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# Effects of the Omrit Project on Student and Alumni Participants from Macalester College

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## **Abstract**

As participation in short-term study abroad programs increases, practitioners seek to understand the effects of these programs not just in terms of increasing participation in study abroad, but also with an emphasis on understanding the effects of these programs on student learning. Some research indicates that program design, rather than length, determines a successful experience abroad; however, the literature also reveals concern that there is not enough data to understand the impact of short-term programs on student learning and that much of the available research is too focused on immediate rather than longer lasting effects.

This paper reports on a research study conducted with Macalester College students and alumni who participated in a short-term, faculty-led summer program in northern Israel, the Omrit Project. The Omrit Project began in 1999 and was designed and continues to be led by faculty members in the Classics Department at Macalester College. This research study was designed to understand the effects of this program on Macalester College students and graduates. The program's effects were studied using an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach in which participants were invited to complete a survey, after which a number of qualitative interviews were conducted to provide additional depth to the quantitative findings. Study participants attributed to the Omrit Project substantial contributions to learning in the areas of disciplinary learning, self-awareness, cultural learning and applied experience. Results identify the program's strengths as well as activities that are particularly effective in supporting student learning. While this study is limited in scope to Macalester students and alumni participating in this particular program, it augments the growing amount of information related to short-term, faculty-led programs and suggests areas for further research.