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Long-Lasting Impact of Faculty-Led Study Abroad: An Alumni Perspective

Nancy Georgiev
SIT Graduate Institute

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LONG-LASTING IMPACT OF FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD:
AN ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

Nancy Jane Georgiev
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International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Adviser: David Shallenberger

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Student name: Nancy Jane Georgiev

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ABSTRACT

Study abroad during the college years can provide a platform for personal and academic growth and development, and cultivate graduates who grasp international issues and appreciate the interconnectedness of the world. An alumni census survey with open and closed-ended questions was distributed to 1,000 alumni of Furman University who studied abroad as undergraduates and graduated from Furman University between 1994 and 2003 to elicit an answer to the question: Which long-lasting benefits do Furman University alumni associate with participation in a study abroad program? The survey asked alumni to report whether specific skills, attitudes, and depths of understanding were impacted by the undergraduate study abroad experience, and to provide written examples of career benefits and relevance to their current lives. Alumni reported significant gains in skills, modifications to attitudes, and increased awareness that contributed to their employability, personal development, and global awareness. They articulated the connection between study abroad and their lives and careers. Study abroad is a platform for formative development and faculty program leaders should be encouraged to incorporate non-traditional topics regarding personal learning into guided reflection to enhance students' cognitive growth and development.

INTRODUCTION

Furman University is a private liberal arts institution that serves an undergraduate population of 2,650 students. Study abroad is one of the university's strongest selling points and has endeared hearty support from academic departments, Furman's administration, and alumni for nearly 45 years although it is not a mandatory element of a Furman education. The first faculty-led, semester-long study abroad program took students to the British Isles in 1969. Furman's faculty-led study abroad programs have steadily gained momentum and popularity. 49% of Furman students participate in a study abroad program prior to graduation with approximately 10% of students studying abroad for two or more semesters. Furman runs sixteen semester-length faculty-led programs on a regular basis.

Furman University wants proof of the results or benefits of studying abroad. Furman boasts of long-lasting benefits, career-boosting experience, and resume building skills and awareness resulting from study abroad, but the University has not measured whether or not these results have been achieved. Furman has begun asking for evidence that study abroad is having the impact it proclaims in order to justify the expense of hiring additional faculty to cover the classes on Furman's campus when other faculty accompany students overseas. During campus visits, parents of prospective students expect Furman to articulate the return on investment and ask what sets Furman's study abroad program apart from programs at competing schools. Furthermore, accrediting bodies are starting to look for evidence of study abroad assessment (Bennett, 2009; Bolen, 2007; Braskamp et al., 2012; Braskamp et al., 2009; Dwyer, Ferst et al., 2005; Hansel, 2008; Hoff & Kappler, 2005; Mitstifer, 2012; Musil, 2006; & SACS, 2012). As a result, Furman's marketing department is in the process of developing new materials to showcase the benefits of study abroad using anecdotal evidence from students and faculty study abroad

directors, and they are depending on me in my role as Assistant Director of Study Away and International Education to fill in the gaps with statistics, alumni survey results, and benchmarking in the field.

Furman University's Character and Values Statement (2013) provides guidelines that encourage the development of skills, attitudes, and knowledge that prepare students for the global workforce:

The university understands its mission to be not only the transmission of knowledge, attitudes, and values, but also their examination and correction in the light of continuing discovery and the integration of knowledge.... The university recognizes its responsibility both inside and outside the classroom to encourage students to confront the problems of contemporary society and to exercise moral judgment in the use of knowledge. To this end, Furman fosters in its students a sense of social justice and encourages them to exercise their civic responsibility in creating a fair and equitable order. Students are educated to solve human problems rather than to use their knowledge as a means of gaining further advantage over those who are disadvantaged.

Furman has asked its study abroad office to ensure that study abroad contributes to the development of student character and values as they pertain to students' ability to confront contemporary issues and solve human problems as global citizens with a moral and humane compass. The guiding question for this capstone research is: Which long-lasting benefits do Furman alumni associate with participation in a faculty-led study abroad program?

I believe individuals develop skills through study abroad experience that are difficult to acquire in a classroom environment without leaving their home country. Several sources promote study abroad as an opportunity to acquire and practice skills that will be attractive to employers

such as language acquisition, adaptability, and cross-cultural communication (AAC&U, 2007; AIFS, 2013; Bolen, 2007; Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Curran, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Musil, 2006; Preston, 2012; Thomas, 2003; & Tillman, 2011). Similarly, it is claimed that behavior and perception change rapidly during study abroad to include an appreciation for diversity and an ability to adapt as necessary to function in an internationalized setting, and these changes tend to be long-lasting (Braskamp et al., 2009; Braskamp & Braskamp, 2012; Bremer, 2006; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Gillespie et al., 1999; Hansel, 2008; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Miller & Rubin, 2007; Thompson, 2003; Tillman, 2011). Finally, study abroad is believed to be a catalyst for preparing individuals to function in an increasingly interdependent world (AAC&U, 2007; Brockington et al., 2005; Deardorff, 2008; Hoff, 2008; Miller & Rubin, 2007).

To establish this research at Furman, I used the mission statement, standards in the field, traits that employers find desirable, and student development theories to guide the design of an alumni census survey. I then undertook a summative study looking for evidence of useful, applicable skills, attitudes, and understandings as well as long-lasting effects on behavior and perception that Furman alumni have associated directly with their study abroad experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparing the study abroad impact of Furman Alumni, I searched literature available over the past ten years for examples of and references to the direct impact of study abroad. It is widely accepted in the field of international education that study abroad cultivates valuable skills and personal characteristics that are attractive to employers and that help individuals adapt to the rapidly changing and interconnected world (Auerbach et al., 2009; Bremer, 2006; Brockington et al., 2005; Clarke & Crossman, 2009; Hoff, 2008). As reported by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in 2009,

IIE and the wide network of colleges and universities it serves believe that many of the skills acquired through a successful study abroad experience – specific cultural knowledge, foreign language acquisition, the ability to communicate effectively in intercultural settings, and adaptability to unfamiliar situations – can be effectively applied to meet the needs of companies and non-governmental organizations. Previous studies have shown that employers place great value on the skills gained through study abroad experience (p.2).

However, there is less known about the long-lasting impact of study abroad on participants. Some studies have been conducted to gather alumni perceptions regarding the benefit of study abroad (Armstrong, 1984; Dwyer, 2004; Green, 2013; Hansel, 2008). Studies such as the AFS – Intercultural Programs (formerly American Field Service) long term impact study (Hansel, 2008) and the IES Abroad (formerly Institute of European Studies) longitudinal survey (Dwyer, 2004) attribute participants’ global mindedness, international appreciation and cross-cultural skills to the study abroad experience while taking into account other factors which may have shaped participants’ ability and willingness to grow and develop in these areas. The IES Abroad longitudinal survey employed questions on program standards and goals from the IES MAP (2008), a list of guidelines for study abroad programs, in order to assess participants’ perceptions of long term study abroad outcomes. Similarly, the AFS long term impact study looked at participants’ perceptions of the value of their experience twenty-five years after studying abroad. The strengths of these surveys were in their ability to collect feedback from participants many years after the initial experience when participants were more likely to make associations between their study abroad experience and its pertinence to their career and personal life. AFS and IES Abroad participants reflected on how study abroad influenced their academic, career and

personal choices. On the other hand, long-term studies of graduates involve speculation about the potential long-lasting effects of study abroad (Preston, 2012). Undergraduate study abroad programs seek to provide a condensed, intensive, hands-on, experiential opportunity for personal and academic development at a time in students' lives when they otherwise may not have equally stimulating occasions at their home universities for rapid, formative growth (Deardorff, 2008; IIE, 2009; Clarke & Crossman, 2009; AIFS, 2013; Dwyer, 2004; Hansel, 2008).

One difficulty with researching long term study abroad impacts and outcomes for Furman University alumni is that, unlike the IES Abroad longitudinal study which was based on program standards included in the IES MAP, Furman's programs lacked a unified set of study abroad goals over time. Prior to 2007, Furman's study abroad programs were highly departmentalized, and goal-setting was a function of the department sponsoring the program. Therefore, for this research I considered ways of measuring some of the benefits mentioned in the IES Abroad and AFS studies such as applicability of skills, attitudes, and understanding gained through study abroad to one's career and life (AAC&U, 2007; Bolen, 2007; Braskamp et al., 2009; Braskamp & Braskamp, 2012; Bremer, 2006; Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Curran, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Gillespie et al., 1999; Hansel, 2008; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Miller & Rubin, 2007; Musil, 2006; Preston, 2012; Thomas, 2003; Tillman, 2011), and on skills identified by employers as essential (AAC&U, 2007; Bolen, 2007; Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Curran, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Musil, 2006; Preston, 2012; Thomas, 2003; Tillman, 2011).

Based on the six domains named in the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards (Mitstifer, 2012), the Standards Queries (The Forum for Education Abroad, 2011), and studies in the field of education abroad (Bremer, 2006; Deardorff, 2008; Green, 2013; Clarke & Crossman, 2009; IES, 2009), I selected three categories, skills,

attitudes, and understanding, from which to gather information from respondents. In an article focused on providing a definition of “global workforce development” Darlene Bremer (2006) explained how “international education experiences help prepare global-ready graduates for the twenty-first century workforce” (p.40). Bremer (2006) summarized Darla Deardorff’s definition of global workforce development which described the development of skills, attitudes and understanding “necessary to be successful when working with people from different cultures, regardless of location” (Deardorff as cited in Bremer, 2006, p. 42). Additionally, Deardorff (2008) reported that the most agreed upon definition of intercultural competence in the field of international education was “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriate in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 33). The examples of skills, attitudes, and understanding about which I chose to gather data directly correlated to job qualifications.

Research suggests that an outcome assessment should be an integral part of program design (Bolen, 2007; Deardorff, 2008; Musil, 2006; Ferst et al., 2005). In the field of international education, time spent abroad has been regarded as having the innate potential to cultivate desired skills, attitudes, perceptions, and abilities associated with a liberal arts education (AAC&U, 2007; Miller & Rubin, 2007; Brockington et al., 2005). These benefits are often acquired instinctively by participants when adapting to their surroundings. Institutions of higher education, like Furman, take credit for these positive results by incorporating program goals that capture the natural cycle of learning. Indeed, outcome assessments for study abroad are relatively new and lacking valid research on impacts, program providers are able to incorporate natural occurrences of intercultural development into their program goals and assessments according to Bolen (2007), Deardorff (2006) and Musil (2006). Carol Conway,

director of the Southern Global Strategies Council, further explains that “the experiential learning experience ... provides [study abroad students] with a deeper understanding of how the world works and how other people think, as well as providing them with the basics for building the capacity to learn throughout life” (as cited in Bremer, 2006, p. 42). King and Baxter Magolda (2011) wrote about a developmental model of intercultural maturity that accounts for natural human development, which they claim does not “emerge fully formed, but unfolds with time and experience” (p. 586). Often current students have difficulty articulating their recent study abroad experience and putting it into a broader perspective (Curran, 2007). Therefore, it was my hypothesis that alumni who have had time to process their study abroad experience for at least ten years will be able to articulate its impact, cite examples of its relevance to their lives and careers, and show developmental maturity in their ability to reflect on the significance of their overseas experience.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study abroad office at Furman has been asked to gather feedback from study abroad alumni to be used in marketing materials for the university. To determine what to ask, obtaining a thorough knowledge of the history of the study abroad program was necessary. I achieved this by meeting with Furman faculty members who had led students abroad since the inception of the program in 1969. One of the biggest challenges I faced was a lack of documentation of the study abroad programs. Also, the Registrar at Furman referred to programs by country whereas faculty used specific titles related to their discipline. For some programs the theme changed dramatically depending on which department was sponsoring the program and which overseas destinations were visited, but this was not evident from the records of the Registrar or the alumni office which reported a single country as the destination of multiple programs.

Furman changed academic calendars from a trimester to a semester system seven years ago. For the purpose of providing the context for the programs in which the study group participated, I will briefly describe the two presiding types of programs that existed. The trimester calendar included a twelve-week fall term, a six-week winter term, and a twelve-week spring term. The six-week winter term was an experiential education component that included six-week, faculty-led programs that were linked to a fall semester course or courses. Students would study a topic intensively in the fall and then have a six-week study tour facilitated by their professors to put their learning into perspective by surveying a specific topic in the context of several countries. For example, the UK/EU program sponsored (at times) by the economics department studied the European Union and its Economics. The religion and political science departments facilitated a joint program to Greece, Israel, Kenya, and Tanzania. The other model that existed during the trimester calendar was a twelve-week language immersion program for the languages taught at Furman: Chinese, French, German and Spanish. These programs were characterized by host family stays, intensive language study, and a group excursion to study a single country in further depth.

Since the study abroad program was decentralized and institutional records are incomplete and misleading, it is impossible to know what each program's learning objectives were. Therefore, I chose to make a general list of skills, attitudes, and understanding that employers find desirable and study abroad programs claim to foster. I asked respondents to rank to what extent their study abroad program facilitated each item on the list. In addition, I included open-ended questions to collect responses that emphasized items already listed or introduced new benefits of study abroad. I considered what a participant of study abroad should know, be able to do, and value as a result of their undergraduate experience abroad. I also thought about

what the two general models of study abroad (foreign language immersion and academic study tour to multiple destinations) would set as learning outcomes. Then, I developed a list of skills combining the common skills and experiences that could be accomplished on a study abroad program and that employers find desirable such as problem solving, analytic ability, adaptability, foreign language, relationship skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and cross-cultural competency to name a few (Auerbach et al., 2009; Bremer, 2006; Clarke & Cross, 2010; Curran, 2007; Norris & Gillespie, 2005). Some of the skills represent cross-cultural competency; however, I felt it was necessary to provide a definition for this term by giving concrete examples of what I intended. Instead of asking directly whether alumni had developed their cross-cultural competency, I included additional skills that could be considered essential coping strategies to go from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1993) such as adaptability, integration into new social groups, learning how to work in a multilingual environment, learning a foreign language, learning to communicate across a language barrier, and coping with difficulty and rejection (Peace Corps, 2012). Finally, I solicited feedback from faculty members about the questionnaire to ensure relevancy.

Next, I chose the group of alumni to study. Furman has alumni data for study abroad participants that spans 44 years, from most recent graduating class to the first faculty-led study abroad students in 1969. Alumni who graduated between ten and twenty years ago (between 1993 and 2003) were chosen for several reasons. I anticipated the group had time to settle into careers and lifestyles, and this study is evaluating the impact of study abroad on career and life choices. Alumni with ten years of post-study abroad life experience were predicted to provide more stability in these areas. Hard and soft skills associated with study abroad would be more pronounced. Focusing on alumni who had graduated between ten and twenty years ago helped

me interpret the underlying circumstances surrounding the program with better clarity and accuracy. I ensured that the types of learning, skills, attitudes and examples of understanding included in the survey were relevant to the audience. This was accomplished by meeting with faculty members who had led students abroad during this time period to gain feedback regarding the study. In particular, I wanted to ensure that alumni would recognize their study abroad program in a drop down list. No such list existed at Furman except as institutional memory.

The challenges to preparing this study were numerous. In addition to incomplete records and decentralization of programs, I was asked by the University to provide useful statistics without explanation or directions that defined what they would consider beneficial. Further, as I sought advice on my design, many suggestions that I received would have changed the original inquiry. Finally, I was asked if I could collect results for all five thousand alumni for which we have contact information. I had to determine how to scale the survey without adversely effecting quality. The resulting census survey is intended to be generalizable to all alumni of Furman's study abroad program (see Appendix A).

The chosen method of delivery was an anonymous online census with a combination of Likert scale and open-ended questions. I chose to create a locally developed instrument in order to tailor the questions to meet the needs of the university and my research inquiry, and to make it attractive to the study group. Invitations to the survey were delivered to 1,000 Furman University alumni who graduated between 1994 and 2003 and participated in at least one study abroad program as undergraduates. I created the survey using Wufoo because I could personalize the web format with the Furman logo and colors to look professional and legitimate for the intended audience and to improve the response rate. An online survey provided a convenient way to collect summative data that is both quantitative and qualitative, and the survey could be sent to a

large number of individuals quickly and inexpensively. The standardized format of the results in an Excel document made it relatively simple to analyze.

One weakness of a survey, and especially of one that asks about past experiences is that responses may not be accurate because of misremembered events. Despite inaccurate memories, what is more important is respondents' perception of their experience and how they interpret the impact of study abroad on their life and career. I sought to overcome this weakness by looking for correlations between the text responses and the Likert scale questions to test for validity. Another difficulty is that the questions on the survey can be interpreted in multiple ways. The survey did not undergo rigorous psychometric analysis, though I sent the survey to a beta test group and to the Furman faculty members and other stakeholders who had helped me with my research prior to sending it to the official study group.

Since the survey was voluntary, it was impossible to guess what the response rate would be. Too many responses would yield a large quantity of data and a higher rate of reliability whereas too few results would yield a more manageable amount of data that might not represent the whole group accurately. The survey could have appealed to those alumni who have had a favorable or continued international experience. Those who chose to respond may not accurately represent the experience of the study group at large. Responders were self-selecting and in order to ensure a random sample, I looked at the results of the initial five percent of responses and compared them with the last five percent of responses to see if they matched in terms of quality and Likert scale rankings. There appeared to be no significant differences between respondents who eagerly completed the survey within the first hour of receiving it and those who responded at the end of the second week. I also worked with the data from one half of the responses to

create initial categories, classifications and statistics, and then made sure the other half of the data fit with the groupings I had devised and was consistent with my statistics.

My invitation to alumni to participate in the survey and the survey itself were intended to be neutral and invite criticism as well as positive feedback. My own bias could distort the data since I hope to use study results to promote study abroad, and have asked questions that would elicit admirable qualities. Respondents had the opportunity to provide criticism and a candid rating of the impact study abroad has had on their life and career. Open-ended questions were included to offset any tendency toward bias in creation of the survey. To help control for bias in analysis, members of my cohort at SIT Graduate Institute have reviewed and commented on my assessment.

METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

The final survey used a combination of open and closed ended questions (see Appendix A) to collect information from respondents. Once competencies to assess were determined, a meaningful way to measure them was required.

For sections on skills, attitudes, understanding and learning influences, I used Likert scale formats and provided examples for respondents to rank the extent to which their Furman study abroad experience influenced the competencies listed in these categories. After each section, respondents were asked to provide further clarification, examples, and relevant comments as a way of triangulating the results to improve the reliability of the data I collected from the Likert scale. I asked that respondents' written answers be in response to the questions about the impact of their study abroad program to their life and career. Additionally, I asked respondents to rank to what extent their learning abroad was influenced by factors such as class lectures and casual conversations with a local member of the host society.

The survey questions asked how the Furman study abroad experience, as opposed to any other type of international experience, impacted the respondents. Likert Scale questions, respondents included a “not applicable” option. I attempted to minimize jargon that could be misunderstood such as “cross-cultural competency” and clarified with examples where I anticipated a potential for confusion such as the ability to work in a multi-lingual environment. Respondents rated the extent their program facilitated the development of skills, attitudes and understanding. I turned the results into percentages by considering Likert Scale ratings of “to a large extent” and “to a moderate extent” a positive outcome.

The section of the survey requiring mandatory responses was divided into three sections corresponding to skills, attitudes, and understanding. Alumni were asked to rate the extent to which their study abroad experience helped them develop skills, influenced their attitude, or contributed to their understanding. This line of questioning sought to validate Bloom’s revised taxonomy of cognitive development (Airaisian, 2000) and anticipated alums could articulate their experience and provide examples of situations in which their study abroad experience was applicable to their career or personal life. It also sought to elicit from the respondents a correlation between study abroad learning and their careers. Finally, the questions prompted respondents to synthesize their experience by making new meaning out of their experiences, and making a judgment or evaluation about their experience (Anderson et al., 2008).

In the section on understanding, I looked for evidence of increased understanding of differences resulting from an experience in another society, and increased understanding of one’s own society by collecting Likert scale ratings and open-ended responses citing examples of knowledge. Often students find that by studying, observing, or experiencing something drastically different, they reflect upon and come to a better understanding of their own cultural

norms that they previously took for granted and begin to recognize values that can be defined as universal, societal, or individual. The matrix of Likert scale responses allows placement of the individual in this context (La Brack, 2003; Deardorff, 2008).

For analysis of the open-ended text responses, I looked for evidence of Self-Authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009) and the three-tiered framework from Taylor and Haynes (2008) that organizes the levels of cognitive development that an individual can achieve which range from dependence on teachers for knowledge and understanding to becoming an independent thinker with the ability to analyze, evaluate and make judgments (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Self-authorship refers to the highest level of intellectual development. Likewise, Bloom's taxonomy of development includes a range of learning outcomes as they increase in complexity from knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation of new connections, theories and knowledge (Airaisian, 2000). Bloom's taxonomy largely influenced the scope of my study and is the theory behind the categorization of my questions into skills, attitudes and understanding in terms of what participants should be able to do, demonstrate and know. Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity provided a scale ranging from ethnocentric to ethnorelative development and was useful to the interpretation of responses to the open-ended questions. Ron Moffatt, former president of NAFSA and director of the San Diego State University International Student Center, said that

the research indicated that there are several intersections between students' development states and the competencies necessary to function and succeed in a global society....

Those intersections include being flexible in dealing with inter- or multi-cultural differences, cultural competencies, critical and reflective thinking, intellectual flexibility, emotional cognitive integration, and identity formation. International experiences only

enrich these skills as students develop their short- and long-term goals (Bremer, 2006, p. 43).

I coded evidence of personal growth and development within the answers to the open-ended questions. I looked for patterns in the responses to the open-ended questions and tallied the results for emergent themes to find a numerical representation of the data. The challenge of coding responses is that the results reflect that which the individual respondent felt compelled to emphasize. If asked on a different day, a different theme could emerge. Some respondents did not choose to write a comment or referred me to their answers to the Likert Scale questions which asked the same questions in a different format.

I asked a hypothetical question about the importance of a study abroad experience to a hiring employer; however, the hypothetical nature and vagueness of the question yielded unreliable results. My intent was to ascertain to what extent respondents in the working world value international experience in potential candidates for hire based on a statement published by IIE in its IIE Briefing Paper in October 2009,

Study abroad experience is widely recognized among senior management as having the potential to cultivate valued skills and desirable personal qualities in new recruits. In a recent survey, ninety percent of senior management who reported studying abroad during their own careers also reported a hiring or promotion strategy that actively sought out and rewarded study abroad experience. This suggests that individuals with personal experiences studying abroad are more likely to place a higher value on the study abroad experience of a potential employee.

The lack of reliable results for this question were a disappointment, but they did not compromise the rest of the study.

Demographic questions were included to define the population by gender, ethnicity, date of graduation, year of study away participation, major, current career, whether the respondent currently lives abroad or in the United States, and study away program and destination. This data provides patterns and context to generalize about the group of respondents although the survey was anonymous.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

A link to the Wufoo survey¹ was sent in a personalized email from my @furman.edu email address to 1,267 Furman alumni and included an explanation of the survey, an invitation to help the study abroad program at Furman by providing feedback, and my contact information (see Appendix A). After subtracting undeliverable emails, the survey was received by 1,002 alumni. The survey generated 203 unique responses within a two-week timeframe.

Demographics

Of the 203 responses I received, 67% were from female respondents and 33% were from males. 92% identified themselves as Caucasian. 3% identified as black or African/American, Latino or Hispanic American, or non-resident alien. The remaining 5% identified as other or provided no response. The majority of respondents are U.S. citizens (98%), with 2% identifying dual citizenship: U.S.-Canadian and U.S. – UK citizenship, and two Swedish. 10% of respondents currently live abroad.

The average rate of response per graduation year was 16% and the median response was 13 per class. Eighty-six percent of respondents identified themselves as currently employed or self-employed, 11% as homemakers, 3% as students, and 1% as currently unemployed and looking for work. The highest level of education received was reported as 27% holding a

¹ <https://furmanstudentlife.wufoo.com/forms/furman-study-abroad-alumni-survey/>

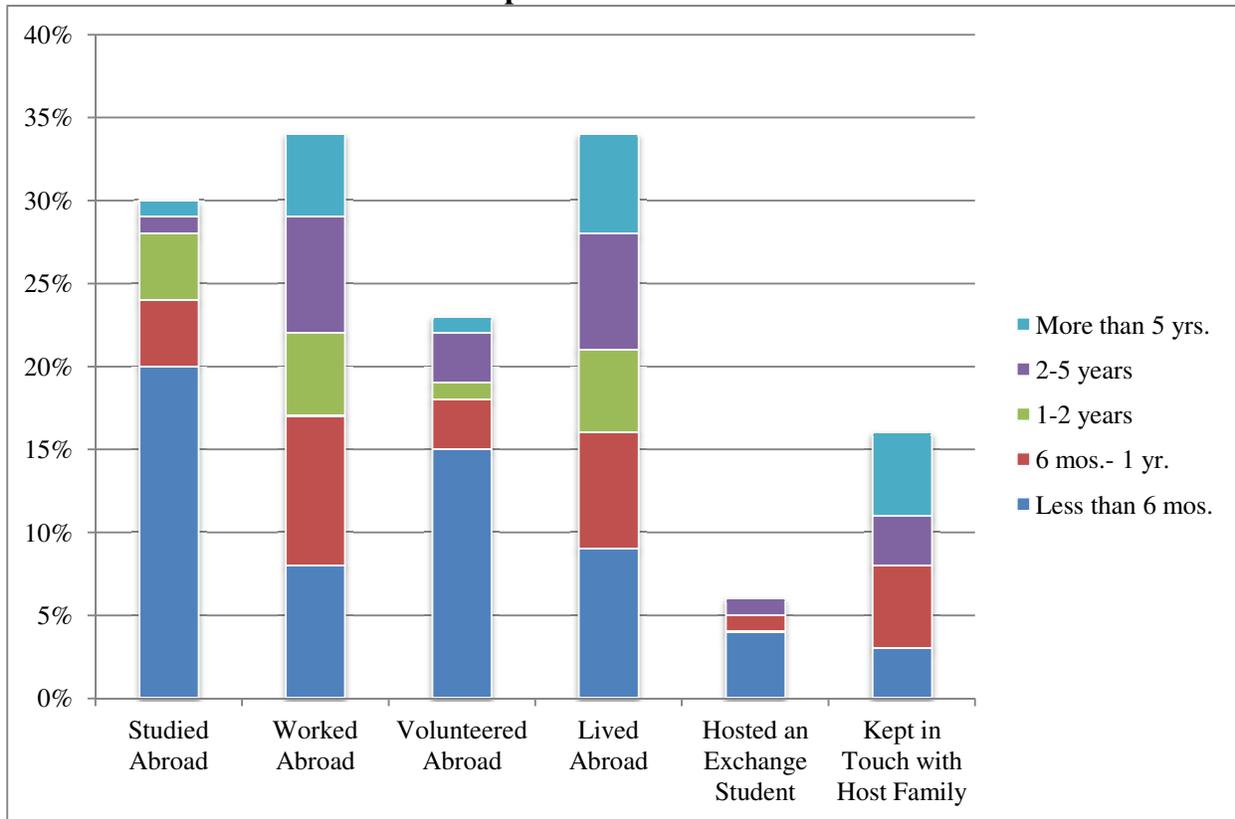
Bachelor's degree, 47% having earned a Master's degree, 16% having earned a professional degree and 10% having earned a Doctorate.

All of the respondents participated in at least one study abroad program, and 14% participated in two or more programs. Seventy-three percent of the respondents participated in a study tour of either six or twelve weeks of duration. Study tours stop in multiple cities and countries for education tours and lectures. Study tours are preceded by required preparatory coursework taken at Furman in the semester prior to travel. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they participated in a language immersion program characterized by accommodation with host families, coursework in the target language, and a stationary location in a single country.

The percentage of alumni who participated in a twelve-week semester program was 63% and 49% participated in a six-week winter term program. Thirty-seven percent of students were housed with host families for language intensive programs, and 63% of the students lived in hotels or dormitories during their study tours, and the other 8% were housed in apartments, tents, or some combination of accommodations.

After graduating from Furman, many of the respondents reported participating in additional international experiences. The survey asked participants to identify whether they had participated in specific international experiences and to provide the duration of the activity: 30% studied abroad, 34% worked abroad, 23% volunteered abroad, 34% lived abroad, 6% hosted an exchange student, and 16% kept in touch with host families from their Furman study abroad experience. Table 1 displays the types of international experience, the percentage of participants who reported having these experiences, and the ratio of respondents based on the duration of their international activity (see Table 1).

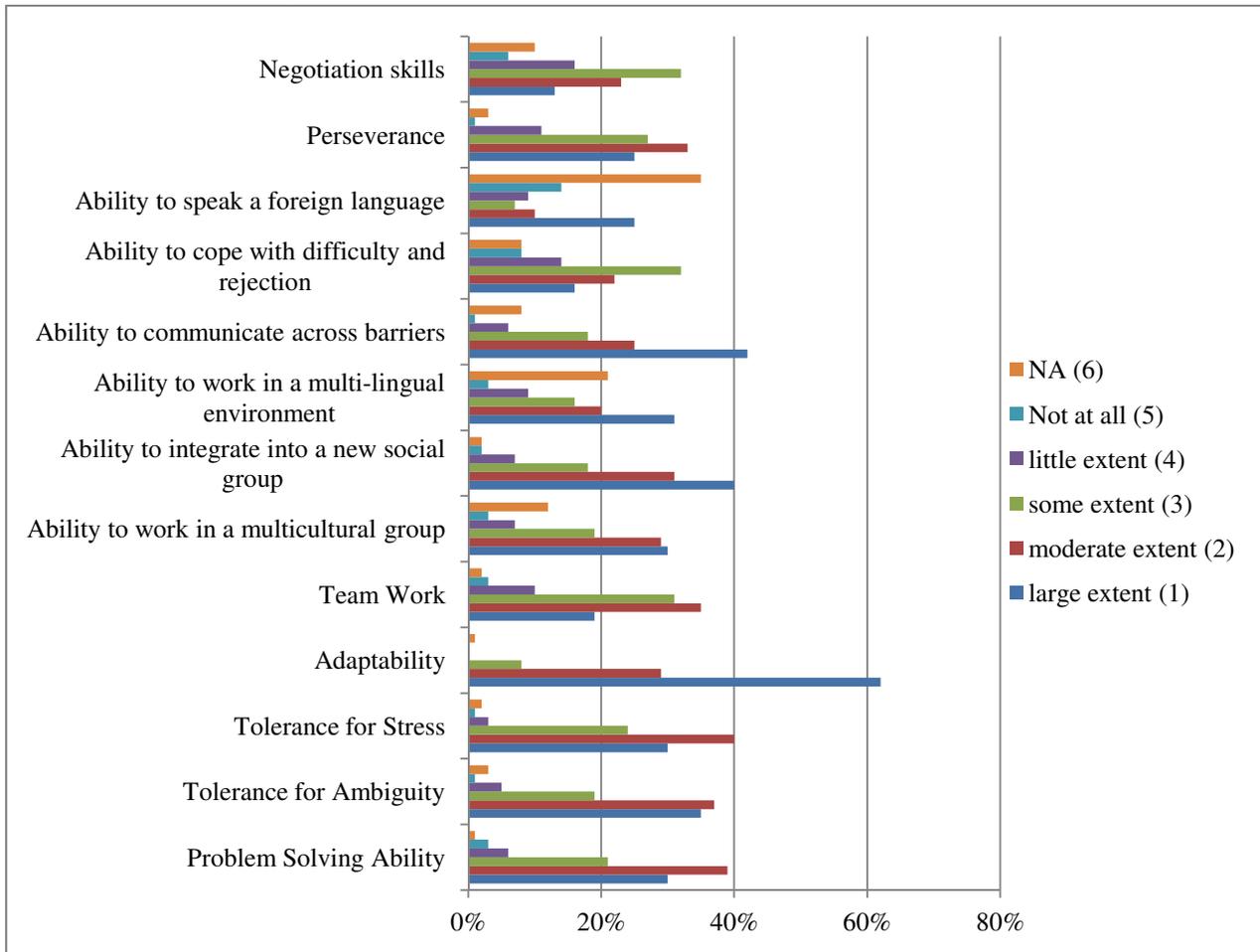
Table 1: Additional International Experience



Skills

The survey asked the respondents to rank to what extent their study abroad experience helped them develop particular skills. Table 2 presents the survey results for skills. For each skill, the percentage of Likert scale responses is depicted (see Table 2). The study abroad alumni reported that two skills in particular, adaptability and the ability to communicate across barriers, had been developed to a large extent during their study abroad program, by 62% and 42% respectively (see Table 2). Ability to work in a multi-lingual group, ability to integrate into a new social group and problem solving ability also received a high rating.

Table 2: Results for Skills

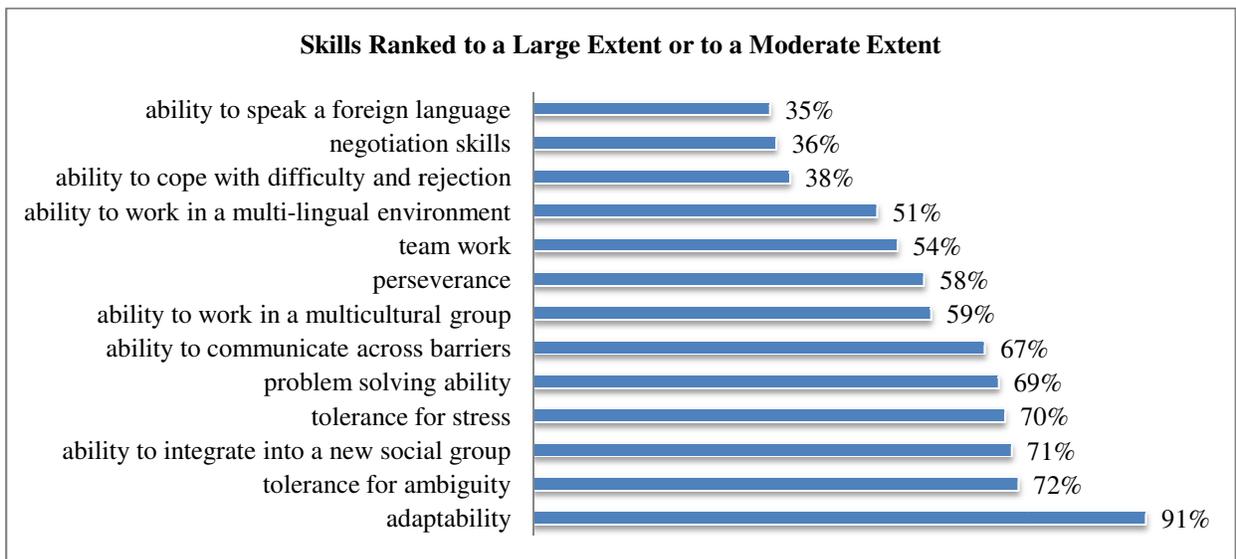


In the open-ended questions regarding skills, alumni elaborated on or reiterated those skills that they found most beneficial and applicable in their daily lives and careers. Instances of intercultural competence were mentioned by 41% of respondents. Intercultural competence included references to the ability to notice cultural differences, relate to foreigners, communicate with non-native English speakers, communicate across cultures, work with others, adapt, and operate in a new environment. The second most frequently mentioned skills resulting from study abroad were travel competency and ability to navigate in a new place, which was noted by 26% of respondents. Competency or fluency in a foreign language was mentioned by 18% of

respondents. Other skills that were mentioned included independence, managing stressful situations and honing listening skills.

Table 3 represents the skills that alumni reported developing during study abroad to at least a moderate extent. Ability to speak a foreign language is proportionate to the number of students who participate in a foreign language immersion program, so in fact, the visual representation is not indicative of the skills development of the alumni who participated in that type of program (see Table 3).

Table 3: Skills Ranked to a Large Extent or to a Moderate Extent



A female alumna who studied abroad two times, once on a summer program through a third-party study abroad provider to England and a second time on a Furman faculty-led program to Israel and the Middle East, described how the skills she had gained were applicable to her career:

I worked for almost 7 years (2006-2012) for National Geographic Magazine.... During my tenure at NGM I traveled to various places ...and had work colleagues from all over the world. The knowledge I gained from study abroad helped me to relate with people

from various backgrounds and embrace travel opportunities offered during my professional career.

Attitudes

The results for influenced attitudes were the most remarkable of the three categories (skills, attitudes, understanding) and contained the highest number of rankings of “to a large extent.” Seventy-nine percent of alumni reported that their attitudes were influenced to a large extent toward their host country, 66% reported being influenced to a large extent toward other cultures, and 65% toward being open to different perspectives. The results that were ranked as least “to a moderate extent” were all above 50% in this category. 95% had their attitude influenced toward their host country, 88% toward other cultures in general, 87% toward being open to different perspectives 79% toward the United States, 59% toward immigrants to the United States, 57% toward economic inequality, and 53% toward learning a second language.

Table 4: Results for Attitude

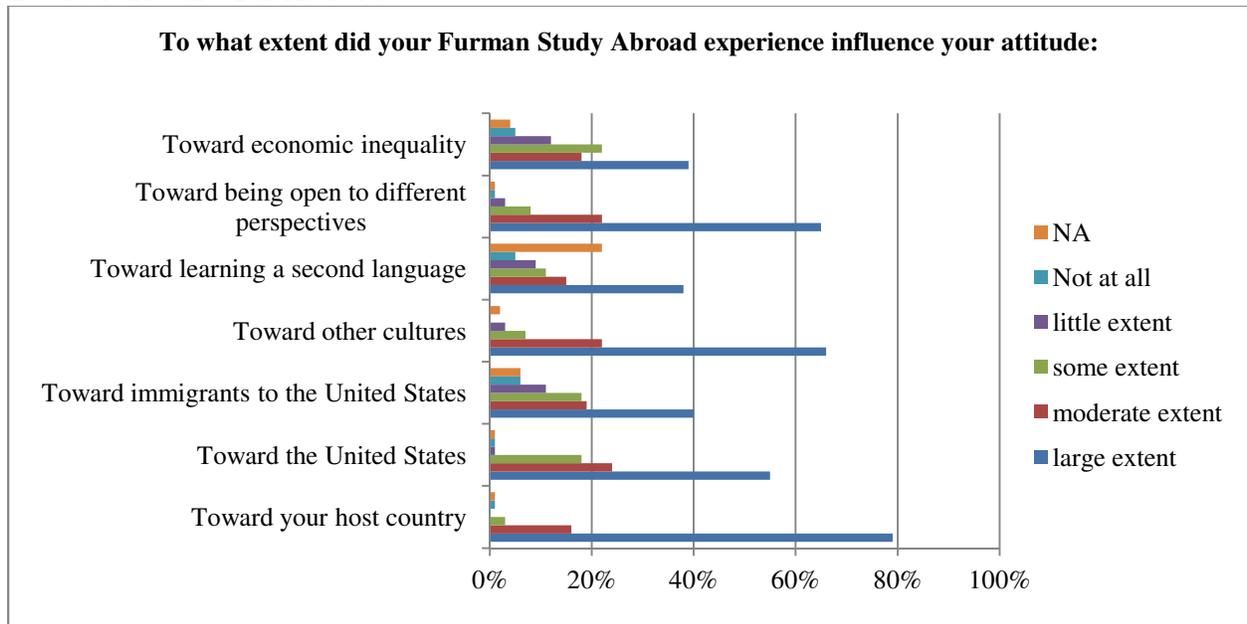
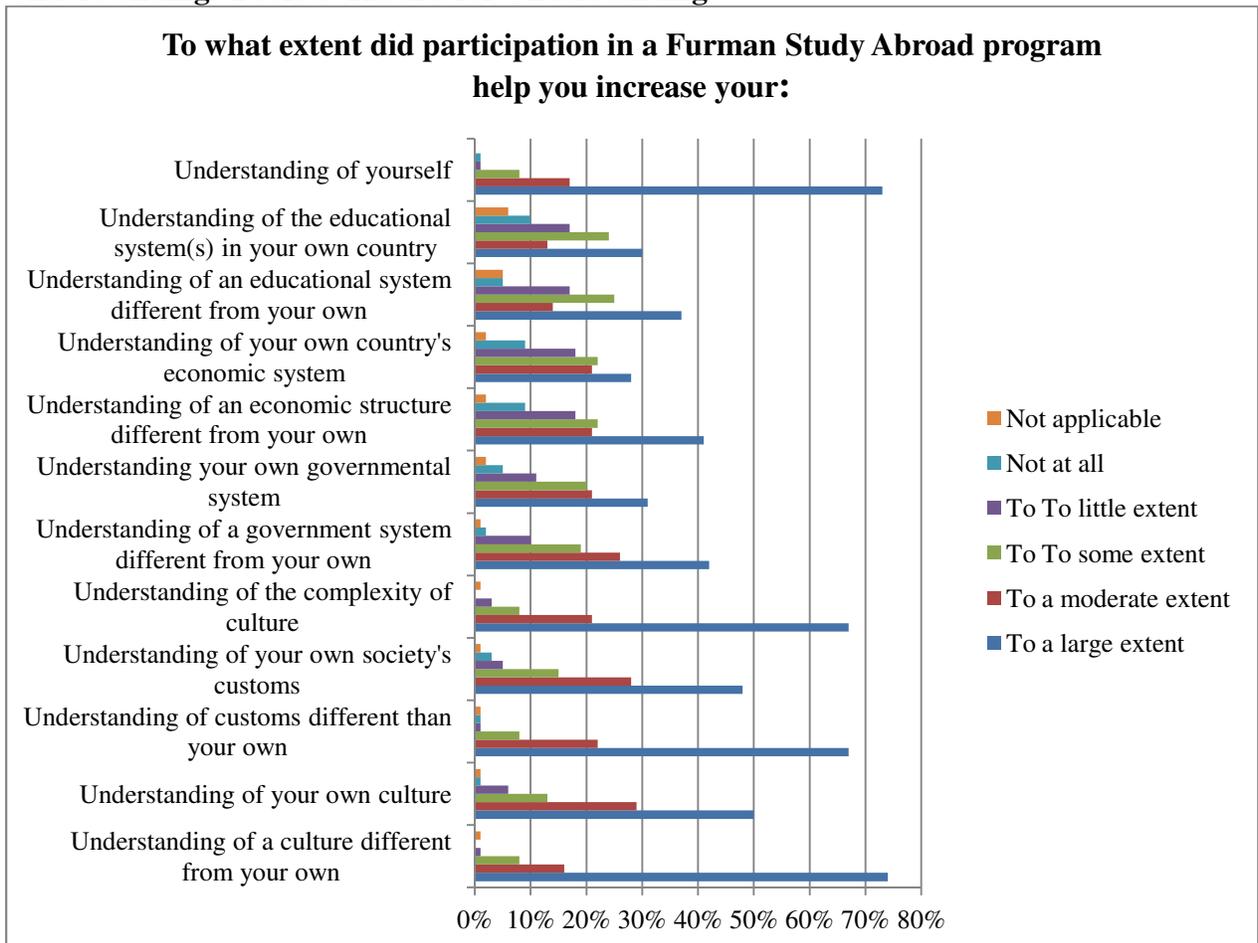


Table 4 represents the results regarding the extent to which study abroad influenced respondents' attitudes. The results are depicted with colored bars representing the percentage of responses per Likert scale category. (See Table 4).

In the open-ended responses, respondents made reference to changes in their attitudes due to study abroad. 25% of respondents mentioned improved confidence related to exploring a new place, speaking a language and trying new things. 13% of respondents commented on increased compassion or empathy toward immigrants, foreigners, and non-native English speakers living in the United States. Others mentioned appreciation for another thought process or perspective, open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, independence, humility and sense of adventure.

Understanding

Understanding: Table 5: Results for Understanding.



Alumni were asked to rank the extent to which their participation in a study abroad program helped increase their understanding of various concepts and subjects. The results are depicted in Table 5 and display the Likert scale responses as percentages (see Table 5).

The alumni reported the largest increase in their understanding of a culture different from their own and understanding of oneself. An impressive 74% of alumni ranked understanding of a culture different from their own, and 73% rank gaining a better understanding of oneself “to a large extent.” Another 67% reported an increased understanding of customs different than your own, and 67% understanding of the complexity of culture in general. At least 60% of alumni selected the ranking “to a moderate extent” or higher for the following categories in order from highest to lowest: 90% understanding yourself, 90% understanding a culture different from your own, 89% understanding customs different than your own, 88% understanding the complexity of culture in general, 79% understanding of your own culture, 76% understanding of your own society’s customs, 68% understanding of a government system different from your own, and 62% understanding of an economic system different than your own.

International Experience

In the open-ended response questions, 48% of the comments related to having developed a deeper understanding of either an academic subject or a new place. Other responses included increased self-awareness, self-understanding, and understanding of others. Most notable were the number of individuals who had passed information from one generation to the next by encouraging their own children to have a similar experience or by leading study abroad programs for students. Another sizable group of respondents reported information about their international career or connections, and several reported changing career directions as a result of their study abroad experience (see Table 6).

Table 6: International Experience

Please identify additional international experiences you have had that could be linked to your study abroad experience (e.g. Rotary Club, returning to visit your study away site(s), changing your major/career path, hosting an exchange student, looking for work abroad, etc.)	Percent
Passing Information to Another Generation (school teacher, took family to visit Furman study abroad site, hosting a foreigner, led a study abroad program)	15%
Employment: international career, work abroad, attended international conference, work for a global company, internship abroad	16%
Research abroad: medical, missionary, job-related	4%
Education Abroad: attended graduate school abroad, participated in additional study abroad after graduating from Furman; studied a new foreign language	10%
Volunteered Abroad: missionary, Peace Corps (6) , service	10%
Other: Individually arranged international travel	11%
No Response	30%

Respondents were asked to identify international experiences that they could link to their study abroad experience (See Table 6). The question was not required, and 30% of respondents did not specify any type of international experience. The open-ended responses fell into six general categories and the percentages represent how frequently each type of international experience was mentioned and are not necessarily an accurate, cumulative number of all international experiences that the respondents have had.

Sixteen percent of respondents reported employment either abroad or with a global company as an international experience.

Fifteen percent of respondents mentioned an international experience involving the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next such as teaching school children or their own children something related to the study abroad experience, leading a study abroad program, hosting a foreign exchange student, encouraging their own children to study abroad or taking their family to visit their undergraduate study abroad site. Twenty-three respondents (8%) have led their own study abroad programs for high school or university foreign language students.

Eleven percent reported traveling overseas at their leisure to visit their previous study abroad site or to travel to new places.

Ten percent of alumni reported studying overseas for graduate school either for a full degree program or for a shorter study abroad program.

Ten percent reported volunteering overseas. Five respondents served in the Peace Corps, and the thirteen respondents had participated in a missionary or service project overseas.

Four percent of alumni had participated in research abroad for medical, missionary or job-related purposes.

Lasting Impact:

A female alumna who graduated in 2003 and participated in three study abroad programs – a faculty-led program to Russia and the Baltics to study history and politics, a faculty-led program to Sub-Saharan Africa to study economics and politics, and an exchange program to Groningen University in the Netherlands – described the way in which her study abroad programs had a lasting impact:

I apply the skills, knowledge, and perspective that I began to develop during Furman study abroad programs almost every day in my current position. My projects stretch throughout the Middle East/North Africa region, which requires a constant switching between cultural contexts and communication in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural environment. In addition, I head teams functioning across the MENA region, solving a variety of problems on an international basis daily.... Dr. Bill Lavery, who was the legendary head of the International Education program when I was a student, put it this way: "First you travel with a Furman group and professors. Then, you study abroad for a semester at a university by yourself. Then you find an international internship. Then, you

are ready to live and work outside the U.S." I have found this largely to be true, as I now live and work outside the U.S. My current position is the result of a long process of developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to thrive in the Middle East, and it began with the initial steps that Furman's study abroad program allowed me to take. (Female alumna of 2002, participated in three programs: Russia and the Baltics, SubSaharan Africa, and an exchange semester at Groningen University in the Netherlands).

A male graduate of 1998 with a double major in French and Political Science and three study abroad programs as an undergraduate – French Language Program in Versailles, France, Middle East Political Science and religion program to Israel, Greece, Kenya and Tanzania, and an exchange program in China – described the lasting impact of study abroad:

It definitely shaped my world view and made me want to spend more time abroad and learn additional languages, which I did. The study abroad program was the single most valuable experience I had at Furman. I agree with David Shi [former president of Furman University] that every single Furman Student should go on at least one study abroad. I feel so strongly about this that I would go so far as to say that you cannot have a complete liberal arts education or become the kind of citizen Furman is so good at developing without experiencing a foreign culture over a period of months. Of the three foreign studies I did, living with a host family in France was far and away the most impactful, rewarding and life changing. Prolonged human interaction with another culture is most critical. I am a real estate attorney and I regularly conduct closings in French and Spanish. I am also able to develop business and connect with clients as a result of my familiarity with foreign cultures.

A female graduate of 2003 who majored in English and participated in the Furman faculty-led study abroad program to the Middle East explained the lasting impact of study abroad in this way:

Since graduating Furman, I have traveled abroad short term to Mexico, Peru, and Africa. All of these service-oriented trips have furthered my appreciation for other cultures and broadened my sense of what is happening in the world. These trips have also helped me see my life differently here in the states, how I spend my time, how I spend my money, etc. I am a counselor so traveling abroad has helped to broaden my perspectives on suffering, perseverance, and other challenges associated with living in 3rd world countries. Cross-cultural communication and experiences helps you to listen attentively and learn other modes of communication like body language which is helpful in therapy. The most helpful tool in traveling abroad is relating to other cultures here...having patience with those who don't speak English as their first language or those who were not born in the U.S. but working here. Also appreciating all of the privileges we have here in the States.

A male graduate of 1998 participated in the England and Western Europe program that focused on the European Union and economics. He described the impact on his career:

On the ground experience in Europe has been critical in my career as an investment manager. Financial markets are global, and you must understand that property rights, worker attitudes, and local regulation have a big impact on business and productivity, and, therefore, investment returns. Foreign study helped me realize this, and prioritize this in the investment process. Also, being well-travelled is a huge asset in business, from a professional standpoint (your knowledgebase/worldliness) to simply networking and

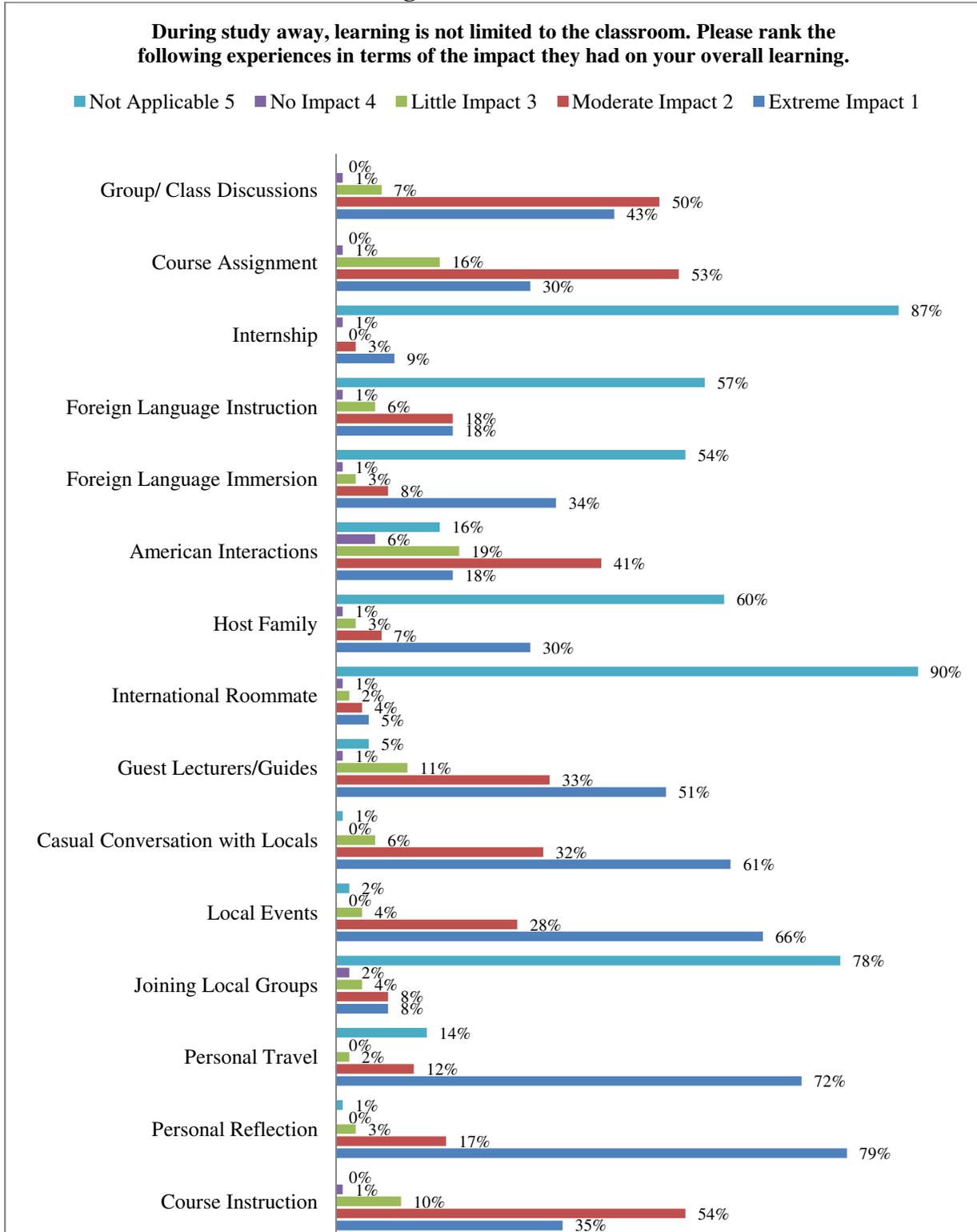
helping start casual conversations. Lastly, I'd say that foreign study (and my employment overseas after graduation, which was prompted by my foreign study) was a key component that differentiated my resume for every job and grad-school position I applied for. Again, foreign study is among the greatest decisions I ever made, and I could probably go on for much longer about the benefits, but these are the top that come to mind. A short program (like the 3 weeks I see in the next question) is definitely better than nothing, but I think you really need 2-3 months outside your home country.

A female graduate of 2000 who majored in Spanish with a concentration in Latin American studies participated in two faculty-led study abroad programs while attending Furman: Costa Rica Spanish Language and Culture program and Israel, Greece and Italy Biblical Archaeology and Italian Renaissance program. She described how she has applied her experience to her life and career:

I have used my Spanish-language skills directly in three of my jobs--working with a missions agency in Latin America, teaching Spanish at the high school level, and now taking my university students on cross-cultural experiences to Latin America. The benefits of being able to cope with travel and the irregularities of life in developing countries have served me immensely as I lived overseas for about 5+ years (in total) on different continents. Currently, I'm on a professional leave from university and am volunteer teaching at college in Malawi. It's unlikely that I ever would have had the skills to do this had I not first started my overseas experiences at Furman. I am immensely grateful for the opportunities that Furman provided.

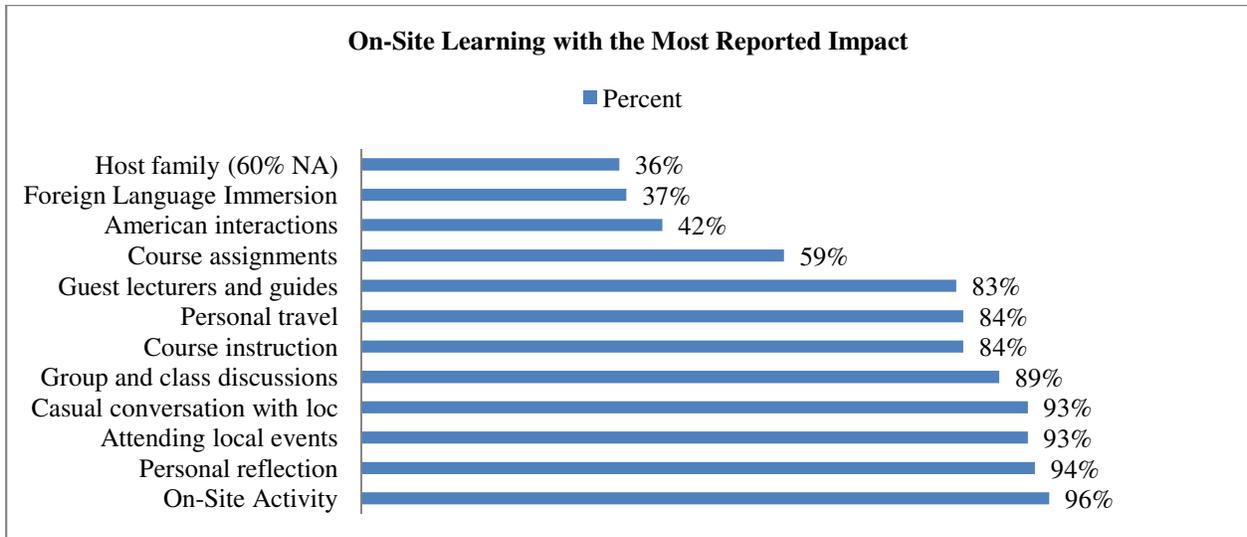
On-Site Learning

Table 7: Results for On-Site Learning



In this section, respondents were asked to rate the impact of traditional classroom and non-traditional experiences on their learning (see table 7). The next table displays the types of learning respondents found most impactful as indicated by their rating of extreme or moderate impact (see Table 8).

Table 8: On-Site Learning with the Most Reported Impact



Joining local groups or clubs, having an international roommate and participating in an internship were noted as not applicable to the majority of participants.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The survey response rate was approximately 20%. Those who responded reflect the demographics of Furman’s study abroad participants provided by the Registrar. The ratio of female to male alumni respondents (2:1) was the same gender ratio for the entire study group. Similarly, the racial background of participants in Furman’s study abroad programs has been predominantly Caucasian which is consistent with the results of the alumni survey; only 8% identified themselves as having a race other than Caucasian. The average response rate for each graduation year was 16%. Years in which a higher number of students studied abroad corresponded with a higher yield in responses. Some programs were offered on a biennial basis,

so looking at data over ten years provided a more accurate representation of programs. The alumni respondents had a wide mix of undergraduate majors and participated in a variety of Furman faculty-led programs. There were 37% who participated in a full-immersion language program to one of eight host destinations, and 63% participated in a study tour to multiple destinations.

The majority of the respondents (73%) have gone on to earn a master's degree or higher, and 86% are employed making the results of the survey relevant to my quest to understand the impact of study abroad on the careers of alumni. The 11% who identified as homemakers had either been employed in the past or could relate their study abroad experience to their life choices making their responses fully relevant.

The category of international experience is extremely broad and may be interpreted in many ways. I want to reiterate that the results are not an exhaustive demonstration of the international experience Furman alumni have had; the results represent the most significant international experiences that respondents felt compelled to share. Indeed, some respondents explained that they had had so many international experiences that they did not know what to mention in a short list. Most notable were the 23 individuals who mentioned leading students on study abroad programs of their own, 12 individuals who had been on mission trips, and 6 individuals who served as Peace Corps volunteers. 34% of alumni have lived abroad for some period of time; working, studying, or volunteering, and many of these individuals have gone abroad on multiple occasions for short periods of time. Some alumni reported that they would encourage their own children to study abroad one day and that they had already taken their family back to their study abroad site to share the experience with them. In addition to those who

specified they had worked abroad, many reported having worked in the United States for a multinational company or on multicultural teams.

Most of the respondents found that skills they improved while studying abroad have proven beneficial in their lives and careers. At the top of the list of skills that were most cultivated by studying abroad were adaptability, tolerance for ambiguity and stress, problem solving, integration into new social groups and the ability to communicate across barriers. Respondents related this mix of cross-cultural and interpersonal skills to preparation for their career. They reported having an advantage in the job hunt because of their overseas studies, and specifically, to the ability to communicate across cultures, speak a foreign language, or be able to navigate physically and culturally in a new place.

Many alumni reported that their study abroad experience is still useful and relevant in their career. They draw upon their experience for anecdotal evidence, use their time abroad to remember how it felt to be a foreigner (empathy), work in a multicultural team, or work internationally. Further, alumni associated benefits of studying abroad with the way they deal with everyday situations such as speaking Spanish with immigrants, teaching school children, and passing wisdom down to their offspring. One skill that I did not ask respondents to rank but which came up frequently in the open-ended responses was travel competency or the ability to navigate in a new place. Many respondents described their ability to navigate in a foreign setting, a transferrable skill applicable to traveling for work, relocating, and having confidence to go somewhere new for personal travel.

I was surprised that the rating for ability to cope with difficulty and rejection and negotiation skills (35% and 33% respectively) were so low since the majority of alumni spent time in countries where English was not the native language and would have encountered

communication barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and situations requiring more persistence and patience. However, one explanation may be related to having a group mentality and the ability to rely on the expert faculty director, debriefing sessions, or local guides to help participants feel less of a need to negotiate or deal with rejection. Additionally, I believe these skills are difficult to master in general. As participants, the alumni dealt with difficult situations, rejection, misunderstandings, communication barriers, and other challenges which would have required perseverance, coping skills, and possibly negotiation. Another explanation may be avoidance of these skills due to the faculty-led model and the comfort of being in a foreign place with others who help with navigation, communication and negotiations. Indeed, forty percent of alumni who were in more independent situations such as exchange programs and foreign language acquisition programs, reported at least a moderate extent of development in their ability to deal with rejection.

Of the three categories (skills, attitudes, and understanding), alumni reported the most influence on their attitudes. In particular, respondents noted that they had gained appreciation for their host country, other cultures, and being open to different perspectives. A significant amount of respondents reported that they changed their attitudes regarding their home country and its politics, economics, education, and treatment of foreigners. The study abroad courses themselves may have been more focused on highlighting differences and improving understanding of a certain area rather than on making comparisons to the United States. The comparisons may have been made during personal or class reflections and did not play a dominant role in the academics. Even so, most alumni noted that their attitudes were influenced across the board. It is the point of the study abroad experience to introduce students the three top ranked concepts: understanding the host country, other cultures, and other perspectives.

Aside from the Likert scale list of attitudes, respondents also mentioned increased confidence in themselves, their ability to speak a foreign language, their ability to navigate in a new place, and in their cross-cultural communication skills. Alumni mentioned empathy, compassion, and the ability to relate to others which have had a direct effect on the respondents' careers in terms of the way they manage or work in multicultural and multinational teams.

The extent to which study abroad influenced participants' understanding is related to the results for attitudes as well. Respondents noted that their understanding increased the most regarding different cultures and customs, gaining a better understanding of oneself, and understanding the complexity of culture. Their understanding of topics peripheral to their studies also tended to increase by mere exposure to their host countries. For example, more than half of all respondents noted that their understanding of a foreign government, economic system, and educational system had improved as a result of studying abroad. Fewer participants felt that studying abroad had increased their understanding of their own government, economic system and educational systems, which again may be attributed to the academic theme of the program differing from the questions I asked. Those who noted an improved understanding of systems and customs inherent in the United States were predominantly students who had participated in a program focused on economics or political science. Those least likely to mention an improved understanding of customs had participated in a science program to a field station where they were isolated from the mainstream culture.

The section in the survey dedicated to on-site learning captured the essence of engaged learning at Furman. Furman has a long tradition of experiential education and vocational reflection. The survey results reflect Furman's heavy emphasis on reflection with 96% of alumni respondents crediting it with the most impact on their learning abroad. Another hallmark of the

faculty-led model at Furman is the emphasis on attending local events with relevance to the academic topic. Local events such as attending theatre productions during the theatre program in the United Kingdom had a large impact on respondents' learning. Alumni ranked course instruction, class discussions and guest lecturers high in terms of their impact on student learning abroad, and I think that is a direct result of the linked course model that Furman promotes.

The learning and preparation for a study abroad program started well in advance of travel during prerequisite courses and continued upon return during subsequent courses with the faculty leaders of study abroad. Study abroad was not a disjointed experience at Furman ten to twenty years ago. It fit into the curriculum seamlessly, satisfying requirements in the major or minor and for the general education requirements of the university, and being led by quality members of Furman's faculty. Students received letter grades which were factored into their grade point average for participation in faculty-led study abroad courses. Students were selected for participation by the sponsoring departments and were held accountable for prerequisite course work and activities. Familiar faculty, links to the curriculum, accountability, and interest in topical studies attracted students who were academically motivated and inspired by their study abroad professors. Students entered the study abroad program familiar with the course instructor, classmates, and the topic of study.

Alumni who participated in a full-immersion language program ranked the host family experience and foreign language instruction as having a tremendous impact on their learning. Host families are a characteristic of the full-immersion language programs whereas students on study tours reside primarily in hotels or dormitory-style housing. Those students in host family settings have easier access to the local community, traditions, and language than do the students who rely heavily on the course instructor and guides to share cultural tidbits. Even so, there was

little difference between the language alumni and the study tour alumni in terms of what impacted their on-site learning the most. I found it surprising that very few students joined a local group or club to meet with locals and find a way into the community. This may be a result of the Furman faculty-led model and its insular effect on participants, or it may be due to the frequency of site changes during the study tours, language barriers, and difficulty finding an appropriate group to join.

Within the ranked question sections, alumni overwhelmingly reported that they had developed skills, adjusted their attitude and gained a broader knowledge. I found evidence of higher-level thinking in the alumni's written responses to questions in which they were prompted to provide examples of the applicability of their study abroad experience beyond Furman University, and to describe direct or indirect benefits. It was clear that studying abroad had a lasting impact on the majority of the respondents. Most had no problem citing examples of relevance and benefits to their careers and lives today.

I expected to see more comments from dissatisfied alumni or alumni who had no perceived benefits, but those results were minimal and accounted for only 2% of all responses. The two individuals who identified themselves as having Swedish citizenship, for example, tended not to find the questions applicable or did not find the experience as rewarding as their American counterparts, possibly because their four-year experience in the United States was more significant in time and impact than a short program abroad. One of these Swedish individuals explained, "I grew up in Sweden and travelled extensively pre and post foreign study- can't pinpoint anything in particular I learned while on foreign study." An American male respondent self-identified as "an army brat [who] lived in Germany for nine years before the age of fourteen". This individual indicated that he did not gain new skills while studying abroad. A

similar theme of prior travel experience taking away from the overall impact of study abroad was echoed in one other respondent's explanation:

I had already traveled a lot before Furman so there was really nothing new, but for someone who had never travelled, that would certainly be the benefit. Going with a professor who has real experience in a country, both in their studies but actually being there and knowing the people really can expand the impact. My professors had the intellectual knowledge but did not have the relationships that I know some other professors have and can bring to their students. That is really the key is to have professors who have real connections in the foreign study community...otherwise they are just tourists too. I actually delivered a connection at the University of Moscow that was as good as any connection the professors had. The professors today seem to be real good at academics and writing books, but professors who have connections and can actually deliver hands on learning are what Furman should try to deliver to its students.

Indeed, most respondents cited an influence on their career choice, seeking further international experience, or applying the lessons learned while studying abroad to the multicultural workplace. Perhaps Furman University, with its experiential emphasis on engaged learning, attract the type of student who will benefit from the faculty-led program model.

DISCUSSION

This alumni survey could be deployed to students from any type of university. I developed it to be general and not to cater to the faculty-led model. Results from various institutions may be different depending on the strengths and weaknesses of any given program. For a longitudinal study, the survey could be administered to students immediately upon completion of their program and then redistributed ten years later.

I was hoping to find evidence that study abroad alumni would be more likely to hire employees with a history of study abroad. In a hypothetical question, I asked alumni to indicate how important the following experiences are to them when evaluating candidates for hire: foreign language fluency, short-term vs. semester-length study abroad experience, internship. My results for whether study abroad is looked at favorably by employers did not support this statement because the question was not framed appropriately. Respondents felt compelled to provide additional comments to contextualize their responses and explain why study abroad did or did not matter to their particular company. The value that Furman alumni place on study abroad is evident in their descriptions of how they apply skills and knowledge developed during study abroad to their lives and careers, and in their desire to pass the knowledge down to their own children and others.

One suggestion that I would offer future faculty program directors based on my findings is that programs should incorporate the valuable and salient types of non-traditional learning that occur on study abroad programs into their learning goals and outcomes. Most faculty abroad are concerned with teaching and testing material related to a specific academic topic; however, the study abroad experience tends to be described by alumni as formative because of the myriad opportunities for exposure to the environment and its people outside of the classroom, and faculty would be wise to seize the opportunity to guide students development by asking them to reflect on the experience at large as it is happening.

By and large, Furman's study abroad alumni have gained salient transferrable skills and understanding that have been personally and professionally beneficial to them while also beneficial to the prosperity of the contemporary global marketplace. The results of this study can be incorporated into numerous strategies for marketing the study abroad program. The research

findings will be turned into reports and presentations for the university and shared with the marketing department. The preliminary results were referenced in a NAFSA conference presentation and will be used for future collaboration with colleagues from other institutions. The marketing department will publish a story on my findings and will use some of the results in marketing materials promoting the university and the study abroad program. Furman's career office is looking for a way to bridge the gap between study abroad and career potential and plans to collaborate with the study abroad office to incorporate the findings from this study into a career advising workshop. The office for institutional research at Furman will be able to help me refine the survey and increase the response rate by combining it with ongoing efforts to survey alumni. Parents and high school counselors who visit the university on prospective student days may be influenced to send students to Furman upon hearing about the lasting impact of Furman faculty-led study abroad programs. This study will be turned into a longitudinal study and the same survey will be distributed to students returning from study abroad and again ten years later. The preliminary results have already been incorporated into a mandatory study abroad advising workshop and will be referenced during student advising meetings. By highlighting the benefits and impact reported by alumni, prospective participants can reflect on their own goals for their learning while abroad and will hopefully incorporate those ideas into compelling study abroad applications.

Recommendations for further research

Any type of summative assessment can be improved. The field of education abroad is currently working on developing and testing various instruments to measure learning, intercultural aptitude, and the value of studying abroad (Armstrong, 1984; Deardorff, 2008; Dwyer, 2004; Hansel, 2008). This study was based on desirable career attributes that should be

developed during study abroad, but more research is needed to draw conclusions about job preparedness of study abroad alumni compared to alumni who did not study abroad. A comparison study determining the benefits of a faculty-led study abroad program as opposed to a third-party provider program or exchange programs would also be helpful. Furthermore, research is needed to determine whether a study abroad and internship combination program provides more benefit than a traditional study abroad program.

Conclusion:

The results of the alumni survey have provided positive feedback that will be useful to the university in the promotion of study abroad and experiential learning. Respondents reported that having an international experience related to coursework and led by faculty members who prepare them and help them process the experience has led to many lasting benefits. Respondents reported increased levels of confidence navigating new surroundings, being open to new perspectives and ideas, accepting and desiring to understand diverse peoples, and adapting to new surroundings and situations. These skills and concepts are transferrable to domestic and international environments such as moving to a new town, working with a multinational team or for a multinational corporation, and acting as an ambassador for places studied. Meaning making and self-authorship have resulted as alumni have reflected on their study abroad experiences while abroad and in the time since they have graduated. Other learning outcomes include comparisons, synthesis, and finding new depths of understanding and appreciation of cultures, peoples, values, and systems, and evidence that these outcomes had been achieved was apparent in the open-ended responses which also demonstrated maturity, applicability to current careers, and personal benefits. In conclusion, the faculty-led study abroad program at Furman University has had a lasting impact on alumni.

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APPENDIX A

Furman Study Away Alumni Survey

Hello, and thank you for your interest in participating in this questionnaire. My name is Nancy Georgiev, and I am a graduate student at School for International Training, and the Assistant Director of Study Away and International Education at Furman University. I am studying the impact of study away on Furman alumni. This questionnaire is anonymous, your participation is optional, and you can withdraw at any time. Choosing to complete the survey acknowledges your consent to participate.

You will need 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Please feel free to contact me at nancy.georgiev@furman.edu with any questions.

- Gender *
- Race/Ethnicity
- Country of Citizenship *
- If you hold dual citizenship, please indicate your second country of citizenship.
- Do you currently live abroad? *
- Year of Graduation from Furman *
- Majors and/ or minors at Furman University? *
- Highest Level of Education Obtained *
- Employment Status
Are you currently.....? *
- Select the study away program you participated in while attending Furman University. If you attended more than one program or can't find the program that best identifies the program you participated in, please use the comment box to explain. *
- Comments: (List additional study away programs that you participated in as a Furman University student).
- What was the primary language of instruction when you were studying away as a Furman student? *

Chinese, English, French, German, Spanish, Other

- Comments: (If you participated in more than one program, please comment on the primary language of instruction for each program.)
- Duration of the study away program(s) you participated in while attending Furman University.
Check All That Apply *

Fall Semester - 12 weeks Winter Semester - 7 weeks Spring Semester - 12 weeks Summer Full academic year I don't remember

- What was your primary living arrangement while studying away? *
- Comments: (If you participated in more than one program, please indicate primary living arrangement for each.)

On-site Learning

During study away, learning is not limited to the classroom. Please rank the following experiences in terms of the impact they had on your overall learning.*

	Extreme impact	Moderate impact	Little impact	No impact	Not applicable
Course instruction	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Group/class discussions	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Course assignments, projects, research, reflection papers	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Internship	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Foreign language instruction	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Foreign language immersion	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Interactions with other American students	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Host family	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
International roommate	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Guest lecturers/ tour guides	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Casual conversation/interaction with locals	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Attending local events (e.g. performances, festivals, community service)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Joining local groups, organizations, clubs, sports, fitness	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Personal travel	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Personal reflection	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Have you done any of the following since graduating from Furman University and for how long (cumulative length of time abroad):

*

	less than 6 months	6 months - 1 year	1 - 2 years	2 - 5 years	more than 5 years	Not applicable
Studied abroad	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Worked abroad	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

On-site Learning

During study away, learning is not limited to the classroom. Please rank the following experiences in terms of the impact they had on your overall learning. *

	Extreme impact	Moderate impact	Little impact	No impact	Not applicable
Volunteered abroad	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6
Lived abroad	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6
Hosted an exchange student in your home	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6
Kept in touch with your host family (from studying away on a Furman program)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6

To what extent did your Furman Study Away experience help you develop the following skills: *

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little extent	Not at all	Not applicable
Problem solving ability	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Tolerance for ambiguity	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Tolerance for stress	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Adaptability	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Team Work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to work in a multicultural group	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to integrate into a new social group	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to work in a multi-lingual environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to communicate across barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to cope with difficulty and rejection	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Ability to speak a foreign language	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Negotiation skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

To what extent did your Furman Study Away experience influence your attitude *

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little extent	Not at all	Not applicable
Toward your host country	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward the United States	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward immigrants to the United States	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward other cultures	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward learning a second language	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward being open to different perspectives	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Toward economic inequality	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

To what extent did participation in a Furman Study Away program help you increase your: *

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little extent	Not at all	Not applicable
Understanding of a culture different from your own	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of your own culture	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of customs different from your own	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of your own society's customs	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of the complexity of culture	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of a government system different from your own	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of your country's government system	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of an economic structure different from your own	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of your own country's economic structure	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of an educational system different than your own	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

To what extent did participation in a Furman Study Away program help you increase your: *

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	To little extent	Not at all	Not applicable
Understanding of the educational system(s) in your own country	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Understanding of yourself	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- In what ways have you been able to apply skills or knowledge you gained during study away to your life or career? Please provide some examples. *
- Please describe any direct or indirect career benefits you gained from studying away
- Please identify additional international experiences you have had that could be linked to your study away experience (e.g. Rotary Club, returning to visit your study away site(s), changing your major/career path, hosting an exchange student, looking for work abroad, etc.)
-

If you had to capacity to hire an employee, indicate how important the following experiences are to you when evaluating candidates for hire:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	Not applicable
Fluency in a foreign language	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
International semester-long internship	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
Semester-length study abroad program	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
3 week study abroad program	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6