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Los Angeles

Exploring Factors that  
Lead to Participation in Study Abroad

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Lisa Loberg

2012

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring Factors that  
Lead to Participation in Study Abroad

by

Lisa Loberg

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Christina A. Christie, Co-Chair

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Despite the many demonstrated benefits of a study abroad experience, trends in campus internationalization, and large-scale governmental initiatives to promote international education, participation of U.S. students in study abroad remains relatively low. The purpose of this study was to address the disparity between high levels of student interest and low levels of participation by exploring factors that lead to student participation.

Previous studies have explored how participation may relate to intent, motivation, or other characteristics and have also identified a number of barriers, both real and perceived, that prevent more students from studying abroad. Prior research has focused mainly on the student; an overlooked resource throughout the literature is the study abroad professional.

The current study sought to identify participation factors by gathering the perspectives of professionals who work in the field of international education and have experience working with or at institutions with high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad. Using a mixed methods triangulation design with a convergence model, results from the 2010 IIE-Forum

Snapshot survey of study abroad professionals (n=219) were compared with findings from a focus group and interviews conducted with a total of 17 study abroad professionals from colleges/universities and from third-party program providers / International Education Organizations (IEO).

Findings indicate that faculty support and curriculum/academic integration are the key factors that lead to student participation in study abroad. While these factors are not new to the field of international education, their prioritization above the perceived role of funding represents a potential new area of focus. Efforts to address low student participation rates typically involve increased marketing to students and requests to the institution for more funding and staffing.

The current study suggests that given the role of faculty support in encouraging higher rates of student participation at successful institutions, outreach efforts aimed directly at faculty may be more effective than trying to convince students to study abroad or trying to target the many barriers individually. Furthermore, working towards curriculum/academic integration can more effectively build an institutional culture that supports study abroad, eliminates barriers, and leads to greater rates of student participation.

The dissertation of Lisa Loberg is approved.

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2012

## DEDICATION

To my study abroad colleagues,  
whose dedication to making the world a better place  
drives and inspires my daily work.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the world around us becomes increasingly globalized, colleges and universities are challenged with the task of preparing graduates for work and life in an environment that is more interconnected than ever before. Study abroad is becoming an important educational tool as well as a main component of campus internationalization efforts (Green & Siaya, 2005; Dutschke, 2009). Research has linked study abroad to immediate gains in student success, as measured by academic performance, retention, and persistence (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Students who have studied abroad also demonstrate higher levels of intercultural competency (Deardorff, 2009), and those who have engaged in high quality social interactions with their host culture exhibit significant linguistic gains (Allen & Herron, 2003; Hadis, 2005; Magnan & Back, 2007; Regan, 1998; Segalowitz, Freed, Collentine, Lafford, Lazar & Diaz-Campos; 2004; Yager, 1998). An overseas educational experience of any duration has been connected to greater civic engagement and lifelong philanthropy (Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009).

While these documented outcomes have considerable meaning for higher education, the impact of study abroad is now extending far beyond the academy. Recognizing the many benefits of an international experience, a growing need to prepare globally-minded citizens, and the utility of study abroad in addressing that need, the United States government has promoted international education through several recent initiatives. The establishment of the Lincoln Commission in 2004 by U.S. Congress and the Administration; the subsequent recommendation to increase the number of U.S. students abroad from 250,000 to 1,000,000 annually (Commission

on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005); the declaration of 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad;” the U.S. Department of State’s 100,000 Strong Initiative, announced in 2009, to dramatically increase the number of U.S. students studying in China; and the 2011 U.S. Department of State’s 100,000 Strong in the Americas are major examples. Furthermore, diplomatic talks during the 2012 U.S. delegation to Brazil prominently featured educational exchange as a means of collaboration (IIE, 2012). These governmental initiatives indicate that students are key to future success in international relations and global competitiveness.

### **Background of the problem**

Despite the many demonstrated benefits of a study abroad experience and large-scale governmental initiatives to promote participation, just 1-2% of U.S. college students studied abroad in 2009-10 (IIE Open Doors, 2011). Low participation, however, is not due to lack of student interest. A study by the College Board and American Council on Education (ACE)/Art & Science Group (2008) found that 50% of college-bound high school students plan to participate in a study abroad program in college. With only 1-2% of enrolled college students participating each year in programs of all durations, there remains a considerable disparity between the percentage of students who indicate initial interest in study abroad and the percentage of students who actually end up participating.

Studies on choice and intent have sought to understand this discrepancy between high rates of interest and low rates of participation by investigating characteristics of students. Researchers have examined factors that may impact a student’s choice to study abroad. Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, and Kheiltash (2007) found that college freshmen who were active in high school government and other school activities were more likely to study abroad in college. In an

analysis of Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data at a large, public university in the northeast, Stroud (2010) discovered a correlation between participation in study abroad and attendance of university more than 100 miles from home. Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) note many similarities between college choice and intent to study abroad. Salisbury et al. emphasize that understanding the choice process is central to encouraging student participation in study abroad.

Research in international education has discovered a number of barriers that prevent more students from participating in study abroad. Many of these barriers exist at the student level and include perceptions of: finances, concerns over graduating on time, cultural background, and level of family support (Sanchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006). Barriers also exist at many levels within an institution (Heisel & Stableski, 2009) and include limited staffing and resources, lack of support from faculty and administration, and the need for curricular integration and financial support.

To further compound the disparity between interest and participation, the typical profile of the study abroad student is a Caucasian female whose chosen major of study is in the humanities (IIE, 2011; Stroud, 2010). Students of other ethnic backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in study abroad (McClure, Szelényi, Niehaus, Anderson, & Reed, 2010; Penn & Tanner, 2009), as do students in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Shirley, 2006), also referred to as STEM subject areas.

Given the many benefits of study abroad, its highlighted role in campus internationalization efforts, and the fact that a study abroad experience is rapidly becoming a function of career competitiveness and success, student participation in study abroad is also an issue of access and equity. The ability to navigate and overcome these identified barriers may be



a result of having sufficient social and cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1998), as well as an environment that shapes choice, as discussed by McDonough (1997); in the way that students with college-educated parents are more likely to successfully navigate the college process, students whose parents did not study abroad may not know of the opportunities or see the value.

### **Need for the study**

Previous studies have provided insight as to how participation in study abroad may relate to intent, motivation, or other characteristics. These studies have focused mainly on the student. An overlooked resource, however, is the study abroad professional; an individual who may work for a college/university or for a third-party provider, which administers study abroad programs, also known as an International Education Organization (IEO). Study abroad professionals typically have experience working on or with various kinds of campuses, they work directly with students, and many are advocates and champions of international education. They are often the ones shaping institutional policy, and in many cases, experimenting with strategies in order to make study abroad accessible to more students. Study abroad professionals have a wealth of knowledge and experience to contribute to the discussion about which factors lead to student participation.

In addition to the expertise of study abroad professionals, more can also be learned from successful institutions. Certain institutions are already known for having an international focus, a reputation likely cultivated over decades; students arrive on campus with an expectation that they will study abroad at some point during their college career. Study abroad participation is high at these institutions, and allocated resources and staffing typically reflect a true commitment to campus internationalization. Institutions at the other end of the spectrum send few students abroad; they struggle with limited resources and often have one-person study abroad offices, or

in the case of some institutions and community colleges, zero staff members dedicated to study abroad. They may lack support from administration, and investing in international education is not an institutional priority. Still, some colleges and universities have dramatically increased student participation in a span of a few short years. Few studies have examined these trends or analyzed correlations between institutional variables. For institutions looking to send more students abroad, and for a nation with a goal of sending one million students annually, more information about effective best practices is critical. Understanding the impact of institutional variables and learning from the perspective of the study abroad professional as to what has led to consistently high or increased rates of student participation in study abroad could be tremendously helpful to strategic planning efforts of an institution and to the field of international education as a whole.

### **Overview of the study**

This study sought to capture the perspectives of professionals who work in study abroad and to discover what factors may be leading to the success of institutions that are sending consistently high or increasing numbers of students abroad. This study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad?
2. To what extent are these identified factors prevalent at institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad programs from 2006-2011?

To address these research questions, I analyzed the data set from an existing survey with 237 respondents (IIE-Forum Snapshot survey, 2010), coding the responses and using statistical

software (SPSS) to examine correlation between variables of institution type, change in participation, and change in budget.

This IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) data set provided me with responses from a wide range of professionals in study abroad. To complement quantitative data with more in-depth, qualitative information, I also conducted a focus group and interviews with a total of 17 study abroad professionals from colleges/universities and from third-party providers—also known as International Education Organizations (IEO). Study abroad professionals who work for IEO's often have familiarity with many U.S. campuses and represent their organization to colleges and universities. Because the nature of their work involves visits to many different institutions, these study abroad professionals are in a unique position to compare what they have observed about the study abroad operations, campus climate, and student population of the campuses they visit.

The collaborative nature of the field of study abroad made it possible for me to gain access to these individuals and institutions through networking, my attendance at several professional conferences, and my membership in several professional organizations: The Forum on Education Abroad, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, and the Institute of International Education (IIE). My membership in these organizations also provided me with access to the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) data set and to study participants who had experience working in various capacities with or at institutions that had consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad from 2006-2011 and at the time of the project. I asked the 17 interview and focus group participants to discuss what they viewed as factors that lead to participation in study abroad and to share what they believed were reasons behind recent increases in participation.

## Summary

My goal in undertaking this project was to provide study abroad professionals with an understanding of what their peers view as the most influential factors to study abroad participation. By exploring and identifying what factors may relate to high or increasing participation rates, it is my hope that this project will lead to the implementation of institutional strategies that help overcome the barriers students face and provide better access to study abroad. In addition to the many personal benefits of a study abroad experience, sending more students abroad will ultimately move our nation and its people towards greater global awareness and understanding.

The next chapter provides a review of literature relating to study abroad, the benefits and outcomes that have been identified for students and other constituencies, and the issue of low student participation at the undergraduate level. Chapter Three details the research methods used for the project, and Chapter Four presents the findings. The fifth and final chapter discusses implications for practice and provides recommendations for further study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

As more colleges and universities move towards internationalizing their campuses, study abroad has become a main strategy in the preparation of graduates for what is becoming a more globalized society (Green & Siaya, 2005). While campus internationalization can and should take many forms, recent inventories of campus activities and initiatives confirm that student participation in study abroad remains at the core of many institutions' internationalization efforts (Green & Siaya, 2005). International programs and partnerships are endeavors that greatly enhance the reputation of institutions, and student participation in study abroad is often seen as an indicator of overall institutional quality (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). What are the outcomes of a study abroad experience and how are they assessed? Given the documented benefits of study abroad, why aren't students participating at higher rates? What barriers to participation are students encountering and how are they being addressed? What is known about the characteristics of students who do study abroad?

After presenting an historical overview of study abroad in the context of higher education and outlining common definitions of study abroad, this chapter will consider the above questions through a review of literature on international education. In particular, it will examine research on student outcomes, previous studies on factors of participation, and identified barriers to participation. The chapter will also provide evidence as to why increasing student participation in study abroad programs is beneficial and expand on the rationale for the current study.

## Overview of Study Abroad

### Historical context

Study abroad is not a new or recent enterprise; Hoffa (2000) points to the existence of formal study abroad in as early as the 1920's. Even before the 1900's, an academic sojourn from the United States to Germany or France was intended to gain language fluency as well as cultural knowledge, as the study of German or French language was seen as a sign of high society (Gilman, 2000). With the arrival of World War I and II, the U.S. government began to take an active interest in the teaching of foreign languages in an attempt to create a globally-competitive citizenry as well as a strategy for war readiness. As a result, teaching emphasis began to shift from literature and culture to language competency for practical use (Gilman, 2000).

Following the end of World War II, the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 led to the promotion of study abroad through the exchange of U.S. and international students, professors, and scholars. Again, the U.S. government's involvement in study abroad and foreign language learning stemmed from an interest in national readiness and global competition, and this focus continued throughout the Cold War. The U.S. government continues to maintain a list of languages that have been identified as having strategic importance to national security. The study of these "critical" languages is still promoted through special government-funded programs such as the Boren, National Security Education Program (NSEP) and the Benjamin Gilman scholarship program.

International education continued to be driven by national defense priorities until the 1960's, when colleges and universities started shifting the focus onto study abroad's contribution to global awareness and understanding of other cultures (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988). This is also when many colleges and universities began developing study abroad programs of their own, as

well as forging partnerships and exchange-based agreements with overseas institutions.

Goodwin and Nacht (1988) interviewed college administrators in the 1980's and found that study abroad was being considered an important emerging trend at that time. Accessibility to information via the internet has enhanced program selection and ease of travel in subsequent decades. The number of U.S. students studying abroad has steadily increased, from under 50,000 in 1985 to nearly 270,000 in 2009/10 (IIE, 2011). What is counted in the "study abroad" numbers, however, represents a wide variety of international experiences.

### **Common definitions of study abroad**

While the term "study abroad" was commonly used to indicate an entire "junior year abroad," what is now considered "study abroad" encompasses international experiences of varying durations: an academic year, semester/quarter, a summer, or a faculty-led travel seminar of any duration involving academic credit and an international destination or multiple destinations. Consequently, this wide range of definitions makes discussions about study abroad trends more complicated, as national rankings typically do not distinguish program duration but are based on the total number of students participating in all credit-bearing programs abroad (IIE, 2011).

In the case of research projects, the literature is somewhat clear in distinguishing duration and program types examined in individual studies; yet, what gets categorized as "study abroad" is still largely a mix of different types of experiences. Moreover, a study abroad "program" could be administered by a home university, by a host university, or by a third-party provider--also known as an international education organization (IEO). It may be exchange-based, where students are exchanged on a one-to-one or an uneven exchange, depending upon the institutional agreement. With a direct-enroll model, a student matriculates into a host university either

independently, as part of a partnership or exchange agreement with the home institution, or assisted by a provider or IEO. Other models involve study centers for international students run by the host university or study centers run by the home university or provider/IEO. These study centers are also known as “island” programs; other hybrid variations exist as well. Housing might involve individual or shared accommodations such as university dormitories, student residences throughout the city, apartments, or home-stays with host families. Engle and Engle (2003) call into question the wide range of programs that are considered “study abroad,” asserting that short-term programs might not have a place under the same “umbrella” that houses programs of “intensive, longer-term cultural, linguistic and professional immersion” (p. 3). Engle and Engle propose a classification system for study abroad program types and varying characteristics and developed a rubric to distinguish differences between a “study tour, short-term study, cross-cultural contact program, and cross-cultural immersion program” (p. 11). What is considered “study abroad” by most U.S. institution is still a mix of experiences and durations; how study abroad program participation is defined may be a big part of the issue.

Each year, the Institute of International Education (IIE) collects information from U.S. colleges and universities through a voluntary questionnaire about student participation in study abroad. The questionnaire solicits information on total numbers, demographics, majors of participating students, countries where they studied, and program duration. Possible categories of program duration are listed as yearlong, semester-long, summer, or short-term (IIE, 2011). Other program characteristics such as level of immersion, or direct-enroll in a foreign institution vs. center-based site, are not captured in the survey questions. A separate questionnaire collects data about numbers of international students on U.S. campuses, countries of origin, academic level, majors of study, and their primary source of educational funding. Responses are submitted



electronically to IIE, and the results of both questionnaires are published yearly in IIE's *Open Doors* Report on International Educational Exchange (2011). The results of the study abroad survey provide a breakdown of student participation in different program durations: short-term, summer-, semester-, and year-long programs as well as an overall total (IIE, 2011). The *Open Doors* Report provides two rankings: an overall ranking of institutions by total number of students participating, as well as a set of rankings according to Carnegie classification types of Doctoral, Master's, and Baccalaureate and the percentage of students studying abroad as compared to the institutions' graduating class of that year (IIE, 2011). The most publicized rankings are a combination of the different program types and lengths to arrive at a comprehensive total of students participating in study abroad (IIE, 2011). As a result of combining the figures, it is not uncommon for an institution to be highly-ranked by sending the majority of its students on short-term faculty-led travel courses and few students in what might be considered traditional study abroad of a semester or year duration.

IIE has been conducting this annual survey of the internationally mobile student population in the US since 1948 with the support of U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs since 1972. Institutions self-report their student numbers to IIE through the questionnaire (IIE, 2011). The data collection process is subject to error, but because this long-standing survey provides a comprehensive record of international mobility trends of U.S. college students over the past 60 years, it remains an important and useful resource for many constituents.

The resulting *Open Doors* Report presents data in a variety of tables, enabling a brief look at national trends and/or a thorough examination of student participation. Institutions are categorized into three groups by Carnegie classification: Doctorate institutions, Master's

institutions, and Baccalaureate institutions. They are also ranked by (1) the total number of study abroad students and (2) by the percentage of undergraduate participation as compared to the graduating class of that particular year. The top 40 institutions in each Carnegie category and participation category are prominently displayed in the report, though the entire list of reporting institutions can be found online.

These categories and rankings are widely used by study abroad professionals, but with so many different nuances to study abroad programming and levels of cultural immersion, it becomes difficult to arrive at accurate totals. Since the term “study abroad” is often used to describe international education experiences of various durations, including faculty-led travel courses as short as one week, comparing the basic statistics may not provide an accurate picture.

Institutions are usually vague when they publicize high participation in study abroad. It could be that a high number of students leave campus for a brief, two-week trip overseas, while participation in semester programs is low. There has been much discussion in the field of international education as to the value of these short-term experiences. Many institutions see short-term study abroad programs as way to ensure exposure to international education for a high proportion of their student population. It is important to note that short-term study abroad opportunities impact an institution’s overall *Open Doors* numbers and ranking, as short-term participation is counted in the same totals as the semester- and year-long programs. However, the value of the impact of such programs is contested in the international education field. While the SAGE study found that students experienced long-lasting effects from a study abroad experience regardless of duration (Paige et al, 2009), Dwyer (2004) contends that duration has a significant impact on the student experience; more time spent in the country yielded greater benefits for students.

## **Campus internationalization**

Beyond study abroad, campus internationalization refers to a comprehensive strategy to move an institution from a local or domestic focus, to an international one (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bartell, 2003). While many institutions concentrate their international efforts on study abroad programming, study abroad is just one area of a comprehensive campus internationalization strategy (Green & Siaya, 2005). Other strategies include integration of international themes in course offerings, faculty and staff international exchange, presence of international students, foreign language requirements, and other endeavors, which help students look beyond domestic issues (Green & Siaya, 2005). While the concept of campus internationalization has been discussed within higher education in recent decades and has become a buzzword among university presidents, recent inventories of liberal arts colleges and research institutions reveal little progress has been made towards comprehensive internationalization (Green & Siaya, 2005).

## **Outcomes of Study Abroad**

### **Measuring the impact of study abroad**

Given the variety of program models and program duration that fall under the umbrella of study abroad, many constituents are interested in the effects of study abroad. While *Open Doors* serves as a main data source for keeping track of participation in study abroad, several instruments have been designed in an attempt to measure the impact of a study abroad experience on individual students.

Comprehensive testing models include Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill's Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) (2008), which asks a series of questions to ascertain one's viewpoint about the world. The 64-question survey provides a self-report on one's global perspective

relating to cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions. The GPI is designed for use pre- and post study abroad.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) takes into account one's worldview and reaction to difference and predicts one's capacity for intercultural sensitivity and competence. The resulting score places the respondent on a continuum between ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett & Salonen, 2007). The IDI is a theory-based test that has been developed to identify the development stage of the respondent with respect to true intercultural competence. Deardorff (2006a), however, sees intercultural competence as a very broad concept containing many possible definitions. In conducting a Delphi study, Deardorff (2006b) sought to gain feedback from international education professionals in order to arrive at a common definition of the term, yet acknowledged that variation remains between western and non-western perspectives. Deardorff's work underscores the importance of utilizing a common definition and finding the appropriate assessment to measure the gains in student outcomes that result from study abroad and other internationalization efforts.

Both the IDI and GPI are well-known instruments that are used regularly in the pre- and post-testing of study abroad students in order to demonstrate the impact of an international experience, or to measure the effects of program design or a specific intervention. Less formal instruments are also common, and often take the form of student satisfaction surveys, evaluations of study abroad programs, and self-assessments of personal growth (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). While these local instruments provide valuable feedback and help study abroad administrators evaluate the effectiveness of programs and may inform decisions and policies, such questionnaires generally do not produce the tangible demonstrations of learning outcomes (Sutton & Rubin, 2004).

In fall 2000, the University System of Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) was created in order to provide a more comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the effects of study abroad. The resulting survey compares GPA, retention, persistence, and graduation rates of students who studied abroad and very similar peers who did not, finding positive increases and higher rates in all of those key areas among students who studied abroad (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). With over 4,000 student records being added annually, the GLOSSARI database is becoming a sizeable resource of study abroad data.

A variety of instruments have been designed to measure gains in language learning as a result of a study abroad experience. These instruments consist of pre- and post- examinations of spoken and written grammar and vocabulary, proficiency as measured by the Oral Proficiency Index (OPI), and have included journaling, interviews, and focus groups (Allen & Herron, 2003; Freed, 1998; Hadis, 2005; Magnan & Back, 2007; Regan, 1998; Segalowitz et al., 2004; Yager, 1998).

As participation in study abroad represents just one of many indicators of campus internationalization, the field of international education is also looking to measure and assess the progress towards internationalization different institutions have been able to achieve. Paige (2005) developed a rubric of ten performance categories, of which study abroad was one, and used performance indicators to score internationalization progress. Horn, Hendel, and Fry (2007) culled multiple sources to determine indicators of internationalization at top research institutions. Horn et al. used a variety of additional indicators such as: library holdings, faculty scholarship and research orientation, presence of senior administrator to oversee international activities, percentage of international students on campus, and less-commonly taught language offerings, among others, and ranked the institutions based on their scores in each category.

### **Benefits of study abroad: Immediate and long-term gains**

The above instruments have sought to measure the immediate and long-term outcomes of a study abroad experience. Understanding the outcomes of study abroad and internationalization as positive benefits has important implications for the individual, the institution, and for the nation. Positive outcomes provide rationale for investment in campus internationalization plans and for encouraging more students to participate in study abroad programming.

Studies point to the impact of study abroad's experiential learning component on student learning (Deardorff, 2006a; Dwyer, 2004; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). What is also well documented in the literature is the personal growth that students report as a result of their study abroad experience, which leads them to more focused educational and career goals (Curran, 2007; Dwyer, 2004). Studies involving the IDI and the GPI instruments continue to show increases in intercultural competence and a broader worldview as outcomes of study abroad.

Duration of the program abroad does appear to have a significant role in the experience of undergraduate participants. Zielinski (2007) found that the benefits such as increased flexibility/openness were maximized starting at nine weeks in country, making a quarter or semester program an ideal starting point. While other studies have demonstrated beneficial outcomes after a short-term travel seminar, Dwyer (2004) emphasizes that more time in country is better.

Long-term gains resulting from a study abroad experience have also been explored. Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) is a retrospective tracer study with mixed methods research design that contained a sample size of 6,391 participants who had studied abroad (Paige et al, 2009). The study explored five dimensions of

global engagement: civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity, and included questions about educational and career choices. The survey was supplemented by 63 interviews to provide detailed life stories about the impact of the participant's study abroad experience. The SAGE study found that people who had studied abroad lived more civically-minded, philanthropic, and civically-engaged lives, and that their study abroad impact was lifelong (Paige et al., 2009). Furthermore, these outcomes were identified regardless of the participant's study abroad program design or duration.

### **Connection to language learning**

Students who have engaged in quality social interactions with their host culture also exhibit significant linguistic gains (Magnan & Back, 2007). Foreign language study is still a common component of a college education. Although some language departments have begun to disappear from college campuses in recent years, many institutions still include basic proficiency in a foreign language as a graduation requirement, and many even require study abroad in the curriculum for certain majors. These curricular requirements come from a long-standing philosophy about the importance of language study to a liberal arts education (Gilman, 2000) and the expectation that spending time in a country will automatically bring about language gains (Freed, 1998); after studying in France, a student should be able to speak some French. Language acquisition theories, such as Krashen's theory of "input," (Krashen, 1991) confirm this benefit of immersion. Krashen sees comprehensible input as a critical component of language acquisition, as it replicates a more natural process of learning. Study abroad provides the opportunity for that input to occur in a more natural, real setting; however, research involving language gains as a result of study abroad demonstrate that the issue is much more complex than exposure to good models. Studies have measured nuanced improvements in a student's ability to

imitate and incorporate the habits of native speakers as a result of a study abroad experience (Allen & Herron, 2003; Hadis, 2005; Magnan & Back, 2007; Regan, 1998; Segalowitz et al., 2004; Yager, 1998). Yet according to Freed (1998), not every student who studies abroad makes significant language gains. Factors such as program design (Engle & Engle, 2004) level of immersion (Wilkinson, 1998), housing arrangement (Rivers, 1998), and program duration (Dwyer, 2004) greatly impact language results. Much like the findings from research on intercultural competence, which points to the importance of individual reflection (Deardorff, 2006a), Freed (1998) concludes that simply being in a country is not enough to guarantee an increase in language proficiency. As Dwyer (2004) points out, ensuring adequate time in-country can help increase the positive outcomes for students and lead to higher levels in language proficiency, since more time in the country may provide students more opportunities for beneficial social interaction (Magnan & Back, 2007).

Social interaction plays a vital role in determining linguistic gains (Magnan & Back, 2007; Yager, 1998). Even beyond quality contact with locals, attitudes towards the host culture can positively or negatively affect a student's language progress (Allen & Herron, 2003; Yager, 1998). Though we lack a consistent formula to guarantee language gains, a recurring theme within the literature is that study abroad does provide a critical opportunity for increased language proficiency. Given the right conditions, studying in-country provides the potential for a learning environment that Yager (1998) considers far superior to the typical U.S. college classroom.

### **Additional student outcomes**

Increased language proficiency is just one of many outcomes that have been studied. As was previously discussed, the GLOSSARI project was created in fall 2000 by the University



System of Georgia in order to provide tangible evidence of student learning outcomes as a result of study abroad (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). After controlling for several factors, Sutton and Rubin's 2009 release of survey data from the GLOSSARI project revealed that students who had studied abroad had a higher grade point average and a higher persistence and graduate rate than similar peers who did not study abroad. The effects of a study abroad experience, as measured by the GLOSSARI project, consist of immediate, tangible gains in student outcomes that are of direct benefit to the student and to the institution, therefore making study abroad a veritable academic endeavor (Sutton & Rubin, 2004).

Similarly, the connection between student engagement and student success (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006) may help explain study abroad's role in increased persistence and academic achievement. Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement provides a conceptual framework from which to view the impact of experiential learning on student outcomes, and study abroad students who are engaged in their host environment may fit this model of interaction. Carini, et al. (2006) confirmed that student engagement is linked to learning outcomes, including critical thinking and GPA. A study abroad experience has also been shown to provide relevant career preparation, and experiences that involve international internships have a hugely positive impact on career development as well (Curran, 2007; Dwyer, 2004).

As Paige et al. (2009) demonstrated with the SAGE study, an international experience can have lasting effects on a person's life. The longitudinal study found that respondents who had studied abroad long ago were still conscientious of world issues and made attempts to live their lives more "simply." Participants with an international experience were also more likely to vote and to be civically and philanthropically engaged in their communities.

## **Negative outcomes and views of study abroad**

Although study abroad has been demonstrated to be an immensely influential educational experience, one that broadens the mind and creates further opportunity for participants in terms of academic and career options and lifelong learning, it is important to recognize potential negative views. Studying abroad can be a challenging experience complete with severe bouts of culture shock, homesickness, cultural misunderstandings, and a complex acculturation process (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002), as well as a set of unexpected challenges upon the return home (Christophi & Thompson, 2007). Furthermore, study abroad represents risk on a variety of fronts, according to Leuthge (2004), from the expensive purchase, to the psychological risk of increased anxiety and risks to physical safety. These risks transfer to the institution in much the same way that positive outcomes for the student also benefit the institution; institutions that offer study abroad incur risks that must be anticipated and managed. Health and safety of students abroad are topics regularly discussed within professional organizations for international education and addressed by resources such as the Center for Global Education's SAFETI Clearinghouse (n.d.).

Schroth and McCormack (2000) found that study abroad was connected to high-risk behaviors as students attempt to push their limits. Pedersen, LaBrie, and Hummer (2009) discovered that alcohol consumption did not necessarily increase when students were studying abroad; however, consumption of alcohol did increase for some students upon their return to the home campus, which could be considered as a negative effect of a study abroad experience. It doesn't help that some university administrators, parents, and students see study abroad as an extra-curricular pursuit that provides an opportunity to "party" with little academic rigor.

Although study abroad is credit-bearing, it is still seen by some as “dressed-up vacation time” (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 16).

It is also essential to recognize the inherent privilege associated with a study abroad experience. With more than a billion people in the world living on less than \$1 per day (UN, 2010), the mere possibility of sending U.S. students around the world so that they can “experience” life in another country seems potentially frivolous and insensitive. Much of the world’s population stays within a short radius of home and lacks the resources to travel and the necessary qualifications to obtain a visa to many countries, while U.S. students encounter very few limitations on their mobility. The U.S. government’s push to send more students abroad in order to maintain global competitiveness could even fit Chomsky’s definition of advancing a neoliberal agenda that perpetuates inequality (1999). Stromquist (2007) criticizes internationalization efforts that simply satisfy the agenda of U.S. universities to amass partnerships and resources rather than working towards a goal of helping the disadvantaged in the world. Ogden (2007) refers to modern study abroad participants as “neo-colonial” students with wealth and privilege who descend upon other countries and observe the local culture from the “veranda.” Ogden (2007) suggests that students be given sufficient preparation in an effort to help mitigate the potential damage their presence may cause.

Furthermore, Bolen’s (2001) review of study abroad advertising reveals a strong sense of consumerism within the study abroad field that has accompanied growth in participation in recent years. Bolen finds that the presentation of study abroad is becoming less academic and more like a product. Bolen’s findings about study abroad mirror a growing trend towards consumerism in higher education; as first-world countries depend more heavily upon a knowledge economy, higher education is being repositioned as a global commodity (Naidoo,

2007) and functioning more like an industry than ever before. Institutions are chasing prestige in order to ensure competitiveness and positioning in college rankings (Meara, 2007) and to maximize appeal to potential applicants (McDonough, 1994). Sutton and Rubin (2004) note that one such indicator of overall institutional quality is student participation in study abroad. Institutions with high participation in programs of any and all durations often publicize and feature their *Open Doors* survey report (IIE, 2011) rankings in their own marketing pieces.

### **Maximizing the experience and national best practices**

The criticisms of study abroad point to the need for solid program design as well as adequate pre-departure preparation, in-country support, and re-entry orientation. Several guidebooks and accompanying curriculum manuals such as *Maximizing Study Abroad* (Paige et al., 2002) and online preparation programs such as Global Scholar (n.d.) have been developed in order to help students make the most of their study abroad experience. The national professional organizations NAFSA: Association of International Educators and The Forum on Education Abroad have been developing best practice guidelines for program development and institutional study abroad administration to address these potential pitfalls. Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, and Roller (2012) suggest collaboration across the campus with various academic and student affairs offices as a strategy for the study abroad office and for the institution to enhance the overall student experience. Rhodes et al. point out that working together and drawing on the expertise of colleagues from diverse areas of academic and student affairs can ultimately offer streamlined operations and more targeted and informed responses to student emergencies and other sensitive issues.

### **Understanding Participation in Study Abroad**

Despite any potential drawbacks of a study abroad experience, the demonstrated

outcomes have been overwhelmingly positive, and the benefits to the student, institution, and to the nation are numerous. With increased attention to campus internationalization movements and the many aspects of a study abroad experience that are so beneficial to a student, it is surprising that not every college student studies abroad. In recent decades, U.S. student participation has continued to grow (IIE, 2011), but the total percentage of U.S. college students who participate still remains low. Less than 2% of U.S. college students participated in study abroad programs of any duration from 2009-2010 (IIE, 2011). According to the joint study by American Council on Education (ACE) and the College Board (2008), 50% of high school seniors indicated interested in studying abroad during their college career. The disparity between demonstrated interest (ACE, 2008) and actual participation (IIE, 2011) suggests that there are barriers that students are encountering along the way that prevent them from participating. Many of these barriers have been specifically identified in the literature. Researchers have also identified potential predictors of participation by examining characteristics of students who do participate. Previous studies have also sought to analyze intent, motivation, and the decision-making process. Knowing the barriers, predictors, and characteristics can help the field of international education determine how and where access can be improved and how participation in study abroad can be encouraged.

### **Trends in study abroad participation**

In examining study abroad participation numbers, it is essential to consider the various patterns of participation. The typical profile of the study abroad student is a female Caucasian whose chosen major of study is in the humanities (IIE, 2011; Stroud, 2010). Students of other ethnic backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in study abroad (McClure et al., 2010; Penn & Tanner, 2009). Females continue to study abroad at much higher rates than males (Salisbury,

Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010). Students in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, also referred to as STEM subjects, participate at lower rates as well (Shirley, 2006; Stroud, 2010). STEM majors often have sequential curricular requirements, which can make fitting in a study abroad semester seem more difficult.

### **Intent to study abroad**

As mentioned previously, 50% of high school seniors indicate interest in studying abroad (ACE, 2008), so it would seem that awareness is not an issue. Researchers have examined many factors that may impact a student's choice to study abroad. Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, and Kheiltash (2007) found that college freshmen who were active in high school government and other school activities were more likely to study abroad in college. In an analysis of Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data at a large, public university in the northeast, Stroud (2010) discovered a correlation between participation in study abroad and attendance of university more than 100 miles from home. Dufon and Churchill (2006) found that prior language proficiency may even predict participation in study abroad. The desire to learn a language or improve proficiency may also have an impact on program selection, as some students elect to study in non-English-speaking destinations in order to learn the language of the country (Goldstein & Kim, 2005; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009).

Salisbury et al., (2009) contend that there is still very little is known about what makes a student decide to study abroad but note many similarities between the processing of choosing college and the intent to study abroad. Salisbury et al. underscore the importance of understanding the choice process in order to encourage more students to study abroad. They also found that that the most effective advising stresses the need for students to plan ahead for a study abroad experience. Participation in study abroad may be a result of having sufficient social and

cultural capital (Salisbury et al. 2009) as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1998). In examining how students decide to attend college, McDonough (1997) points out that choices are shaped by environments. In the same way that students with college-educated parents are more likely to successfully navigate the college process, students whose parents did not study abroad may not know of the opportunities or see the value. Salisbury et al. (2009) agree that finances aren't the only issue; however, many students with financial concerns do not inquire about study abroad in the first place. In analyzing several nationally administered surveys, Shea (2009) also found that intent and participation in study abroad was affected by students' background, college involvement, and institutional factors. Parents' level of education was also significant predictor of student participation in study abroad (Shea, 2009).

### **Barriers to participation**

Researchers who examine the gap between interest and participation have begun to identify similar structural, economic, and social barriers that may be preventing more students from studying abroad. Barriers to participation in study abroad include students' perceptions of finances, concerns about graduating on time, cultural background, and level of family support (Goldstein & Kim, 2005; Kasravi, 2009; Salisbury et al., 2009; Sanchez et al., 2006). Such barriers reside primarily with the student and can be attributed to student perception in many cases, as students may not realize that some of these issues are not true barriers. A student survey conducted by Goldstein and Kim (2005) found participation factors of student expectations, levels of ethnocentrism, and perceived value of language study. King and Young (1994) also found that students who did not study abroad indicated that having to learn a foreign language was a key discouraging factor.

Other barriers have been identified beyond student perception, expectations, or background. These barriers exist at the institutional level and include limited staffing and resources, lack of support from faculty and administration, and a growing need for curricular integration and financial support (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011; Heisel & Stableski, 2009; IIE, 2009).

### **Communicating information to students**

Few studies have closely examined how students find out about the study abroad opportunities available to them and whether there is a direct impact of certain communication strategies on student participation. The University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP) sought to gather information from UC students about the effectiveness of its marketing and to examine student perceptions about the process and programs by conducting a series of student focus groups (2011). Feedback was gathered from UC students regarding how they learned about study abroad opportunities and what opinions they had about the information presented on the UCEAP websites. The project gathered information from students who had studied abroad with EAP and from students who had decided not to initiate an application. Findings from the project suggest barriers to participation such as concern about finances, graduating on time, and being away from home. Findings also suggest that students were influenced about participating in study abroad by their network of “peers, friends, past participants, UC staff, and parents” (UCEAP, 2011, p. 2).

With rapid changes in technology, it is likely that ever-changing web content is becoming a popular source for information about study abroad opportunities. More students know about the concept of study abroad already by the time they arrive to college, as these opportunities are often highlighted in the admissions process of an institution. In conducting a content analysis of



the prospective student viewbooks of various colleges and universities, Hartley and Morpew (2008) coded study abroad as one of the categories they examined under the area of academics. Hartley and Morpew's (2008) content analysis of college and university viewbooks found that study abroad was a featured item under the category of academics, though they did not examine whether this marketing placement encouraged students to participate.

Shirley (2006) points out that marketing messages about study abroad often leave out male students, which further perpetuates the gender imbalance in eventual participation. Salisbury et al. (2010) found distinct differences in the way that pre- and in-college experiences impact men and women's decision to study abroad. They state that the marketing that appeals to women is very different than what causes a man to act, and they recommend that study abroad marketing strategies be tailored to address these important gender differences.

The way study abroad is presented in marketing pieces may or may not accurately reflect the real study abroad experience. In their analysis of college viewbooks, Hartley and Morpew (2008) found that consistent with the rosy pictures of college life depicted by smiling students and perfectly manicured buildings and grounds, the photos selected to represent study abroad were touristy in nature. Students were posed in front of world landmarks rather than shown interacting with the local culture or carrying around notebooks (Hartley & Morpew, 2008). Bolen's (2001) examination of marketing materials also found an element of consumerism in study abroad marketing that seemed to portray the experience as less academic in nature.

Salisbury et al. (2010) also call into question national and institutional efforts to promote international education and financial aid, pointing to studies that indicate that students are already shaped when they enter college. Their subsequent findings suggest that pre-college marketing and outreach might be most effective; they recommend that advising should

emphasize the need to plan ahead to allow for the length of time between decision and departure (Salisbury et al., 2010). A study by Doyle et al. (2010) also identified early understanding of opportunities as a positive factor of student participation. While pre-college predisposition and early planning is important to consider, these studies do not explain the substantial figure of 50% of graduating high school seniors who are already indicating plans to study abroad during college (ACE, 2008) and those who subsequently do not participate. The timing of student awareness once a student matriculates may also be a factor.

Students may hear from or consult varied sources of information such as: the study abroad office, faculty, staff, and peers. Fellow students in a formal Peer Advisor role in the study abroad office are also a major source of information for interested students; however, the messaging may vary. Lo found that students in the Peer Advisor position across different institutions have a wide range of qualifications, expertise, and responsibility levels when it comes to their advising role in the office (2008).

### **Encouraging Participation**

Barriers to student participation in study abroad seem to exist on a national scale; yet, some institutions have successfully overcome these barriers and regularly send high numbers of students on semester programs abroad each year as evidenced by the *Open Doors* rankings (IIE, 2011). While much is known about the characteristics of students who study abroad, little is known about the strategies of the institutions that send high numbers. Doyle et al. (2010) examined student surveys, case studies, and interviewed 23 staff at five institutions in New Zealand. The factors of study abroad participation identified from the study included: “early understanding” of opportunities, “ongoing support to students, social, cultural, and linguistic capabilities, and how effectively study abroad was integrated into student degree programs” (p.

471). Regarding specific strategies, Goucher College, in Baltimore, Maryland, is an example of an institution that has achieved a high rate of participation through the implementation of a study abroad requirement for all its students (Stuart, 2007). It is important to note that the requirement is not a semester experience; participation in short-term programs can also satisfy the Goucher requirement. Also noteworthy is that a stipend of \$1200 was being awarded to each Goucher student to defray the expenses of this requirement (Stuart, 2007). A university requirement to study abroad accomplishes the goal of sending more students, but an institution still faces the challenge of supporting it—on many levels: financially and programmatically. Strategies and best practices for gathering sufficient institutional support, and accomplishing such a requirement, and then sustaining it, are still relatively unknown.

### **National advocacy**

Institutions are not alone in their quest to send more students abroad. International education is also being promoted through national legislative efforts and government initiatives. Examples of this advocacy include: the bi-partisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005), which is examining ways to support study abroad across institutions nationally; the U.S. Senate resolution, which declared the year 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad;” the Simon Bill, which has a goal of sending one million U.S. students abroad annually; and the 100k Strong Initiative, which has a goal of sending 100,000 students annually to China. These efforts underscore the importance of study abroad as a national priority.

### **Institutional best practices**

Successful institutions are highlighted within the field of International Education through award recognition. The *Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization* is presented by NAFSA to institutions with outstanding strategies and initiatives for bringing an international

focus campus wide. The selected institutions are announced at the annual national NAFSA conference and profiled in several publications. *Spotlight* awards are also given to institutions with a specific international program or initiative that merits special recognition. IIE's Heiskell Awards recognize exemplary institutions in the categories of: Internationalizing the Campus, Study Abroad, International Partnerships, as well as two special categories: Internationalizing the Community College Campus, and Best Practices in International Partnerships international categories (IIE, 2011). Though the awards focus mostly on campus wide internationalization rather than specifically addressing barriers to study abroad participation, these awards do provide positive examples and possible strategies for institutions that may be striving towards a more internationalized campus.

An example of how the cost barrier is being addressed by a private organization is Diversityabroad.com, which in recent years has been providing a comprehensive website of resources and funding opportunities for underrepresented students. The organization also partners with program providers to offer scholarships. Though funding has been identified as a perceived barrier, Salisbury et al. (2009a) claim that even providing financial aid is a nuanced strategy, as it was found to be a more effective in influencing the study abroad decision-making process for women than for men.

Though we lack clear consensus on what works for attracting students to study abroad and what does not, identifying and understanding the strategies institutions have used with success can provide much needed insight to the field of International Education in meeting the goals set forth in the Simon Bill and in carrying out the mission statements of colleges and universities nationwide.

## Summary

Despite these national efforts to promote study abroad, participation is still relatively low. Researchers who examine the gap between interest in study abroad and participation continue to identify the same barriers of student perceptions of finances, concerns over graduating on time, cultural background, and level of family support (Kasravi, 2009; Salisbury et al., 2009; Sanchez et al., 2006). Common institutional barriers also persist and include limited staffing and resources, lack of support from faculty and administration, the need for curricular integration and financial support (Heisel & Stableski, 2009). These problems exist on a national scale; yet, some institutions have successfully overcome these barriers and send high numbers of students on semester programs abroad each year, as evidenced by the *Open Doors* rankings (IIE, 2009-2010).

The literature provides a great deal of insight as to the many benefits of study abroad, the characteristics of students who participate, and the barriers that are preventing many students from participating. A review of the literature regarding strategies to increase study abroad participation yields information on marketing, the need to better understand the realities of college student decision-making, national advocacy, and a review of institutional best practices. What merits further study is the identification of factors that may be within the control of the institution. What also remains unclear are the particular strategies that have been most effective for overcoming the identified barriers and encouraging more students to study abroad.

The objective of the current study was to discover factors that lead to student participation in study abroad by gathering the perspectives of those who work most closely with students: study abroad professionals at colleges/universities and for third party provider programs/IEO's to situate those factors within the context of successful institutions with

consistently high or increasing rates of participation. A better understanding of how study abroad professionals and successful institutions have navigated the identified barriers to increase the number of students studying abroad may empower other institutions to follow suit. The next chapter will discuss the research design and methods that were used in the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The previous two chapters presented evidence demonstrating the growing importance placed on international education, as it relates to the mission and objectives of many U.S. colleges and universities and to several recent initiatives of the U.S. government to increase participation in study abroad. International education research has documented the numerous outcomes of a study abroad experience, including positive impacts on students' growth and development, academic performance, language learning and increased cross-cultural competency. Despite the many benefits of a study abroad experience, just 1-2% of U.S. students study abroad each year. Chapter Two examined prior studies on student participation in study abroad and discussed structural, economic, and social barriers that may be contributing to the disparity between high levels of student interest and low levels of involvement.

Much of the prior research in study abroad has centered on the student—exploring the learning outcomes of an international experience, identifying the barriers that prevent more students from participating, or seeking to understand participation through intent, motivation, or other characteristics. Study abroad professionals themselves, however, are an overlooked resource in international education research. Study abroad professionals have had experience working on various campuses, they are the ones who work directly with students, and many are champions of international education. They are often also the individuals who are setting and/or implementing policy on college campuses, in some cases, experimenting with different

strategies. This study sought to capture the perspectives of these individuals and to explore potential characteristics of institutions that send consistently high or increasing numbers of students abroad. This study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad?
2. To what extent are these identified factors prevalent at institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad programs from 2006-2011?

Chapter Three begins with an overview of the research methods, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter also outlines steps taken to ensure the study was conducted carefully and ethically and ends with a discussion on validity and reliability.

### **Research Design**

To address each of the two research questions, I used a mixed methods triangulation design with a convergence model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) in comparing survey results with findings from the focus group and interviews. I analyzed the data set from an existing survey (N=237) (IIE-Forum Snapshot survey, 2010) and upon interpretation, I merged the quantitative results with the qualitative findings from a focus group and semi-structured interviews that I conducted with a total of 17 individuals who work in study abroad—eight of whom worked for a college or university, and the other nine worked for a third-party provider, also known as an International Education Organization (IEO).

This pragmatic, mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) was chosen as most appropriate for understanding the current research problem and gathering data on the



research questions developed for the study, as it provided for comparisons to be made between the groups. While equal weight was given to mixed methods used for R1, additional weight was given to the qualitative data collected for R2, as participants were specifically chosen for their experience with successful institutions—those with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad. This prioritization of qualitative data for R2 is evident in the presentation and interpretation of the findings.

The decision to use a mixed methods approach was based upon the nature of the research topic. A mixed methods triangulation design with a convergence model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) allowed for the research questions to be more fully addressed by providing the structure of quantitative research and the flexibility of qualitative inquiry. Using a combination of methods also gave more room for innovation and researcher-designed frameworks (Creswell, 2009). The examination of why certain institutions are sending more students abroad than other institutions requires consideration of context and a wide array of variables, including the expertise of individuals who work in the field of international education. Consequently, the research questions could not be sufficiently addressed with a single approach, nor could the many potential success factors be identified through one method alone. For example, a survey might uncover distinct patterns, but the quantitative analysis and discussion could lack context. A strictly qualitative approach might provide an in-depth picture of the individual experiences of study abroad professionals but might preclude generalization to other institutions or the field of study abroad. Comparing the analysis of survey results with findings from the focus group and interviews allowed for the research questions to be addressed in greater detail.

The quantitative portion provided a relatively large sample of study abroad professionals (N=237) and included self-reported data about institutional budgets and student participation

trends. Analysis of the survey alone, however, was not sufficient to fully address the research questions. Additionally, because the survey was not designed for the purpose of this study, there were certain limitations of the survey's design, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The qualitative portion provided the opportunity to gather data beyond the scope of the survey through the use of a focus group and interviews with a total of 17 professionals in study abroad. Specific institutions are experiencing success in sending high numbers of students abroad, but this success may be based on a number of complex factors that cannot adequately be captured in a simple questionnaire, for example. An examination of existing data sets provided valuable information on various trends, but reasons for these trends may have gone unexplained without an additional qualitative component. Qualitative research, as Merriam (2009) points out, has an inductive quality that helps the researcher “build toward theory” (p. 15). By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, data were collected in multiple ways—providing better triangulation—and the context in which the data exist could be more appropriately considered (Creswell, 2009). As Seidman (2006) affirms, the adequacy of a research method depends upon the research being conducted and the questions being asked. The advantage to combining methods for the current project is that a more complete picture could be created, supported by theory and explained inductively by the emergence of common themes.

As discussed in Chapter Two, previous quantitative and qualitative studies regarding study abroad have focused on primarily on the student, identifying barriers to participation rather than highlighting successful strategies study abroad professionals have used to recruit students and increase access. While it is clear that barriers to student participation exist, the successful navigation of these barriers has not yet been studied or systematically compared to the proposed level of combined analysis. Furthermore, the voices of study abroad professionals, particularly

from the third-party provider side, have not been widely captured. This project focused on gathering the perspectives from these individuals, building upon what has been learned from previous studies in international education. The current study was meant to be inductive, which, as Creswell (2009) describes, involves building from the data, to broad themes, out to a generalized model or theory. Examining the practices at successful institutions and the perspectives of study abroad professionals in this way made it possible to discover commonalities that may be contributing to the higher rates of participation. Success factors identified can become strategies that professionals at other institutions use to increase student participation in study abroad. The design of this study is such that it could be replicated.

### **Data Collection Methods**

With the approval of my study by my doctoral committee and by the UCLA internal review board through the Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP), I collected data from an existing survey and from a focus group and semi-structured interviews I conducted with a total of 17 study abroad professionals.

### **Quantitative Data**

Data for this study were first collected from the existing IIE-Forum Snapshot survey data set 2010 (see appendix). The Snapshot survey is a joint effort of the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the Forum on Education Abroad, two national organizations that team together to send out a questionnaire to their members each fall regarding participation in study abroad. The 2010 iteration of the survey was an electronic questionnaire that was distributed via email to IIE and Forum members. The questionnaire asked professionals at member institutions whether or not their respective campuses had experienced an increase or a decrease in student participation in study abroad over the previous year and about participation trends in particular

world regions. Another set of questions asked about institutional support and initiatives employed as part of a strategy to increase student participation. There were also open-ended questions for respondents to provide an expanded answer as to why they believed there had been a change in participation rates (see appendix). I had direct access to this data set through my membership in the Institute of International Education (IIE) and The Forum on Education Abroad.

The specific identifying information for survey respondents, such as name and institution, was not visible in the data set. The survey was sent out to the membership of both IIE and The Forum on Education Abroad, and it is plausible that the responses captured by the survey represent a variety of geographical locations. Table 3.1 offers a description of the respondents by institution type.

Table 3.1

*IIE-Forum Snapshot Survey Respondents by Institutional Type (n=219):*

| Associate |     | Baccalaureate |    | Master's |      | Doctorate |      |
|-----------|-----|---------------|----|----------|------|-----------|------|
| n         | n%  | n             | n% | n        | n%   | n         | n%   |
| 18        | .08 | 60            | 27 | 59       | 26.9 | 82        | 37.4 |

### Qualitative Data

The use of qualitative data complemented the quantitative results by providing a more complete picture of what study abroad professionals view as the factors that lead to student participation. The qualitative data consisted of responses to an open-ended question on the survey questionnaire (IIE-Forum 2010), as well as a focus group and semi-structured interviews that I conducted with 17 professionals in study abroad. The qualitative data obtained from the survey came from an open-ended prompt (Question 8) that asked respondents to give reasons as

to why participation in study abroad had changed from the previous year (directly addressing my research questions). Responses to Question 8 were coded into themes and analyzed.

The IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) was used as a basis for the interview and focus group protocol (see appendix). I piloted the interview protocol with a total of three study abroad professionals: two from IEO’s and one from a college/university. For this area of data collection, I conducted a focus group and semi-structured interviews with a total of 17 professionals in the study abroad field, who also had experience working at or working with institutions with high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad. The purpose of the focus group and interviews was to discover what factors they believe lead to student participation in study abroad and to discuss strategies that they identified as effective in achieving greater student participation in study abroad. The goal for the focus group and each interview was to provide an overall structure for the conversations, but for discussions to be exploratory in nature. I wanted to see what factors the participants identified on their own, unprompted by me.

The range of experience of these individuals was three to 20 years working in international education. They resided in the west, southwest, central, northeast, and southeast regions of the U.S., representing 11 states.

Table 3.2 offers a description of the participants by institution type.

Table 3.2

*Interview and focus group participants by institution type (N=17):*

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| <u>Associate</u> |    | <u>Baccalaureate</u> |      | <u>Master’s</u> |      | <u>Doctorate</u> |     | <u>IEO</u> |      |
|------------------|----|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|-----|------------|------|
| n                | n% | n                    | n%   | n               | n%   | n                | n%  | n          | n%   |
| 0                | 0  | 3                    | 17.6 | 4               | 23.5 | 1                | 5.8 | 9          | 52.9 |

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Of the 17 individuals, eight were employed at a four-year college or university and held the position of Director, Assistant/Associate Director, or Coordinator in the office that administers study abroad. These professionals were drawn from colleges and universities of the following Carnegie classification types as of Baccalaureate, Master's and Doctorate, as categorized in the *Open Doors* report (IIE, 2011). These individuals represented colleges or universities that had consistently high rates of participation in study abroad according to the *Open Doors* publication (IIE, 2011) or that had increases in participation rates from 2006-2011.

The other nine individuals were employed by a third-party provider, also referred to by the field of study abroad as an International Education Organization (IEO). A third-party provider/IEO typically administers study abroad programs in a variety of destinations, maintains agreements with overseas institutions or centers, and typically provides on-site services to students including airport pick-up, housing placement, course registration, planned excursions, and the assistance of a local director. Representatives from IEO's interact often with campuses to share information about their programs, to recruit students, and to develop partnerships and new programs. I intentionally gathered the perspective of third-party provider representatives, as these professionals spend a great deal of time recruiting students on college campuses for study abroad programs. As a result of their travels and institutional connections, they have valuable insight as to the overall feel of one campus as compared to another, especially in relation to levels of student interest in and/or awareness about study abroad. Program provider/IEO representatives are an overlooked resource in study abroad research; this study sought to acquire and highlight their perspectives.

Almost half of the total participants had worked for both a third-party provider/IEO and for a college or university study abroad office during their career and were able to provide

multiple perspectives as a result. In the focus group and interviews, participants were asked to identify what they believe are factors that lead to participation in study abroad and what characteristics are indicative of a campus that supports study abroad. They were also asked to identify specific factors that they believed were contributing to consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad for their own campuses and organizations and to discuss what strategies they wanted to implement in the future.

**Access to study participants.** I had the opportunity at professional conferences to recruit participants in person for this area of data collection. I also recruited one participant by email (see appendix). In person I conducted one focus group with four participants, two interviews each with a group of two participants, and two individual interviews in person. I conducted seven interviews by phone. There were a total of 17 participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Equal weight in analysis was given to mixed methods used for R1; however, additional weight was given to the qualitative data collected for R2 due to the richness and depth of the qualitative data available. Data resulting from quantitative analysis were compared with data obtained from qualitative methods and converged during interpretation.

Upon retrieving the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) data set, which was in the form of a spreadsheet, I created codes for all of the responses (see appendix) and entered the data into a statistical software program (SPSS). I used correlation, ANOVA, and cross-tabulations, to determine correlations and to examine relationships between the variables and the institution types. Table 3.3 depicts the variables that were examined in the study.

Table 3.3

*IIE-Forum Snapshot Survey 2010: Variables examined in statistical analysis*

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|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Question 2  | Institution type                                |
| Question 7  | Change in participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 |
| Question 8  | Reasons given for change in participation       |
| Question 14 | Change in budget from 2008/09 to 2009/10        |

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Survey question 8 provided the initial basis for addressing Research Question 1, whereas the other variables listed in Table 3.2 helped categorize successful institutions by way of participation increases, according to the criteria established. Qualitative data were obtained from the survey from the open-ended question (8) that asked respondents to give reasons for changes in participation as compared to the previous year. Responses to Question 8 were coded into themes and analyzed. The focus group and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. The participants I selected for my study were not meant to comprise a representative sample; however, I did have contact with professionals from 11 states and varied institution types, as shown in Table 3.1, each with consistently high or increasing rates of study abroad participation.

**Ethical Considerations**

Prior to formal engagement with participants, this study was approved by the UCLA internal review board (OHRPP). Participants involved in the focus group and interviews signed an informed consent form; they were aware of the study’s topic and purpose and were apprised of how their privacy and rights would be protected during and after the data collection. They were also given the choice of a \$5 gift card to Starbucks coffee or a \$5 donation to Heifer International, a global non-profit organization that provides livestock, seeds, and training to



families in over 125 countries. All of the interview and focus group participants chose compensation in the form of the \$5 donation to Heifer International.

Anonymity was not being promised in the study, as participants in the focus group and in the two-person interviews had access to the identity of each other; however, confidentiality was maintained by not revealing specific institutions or participant names in the written study. While the nature of the interview protocol did not seek to expose institutional or personal flaws, participants could have been concerned that information discovered could be damaging to the institution or to their career. Sensitivity towards these and other potential issues was maintained throughout the project and strict confidentiality was maintained in all possible areas.

Data collected in the focus group and interviews were recorded and transcribed and remained in a password-protected and/or locked and secure location. It is possible that interviewees felt more comfortable sharing what they perceived as positive strategies, but they might have avoided divulging negative information, especially if topics related to inside politics or other institutional issues. Participants may have been concerned about having their secrets to success revealed to me or to other professionals in the focus groups. I did need to consider the perceptions of my study participants and the possibility that our conversations may also reveal controversial strategies or expose internal politics. This potential of exposure may have caused participants to generalize or frame their responses in a certain way and to avoid specifics; they may not have wanted to reveal challenges that they have faced or other weaknesses including perceived weakness or faults of leadership. Despite the collaborative nature of international education, some individuals or institutions may have been wary of having proprietary secrets exposed. I was sensitive to these possible concerns, even though no such concerns were directly expressed to me by any participants.

## **Reliability and Validity of the Findings**

This study sought to answer the research questions by using several complementary methods, but it is important to note that I was not in contact with enough participants or institutions to warrant broad generalizations. The study offers instead an opportunity to compare perspectives of study abroad professionals regarding the topic of student participation and to more closely examine—through statistical analysis—characteristics of institutions as reported in a national survey (N=237) and a more in-depth qualitative component with 17 study abroad professionals. It provides a window into particular institutions that have had success in study abroad participation and allows for the possibility of utilizing similar strategies by other study abroad professionals. Whether those similar strategies produce results for other campuses or organizations will require further follow up and research. The current study was designed in a way that could be replicated. A similar research design could examine additional institutions and/or organizations that have increased undergraduate student participation in study abroad during another recent span of time and study the effectiveness of certain strategies or initiatives.

A possible pitfall of the study is my own bias as a researcher who is also a study abroad professional. As a result, I may have overlooked certain strategies that are very familiar to me, and therefore went unnoticed, or strategies that were perhaps too unfamiliar to me and went unrecognized and uncategorized. My experience in the profession was a benefit to the study since I was already very familiar with terms, strategies, trends, and the research on study abroad; I am not an outsider conducting this research—I am more easily able to recognize, label, and categorize what I discover.

Regarding the validity of the study, utilizing the existing data set from the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) provided several advantages than had I developed and administered a

survey instrument on my own. As a result of working with the existing data set, I had access to a better sample size, it was an industry-tested instrument, and it likely provided more responses than if I were to survey institutions on my own. Using an existing instrument, however, also meant accepting certain flaws. The design of questions and the menu of possible responses were inconsistent throughout the survey and made coding the responses more difficult. For example, certain responses were nominal variables when they should have been ordinal and vice versa. Survey design has a great impact on the power of the resulting statistical analysis. While the survey was not originally intended for use in SPSS, my analysis will be presented to the IIE and Forum organizations for possible use and survey design feedback for future iterations of the survey.

Despite these design limitations, the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) data set represented a level of validity and reliability that I would otherwise be unable to obtain within the scope of this project. Furthermore, recipients of the survey were specifically members of IIE and/or The Forum on Education Abroad and likely more motivated to complete a survey from a nationally-recognized organization to which they belonged than a singular survey developed and administered by an individual for a doctoral study. It is for these reasons that I utilized the existing data set.

### **Summary**

This mixed methods study brought together an in-depth examination of the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) results and the unique perspectives of study abroad professionals in helping to identify what factors lead to student participation in study abroad and examining the prevalence of those factors at institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of participation. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data gave the most flexibility in

exploring possible factors that may be contributing to the success of certain institutions. These two areas comprised a mixed methods design, in which each stage of data collection is informed by and builds upon another (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010; Greene & Caracelli, 1989). In the current study, quantitative data were complemented by qualitative inquiry, and vice versa. This method of building upon the data gathered in each area provided for a more thorough examination of the complex issues related to the research questions and richer data from which conclusions about student participation in study abroad could be drawn, than if only one method had been applied.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

The aim of this study was to discover factors that lead to student participation in study abroad and to identify strategies that may be contributing to increasing participation rates. As discussed in Chapter Two, previous studies have investigated participation in study abroad by examining the characteristics of students. The current study sought to examine the factors that lead to participation in study abroad by gathering the perspectives of professionals who work in the field of international education. As outlined in Chapter Three, I used a mixed methods triangulation design with a convergence model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) in comparing survey results with findings from a focus group and interviews that I conducted with a total of 17 individuals who work in study abroad. I analyzed the data set from an existing survey of 237 respondents (IIE-Forum Snapshot survey, 2010) and merged the quantitative results with the qualitative findings from the focus group and interviews. This mixed methods approach was used to address the research questions that were developed for the study:

1. What do study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad?
2. To what extent are these identified factors prevalent at institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad programs from 2006-2011?

While equal weight was given to mixed methods used for R1, additional weight was given to the qualitative data collected for R2 and will be discussed in the presentation of the findings. Data resulting from quantitative analysis were compared with data obtained from qualitative methods and converged during interpretation. Following a brief overview, this chapter will present the findings from the study according to each of the two research questions.

### **Overview of the findings**

The primary factor of student participation in study abroad identified by survey respondents centered on financial issues and program development. Recent increases in participation were attributed to the addition of new programs by 29% of respondents who also indicated increases in participation rates as compared to the previous year. The majority of respondents (80%) who gave a reason for declining participation rates in study abroad cited financial constraints and limited resources. Quantitative analysis of survey variables, however, revealed only a weak correlation between change in budget and change in participation. Contrary to the survey responses, the primary factors related to participation identified in the focus group and interviews were not related to financial issues or institutional budget. All of the professionals in the focus group and interviews named faculty support and academic/curriculum integration as the key factors that lead to student participation in study abroad. Many of the barriers identified by the literature, such as concern for on-time graduation and lack of family support were seen as barriers that could be overcome with increased faculty support and by integrating a study abroad experience into the curriculum.

Merging the quantitative results with the qualitative findings in interpretation revealed this noticeable difference between the beliefs and perceptions of the study abroad profession as a whole, as sampled by the survey, and the insight from study abroad professionals with

experience at or with institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of participation. While participation factors discovered in the study are not necessarily new, it is how these factors are prioritized by professionals at successful institutions that provides the most compelling information; faculty support and curricular/academic integration rose to the top as key factors of student participation in study abroad and as characteristic of institutions with consistently high or increasing participation rates.

Rather than confirming the results of the survey, the merging of quantitative results with qualitative findings revealed differences in the factors of participation identified by study abroad professionals from the broader population and participation factors identified by study abroad professionals from IEO's and from institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of participation. These differences represent a major finding of the study and a theme throughout the chapter.

### **Research Question 1**

1. What do study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad?

### **Findings from IIE-Forum Snapshot survey 2010**

**Data source.** I utilized an existing survey data set in order to examine perspectives from a broad range of professionals (N=237). The IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) was distributed to members of the Institute of International Education and The Forum on Education Abroad and yielded 237 responses. To focus on the data obtained from Associate, Baccalaureate, Master's, and Doctorate institutions (as classified by Carnegie), I eliminated responses from variable types "Independent Program Provider" and "Other" (n=17). Eliminating those two categories provided

a sample size of 219. Table 4.1 offers a description of the survey respondents in the statistical analyses for the current study.

Table 4.1

*IIE-Forum Snapshot Survey Respondents by Institutional Type and Control (n=219):*

|               | <u>Associate</u> |      | <u>Baccalaureate</u> |      | <u>Master's</u> |      | <u>Doctorate</u> |      |
|---------------|------------------|------|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|------|
|               | n                | n%   | n                    | n%   | n               | n%   | n                | n%   |
| n             | 18               | 8.2  | 60                   | 27.3 | 59              | 26.9 | 82               | 37.4 |
| Public        | 17               | 7.8  | 5                    | 2.3  | 22              | 10.0 | 47               | 21.5 |
| Private       | 1                | 0.04 | 54                   | 24.6 | 37              | 16.9 | 33               | 15.1 |
| Did not state | 0                | 0.0  | 1                    | 0.04 | 0               | 0.0  | 2                | 0.09 |

In addressing Research Question 1, I examined the responses that were given to an open-ended survey question related to participation. Survey Question 8 asked: “If you saw a large increase or decline (more than 30%) in study abroad enrollments in 2010-11, what do you believe are the major reasons for these trends?” Out of 219 survey respondents, 23 reported either a substantial increase or decline in participation. Only 21 out of those 23 who fit the restriction of Question 8 gave substantive responses. The total number of responses to Question 8 in the data set, however, totaled 49. These additional responses came from respondents in the other categories of participation. In order to capture more data for analysis, I elected to use all 49 responses, rather than just the 23 that fit the original criteria of the question. Table 4.2 describes the 49 responses to open-ended Question 8 according to how they reported change in participation and compared to the total survey sample.

Out of the total 49 responses to the open-ended question, 20 respondents indicated an increase in participation rates, and 29 respondents indicated a decline in participation rates as compared to the previous year (see Table 4.2).



Table 4.2

*Change in Participation for Total Sample (n=219) and Question 8 respondents (n=49):*

|                                      | Change from<br>2008/09 to 2009/10 |      | Question 8<br>respondents |      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
|                                      | n                                 | n%   | n                         | n%   |
| n                                    | 219                               | 100  | 49                        | 100  |
| Substantial increase (more than 25%) | 14                                | 6.3  | 12                        | 24.5 |
| Increase (10-25%)                    | 40                                | 18.3 | 14                        | 28.6 |
| Slight increase (less than 10%)      | 67                                | 30.6 | 3                         | 6.1  |
| No change                            | 29                                | 13.2 | 0                         | 0.0  |
| Slight decline (less than 10%)       | 43                                | 19.6 | 5                         | 10.0 |
| Decline (10-25%)                     | 19                                | 8.7  | 8                         | 16.3 |
| Substantial decline (more than 25%)  | 7                                 | 32.0 | 7                         | 14.3 |

For the purpose of analysis, I created five categories for responses to Question 8 and used them for coding (see Table 4.3 and appendix). The reasons given for changes in participation are discussed below.

Table 4.3

*Categories of Reasons for Changes in Participation (n=49)*

|                                | Respondents with<br>declines in<br>participation | Respondents with<br>increases in<br>participation |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| n                              | 20   | 29  |
| Financial factors              | 14   | 4   |
| Shortage in staffing           | 2  | 0   |
| Addition of new programs       | 0  | 11  |
| Increased awareness & outreach | 0  | 9   |
| External conditions            | 4  | 5   |

**Declines in participation primarily attributed to financial factors.** In examining responses from study abroad professionals who also reported a decline in participation of any value (n=20), 16 responses to the open-ended question centered on financial resources. Fourteen

respondents attributed declines to the economy and institutional funding citing, “global financial crisis,” “recession,” financial problems,” and “economic downturn accompanied by lack of staffing in Study Abroad office.” As one respondent wrote, “we attribute it to the economic recession, as that is the only recession that makes any sense to us.” Two respondents pointed to lack of students’ financial resources, one of who stated, “financial constraints on the part of students and their families” as the reason for the decline in participation at his/her private baccalaureate institution. Another survey respondent from the same institution type noted, “We have a high percentage of students on financial aid; paying for a normal semester is a strain for many of them, much less a semester abroad. ”While the majority (16/20) of survey respondents with declining rates of participation pointed to financial factors, the other four gave reasons that included cancellations due to unrest in the host country and outbreak of H1N1 flu epidemic.

**Increases in participation primarily attributed to addition of programs.** Out of the 49 responses to the open-ended question, 38 respondents indicated an increase in participation rates over the previous year. Of those 38, eight responses pointed to an increase in short-term faculty-led programs as a reason for the increases, and three cited the addition of new programs in general. Seven pointed to increased outreach efforts as characterized by “more awareness of study abroad,” and “visibility of study abroad programs,” including “class presentations.” As one respondent wrote, “We placed materials outside of our office in the hallways and this seemed to increase the number of applicants for study abroad.” This same respondent indicated that there had been “education of academic advisors and other departments on our programs and activities” but pointed to the availability of marketing materials as the reason for the increase in applications. Three respondents saw financial factors as a positive influence, including an “improving economy.” Just one respondent pointed to the direct influence of faculty. This

respondent from a private Master’s institution with a slight increase in participation wrote, “It appears that a few faculty were actively encouraging students to participate in study abroad.”

### Findings from Focus Group and Interviews

**Data source.** In order to gain more in-depth information about potential factors that lead to participation in study abroad, I conducted a focus group and interviews with a total of 17 study abroad professionals. The range of experience of these individuals was 3 to 20 years. They resided in the west, southwest, central, northeast, and southeast regions of the U.S., representing 11 states. Table 4.4 offers a description of the participants according to their affiliated institution type (according to Carnegie classification) and control (whether the institution is public or private).

Table 4.4

*Interview and Focus Group Participants by Institution Type and Control (n=17):*

|         | <u>Associate</u> |     | <u>Baccalaureate</u> |      | <u>Master’s</u> |      | <u>Doctorate</u> |     | <u>IEO</u> |      |
|---------|------------------|-----|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|-----|------------|------|
|         | n                | n%  | n                    | n%   | n               | n%   | n                | n%  | n          | n%   |
| n       | 0                | 0.0 | 3                    | 17.6 | 4               | 23.5 | 1                | 5.9 | 9          | 52.9 |
| Public  | 0                | 0.0 | 0                    | 0.0  | 0               | 0.0  | 1                | 5.9 | 0          | 0.0  |
| Private | 0                | 0.0 | 3                    | 17.6 | 4               | 23.5 | 0                | 0.0 | 9          | 52.9 |

In person I conducted one focus group with four participants, two interviews each with a group of two participants, and two individual interviews. I conducted seven individual interviews by phone. Of the 17 total participants, eight were employed at a four-year college or university and held the position of Director, Assistant/Associate Director, or Coordinator in the office that administers study abroad. These individuals represented colleges or universities that had consistently high rates of participation in study abroad according to the Open Doors publication (IIE, 2011) or had seen increases in participation rates from 2006-2010.

The other nine individuals were employed by a third-party provider, also referred to by the field of study abroad as an International Education Organization (IEO). A third-party provider/IEO administers study abroad programs and provides on-site services for students in various overseas destinations. Services include course registration with a host institution or center, housing, excursions, and the assistance of a resident director. These organizations liaise with U.S. institutions in a variety of capacities; relationships may take the form of formal partnerships or affiliation agreements and contribute to an “approved-programs” list within an institution or students may enroll in their programs independently. Often referred to as “representatives” of the IEO, these nine participants held a position in the area of institutional relations or program development. As representatives of an IEO, these professionals typically visit many campuses each year and are in a unique position to compare what they have observed at the various institutions. Six out of 17 participants had career experience working in both areas—for a college/university and for an IEO.

**Faculty support and curriculum/academic integration seen as most critical to achieving high rates of student participation in study abroad.** In every discussion with professionals at successful institutions, faculty support and curriculum/academic integration were consistently identified as major factors that affect student participation in study abroad. Representatives of third-party providers also consistently identified faculty support and curricular/academic integration as main characteristics of successful institutions with which they work.

**Faculty support.** “The key piece is having faculty members that are supporters of it,” declared an interviewee when asked about participation factors of study abroad. Faculty were seen by all participants as highly influential advisors that could either encourage or discourage

students to study abroad. “You have to have faculty recommending it,” said a participant. Working with academic departments was seen to be “effective” regardless of institution size: a respondent from a comprehensive university said, “At such a big institution, it really comes down to the individual faculty member.” A respondent from a small institution stated that students are “influenced by faculty,” and especially, by “faculty in their major.”

There was general consensus among participants that if, as one respondent pointed out, a faculty member talks about study abroad and says directly to a student, “This is something that you should do,” that conversation will “carry more weight than if a student hears the same thing from someone who works in the study abroad office.” When discussing the influence of faculty support, one IEO professional summarized, “They have a lot of power.” Another interviewee commented, “There has to be 100 percent buy-in from the faculty, or it’s never going to happen.” This participant characterized faculty support as flexibility when approving coursework taken abroad, allowing courses to fulfill requirements on the home campus, and permitting classroom presentations about study abroad.

***Lack of faculty support.*** Not having the support of faculty was also identified by all focus group and interview participants as a factor that contributes greatly to the disparity between interest and participation. An IEO representative described the experience of being at an information table on a campus and witnessing students’ “energy” and enthusiasm about the possibility of studying abroad, but knowing full well that if their “faculty say ‘no,’ they’re not going to go.” Another IEO representative had seen lack of faculty support as a reason some accepted students withdrew from their program; these students could not get their classes approved to count for courses needed to graduate on time. Another participant summarized: “Faculty can stop students from studying abroad,” and when it comes to courses in their

discipline, participants reported that some faculty members maintain the stance that “those classes can only be taught here” at the home institution, not anywhere abroad.

***Faculty advising.*** It was discussed by all focus group and interview participants that if faculty members “brought it up in conversation,” they could encourage a student to study abroad. Although personalized interaction may not be possible at all institutions, one professional from a small, private, Master’s institution saw it as critical to study abroad participation for students to have a “one-on-one conversation at some point during their first two years at the institution” about the option of studying abroad, to help them see that it is “something for them.”

The issue of appropriate advising techniques came up in the focus group in particular, a group comprised of professionals from colleges/universities and third-party providers (IEO’s). Upon discussing personal advising preferences of not influencing a student too greatly in order to ensure that program selection is the main responsibility of the student, there was agreement among the focus group participants that even if a faculty member went so far as to select and recommend a specific program for a student, potentially even his/her own faculty-led program, and if the advising took the form of “You should do this,” that conversation could at the very least motivate and help get the student into the study abroad office, where “additional advising” about appropriate “program selection” could possibly take place.

All focus group and interview participants used the term “faculty support” to describe the inclusion of study abroad planning in the advising process on a campus. It was agreed by all participants that advising in the major is where faculty exude the most “influence,” either positively or negatively, to either encourage or discourage a student from participating in a study abroad program. Recognizing faculty support as a major factor, one IEO professional

recommended that faculty be given the opportunity to “interact with providers; they need to be able to see [for themselves]” what programs offer. Another participant drew a connection between faculty support and the creation of institutional policies that support student participation in study abroad, which on some campuses is either driven or approved by the faculty.

*Curriculum/academic integration of study abroad.* All participants in the focus group and interviews linked faculty support to the concept of curriculum/academic integration. As one professional explained of the integration of study abroad, “You know it’s going to be part of the experience” at a particular university. “It’s part of the culture of the institution,” said two participants. It is important to note here that curriculum/academic integration connotes several concepts: study abroad as a graduation or general education requirement, as a required part of a major, or as one of several ways to fulfill an experiential or cultural requirement. One professional at an institution with increasing participation rates explained how the college had redesigned its core curriculum to the extent that courses taken abroad now fulfilled an international/cultural requirement and had a specific place in the curriculum.

In giving additional examples of curriculum/academic integration, four participants at IEO’s discussed institutional models of sending freshmen or even pre-freshmen abroad on either semester or short-term faculty-led programs. They saw these experiences not only as an example of integration, but as an effective strategy to give students the “travel bug” and encourage students to study abroad again during the academic career, potentially for a longer term.

*Institutional mission and study abroad.* All of the focus group and interview participants agreed that it was important that international education be mentioned in the mission statement of an institution. As one IEO representative noted, “It’s amazing how many institutions don’t

have international education in their mission.” However, it was pointed out in another discussion that “having it in the mission doesn’t necessarily lead to action...but it should be there as a start and as an indication of institutional support.”

While the mission statement was seen as important, it was the “intentional integration” of a study abroad experience into the academics that they felt led to participation. It was agreed by all participants in the focus group and interviews that student participation in study abroad was also influenced by institutional factors such as whether courses abroad would fulfill campus requirements. All participants mentioned that they often heard students express concern that studying abroad would affect progress in their major and/or have the potential to delay graduation.

*External factors.* Faculty support, curriculum integration, and connection to career emerged as key factors that lead to higher participation rates in study abroad, and these factors are typically within the control of the institution. Professionals in all of the interviews and focus group identified “influence of peers” and “level of family support” as external factors that could either lead to or become barriers to student participation in study abroad. If students knew other students who had studied abroad, they were more likely to be convinced that a study abroad experience was for them, and if students had family members who had traveled internationally themselves or who were supportive of the idea, they would be more inclined to study abroad. Students whose family members were not supportive or aware of study abroad opportunities had more obstacles to overcome.

All participants (17/17) discussed student concerns about the cost of studying abroad, and all agreed that in many cases funding was a barrier because of student perception. Cost according to all focus group and interview participants was viewed as something that could often



be worked out—through scholarships, financial aid packaging, program selection, and institutional structures.

**Perspective of IEO professionals.** All focus group and interview participants (17/17) discussed the above factors, but when IEO professionals were asked about what factors lead to student participation in relation to their respective organizations, all IEO professionals (9/9) brought up the importance of developing institutional relationships. Tabling, fairs, brochures, and other forms of student outreach were seen as necessary elements but not nearly as important as the quality of the relationship with the college or university.

All of the IEO professionals recognized their unique position to make observations and comparisons between the various campuses they visit and with which they work. One participant noted specifically, “Because we go to so many different campuses I see all the time that campuses are asking, ‘How do they structure it financially over there [at other institutions]? Could I try that?’” IEO professionals drew on their observations and gave examples from specific campuses in all of the focus group and interview discussions.

## **Research Question 2**

2. To what extent are these identified factors prevalent at institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad programs from 2006-2011?

### **Findings from IIE-Forum Snapshot survey 2010**

To address Research Question 2, close attention was paid to survey responses from professionals at institutions that reported an increase in participation as compared to the previous year. I also examined all survey responses (n=219) relating to: rates of participation at institutions, changes in participation compared with changes in budget, and the reasons given in the open-ended question 8 as to why participation in study abroad had increased. Using

correlation, ANOVA, and cross-tabulations, I determined correlations and examined relationships between the variables and the institution types.

Table 4.5 offers a summary of the responses relating to survey Question 5, which asked participants to indicate change in study abroad participation as compared to the previous year. As the table indicates, 51% of respondents indicated that rates of participation in study abroad were increasing, 35% indicated declines in participation, and 13% indicated no change over the previous year.

Table 4.5

*Responses to Change in Participation Between 2008/09 to 2009/10 and Represented as a Proportion of the Total (n=219):*

|                                      | Change in participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 | Percentage of the group (n=219) |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| n                                    | 219   | 100                             |
| Substantial increase (more than 25%) | 16  | 7.3                             |
| Increase (10-25%)                    | 54  | 24.7                            |
| Slight increase (less than 10%)      | 41  | 18.7                            |
| No change                            | 29  | 13.2                            |
| Slight decline (less than 10%)       | 50  | 22.8                            |
| Decline (10-25%)                     | 20  | 9.1                             |
| Substantial decline (more than 25%)  | 7   | 3.2                             |

**Participation trends and relationship to budget change.** When comparing change in participation, the ANOVA reported significant differences between institution types ( $F=3.428$ ,  $P<.05$ ). Using a Post Hoc Tukey test, participation rates for Baccalaureate institutions were found to be significantly different from participation rates of Doctoral-granting institutions; Doctoral-granting institutions were more likely to report increases in participation ( $p<.05$ ). Table 4.6 provides a description of these increases by institution type.

Table 4.6

*Change in Participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 by Institution Type as a Proportion of the Total (n=219):*

|                                      | Associate<br>(n=18) | Baccalaureate<br>(n=60) | Master's<br>(n=59) | Doctorate<br>(n=82) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Substantial increase (more than 25%) | 16.7                | 5.0                     | 5.1                | 6.1                 |
| Increase (10-25%)                    | 5.6                 | 3.3                     | 25.4               | 26.8                |
| Slight increase (less than 10%)      | 11.1                | 40.0                    | 22.0               | 34.1                |
| No change                            | 27.8                | 15.0                    | 8.5                | 12.2                |
| Slight decline (less than 10%)       | 16.7                | 23.3                    | 20.3               | 17.1                |
| Decline (10-25%)                     | 16.7                | 10.0                    | 13.6               | 2.4                 |
| Substantial decline (more than 25%)  | 5.6                 | 3.3                     | 5.1                | 1.2                 |

Because such a high proportion (70%) of respondents to question 8 had indicated financial factors as reasons for increases or declines in participation, I compared responses about change in participation to responses about change in budget. Statistical analysis of the relationship between change in participation and change in budget revealed only a weak correlation. There was a small but statistically significant correlation ( $r=.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ) when examining all institution types. However, when examining the school types separately, though the correlations were positive, they were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that budget and participation are related, but not strongly related. Had the samples of the individual institution types been larger, it is likely that the correlations may have been statistically significant, but the relationship may still have been weak. When comparing change in budget between institution types, there were no significant differences ( $F=.782$ ,  $P=.51$ ). Table 4.7 provides a description of the change in budget and participation as a proportion of the total (n=219).

Table 4.7

*Change in Institutional Budget and Change in Participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 as a Proportion of the Total (n=219):*

|                     | Decline in participation | No change in participation | Increase in participation |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
|                     | (n=69)                   | (n=29)                     | (n=121)                   |
| Increase in budget  | 13.0                     | 13.8                       | 23.1                      |
| No change in budget | 29.0                     | 44.8                       | 46.3                      |
| Decrease in budget  | 47.8                     | 27.6                       | 23.1                      |
| Do not know         | 10.1                     | 13.8                       | 8.3                       |

As Table 4.7 indicates, 23% of the institutions that reported an increase in budget also had an increase in participation; however, 23% also reported a decrease in budget and still had an increase in participation. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 provide more detail as to the level of the increase or decline in participation in relation to change in budget.

Table 4.8

*Change in Budget for Institutions with Increases in Participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 by Institution Type as a Proportion of the Total (n=219):*

|                     | Slight increase in participation (less than 10%) | Increase in participation 10-25% | Substantial increase in participation more than 25% |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|
|                     | (n=67)   | (n=40)                           | (n=14)  |
| Increase in budget  | 26.9   | 15.0                             | 21.4  |
| No change in budget | 37.3   | 65.0                             | 35.7  |
| Decrease in budget  | 28.4   | 12.5                             | 28.6  |
| Do not know         | 7.5  | 7.5                              | 14.3  |

Table 4.9

*Change in Budget for Institutions with Declines in Participation from 2008/09 to 2009/10 by Institution type as a Proportion of the Total (n=219):*

|                     | Slight decline<br>in participation<br>(less than 10%) | Decline<br>in participation<br>10-25% | Substantial decline<br>in participation<br>more than 25% |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
|                     | (n=43)  | (n=19)                                | (n=7)  |
| Increase in budget  | 11.6  | 21.1                                  | 0.0  |
| No change in budget | 34.9  | 21.1                                  | 14.3   |
| Decrease in budget  | 41.9  | 47.4                                  | 85.7   |
| Do not know         | 11.6  | 10.5                                  | 0.0  |

### **Findings from the Focus Group and Interviews with Study Abroad Professionals**

The focus group and interviews were particularly beneficial to addressing Research Question 2, as all of the participants worked with or were drawn from institutions with consistently high or increasing rates of student participation in study abroad. These participants also represented a variety of institution types and 11 U.S. states. In addition to the topic of factors that lead to participation in study abroad (R1) and potential barriers, my interview protocol asked participants to reflect upon the institutional characteristics, strategies, and factors that they viewed as contributing to consistently high or increasing participation rates and to overcoming identified barriers. This section highlights factors that were identified as prevalent at successful institutions.

**Faculty support and curricular/academic integration.** As discussed earlier, all focus group and interview participants saw faculty support and curricular/academic integration as the most important factors that lead to student participation in study abroad. As one participant from an IEO explained, it’s important to have an “institutional structure” that “encourages students to take that leap.” A participant talked about how beneficial it was to build relationships with

faculty who then made time in their classes for classroom presentations about study abroad. This participant then tracked the results, reporting that the classroom presentations “brought more traffic” to the study abroad office.

The identified factors of faculty support and curricular/academic integration were seen as characteristics of successful institutions. A participant from a campus with recent increases in participation in all program types explained these factors in more detail, specifying that the increase was due to a “confluence of events,” that included: a change in “institutional mission” to a more international focus, a “structural change,” in administration, and “revisions to curriculum” that provided a place for courses taken abroad to count towards a “global requirement.” This participant also noted that there were “tremendous growing pains” at the institution during this process, but the outcome of these concentrated efforts is that participation in study abroad continues to increase. Yet another participant said that international education endeavors are most effective when “coming from the institution.”

Participants from institutions with consistently high rates of participation in study abroad explained that international education was simply “part of the culture of the institution.” Study abroad is something that “you know you’re going to do” if you attend the institution.

**Making the connection to career.** Professionals at historically successful institutions explained that participation in study abroad was a function of the institutional culture, but the question for emerging institutions becomes: how to create that campus ethos? Two professionals at institutions with recent increases in participation rates said they were working to make explicit the professional connection for students. “In a word,” said one respondent, “Career.” This professional went on to explain that highlighting the professional connection for students was an

effective tool in encouraging them to study abroad; knowing what to recommend for different majors, in particular, was key.

An off-campus experience had recently become a graduation requirement at another professional's institution, but encouraging students to participate in an overseas program, rather than a domestic project, was still deemed a challenge. This professional discussed an advising strategy of explaining to students how essential it is for their future career--that they need a study abroad experience to be competitive:

My most effective recruiting tool is to get students to rethink how they think about study abroad in general; [to see it as] a career move and as an academic benefit [of fulfilling requirements]. A graphic design major says, 'Why should I go abroad? It's not going to help me at all.' I immediately show work that has been done by Japanese artists...I've already done research behind the scenes... companies that I know about...saying, this is why it's going to help you professionally...you need international connections, that's how it is.

This same professional had a similar story about advising education majors. "I tell them you can use this [study abroad experience] to become a better teacher."

**Combination of factors.** Although the connection to career was a strategy specifically identified by two out of three respondents at institutions with recent increases in participation, all three made it a point to say that the increasing participation rates in study abroad were likely due to a "combination of factors" at their respective institutions, including: increased outreach and marketing, a specific focus on study abroad by the office and by the institution, more work with faculty, course integration, and program development—"you need to have all of these things in your basket," one explained. "It is a confluence of factors," concluded another.

**Indications of study abroad support on a campus.** IEO professionals visit many campuses each year and are in a unique position to compare what they have observed at the

various institutions. When asked about what they see as indicators of a campus that supports participation in study abroad, one participant provided the following description:

When you step onto a campus, you see a world map with pins where students are studying, you go to the cafeteria and you see posters about study abroad, [these are all] messages that study abroad is an institutional goal.

Participants also said that a strong international component “in the mission statement of the university,” a study abroad office that’s “easy to find,” and “presence of international students on campus” were additional indicators. Another participant reported observing a trend among institutions in New England, concluding that it was “actually easier to study abroad” at those institutions. This professional gave the example of programs that had been specifically developed for first- and second-year students, and said that as a result, students “know” they’re going to go.

**Indicators of a lack of support and/or awareness.** These same IEO professionals also noted particular characteristics, which they felt demonstrated a lack of institutional support of study abroad on a campus.

One IEO professional gave the example of wanting to double-check the location of a study abroad fair two days before it was to be held on a particular university’s campus and finding no mention of the fair anywhere on the website. It was later discussed in the interview that study abroad offices often lack staffing. As another professional noted, “One of the big hurdles on campuses: you have lots of students and only one person in an office devoted to study abroad. And in some cases, not even full-time.” This IEO professional pointed out potential hypocrisy of institutions that “market study abroad” and use it as an admissions tool but don’t support it—and when students want to go, they face all sorts of “institutional barriers.”

**Perceptions of cost.** While there was consensus that funding for study abroad was an issue, monetary concerns were always raised in the context of students’ misperception of cost.



Participants added the clarification that it was most often “student perception of cost” that was the barrier, not the actual cost of studying abroad. These professionals saw cost as a barrier that could be overcome. As one participant who was seeing an increase in short-term program enrollment explained, “It is due to the perception that it is cheaper; students look at the sticker price and see short-term programs as less expensive.” This same participant went on to point out that purchasing a plane ticket for a short-term experience (versus a semester- or year-long program) is not as cost-effective in the long run. Additionally, without the availability of state and federal financial aid for short-term programs, this type of experience becomes less “inclusive” to students without the financial means.

Several participants called into question the validity of the instruments that gather and report on study abroad participation, noting that participation numbers for short-term programs get combined with semester- and year-long programs. One participant gave an example of “an institution that is only promoting J-term programs” as a way of increasing numbers, since the Open Doors publication (IIE, 2011) that ranks institutions based on study abroad participation counts credit-bearing study abroad experiences of all durations: year-long, semester-long, and short-term programs. A fellow focus group participant chimed in about the topic saying, “Open Doors is so skewed.”

### **Additional comments**

**Collaboration in the field of study abroad.** All IEO professionals in the focus group and interviews mentioned that they wanted students to study abroad, even if not on their respective programs. Having familiarity with other study abroad options or a particular university’s program and promoting it over one’s IEO was seen as “beneficial in the long run.” Competition between programs was not particularly high; it was clear from discussion with each

individual they saw themselves as “international educators first,” and that dedication to the profession of study abroad, and to helping more students study abroad, superseded all other goals. One professional addressed the issue of competition directly:

Collaboration in this field has blown me away. Working as an outside provider I thought there would be more competition. At the bare bones, sure, there’s competition, but we’re all really working for the common good of getting students abroad.

Another commented, “At the end of the day, the most important goal is to get students abroad, on whichever program that may be.” As one interviewee remarked, “Let’s just make the pie bigger.”

**Speaking the language of administrators / institutional decision-makers.** It came up in one interview with two participants that study abroad professionals could benefit from more training and experience in higher education administration in order to better advocate for study abroad initiatives on the home campus. One of the participants said, “We need to have a better professional understanding of the institutions that we are part of.” Using budget models and reporting to the governing boards as examples, this participant also noted, “The path to leading study abroad at a university is also diverse...I have a degree in international education; I had never considered what a discount rate meant,” referring to institution models of financial aid packaging. As a result, many of those concepts unique to higher education administration and institutional budgets are “learned on the fly.” The participant went on to say, “Not that the Business Office has any clue about what we do in the study abroad office...but if we want to start building the institutional relationships, we need to start to educate ourselves better about that.” The other participant described large institutions as operating in “silos” and agreed about the need for study abroad professionals to effectively communicate the right data in order to get administrative departments “on board.”

### **Additional Observations**

Throughout the project, it was clear that the issue of student participation in study abroad is on the minds of many study abroad professionals, and it is a topic discussed throughout the field of international education. Despite the many demonstrated benefits of a study abroad experience, barriers prevent students from participating, and access is still not widespread. The discrepancy between high student interest in study abroad and low participation is troubling to the field of international education, as is the figure published in the Open Doors report (IIE, 2011) which states that only 1-2% of college students participate in study abroad programs each year.

All of the study abroad professionals who participated in the focus group and interviews were enthusiastic and supportive regarding the topic of the current study. They all saw study abroad as a meaningful and beneficial activity for students, they wanted students to go abroad for as long as possible—to maximize the benefits, and they wanted to improve access to students. They all acknowledged the disparity between interest in study abroad and participation rates as a major problem in the field of international education. After listing a host of techniques, strategies, and initiatives, one professional from an institution with rapidly increasing participation rates remarked, “Maybe I’m trying to do too much!” It was observed by the researcher that all of the individuals interviewed in the study were genuinely concerned about helping more students to access study abroad opportunities; international education was not just a job to them.

In sum, findings from this mixed methods study provide insight into what study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad and factors that may correspond specifically to institutions with high or increasing rates of participation. This

chapter highlighted key findings from the study as they relate to the research questions. The final chapter will further analyze the findings and the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter Five will also examine the implications of these findings for the field of international education and discuss specific strategies for using this information to potentially benefit professionals who have the goal of increasing participation rates in study abroad for their own institutions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to address the ongoing disparity between high levels of student interest in study abroad and low levels of participation. Previous studies have examined participation through student characteristics and have identified specific barriers that impact whether a student will study abroad. The current study contributes to the literature on the topic of participation by providing and examining the unique perspective of study abroad professionals. Factors of participation identified in the study correspond to existing literature; however, two areas in particular—faculty support and curriculum/academic integration—were prioritized by all focus group and interview participants as most important factors. These findings were linked to practices of successful institutions, defined as having consistently high or increasing rates of participation in study abroad from 2006-2011. These findings represent opportunities to develop potential strategies to help reduce the impact of previously identified barriers, both at the student level and at the institutional level. By navigating the barriers to participation, these strategies may ultimately move institutions towards higher rates of student participation in study abroad.

The previous chapter detailed the findings in relation to the two research questions that were developed for the study. The current chapter further interprets the findings and organizes them around the following three concepts: (1) There is a remarkable difference between the beliefs of the study abroad profession as a whole and the perspectives of professionals with

experience at or with successful institutions, (2) Faculty support and curriculum/academic integration were identified as key factors that lead to student participation in study abroad, and (3) Funding is identified as a factor but remains a relatively weak factor. These three domains of beliefs, strong participation factors, and weak participation factors form the basis of the discussion in this chapter. This chapter also situates the findings within the context of prior research and international education practice, discusses the implications of the study, and provides suggestions as to how the findings may be shared and operationalized into action items for a campus. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations for improvement should the study be replicated, and areas for future research.

### **Differences in Perspectives Among Study Abroad Professionals**

This mixed methods study gathered the perspectives of study abroad professionals regarding the topic of student participation. The research design involved analyzing the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) dataset (n=219) and conducting a focus group and interviews with study abroad professionals (n=17) who work either for a college/university or for a third-party program provider (IEO) and who have experience at or with successful institutions.

Merging the quantitative results of the survey with the qualitative findings from the focus group and interviews revealed a contrast of opinions between the two groups of study abroad professionals regarding factors that affect student participation. These noteworthy differences in perspectives represent an unexpected yet major finding of the study—that the conventional theories on factors that limit student participation in study abroad may not be as influential as many professionals believe. Financial constraints, for example, continue to be identified in the literature as a major barrier to student participation in study abroad. These financial constraints have typically been seen as the actual cost of studying abroad (plane ticket, tuition, etc) and are

viewed as unmanageable for students with high financial need. Financial constraints are also seen on the institutional side in the form of limited office budget and/or insufficient staffing in the study abroad office at an institution. Challenges persist with the many funding models involved with sending students off campus: whether to charge home tuition, charge a fee, provide institutional aid for programs abroad, allow only non-institutional aid for programs abroad, etc.

Consistent with the literature, survey respondents pointed to funding and financial constraints as the primary reason for declines in student participation in study abroad as compared to the previous year. However, statistical analysis of change in budget as compared to change in participation revealed only a weak correlation. As many professionals pointed out in the focus group and interviews, financial barriers on the part of the students are more often perceived than real. The focus group and interview participants discussed the variety of study abroad programs and destinations that have affordable cost of living. They mentioned the many scholarships available to students and that for some campuses, it may even be less expensive for a student to study abroad for a semester or year than to stay on the home campus.

The fact that study abroad professionals, as sampled from the broader population, identified funding as a major factor of participation, whereas study abroad professionals with experience at or with successful institutions identified faculty support and curriculum/academic integration may indicate an opportunity for all professionals in the field of study abroad to start a conversation about where we can best devote our time, energy, and resources in order to achieve maximum results. Knowing what factors have the most impact and knowing what is working at successful institutions can help drive study abroad professionals' strategic planning efforts on campuses that seek to increase participation rates. In a field that is known for its collaboration

and dedication to best practices, these identified factors represent key pieces of information that should be shared among colleagues. My plans for disseminating the findings are outlined at the end of the chapter.

### **Key Factors that Lead to Student Participation in Study Abroad**

The professionals in the focus group and interviews consistently and unanimously identified faculty support and curriculum/academic integration as key factors that lead to student participation in study abroad. These professionals acknowledged other factors including: funding, concern for on-time graduation, peer influence, marketing and outreach, institutional partnerships, level of family support for study abroad, previous experience abroad, connection to career, level of faculty support, and institutional culture, many of which are already featured prominently in the literature. What emerged from the current study, however, was a clear prioritization of faculty support and curricular/academic integration.

The interview protocol did not suggest factors for the participants or ask them to agree, disagree, or comment on previously identified factors; rather, the questions were exploratory in nature and relied upon the participants to generate the factors. In the beginning of the discussions, study abroad professionals would typically talk about peer influence, various challenges that students face, the need for institutional support, and strategies for marketing and encouraging awareness of opportunities to study abroad. I began to notice a trend in many of the interviews: halfway into the conversation, unprompted by me or by the protocol, participants would bring up the issue of faculty support. When they would mention faculty support, they would prioritize it above anything else that had been discussed. As one participant said of key factors, “*Obviously* faculty support is necessary.”



Albeit logical, the idea of faculty support as a factor that leads to student participation is not so obvious to the field of study abroad. As study abroad professionals as a whole, we seem to believe that if we just market more, develop the right programs, achieve adequate funding—essentially overcome the existing barriers to participation, we will be able to make study abroad accessible and ultimately send more students. What the current study has discovered, however, is that the time, energy, and resources of professionals in education abroad might be better spent fostering connections with faculty and academic departments. As the focus group and interview participants pointed out, many of the barriers students face—even lack of family support—could be overcome through faculty support and curriculum/academic integration. In the case of students whose families are not supportive of a study abroad experience—often because they do not see the value—integrating study abroad into the curriculum makes academic relevance no longer a point of contention. If the requirements for a business major, for example, included an international experience, students at that institution would no longer have to overcome the perception that study abroad delays graduation or that it is an extra add-on and non-academic in nature. In many cases, an institutional requirement to study abroad obliges the institution to package study abroad programming in a way that integrates the experience into the students’ academic career and in a way that ensures affordability. The integration of the study abroad experience into the curriculum therefore eliminates barriers that currently prevent many students from participating.

Just as the influence of faculty was seen by focus group and interview participants as a powerful force that could move a student beyond a cursory interest in study abroad to actually apply and participate, lack of faculty support on a campus was seen as a nearly insurmountable roadblock; faculty could easily discourage a student from studying abroad by declaring it

impossible, unimportant, or irrelevant to coursework and/or career goals. Study abroad professionals in the focus group and interviews were cognizant that no matter how much advising, marketing, encouraging, and peer outreach study abroad offices could do, faculty encouragement (or discouragement) carried the most weight. Additionally, the level of faculty support for international education on a campus can determine whether an academic department, or an entire institution, adopts study abroad as a requirement.

What also became clear in further analyzing the findings was that study abroad was indeed part of the culture at successful institutions in particular. Study abroad experiences at successful institutions were seen not as extra-curricular activities but as prominent features of the institution's academic offerings. While this area of the findings warrants further study, analysis of the participant responses suggests that study abroad can eventually become a part of the institutional culture if it is made visible how an international experience connects to and complements the student's major. To give an example of this visible link, study abroad professionals described departments with pre-approved coursework as having removed the obstacles for students, making it more likely for students from those disciplines to participate.

The path to making study abroad part of the culture at an institution did not appear to be conducive to overnight success; rather progress at successful institutions had been made over time with various initiatives—some big and some small. Consequently, the initiatives identified by the study abroad professionals at successful institutions began to form a pattern. As study abroad professionals were identifying factors that they believe lead to student participation in study abroad, increases in participation rates seemed linked to where an institution was in terms of certain initiatives. There appeared to be a similar series of stages or progression of events at the different institutions described by the study abroad professionals. The stages they identified

also corresponded to rates of participation. Established institutions with historically high rates of participation from institutions had visible signs of academic integration and institutional culture. Institutions with recent increases in participation had recently focused on making the connection to career or were just starting to work with faculty and departments to integrate study abroad into the curriculum.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the connection between campus initiatives identified by professionals in the focus group and interviews and levels of student participation in study abroad at the respective institutions. As the graphic depicts, each progressive step or area of focus corresponds to an increase in participation rates. Many institutions and their students are restricted by perceptions of cost and other barriers identified by the literature; participation rates are low as a result. As a first step towards increasing participation in study abroad, many institutions begin with efforts to increase awareness about study abroad opportunities through marketing and outreach; these efforts result in more students participating, but participation is still not widespread. As institutions move from general awareness to demonstrating the positive impact of study abroad on career preparation and competitiveness, more students may be encouraged to participate as a result. Institutions that engage faculty to promote study abroad and work towards greater levels of faculty support may also begin integrating study abroad more easily into the curriculum. These efforts further build the foundation for study abroad to become part of an institution's culture. As a result, many of the barriers identified in the literature no longer apply, and participation rates can increase exponentially.

Again, this discovery of specific institutional efforts/areas of focus and the connection to participation rates as reported by focus group and interview participants certainly warrants further study, but this correlation represents a place from which to start further research and

strategies for institutions to consider. With so many competing priorities and limited resources, seeing what factors have had the most impact on student participation at successful institutions may be of tremendous benefit to study abroad directors and institutional leaders.

Figure 5.1  
*Factors that Lead to Participation in Study Abroad and to Progressive Development of Institutional Culture*



### **Less influential factors**

Barriers to participation such as finances, concern for on-time graduation, and lack of family support are participation factors that are familiar to study abroad professionals, but the findings from the current study suggest that they may be less influential than the factors of faculty support and curriculum/academic integration. One could argue that perhaps successful institutions have sufficient funding, and therefore money is not a factor. This point certainly merits further study, but the findings from the current study suggest that focusing on a strategy of curriculum/academic integration and garnering faculty support may be more effective than requesting a budget increase. As the quantitative analysis of the survey dataset indicated, an increase in institutional budget did not cause an increase in participation; moreover, some institutions with increases in funding experienced a decline in participation. Still, study abroad professionals continue, as evidenced by the survey results, to perceive funding as a problem and as a solution.

The typical reaction to a perceived lack of funding is to request more funding. In tight economic times, making the case for funding is not necessarily an easy task. As one interview participant pointed out, many study abroad professionals are highly skilled at advising students and program development but may not have the training to make the compelling case to the budget officer or upper administration that study abroad is not a loss leader but an essential investment. Furthermore, institutional budget models only tell part of the story; they leave out the benefits of higher retention rates, academic success, and lifelong civic engagement of study abroad students. These outcomes are now being documented more frequently and systematically, but they are not always effectively communicated to decision makers, especially in the context of budget modeling. Focusing the efforts of the study abroad office on advocating

for more funding may not even be an effective use of time. The current study points to the need to create strong ties with faculty across the campus. Garnering faculty support and finding ways to integrate study abroad in the curriculum may be more effective strategies; the necessary funding may then even follow.

As we have seen from the examples of successful institutions, many of the barriers to participation can become weaker factors if effective strategies are employed to counteract them. By focusing on faculty support and finding ways to integrate study abroad into the curriculum, areas that truly have the most impact in encouraging higher rates of student participation, what previously seemed like insurmountable barriers may no longer even be factors.

### **Limitations of the study**

The IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010) was a helpful instrument for the study but had several limitations in its design. The survey questionnaire was not designed for the purpose of the current study and may not have accurately or adequately captured responses on the issue of participation. The response options were not originally designed for input into statistical software such as SPSS and had some inconsistencies in how data were originally collected. Had a survey been developed specifically for this project, it could have included more targeted questions on the issue of student participation. At the same time, it I think it was beneficial to see what professionals indicated when they had limited space and possibly answered with what came to mind first. A potential follow-up project to the current study might be to design a survey instrument to test the factors that were raised by the study's participants, to ask education abroad professionals to rank their importance, and/or to include new questions on the next iteration of the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey.

Another possible limitation is that the survey asked about participation trends between 2008-2010. Because those years in particular were marked by economic turmoil in the U.S and the world, financial concerns may have weighed more heavily on the minds of survey respondents. Comparing responses from future iterations of the survey would be useful.

Yet another limitation of the study was that it only considered U.S. perspectives. With many countries around the world involved in educational exchange, it would have been interesting to gather perspectives from professionals in other countries as well. While my focus group and interview participants came from a range of institutions and various regions, it may have been beneficial to talk to even more professionals. The findings of the study cannot be generalized to all study abroad professionals or institutions, as the sample was not wholly representative. The study was meant to be exploratory in nature to discover factors that could also form the basis of future studies. As highlighted in the current study, there is much to be learned from the expertise and experience of study abroad professionals.

### **Dissemination of the Findings**

I plan to present my findings at international education conferences and submit articles for publication in related journals. I will also share the results of my research with my own institution and use the study to inform strategic planning at the university where I work. My focus group and interview participants were interested in receiving information about the findings as well.

Because the study relied on the results of the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey (2010), and leadership from The Forum on Education Abroad expressed interest, findings will be shared with IIE and Forum. I will offer questions that could be included in the next iteration of the survey to further capture the perspectives of study abroad professionals regarding the topic of participation

and provide for potential longitudinal comparisons. I will also provide recommendations for making the questionnaire more compatible with statistical software such as SPSS, which would allow for greater quantitative analysis of the data collected.

### **Recommendations and Areas for Future Research**

The current study creates many opportunities for additional follow-up and for future research. Because the exploratory nature of the interview protocol allowed for factors to be generated organically by the participants, the participation factors that were identified merit further study to see if they would be identified by professionals at other institutions as well. As discussed earlier, a future research project could list the factors that were identified in the current study and ask study abroad professionals, as well as other constituents, to rank their level of impact on student participation.

The current study focused on professionals who worked at or with successful institutions. A more rounded picture might be accomplished by interviewing professionals from institutions that are struggling to send students abroad. What factors are identified by those professionals? Are there different barriers? What, if any, strategies are being employed to counteract those barriers and to what level of success?

If I were to conduct the research project again in the future, I would compare the 2011 iteration of the IIE-Forum Snapshot survey to the 2010 version that was used for the study. There are also several other national surveys conducted by The Forum on Education Abroad that could be examined as well, such as The Forum Pathways to the Profession Survey (2008) and State of the Field Survey (2009, 2011). Because these questionnaires also gather the perspectives of study abroad professionals on a variety of topics, it would be beneficial to use them for statistical analysis as well.



The current study considered international education experiences in the most general sense and did not distinguish between year-long, semester, summer, and short-term programming. A follow-up project might seek to identify factors that might be specific to those program types. Institutional factors could also be explored; is there a correlation between characteristics of institution (such as location, region, type of city, institution size) and participation in study abroad?

When considering the findings of the current study, many more questions come to mind. What is it about faculty support and curriculum/academic integration specifically that leads to higher participation rates? Do the same principles apply to community colleges? How can a campus strategically forge those partnerships with faculty in order to promote study abroad and how can academic departments be persuaded to see study abroad as an essential facet of the major? An action research study could follow an institution that was intentional about building a study abroad-going culture to see if it moved through similar stages of development and to see how student participation rates corresponded to strategic changes made on the campus.

So much of the prior research has focused on the barriers to participation and on the student, but more needs to be known about the professionals and the institutions that are successfully navigating the barriers if we are serious as a profession and as a nation about increasing student participation in study abroad.

## APPENDIX A

(Reprinted with permission from IIE and The Forum on Education Abroad)

### IIE-Forum 2010-11 U.S. Study Abroad Snapshot Survey Survey Deadline: October 1, 2011

IIE and the Forum on Education Abroad are joining once again this year to gather early data on study abroad enrollments for the 2010-11 academic year (including summer 2011), in anticipation of the *Open Doors* 2011 Press Briefing. Last year's survey provided the field with groundbreaking information indicating that the dip in education abroad enrollments would not be sustained.

We hope you will be able to give us some quick feedback again this year (via the online survey form) on your study abroad enrollments for 2010-11. We realize it is still early and students returning from study abroad in the summer may not have transferred their credits yet. Therefore, we ask you to provide your best early estimates, even if the numbers for your institution are not yet final.

All institutional responses will be anonymous and only aggregate numbers will be shared. We ask for your name below only to ensure that no more than one reply is received per institution, and to facilitate follow-up if there are any questions.

Please try to respond as soon as possible. Unless we receive your response by **October 1, 2011**, we will not be able to include it in the results reported during International Education Week in November.

Thank you very much for participating in this short survey, which should take no more than 15 minutes to complete, once you have gathered the relevant data.

---

**1. Please provide the following contact information, which will be used only if we have a question about your responses.**

Name:

Institution/Organization:

City and State:

Email:

**2. Please indicate your institution or organization type. (Check one).**

Doctorate

Master's

Baccalaureate

Associate's

Professional/Specialized

Independent Program Provider

**3. Is your institution a public or private institution?**

Public

Private

**4. What is your institution/organization's total student enrollment?**

1-1,000

1,001-5,000

5000- 10,000

10,001-20,000

Over 20,000

Don't Know

**5. How many students at your institution studied abroad for academic credit during the 2010-11 academic year (fall 2010 through summer 2011)?**

[open-ended]

**6. How many international students (non U.S.-citizens or permanent residents) studied abroad for academic credit during the 2010-11 academic year (fall 2010 through summer 2011)?**

[open-ended]

**7. How did study abroad enrollment at your institution change during the 2010-11 academic year (fall 2010 through summer 2011) compared to the previous academic year?**

Large increase (more than 10% increase)

Increase (5-10% increase)

Slight increase (less than 5% increase)

About the same as last year

Slight decline (less than 5% decline)

Decline (5-10% decline)

Large decline (more than 10% decline)

**8. If you saw a large increase or decline (more than 30%) in study abroad enrollments in 2010-11, what do you believe are the major reasons for these trends?**

[open-ended]

**9. What changes, if any, have you noticed for the following destinations during the 2010-11 academic year, compared to the previous academic year?**

China

Japan

India

Indonesia

Brazil

Mexico

Turkey

Australia

Europe  
Middle East  
Sub-Saharan Africa

*[for each country/region, the respondent will pick from the following in a drop-down box]*

Large increase (more than 10% increase)  
Increase (5-10% increase)  
Slight increase (less than 5% increase)  
About the same as last year  
Slight decline (less than 5% decline)  
Decline (5-10% decline)  
Large decline (more than 10% decline)  
Not applicable/Don't know

**10. Approximately how many students participated in *non-credit bearing* activities (such as internships, volunteer experiences or other co-curricular activities) abroad during the 2010-11 academic year (fall 2010 through summer 2011)?**

[open-ended]

**11. Which countries and/or regions are the most popular for these non-credit bearing education abroad activities?**

[open-ended]

**12. Which steps has your institution/organization taken to increase study abroad enrollments over the past year? (Check all that apply).**

New staff or additional staff time focused on study abroad enrollment  
New funding for marketing and promotion of programs  
New scholarships/grants for study abroad  
New short-term faculty-led programs  
New bilateral exchange programs  
New partnerships with foreign-based institutions or programs abroad  
New partnerships with U.S.-based institutions or programs focusing on study abroad  
None of the above  
Other: please specify

**13. If your institution/organization has developed new partnerships with foreign-based institutions or programs abroad, which countries/regions did you focus on?**

**14. Comments (optional): We would appreciate any observations you have about study abroad enrollments at your institution during 2010-11, such as responses to events in Japan and the Middle East, etc.**

**Thanks again for your participation!**

## APPENDIX B

### CODES FOR QUESTION 8

| <i>Category of identified factor</i> | <i>Code</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Financial factors                    | 1           |
| Shortage in staffing                 | 2           |
| Addition of new programs             | 3           |
| Increased awareness and outreach     | 4           |
| External conditions                  | 5           |

## APPENDIX C

### STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

#### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

##### *Examining Factors that Lead to Participation in Study Abroad*

Lisa Loberg, doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program, at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience in the field of international education. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

##### **Why is this study being done?**

The goal of this study is to determine what factors lead to student participation in study abroad and to obtain the perspectives of professionals who work in international education.

##### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an interview or focus group, either in person or via internet video chat / skype, to discuss what leads a student to participate in study abroad,
2. Provide your opinion about the effectiveness of marketing, outreach, and other campus efforts to promote study abroad opportunities,
3. Be available for follow up, if clarification to responses is needed.

##### **How long will I be in the research study?**

Participation will take a total of about 30-60 minutes for the interview or focus group. Site visits conducted by the researcher will take additional coordination and a maximum of two days. The study is scheduled to be completed in May 2012.

##### **Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

Participants are asked to be candid in their responses and forthright about their opinions. Participants may be asked about events that occur at their place of work and/or related locations.

Participants will be identified in broad categories of working at a college/university (by Carnegie type) or for an International Education Organization (IEO); specific details about participants will not be released.

### **Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

You will not directly benefit from participation in the research; however, the topics discussed may contribute to your own professional development.

The results of the research may benefit the field of international education by providing further insight as to the effectiveness of efforts that encourage student participation in study abroad.

### **Will I be paid for participating?**

- You will receive a choice of the following compensation:
  - \$5 gift card to Starbucks coffee, *OR*
  - \$5 donation made to Heifer International, a global non-profit that provides livestock, seeds, and training to families in more than 125 countries.

### **Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Participants in the study will be identified only by the Carnegie category or type of institution or organization with which they are affiliated.

If you participate in a focus group, your identity will be generally known by the other participants in that particular group. Any participants with confidentiality concerns may ask for an individual interview in lieu of a focus group.

Confidentiality will be maintained by attributing a code name for each participant. Data collected in connection with this study, including, but not limited to, voice recordings, transcripts, and notes, will be kept electronically under password protection with strict access only to the researcher. Paper documents will be stored in a secure location and converted to password protected electronic files as quickly as possible. Paper documents will be shredded before disposal.

### **What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

### **Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

- **The research team:**  
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the researcher. Please contact:

Lisa Loberg, Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership Program  
Email: xxxxxx  
Cell phone: xxxxx

Committee co-chairs: Dr. Linda Rose and Dr. Christina Christie of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA.

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**  
If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program  
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694



## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

University of California, Los Angeles

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### *Examining Factors that Lead to Participation in Study Abroad*

Lisa Loberg, doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program, at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study. This research is being conducted for her dissertation. Faculty sponsors are: Dr. Linda Rose and Dr. Christina Christie, of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience in the field of international education. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

The goal of this study is to determine what factors lead to student participation in study abroad and to obtain the perspectives of professionals who work in international education.

#### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

4. Participate in an interview or focus group, either in person or via phone / internet video chat / skype, to discuss what leads a student to participate in study abroad,
5. Provide your opinion about the effectiveness of marketing, outreach, and other campus efforts to promote study abroad opportunities,
6. In the case of a site visit, researcher will also conduct observations at your institution,
7. Be available for follow up, if clarification to responses is needed.

#### **How long will I be in the research study?**

Participation will take about 30-60 minutes for the interview or focus group. Site visits conducted by the researcher will take additional coordination and a maximum of two days. The study is scheduled for completion in May 2012.

### **Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

Participants are asked to be candid in their responses and forthright about their opinions. Participants may be asked about events that occur at their place of work and/or related locations.

Participants will be identified in broad categories of working at a college/university (by Carnegie type) or for an International Education Organization (IEO); specific details about participants will not be released in the findings.

### **Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

You will not directly benefit from participation in the research; however, the topics discussed may contribute to your own professional development.

The results of the research may benefit the field of international education by providing further insight as to the effectiveness of efforts that encourage student participation in study abroad.

### **Will I be paid for participating?**

- You will receive a choice of the following compensation for participating in the study:
  - \$5 gift card to Starbucks coffee, *OR*
  - \$5 donation made to Heifer International, a global non-profit that provides livestock, seeds, and training to families in more than 125 countries.If you choose to leave before the discussion ends, you will receive full payment for participation.

### **Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Participants in the study will be identified only by the Carnegie category or type of institution or organization with which they are affiliated.

You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. You have the right to review the recordings made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

If you participate in a site visit observation, your participation in the study and connection to the researcher may be known by your superiors and co-workers. If you participate in a focus group, your identity may be generally known by the other participants in that particular group. All participants will be asked to keep what is said

during the group discussion between the participants only; however, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Any participants with confidentiality concerns may ask the researcher for an individual interview in lieu of a focus group.

Confidentiality will be maintained by attributing a code name for each participant. Data collected in connection with this study, including, but not limited to, voice recordings, transcripts, and notes, will be kept electronically under password protection with strict access only to the researcher. Paper documents will be stored in a secure location and converted to password protected electronic files as quickly as possible. Paper documents will be shredded before disposal.

On the checklist at the end of this consent form, you will be asked to indicate if you would permit the researchers to include transcripts, photos, videos, and other recordings of data collected of your study participation in future articles, conference proceedings or other professional endeavors. You will have the opportunity to accept or decline the various potential uses of this data.

### **What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

### **Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

- **The research team:**  
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the researcher. Please contact:

Lisa Loberg, Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership Program  
Email: xxxxx  
Cell phone: xxxxx

Committee co-chairs: Dr. Linda Rose and Dr. Christina Christie of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA.

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**  
If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program  
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

**Contact for future studies:**

Please check the appropriate box below and initial:

I agree to be contacted for future research studies.

I do NOT agree to be contacted for future research studies.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**Potential uses of data/images:**

Please check the appropriate box below and initial:

I agree to allow transcripts, photos, videos, and/or other recordings of data to be used in future articles, conference proceedings, and/or other professional endeavors.

I do NOT agree to allow transcripts, photos, videos, and/or other recordings of data to be used in future articles, conference proceedings, and/or other professional endeavors.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

Lisa Loberg  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

xxxxxxx  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E

### EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

(Used for one participant. All other participants recruited in person).

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings from California! You visited our campus last October, and I remember thinking at the time that you'd be a great person to interview for my dissertation research. I'm working on a project to better understand what leads students to study abroad and would like to gather the perspectives of study abroad professionals. Would you be interested in participating in a 30-45 minute interview?

I'm going to be at the Forum Conference in March and could set up a time to meet on Sunday or Monday of that week. Let me know if you might be interested in participating and we can go from there!

Best,

Lisa Loberg

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

**PROTOCOL**

FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW

Lisa Loberg

*R1. What do study abroad professionals view as factors that lead to student participation in study abroad?*

*R2. To what extent are these identified factors prevalent at institutions with dramatic increases in participation in study abroad programs from 2006-2011.*

Background: I am conducting some research on the factors that lead to student participation in study abroad.

*Prompts are flexible with probing questions to be used as needed.*

| <b>Topic</b>                                | <b>Question</b>   | <b>Notes/Follow up</b>                                    |
|---|---|---|
| Factors (R1)                                | In your experience, what do you think moves a student to study abroad?<br>For a semester?   | What if anything prevents a student from studying abroad? |
| Barriers                                    | Is there anything that an institution can do to overcome barriers and encourage more students to participate?   | Opinion   |
| Motivations                                 | In your own experience, what have you found to be most effective at encouraging students to study abroad (on semester programs) outreach, etc on your campus?                                 |   |
| Forum snapshot information<br><br>If needed | What is your institution or organization type:<br>Doctorate<br>Master's<br>Baccalaureate<br>Associate's<br>Professional/Specialized<br>Study Abroad Program Provider<br>Other: Please specify | Forum question  |
| Background info                             | Is your institution/organization public or private?   | Forum question  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Only if needed;<br>data may be<br>gathered online                               | Public<br>Private   |  |
| Student<br>population<br><br>Only if needed;<br>data may be<br>gathered online  | What is your institution/organization's <b>total student population</b> ?<br>1-1,000<br>1,001-5,000<br>5,001-10,000<br>10,001-20,000<br>Over 20,000<br>Don't know   | Forum question   |
| Participation<br>level<br><br>Only if needed;<br>data may be<br>gathered online | About <b>how many students at your institution/organization studied abroad for academic credit during the 2010-11 academic year</b> (fall 2010 through summer 2011)?  | Forum question   |
| Participation<br>trend<br><br>(R2)  | Does that represent an increase/decrease in participation from last year? Over the past four years?   | Substantial increase (more than 25%)<br>Increase (10-25%)<br>Slight increase (less than 10%)<br>No change<br>Slight decline (less than 10%)<br>Decline (10-25%)<br>Substantial decline (more than 25%) |
| Reasons /<br>factors (R1, R2)   | What do you think are the (major) reasons for this change?  | Forum language:<br>If you saw a substantial increase or decline in study abroad enrollments in 2010-11, what do you believe are the major reasons for these trends?                                    |
| Duration<br><br>Only if needed;<br>data may be<br>gathered online               | What type of program duration has the highest participation? Year-long, mid-length/semester, summer, short-term.<br><br>(Or) Is participation primarily in year-long, mid-length semester, summer, short-term programs? | <i>Follow up: Do you send students on primarily faculty-led programs?<br/>Exchanges? Are they your own programs?<br/>Any observations on trends of program duration</i>                                |
| Duration,<br>opinion  | Do you have any opinion as to which amount of time is best for a student to study abroad?   | Does marketing go that way?  |
| Program<br>structure  | What is the program structure at your institution? Own programs; providers; external;   | Basic explanation; but easy or difficult   |

|                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Financial aid structure     | Do students pay home tuition? How does financial aid work on your programs?   | Is this clear for students?<br>Convolved?   |
| Factors (R2)                | Do you think that program structure is a factor for participation? How  |   |
| Barriers (R1)               | Do your students encounter any <b>barriers</b> that prevent more students from studying abroad? What do you think those are? Are they insurmountable? Does your institution do anything specific to address those barriers? What has been most effective? |   |
| Factors (R1, R2)            | What do you think makes a student (on your campus) decide to study abroad?  | Capturing data in multiple ways   |
| Factors (R1, R2)            | What kinds of outreach do you find most <b>effective</b> ?  | Capturing data in multiple ways   |
| Optional follow up          | Do you think students are <b>predisposed</b> as to whether they will study abroad or not?   | Opinion   |
| Institutional outreach      | Can an institution <b>create a climate</b> that encourages study abroad participation? How?   | Campus internationalization:<br>Website;  |
| Effective outreach          | Out of the initiatives or programs or outreach, what do you think are the most <b>effective</b> ?   |   |
| Institutional steps (R2)    | Has your institution taken any <b>steps to increase</b> study abroad enrollments over the past year? (Check as they come up).   | Forum language New staff or additional staff time focused on study abroad enrollment  |
| If not previously mentioned | Is study abroad / international education in the mission of your institution? Website easy to find?   | New funding for marketing and promotion of programs<br>New scholarships/grants for study abroad<br>New short-term faculty-led programs<br>New bilateral exchange programs<br>New partnerships with foreign-based institutions or programs abroad<br>New partnerships with U.S.-based institutions or programs focusing on study abroad<br>None of the above<br>Other (please specify) |
| Final question              | Any other key factors that you think contribute to participation in (semester) study abroad?  | Or out of the key factors we have discussed, do you   |



|  |                                  |                                |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  |                                  | see any as key/highest impact? |
|  | Anything else you'd like to add? | Thank you!                     |

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