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Strategic Study Abroad: A Program Proposal for Continued Faith Development of Chi Alpha Students Studying Abroad

Erin Leonard
SIT Graduate Institute

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Strategic Study Abroad: A Program Proposal for Continued Faith Development of
Chi Alpha Students Studying Abroad

Erin Lee Leonard
PIM 73

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, U.S.A.

May 2015

Advisor: Dr. Raymond Young
Abstract

With around 28,000 individual participants, Chi Alpha is a diverse network of Christian students on U.S. college campuses. By regularly meeting in groups and collectively reaching out to the community, students develop their faith and build lasting relationships.

Faith development is an integral part of Chi Alpha students’ lives. Yet, because community is an important aspect in faith development, studying abroad can cause challenges. Students expressed missing accessible Christian peer support and mentorship while abroad. They further expressed disconnection from their faith and felt their spirituality had declined while studying abroad.

As study abroad participation has been increasing over the past decade, the Chi Alpha executive ministry team turned new attention towards programming for study abroad students. A faith development program to operate concurrently with a student’s study abroad program was created. In relation to its name, Strategic Study Abroad aims to motivate Chi Alpha students to be strategic, not separating their cross-cultural learning experience from their beliefs, but engage their faith into the learning experience.

Keywords: experiential learning theory, faith development theory, Chi Alpha, Assemblies of God, study abroad
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Erin Leonard

May 17, 2015
For all who encouraged and supported me through my education journey. Special thanks to my mother, Sandra Leonard, and to my friend and mentor, Patricia Welle.
May 17, 2015

Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, U.S.A.
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Dear Executive Ministry Team:

In the spring of 2015, the U.S. Department of State announced the formation of a new study abroad branch. This is a significant testament to the growing number of students studying abroad each year. With approximately 28,000 students participating in Chi Alpha on U.S. campuses, more and more of these will be planning to go abroad during their undergraduate studies. The question becomes what can we do to help these students remain in the Christian community while abroad? I believe the answer is to enhance Strategic Study Abroad.

The Director of Chi Alpha Expeditions has done an excellent job in conceptualizing the idea of Strategic Study Abroad. However, lack of resources and time has not allowed him to build a framework for the ministry. Thus, I have taken the initiative to develop the following program proposal. My hope is that you will consider it carefully for full implementation and allocate resources towards the program. I would furthermore be honored to help in its development.

Through your review, please consider these two statements from Chi Alpha students:

“I think that I became dependent, to an extent, on the constant edification and accountability that comes with being part of Chi Alpha community. When I went to India, it was the first time in a long time that I no longer had a small group or an accountability partner or a mentor. My commitment to my faith waned a little…I let myself go a little bit”. –Survey Respondent 1, U.S.

“When I have traveled for extended periods before I felt like it was very easy to get disconnected from my faith, and I hope to avoid that in the future” –Survey Respondent 7, U.S.

In relation to its name, Strategic Study Abroad aims to motivate Chi Alpha students to be strategic about their faith development and engagement in the community while studying abroad. The goal of the Strategic Study Abroad is that students will not disengage, but rather apply their Christian beliefs to their cross-cultural learning experience.

Thank you for your consideration of implementing the following program proposal.

Best,

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Strategic Study Abroad: A Program Proposal for Continued Faith Development of Chi Alpha Students Studying Abroad

Introduction

“When I have traveled for extended periods before, I felt like it was very easy to get disconnected from my faith, and I hope to avoid that in the future.” This statement made by a Chi Alpha student expresses a timely concern of Chi Alpha ministry leaders. As more students are studying abroad each year, there is a greater need to keep students engaged in faith development while off campus. How to accomplish this was given considerable consideration, and the Strategic Study Abroad (SSA) was conceptualized.

Currently, SSA is a national initiative from the Chi Alpha executive ministry team. It is under the scope of Chi Alpha Expeditions, which is the cross-cultural missions umbrella of Chi Alpha. Chi Alpha Expeditions is charged with the task of inspiring students to be missional by encouraging students to give to cross-cultural missions, pray for missionaries, welcome international students, and go on service-learning trips.

The initial goal of Strategic Study Abroad was to encourage students to grow within their faith and share it with others while abroad. This would be done through connecting students with a local missionary, church leader, or student ministry. The Chi Alpha Expeditions Director began to develop this small network, and then built a webpage to publish it (see appendix B for a snapshot). However, not having support staff, along with a lack of a programmatic framework, has kept the initiative from moving beyond anything more than a networking tool. Thus, the following proposal was built for a learner-centric program for Chi Alpha Students. It is designed to provide a structured support for students towards continued faith development while abroad, and run concurrently with their university’s study abroad program.
Background

Chi Alpha is “a national organization of students in higher education who unite to express the person and claims of Jesus Christ to their campus communities and call others into relationship with Him” (Gaylor, 2012, p. 5). They are deeply missional, seeking to share the Christian faith to everyone (regardless of race, gender, religion, etc.) on campus. This might include campus events and inviting individual students to small group discussions. Chi Alpha groups, though outward reaching, are built upon a framework of community. In this way Chi Alpha groups are welcoming, but focused. These community foci are: worship, prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and mission. Each Chi Alpha group is self-governing, self-funding, and self-perpetuating. Each group is chartered and affiliated. Currently over 300 college campuses have a chartered group, including places like American University, Kent State, and UCLA. See appendix C for organizational structure chart and http://www.chialpha.com/directory/combined.html for a listing of universities that have groups.

Chi Alpha is also a movement. Chi Alpha’s Executive Director made this bold statement during an all staff meeting. Later that day, he stated that around 30,000 students in the U.S. all united by the same philosophy and goal matched the very definition of a movement. According to Merriam Webster’s online dictionary (2015), a movement is “a series of organized activities working toward an objective; an organized effort to promote or attain an end.” Chi Alpha students and leaders all are committed to a relationship with Jesus Christ and actively work to extend the invitation for others on their campus to experience the same encounter with Christ. This is the movement. It is missional and relational. Chi Alpha groups are the vehicles in which they seek to reach their objective.
Because Chi Alpha students are intensely dedicated to their Christian beliefs, a program that allows its students to process their cross-cultural interactions abroad within the context of their beliefs has enormous potential. Chi Alpha is uniquely positioned to begin this type of program because of its affiliation with the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God (A/G) was founded as a missions organization that currently has 67,512,302 adherents, 366,105 churches, and 384,205 ministers worldwide. (Assemblies of God, 2015, p. 1) Strategic Study Abroad will tap into this network to find Christian connections for students studying abroad, wherever they may be.

**Program Overview & Rationale**

While proposed as a program, Strategic Study Abroad is not really a program at all. There is no credit offered, no required work, and participation is voluntary and by interest level. Students will have a tremendous amount of freedom to shape their own faith development plan while abroad; and Chi Alpha’s goal is to come alongside them and help them succeed. Obviously this raises questions. What will Strategic Study Abroad actually do? And, why?

Despite not being a credit-bearing program, SSA will provide the structure that young adults need for their faith to mature. It will do this by: 1) connecting Chi Alpha students with a local Christian leader where they plan to study abroad, 2) connecting Chi Alpha students to other students with the same Christian beliefs studying abroad at the same time, 3) challenging Chi Alpha students to continue reaching out to the community while they are abroad, and 4) by being a caring resource for each individual through each stage of studying abroad (pre-departure, while abroad, and re-entry).

For Chi Alpha students, whose worldview emphasizes living in community, serving, and reaching out, SSA ensures that these core elements will continue. The next Theoretical
Foundation section will expand on the reasons why a faith development program like SSA is necessary. To set up understanding, though, consider this example:

Bethany plays the violin and practices every day. When going abroad for a semester, she needed to make a decision as to whether to pack her violin or leave it at home. Not wanting to pay the extra baggage fee, she left it in the United States. Leaving her violin at home meant she will get rusty and need to spend a considerable amount of time practicing later to regain the same skill-set she had when she left. However, if Bethany had decided to take her violin with her, she could have continued practicing while abroad and kept improving her skills. Still, she would need to make a conscious choice to practice while abroad.

For many Chi Alpha students, Christian spirituality is like Bethany’s violin. It requires a disciplined approach to develop knowledge and deep awareness of themselves and God. For them that commitment is expressed through dedication to personal Bible readings and prayer, active participation in a community of people with these shared beliefs and goals, and living a missional life sharing Jesus with others. Chi Alpha envisions Strategic Study Abroad to be the vessel that makes taking the violin on the airplane, as an analogy, a viable possibility for students. Not only this, but SSA can also help Bethany meet other violinists abroad.

Furthermore, studying abroad can typically cause a cognitive dissonance between a student’s current worldview and a new construct of reality. According to Sharon Parks (1986), this is a crisis, or a hallmarked point of time in which a student moves from one cognitive, behavioral, or faith developmental stage to the next. As Chi Alpha recognizes and anticipates these learning stages, the leadership can help mentor their students more effectively through their experiences.
The hope of Strategic Study Abroad is that students will come back to their home college or university not having lost momentum, but rather enriched, having applied their Christian beliefs to the cross-cultural learning experience. In relation to its name, Strategic Study Abroad aims to engage Chi Alpha students to be strategic about their faith development and their engagement in the community while studying abroad.

**Theoretical Foundation**

Strategic Study Abroad (SSA) was developed out of a perceived need to continue caring for Chi Alpha students and to challenge them to be strategic about their interactions within the community during their semester abroad experience. However, that need must be legitimized through a theoretical framework. The following section attempts to do just that by utilizing experiential learning, stage development, and faith development theories to make a case. Based on a review of relevant literature, little to no theoretical development existed where faith intersects with experiential learning abroad. Thus, the following section works to build that theoretical foundation.

**Merging Experiential Learning and Faith Development**

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), as stated by Passarelli and Kolb (2012) is “a dynamic view of learning based on a learning-cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action-reflection and experience-conceptualization” (p. 138). Simply put, ELT is the idea that understanding occurs when reflecting upon actions. Furthermore, knowledge is gained from constructing an idea, or theory, about the world from the experience and then testing that theory.

Experiential learning theory seems to perfectly match with immersion experience abroad. However, to automatically equate the two would not be correct. Just as a house and its
foundation are not the same thing, study abroad and experiential learning are not the same thing. Many well-meaning educators get trapped in this misconception. They might think that mere experiences abroad will automatically generate a transformative learning experience, but they do not. (Vande Berg, Paige, Heming Lou, 2012). John Dewey, a founding voice in experiential education, challenges this assumption. “‘Activity that is not checked…may be temporarily enjoyed. But intellectually it leads nowhere.’…Moreover, while true education is always rooted in experience, not all experiences have equal educational merit” (Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich, 2002, p. 44). Here is the critical point of experiential learning: experience must be accompanied by moments of meaningful reflection in order to be transformative and knowledge producing. For study abroad programing, this means incorporating strategic activities that involve reflection upon the immersion experience. Without reflective opportunities, studying abroad is not experiential learning.

Why is Experiential Learning Theory important to the theoretical foundation for Strategic Study Abroad? There are two explicit reasons. First, experiential learning involves engaging the whole individual, in both experiences and reflection; engaging the whole person includes their beliefs and worldview. Second, faith development is closely paired with Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle.

Regarding involving the whole individual, Kolb directly stated, “educating is holistic” (Passareli & Kolb, 2012, p. 149). If operating under the common assumption that religion is one piece of an individual’s identity, then it is important to consider when building a holistic learning environment. Most would agree this is true. However, there is an element of religion that is more than one piece of an individual, but an integral portion; that is his or her construct of faith.
The originator of faith development theory, James Fowler (1981), holds claim that faith is actually the central glue that holds the rest of the pieces of identity together.

Linguistically, faith and religion are distinct from each other. While religion is what an individual adheres to that match their convictions and constructs of existence, faith is the activity of building those constructs. As stated by both Parks and Fowler, it is the act of making meaning. Sharon Parks (1986) further explains this:

“Faith is often linked exclusively to belief, particularly religious belief. But faith goes far beyond religious belief, parochially understood. Faith is more adequately recognized as the activity of seeking and composing meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience. Faith is a broad generic human phenomenon. To be human is to dwell in faith, to dwell in one’s meaning—one’s conviction of the ultimate character of truth, or self, of world, of cosmos” (xv).

Furthermore, Fowler (1981) defined the word ‘faith’ by exposing the root statement of “I trust, I commit myself, I rest my heart upon, I pledge allegiance” (p. 16). He then stated, “Our commitments and trusts shape our identities” (p. 18). Combining these two statements would look like this: faith shapes our identities. If Fowler and Parks are correct, then faith should not be an afterthought when building a holistic learning environment, but be centrally built into the learning environment. What this would look like in a non-religious study abroad program needs further exploration and suggestions for implementation. However, broad questions like ‘How did your experience impact how you view the world?’ might help a student conceptualize their faith, or their way of ‘making-meaning’. For Strategic Study Abroad, building faith development into the study abroad experience is a critical part of the program’s existence. SSA will help to fill the existing gaps in faith development support by allowing Chi Alpha students
the opportunity to ask themselves life’s critical questions about meaning within their cross-cultural experiences and within their beliefs.

The second consideration as to why ELT is important to making a case for Strategic Study Abroad is that faith can directly be correlated to Kolb’s experiential learning cycle. Kolb’s learning cycle was described by Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002): “In order to transform experience into knowledge, learners must begin with their own concrete experience, then engage in reflective observation, move to a stage of abstract conceptualization, in which they begin to comprehend the experience, and then engage in active experimentation of the concepts” (p. 45). That is, the individual purposefully invests into learning by engaging themselves into the process of experience and reflection, observation and knowing.

The important theme in Kolb’s learning cycle is that the experiential learning process is the art of creating understanding from experiences, or conceptualization, which is consistent with Fowler and Parks’ construct of faith. Both theorists agree that faith is ‘meaning-making’. That is, faith is the universal part of a learner’s life that seeks to create meaning for the self in relation to the world. What is conceptualization and reflection on an experience, but none other than an act of making meaning of an experience? As a learner engages himself or herself in the process of experiential learning, they are in a sense enacting their faith and creating meaning. As a faith development program, Strategic Study Abroad would provide a structural support when conceptualizing meaning. This would be done through the mentorship from a Christian leader in the host country, and through an online peer cohort designed to initiate discussion about the Christian faith in diverse practices.

It would be an injustice to not pause and ask a critical question relating to ELT and faith development: why wouldn’t a secular study abroad program, which incorporates broad faith
development in its curriculum, supplant the need for supplemental religiously-oriented faith-development based programming? I believe the answer is within Luttenman-Anguilar and Gingerich’s fourth principle of guiding experiential learning in study abroad: community.

Gordon Murray (1993) states, “For many students, testing ideas, engaging in dialogue, and sharing what they have learned with their peers is one of the most important aspects of the educational process.” (Luttenman-Anguilar & Gingerich, 2002, p. 62). Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) state, “It is not enough to simply ask students who participate in study abroad to engage in critical analysis and reflection on their own. Rather, this is something they must engage in with others” (p. 56). In the context of faith Helminiak (1996) states, “The paradox of spirituality is that its experience is personal and unique, but only finds its fullest manifestation in the context of an ever broadening, mutually supportive community (Love and Talbot, 1999, 366)”. Given the importance of group dialogue in the experiential learning process, especially as it pertains to faith development, then carefully developing the learning community is essential in study abroad.

For many Christian students, finding a community that will not just incorporate faith development, but will also teach them to think critically about their intercultural experiences within context of their specific beliefs, is extremely important. Chi Alpha students seek consistent teaching, and desire to purposefully incorporate the Bible and the knowledge from seasoned religious mentors into their daily experiences. Here is where a stable religious community is important. Given the appropriate resources, the student has an opportunity to not separate their beliefs and the cross-cultural experiential learning process, but integrate them. They will be able to understand cultural diversity in the Christian faith with consistent teaching.

It must be clarified that having a Christian community abroad does not displace the need
for interaction with others from different beliefs, nor should the student only connect with people of the same religious denomination. Rather, cross-cultural interaction should be strongly encouraged. A student cannot truly understand cultural and religious diversity without experiencing it. However, continued participation in a diverse Christian community allows the student the opportunity to process their external experiences with different faiths and conceptualize truth within the context of their beliefs. That is, they need to discover what diversity means in relation to their established beliefs. The goal of Strategic Study Abroad will be to provide connections with other Christian students and leaders who can act as a guidance and support; to be that community where a student can conceptualize answers through dialogue with others.

It must also be noted the individual always has the opportunity to change their beliefs as their faith develops. Chi Alpha will never dismiss a student because of core belief changes, but continue to help them process their faith development, ask critical thinking questions, and operate under its fourth reason for existence- caring. However, the student may still conclude that the Christian community is not conducive with their faith development anymore. This is not the desired outcome for Strategic Study Abroad, but it does recognize that this can happen. In this case, Chi Alpha will allow the student to end the program, and welcome their feedback and future communication.

**A Deeper Look at James Fowler’s Stages of Faith**

James Fowler’s faith development theory introduces ‘stages of faith’ in which an individual progresses through during their lifetime. The stages are all variant forms of faith structures, including: 1) one’s form of logic (influenced by Piaget), 2) one’s form of moral reasoning (influenced by Kohlberg), 3) one’s form of perspective taking, 4) one’s form of world
coherence, 5) one’s locus of authority, 6) the bounds of social awareness, and 7) the role of symbolic function. (Parker, 2009)

There are six stages (with a pre-stage) that address these changing structures of faith. All are hierarchal, assuming individual progression from a more simple state to more complex constructs in faith. The faith development stages are: Undifferentiated Faith (Infancy), Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood), Mythic-Literal Faith (School Aged Children), Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence), Individuative-Reflective (Young Adult), Conjunctive Faith (Mid-Life), and Universalizing Faith (Mid-Life and Beyond). (Stanard & Painter, 2004) Of the stages of faith development, the only ones that are applicable to a traditional young adult studying abroad are: Mythic-Literal (stage 2), Synthetic-Conventional (stage 3), and Individuative-Reflective (stage 4).

The first relevant stage to Strategic Study Abroad is the Mythic-Literal Faith stage (stage 2). Within this Mythic-Literal stage “the person begins to take on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community. Beliefs are appropriated with literal interpretations, as are moral rules and attitudes” (Fowler, 1981, p. 150). This is typical of many school-aged children and some early adolescents. Thus, it is unlikely that a Chi Alpha student would be within this stage of faith development. However, if a student is underdeveloped socially and cognitively, they could be at this stage. The transition to the next stage is typically precipitated by some sort of crisis, usually a conflict between their beliefs and alternative voices from authorities.

Most individuals in the Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage (stage 3) are adolescents. However, many adults may never develop beyond this stage. This happens when they are unable to synthesize their own identity. In this stage, “a person’s experience of the world now extends
beyond family. A number of spheres demand attention: family, school or work, peers, street society and media, and perhaps religion” (Fowler, 1981, p. 172). With regards to faith, it becomes an anchor of orientation in the middle of competing life aspects. Faith will bring together context and beliefs in order to establish identity and perspective. (Fowler, 1981) In other words how an adolescent views the world will become the anchor for every experience and relationship in his or her life. Chi Alpha students may be operating in this stage; however, it is more likely that they will be transitioning to the next stage (Individuative-Reflective).

In the Individuative-Reflective stage, the individual experiences intense conflicts. These include: “individuality versus being defined by a group or group membership; subjectivity and the power of one’s strong felt but unexamined feelings versus objectivity and the requirement of critical reflection; self-fulfillment or self-actualization as a primary concern versus service to and being for others; the question of being committed to the relative versus struggle with the possibility of an absolute” (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). These conflicts demonstrate an individual’s greater critical reflection upon meaning, and their attempts to orient their life around their constructs. The transition between this stage and the previous one is uniquely significant because the adolescent or young adult takes responsibility for his or her “commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes” (Stanard & Painter, 2004, p. 200). Chi Alpha students within this stage are attempting to bring balance to their life and orient it around their Christian beliefs that have developed out of their faith development process.

Lownsdale (1997) reported that “only about 1 in 6 respondents in Fowler's sample group reached Stage 5 of faith development, and it was not found before midlife” (Stanard & Painter, 2004, p. 200). Thus it is highly unlikely that a study abroad student would be in this stage or the succeeding stage. Therefore, their background will not be discussed. However, the two
following stages involve tense conflicts between clear logic and a complex life, then an acceptance of the paradoxes of life. (Stanard & Painter, 2004)

Although there are three applicable stages to a potential Strategic Study Abroad participant, it is most likely that the individual will be transitioning between stage 3 and 4. This means the typical student would be experiencing some crisis that is the conduit for development forward in their faith. Sharon Parks explored this time of transition and asserted that the lengthy transition between stage three and four was actually a stage within itself. This correlates with the lengthening time period of young adulthood. Whether a separate stage, or transition, we can build a theoretically based construct of what a typical Chi Alpha student would be:

The Strategic Study Abroad participant is likely someone who is in the midst of experiencing competing cultural norms and beliefs. Faith development becomes critical as they are looking for equilibrium in a chaotic world. Remembering the definition of faith as meaning-making, they are in the process of constructing ideas about the world and God in relation to their experiences. The SSA student is in the process of establishing their own identity, testing and expressing their Christian beliefs, and seeking out self-actualization.

**Sharon Park’s Young Adult**

Sharon Parks began her research working with James Fowler, and then became especially interested in young adult development. Her background with faith development, paired with a focus on the young adult, makes her research very important to the theoretical framework of Strategic Study Abroad. Furthermore, her stress of mentorship is important to note.

Parks (1986) describes four stages of life development: Adolescence/ Conventional,
Young Adult, Tested Adult, and Mature Adult. However, the substantial part of her theory describes segments for development loosely related to these four age-bound phases. These development areas are: Forms of Knowing, Forms of Dependence, and Forms of Community.

Throughout Forms of Knowing, the objective is the formation of reality. Typically in the adolescence stage, an individual knows what he or she knows because an authority says so. At one point the individual begins to realize that there is more than one form of reality, in which they enter the Unqualified Relativism stage. The third point of growth is when an individual moves into the Probing Commitment stage, in which the individual centers their reality on their future plans. The fourth stage is Tested Commitment, in which the individual’s commitments become more solidified, and the final stage is Convictional Commitment, in which an individual develops new deep commitments. (Parks, 1986) Strategic Study Abroad students could be either in the Unqualified Relativism stage or the Probing Commitment stage.

Forms of Dependence is a development cycle of four stages: Dependent/Counter-dependent, Fragile Inner-dependence, Confident Inner-dependence, and Interdependence. Beginning in the first stage of development, an individual relies on authorities for how they should feel until they begin to open up to the diverse opinions of others. At this second stage (Fragile Inner-dependence) the individual begins a balancing act between their own feelings and that of others. Moving into the next stage, the individual becomes more self-assured in their ability to shape their own destiny. Finally, the individual moves to Interdependence, in which the individual has a balanced perspective and is strongly confident. (Parks, 1986) Strategic Study Abroad students would most likely be in the Fragile Inner-dependence stage.

The Forms of Community stages demonstrate significant periods in which an individual has progressed from a limited community to more open interaction. The first of five stages,
Conventional Community, is where an individual first adopts the culture of their immediate family and/or close relationships. When the individual begins to change perspectives, and their identity becomes less centered on their immediate relationships, the individual enters the Diffuse Community Stage. Transitioning in to the Mentoring Community can be identified when the individual engages with communities that provide support as they distance themselves from their past. When an individual has strengthened his or her own beliefs and seek groups with similar values, it is indicative of the Self-selected Group stage. At the final stage, the individual becomes deeply aware of the values of others and seeks out groups that are diverse. (Parks, 1986) Strategic Study Abroad students would be either in the Diffuse Community Stage or beginning in the Mentoring Community stage.

The transition between stages is usually earmarked by some sort of crisis. Parks stresses the importance of imagination to move a person through development, and provides a framework for how that imagination channels development. First, the individual becomes aware of the conflict (Conscious Conflict), and then he or she must take a moment to reflect (Pause). At this point a light bulb will come on (Imagine) and an individual reorders their perspective (Re-patterning). Finally, the individual will verbalize their insights to others (Interpretation). (Parks, 1986) As one can see from earlier discussion, this cycle is closely paralleled to the Experiential Learning Cycle.

Parks’ theory adds to the describing factors of a potential Strategic Study Abroad student by including 1) their need for mentorship, 2) their openness to the diverse opinions of others, and 3) their attempts to reconcile the conflicting forms of reality.

Both Sharon Parks and James Fowler built their theories on the foundation of other stage development theorists. Eric Erickson, Jean Piaget, Kegan and Kholberg all influenced their
work. (See appendix A for a comparison of these theories in relation to Fowler’s stages)

Therefore, the theoretical foundation for Strategic Study Abroad is built firmly upon layers of research work. SSA will consider all levels in its program development.

**Needs Assessment**

In preparation to developing the program proposal for Strategic Study Abroad, a needs assessment was conducted. This comprised of surveying seven Chi Alpha students attending Stanford University who had studied abroad or anticipate studying abroad, and interviewing one of the respondents. (See appendix D for survey) An additional Chi Alpha student who had attended American University was surveyed and interviewed as well. The purpose of the survey and interviews was to discover what the needs of Chi Alpha study abroad students were, and what they would like to see in future programming of SSA.

From the surveys and interviews, recurring themes became evident. These included the need for peer mentors, the importance of pre-departure orientation, and variant experiences of attending a church regularly.

**Peer Mentorship**

Sharon Parks (1986) stressed that the young adult phase of life was hallmarked by a need and need for mentorship. Consistent with her theory, I found the survey results to support the desire for mentorship. However, most students acknowledged a desire for mentorship from peers, or a structured support of peer advice and encouragement. Results showed that respondents who had studied abroad agreed that they either would have benefited from a peer support system, or they had one and liked it. For instance, one student stated: “[I was] very well supported by my peers. One of them had been abroad the quarter before and told us about the church she went to”. Another respondent stressed how she would like to see a student
ambassador program for Chi Alpha students studying abroad. She mentioned that having someone to speak with who had already been abroad would have benefited her before she went abroad. Hearing the students talk about peer support confirmed Strategic Study Abroad’s programmatic idea to have cohorts purposed to discuss their experiences with each other (to be further explained in the curriculum section).

**Pre-Departure Orientation**

Knowing what to expect abroad was a reoccurring theme for Chi Alpha respondents, as can be seen in this respondent’s answer:

“I wish that there were more materials from Chi Alpha pastors/leaders on what happens next. As in, what happens when you no longer have an extremely consistent and constant community. Even after my freshman and sophomore years of college, going home was always really painful and a time of backsliding, because co-dependence can definitely become a bad habit in some XA small group relationships. And it's a dangerous habit to have. Maybe materials on that...devotionals or something.”

This respondent’s comment made two things clear. First, students need to be oriented on how to develop their own personal faith development strategy while abroad. Secondly, there is a huge need for proper pre-departure orientation. A successful orientation will set expectations of experiences and relationships. For SSA, a successful orientation will establish boundaries as to what is the cohort’s role to each other, what to expect from the church leaders abroad, and what each student is expected to do as a self-directed learner.
Church Attendance

One student said this about finding a church. “I was lucky in that respect, but I don’t think many others are.” Her intuition was right; survey responses made it clear that while there is a huge variance of experiences in church attendance, many do not overcome barriers to finding a church community. Top barriers included language difficulty and competing cultural activities including weekend excursions.

One student who traveled frequently on the weekends stated, “I wish that I could have been able to be at the actual church often enough to make good relationships with church members”. Another stated, “I visited a church in my city once. I often traveled on weekends and church was not a high priority. Furthermore, English speaking churches were not so easy to find”.

Yet, another respondent joyfully talked about her experience of engaging with a church regularly. Enjoying the diversity of the church, she stated, “Sometimes there’s no real right or wrong way (to do church)”. This statement was evidence that she accomplished a desired goal for Strategic Study Abroad students: to understand and appreciate the diversity of Christianity practices around the world.

Learning from the survey respondents, Strategic Study Abroad will need to adapt its initial goal to see students plugged into a church or campus ministry regularly. Instead of stressing church attendance weekly, SSA will suggest finding a Christian community for regular encouragement. This might look like listening to sermons online, attending a campus ministry, or having a bi-weekly get-together with another Christian on campus for prayer and brief Bible study. All these alternatives will be proposed and addressed in pre-departure orientation.
Goals and Objectives

Once the theoretical framework was established and needs analysis was completed for Strategic Study Abroad, defining program goals and objectives were developed using Backwards Design. (Wiggins, 2005) This method first identifies the desired results for participation, and then determines the acceptable evidence that would demonstrate a participant has achieved the desired outcome. Only then can a program and curriculum be developed. This section introduces both participant and program goals that were developed with assessment and evaluation in consideration. These can be further explored in the ‘evaluation measurements’ section of the proposal.

Program Vision Statement

Chi Alpha’s Strategic Study Abroad seeks to inspire students studying abroad to be strategic about their spiritual growth and interactions with the community. Strategic Study Abroad envisions students who utilize given opportunities for critical thinking to examine their cross-cultural experiences and develop spiritual maturity, incorporating diversity in the Christian faith. It further envisions students who are passionate about engaging in the community abroad, expressing their beliefs in their everyday lives.

Program Goals

The following goals have been identified for Strategic Study Abroad:

1. To continue communicating with and mentoring Chi Alpha students who are off-campus studying abroad for a semester.
2. To inspire Chi Alpha students to think strategically about studying abroad.
3. To build an expansive network of missionaries and Christian leaders abroad who are committed to connecting with Chi Alpha students studying abroad in their country.
4. To make Strategic Study Abroad well known to all chartered Chi Alpha groups, and to missionaries and ministries abroad.

5. Have developed strategies for sustained growth of SSA and develop a viable financial model.

Program Objectives

To fulfill the program goals, the following objectives have been established:

1. Follow the implementation timeline to have a fully implemented program for the fall 2017 cohort.

2. To produce inspiring print and electronic resources about SSA fully saturating the Chi Alpha group network.

3. To revamp the Strategic Study Abroad website to one which makes it easy for students to quickly understand the mission of SSA and easily become connected with the program’s coordinator.

4. Make initial connections in person with A/G missionaries at the biennial General Council and periodic Pre-field Orientation Trainings, and make initial virtual connections with A/G missionaries who are abroad, to disseminate the vision of SSA.

5. Inform and involve key leaders within the Assemblies of God with the implementation process in order to build buy-in and access to communication vehicles to missionaries, churches, and ministries both abroad and in the United States.

6. Connect with other campus ministries about their initiatives to engage students abroad to discuss cooperation and gain understanding that will help to key Chi Alpha and A/G leaders to develop a viable financial model and plan for sustainability.
Participant Goals

When developing the theoretical framework, it became clear how critical personal faith development is to Chi Alpha students studying abroad. Thus, the participant goals centers on personal growth. This is slightly deviant from Chi Alpha’s core vision and mission for outreach. However spiritual growth is connected to missions; so that when a student grows inwardly, it is naturally expressed outwardly. Additionally, service is not dismissed, but written into the third goal.

The following participant goals were identified for SSA:

1. Can identify the different ways people within the society of the foreign country make meaning about life, and compare it with their own personal faith.
2. Be aware of and appreciate the cultural differences between Christian practices in the church abroad and their own Christian practices.
3. Be able to articulate their beliefs and complete volunteer service in a cross-culturally sensitive way.

Participant Objectives

To fulfill the participant goals, the following objectives have been established:

1. Students will have completed at least three online group conversations during the semester, lasting at least 30 minutes, with other SSA students studying abroad.
2. Students will have had at least two informal meetings with a Christian leader abroad during the semester.
3. Students will have attended church services or campus ministry gatherings regularly

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1 'Regularly' depends on the demands of the student’s study abroad program and is determined by the individual participant (but cannot be less than 2 times a month).
4. Students will have participated in at least one service outreach opportunity with their church or campus ministry abroad during the semester.

**Program Design and Scope**

SSA is designed to help students process their cross-cultural experience within the context of their beliefs throughout the study abroad cycle: pre-departure, while abroad, and re-entry. Each student will be placed in a cohort of other students studying abroad; which will be divided by time-zone appropriateness to make online chat sessions viable. The program will also encourage students to participate in outreach programs and attend a church or campus ministry. SSA will deliver the program through a coordinator who is either a part of the national staff, or closely works with the national staff.

**Student Participation Timeline**

As Chi Alpha students are in the planning process of studying abroad through their university or program provider, they will notify either their Chi Alpha group leader or the national SSA coordinator of their interest in the SSA program. At the initial point of contact students will be given a Request for Involvement form to complete and return to the SSA coordinator. With this the student will be considered for participation with a cohort for the semester or quarter that lines up with their study abroad experience. Appendix E details a typical timeline of student participation.

**Timeline for Implementation**

The goal for Strategic Study Abroad is to fully implement the program for the fall 2017 semester. Planning, developing marketing materials, and communicating with regional leaders and group leaders would begin in the spring of 2016. The official marketing launch to students would begin in January 2017 with the World Missions Summit. Anticipated recruitment would
occur in the spring 2017. Also in the spring curriculum materials will be developed, and by fall 2017 SSA would be up and running. For a more detailed outlook, see Appendix I.

Curriculum

Design Principles

Considering a curriculum for Strategic Study Abroad brings challenges. For instance, given the limited time students can devote to a supplemental program, it cannot require readings, journaling, or any other extensive work. Instead, the curriculum is student-centered, or self-directed by the learner. However much a participant chooses to be engaged determines the amount of learning that happens. This makes measuring student success difficult, but various evaluation techniques can be used (which is discussed in the evaluation section of the proposal). Learning materials will be made available to the student through a pre-departure and re-entry curriculum. In addition, specific questions will be given to the students to discuss with their cohort during their online sessions. Journaling will be encouraged, but not required, to aid their discussions. Design principles to be considered in developing these materials include Park’s role of imagination (paired with the experiential learning cycle) and the IES 3D Model.

Kolb’s experiential learning cycle, as discussed in the theoretical framework is the process in which a student translates their experiences into understanding. The stages progress through 1) a concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and then 4) active experimentation of what was learned. This closely matches Sharon Park’s role of imagination, in which the process includes 1) consciousness and experience of a conflict, 2) pausing to reflect, 3) imagining a solution or theory about their experience, 4) reordering their perspective, and then 5) verbalizing their insights to others. Guiding questions for their cohort discussions are developed under the assumption that the questions will cause students to be
conscious about their experiences and pause to reflect; thus aiding the experiential learning cycle and imagination.

The IES 3D Model was developed by IES, a third-party study abroad program provider. It outlines three areas of an individual in which the designed learning experience should consider: 1) the intrapersonal dimension, 2) the interpersonal dimension, and 3) cognitive dimension. Each of these should be written into 1) experiencing culture, 2) the curriculum, 3) the co-curriculum, and 4) engagement with the community. (Gillespie, Braskamp & Dwyer, 2009) Strategic Study Abroad is naturally a part of both the co-curriculum and community engagement learning experience. The curriculum of Strategic Study Abroad will consider each dimension of the learner when developing orientation materials and guiding principles for leaders and missionaries abroad.

**Pre-departure**

As students are studying abroad through their own university or third-party program provider, much of the general pre-departure orientation is done through their program. Items such as culture shock and safety is already taught through their primary study abroad orientation. The purpose of Strategic Study Abroad’s pre-departure orientation is to orient the students on the expectations of participating in SSA, to announce to each student the missionary or leader they have been paired with, introduce the members of their cohort, and give the students an opportunity to think about how they will be strategic in spiritual growth and engagement in the broader community abroad. This is a critical part of the curriculum, as it establishes relational expectations for the cohort community and for their paired leader.

To facilitate the experiential learning cycle, students will be asked to write a letter to themselves which will be mailed to the student later in their semester abroad with a care package.
and note from their own leader/group back on their home campus. Receiving the package will encourage reflection on their experiences.

Pre-departure will be administered virtually through a combination of an informational packet e-mailed to the student, an inspirational/informational video made available online, and a group chat session (utilizing Google Hangout) with their cohort members and the program administrator. For a list of content to be developed in each of these modes of communication see appendix F.

**While Abroad**

While students are on their study abroad program, participation in the supplemental Strategic Study Abroad initiative will have four requirements, related to the program objectives:

1. Completed at least three online group conversations during the semester abroad with their cohort, lasting at least 30 minutes.

2. Commit to two informal meetings with their matched Christian leader.

3. Attend a church service or campus ministry regularly².

4. Complete at least one community service outreach opportunity during the semester.

In addition, students will be encouraged to journal their experiences, so that they are prepared for the online conversations with their cohort. The online group conversations will be directed by giving the cohort different sets of two questions to discuss for each session. To see a list of potential questions, see Appendix G. The informal meetings with their Christian leader have the following objectives: 1) develop a friendly relationship that will serve as a base for conversation about faith and experiences abroad, 2) be a reference point for the student to go to

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² 'Regularly' depends on the demands of the student’s study abroad program and is determined by the individual participant.
for answers regarding the faith trends in the community abroad, 3) serve as an resource for the student to find a church or campus ministry to attend and ways to complete volunteer service in the community.

Re-entry

Re-integration into the community once back home requires as much facilitation as pre-departure training. However, similar to pre-departure items being covered with their primary program, SSA will not cover basic items that may be discussed through their home institution or program provider. Rather, SSA will allow students to process their re-entry process through three things: 1) having one scheduled online session with their cohort 1-2 months after returning, 2) making an inspirational/informational video available online that addresses continuing their faith journey and outreach and practical tips for re-entry, and 3) facilitate alumni gatherings at the annual regional SALT conferences and the World Missions Summit (which happens every three years).

Staffing

To be successful SSA will need to rely on existing national staff for tasks such as producing videos, updating the website, and communicating with key leaders in the Assemblies of God. It will further rely on regional directors to communicate to the individual Chi Alpha group leaders. Existing administrative assistants will also need to collaborate with a new program coordinator and existing national staff to put on events like alumni gatherings and information sessions at regional SALT conferences and the World Missions Summit.

The two key staff members to Strategic Study Abroad are 1) The program director and 2) a new program coordinator. The current Director of Chi Alpha Expeditions will also serve as the Director for Strategic Study Abroad. He would be the person of decision power and the one
communicating with key leaders within the Assemblies of God and national Chi Alpha staff. The Director would also be the first point of contact in a crisis situation and work to develop funding for SSA by communicating with potential donors and U.S. church contributions.

The program coordinator would be in charge of communicating with missionaries and church leaders, and collaborating with the SSA Director to develop and implement the marketing strategy and communicating with potential participants, existing participants, and alumni. The program coordinator would further administer the curriculum, talk with parents about concerns (with escalating issues given to the SSA Director), and conduct research that would be strategic in developing the scope of the program. Ideally, the program coordinator would be a full time staff member.

Because much of the work done to implement SSA will be done by existing staff members, training will be less focused on the ‘how-to’ of their roles, but on the vision and goals of the program. An initial orientation for all national staff members will introduce the new program, motivate staff to accomplish the goals, and set clear expectations for individual roles. Following the introduction, existing staff will be oriented on broad areas that will affect everyone, such as crisis management. Beyond the national staff, training mentors abroad will be accomplished through a mentor handbook with suggested conversation starters. Both mentors abroad and regional and local Chi Alpha leaders will be oriented on the goals and objectives of Chi Alpha through marketing and recruitment efforts.

**Marketing & Recruitment**

Strategic Study Abroad is a groundbreaking initiative, and most students and leaders will have never heard the vision of SSA before. Thus a well-done marketing and recruitment strategy is critical. The following section details foundations for such a strategy.
Environment Analysis and Market Opportunity

Chi Alpha is not the first organization to engage Christians, from non-religious colleges and universities, in faith development and community outreach while abroad. Two organizations are actively building programs to either 1) provide a complete study abroad program to students, or 2) connect study abroad students to each other for mutual encouragement and support. These are CRU³ and InterVarsity⁴. Both organizations work with International Studies Abroad for the academic and logistical portion of their study abroad programs. To connect students who are independently studying abroad through their home institution or third-party provider, CRU and InterVarsity differ slightly. InterVarsity is more events oriented, encouraging students to participate in retreats while abroad. CRU is completely virtual and challenges students with a structured curriculum. Chi Alpha would be more student-centered, allowing for participation to be at the student’s own desire and needs. It would not be highly structured, nor event related.

Chi Alpha students are encouraged to live missionaly within their own home campus, family and friends. Thus, the idea of serving the community abroad during a study abroad program would not be foreign to them. Given the strong community each chartered group has, Chi Alpha would have an advantage for successfully engaging students in a Chi Alpha program abroad.

Unique Selling Position/Value to Customers

Chi Alpha differs from existing programs in that it is less structured and participation is completely voluntary. Students who are enrolled in challenging and time-consuming programs abroad might be more inclined to participate in Chi Alpha’s Strategic Study Abroad. Additionally, while there is incredible opportunity for cross-organizational cooperation, students

³ http://cruabroad.com/vision/
⁴ http://studyabroad.intervarsity.org/
who are in a Chi Alpha campus group might be more comfortable participating in a Chi Alpha program versus a CRU program (and vice versa).

Recruitment Target Participant Profile

A typical SSA participant is between the ages of 19 and 28. They are full-time undergraduate students who will be studying abroad through their university or a third-party program provider. SSA participants can be from all races and socio-economic backgrounds, although the trend will likely follow the average U.S. study abroad student. SSA students are deeply devoted to the Christian faith. They are willing to devote portions of their free time in order to grow in their faith and serve. Chi Alpha students are continuously being challenged to live a missional life and devote time to building relationships and sharing Jesus to others. Thus a SSA student will be very familiar and comfortable with devoting some of their free time abroad to service and to the SSA program. It is not unusual for a Chi Alpha student to want to give a year or longer in service to ministry abroad after completing their bachelor’s degree.

Chi Alpha has students all over the world. Within the United States, during 2014, there were 28,000 students participating in Chi Alpha. (Chi Alpha, 2015) According to the Institute of International Education, 1.5% of all US students were studying abroad during the 2012-13 Academic Year. Approximately 40% of these students were studying abroad for a quarter or longer. This means that 441 Chi Alpha Students would have studied abroad; and of those 168 would have been abroad for a quarter or longer. Statistically then, Strategic Study Abroad has a market for 168 students to participate in SSA each year. This is a very large amount considering SSA is only one program that could only initially handle 1-3 cohorts with a maximum of 6 students in a cohort each semester.
Other Targeted Markets

In order for SSA to be successful, Chi Alpha will need to market to the people/groups listed below as well. This is because each is an influential part of a Chi Alpha student’s decision making and a disseminator of information to students.

- Local U.S. Assemblies of God churches
- Regional Chi-Alpha directors
- Individual Chi Alpha chartered group leaders
- Assemblies of God missionaries and ministries abroad

SMART Goals

The following goals are defined for the initial implementation of Strategic Study Abroad. They were created with a common format: SMART. This means the goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

- **Recruitment:** To recruit one cohort for the fall 2017 semester (3-6 students), with a steady growth for the subsequent semesters reaching 3 cohorts a semester by Fall 2019.
- **Marketing:** To build a positive brand image and SSA’s vision to be known to 80% of all Chi Alpha chartered groups by the onset of the World Missions Summit in January 2017. Specific marketing tactics and recruitment efforts have been identified to reach the above stated SMART goals. See appendix K for a chart of these.

Routes to Market

In order to reach the targeted audience, various mediums were considered. Broken up into electronically online and offline formats, the following routes to the market will be utilized.

**Online**

- SSA Website
• Promotional Videos through Chi Alpha’s main website, with a featured Monday Motivator

• Twitter, Facebook

• Email communication to regional directors and chartered group leaders

• Email sent through the General Council to all Assemblies of God World missionaries

• Email Assemblies of God district young adult ministry leadership staff

Offline

• Visits to 1) Pre-Field Orientations (3 times a year), 2) The biennial General Council to reach A/G World Missions missionaries and ministry leaders abroad (also staff a booth at the General Council)

• Phone calls to strategic Chi Alpha chartered group leaders and to all regional Directors

• Information Session at the World Missions Summit in January 2017, with a highlighted segment in the main program

• Information Sessions at regional SALT conferences, with a highlighted segment in the main program

Communication Materials

To aid the marketing and recruitment efforts of Strategic Study Abroad, the following communication materials will be utilized:

• Postcards for information sessions, booths, and mailings. (for an example print material see appendix L)

• Website

• Social Media- Twitter, Facebook

• Promotional video for students
Logistics

Implementing Strategic Study Abroad is contingent upon the support of existing connections and resources, while successfully generating new resources. Thus, inventorying what can be utilized is important to knowing what will be needed. This is true not just in staffing and budget, but with logistics as well.

For instance, implementing the program will require curricular resources to be created and upload online the pre-departure orientation and re-entry videos. Currently, there is a staff member on the national Chi Alpha staff that is designated to communications. SSA can have access to him and utilize his talent and equipment to create these videos. He will also be an asset to updating the SSA portion of the Chi Alpha Expeditions website. The communications staff can also create written program materials; however, the program administrator could also be charged with that task.

As already discussed, SSA will tap into the existing Assemblies of God network to find mentors, churches, campus ministries, and leaders that are willing to invest a small amount of time in Chi Alpha students studying abroad. Establishing and communicating with these stakeholders will be the role of the program coordinator. Attending events like Pre-field Orientation for missionaries, the national General Council that happens biennially, and making connections with missionaries on the field through Skype or phone are all ways to reach out to missionaries abroad. Connecting with churches and campus ministries abroad will happen on a case-by-case basis as a student identifies what city they will be studying abroad in.

Health, Safety & Crisis Management

The program’s role and obligation to participant health and safety can be debated in many ways. One can argue that SSA is supplemental program, and in turn it has the same obligation as
a club in which a student might participate in while abroad. However, ethically SSA might be considered responsible to building in a separate crisis management plan, especially related to faith-based circumstances. In response, SSA will develop an abbreviated crisis management plan addressing risk aversion and response to incidents while a student is not participating in their study abroad program, but is at the local church or campus ministry. This plan is not intended to operate self-standing, but be a response towards collaborating with the student’s study abroad program and/or university. Since each program has its own crisis management protocol, students will be asked to provide basic contact information for their program and/or university administrators on-site before going abroad. For a copy of an initial draft plan and request for contact information, see appendix J. Mentors abroad will be oriented on their role in the SSA crisis management plan in the mentor handbook.

Student health and safety has been carefully considered. SSA participants are discouraged from participating in medical or construction activities without thoroughly examining the risks and purchasing supplemental insurance for the time period in which they will be volunteering away from their study abroad program. The Assemblies of God must approve the insurance.

All participants are required to have broad travel insurance. However, since insurance is also required through the sending universities and programs, SSA will not need to enforce and will not interfere with the transaction of obtaining insurance.

Another consideration regarding the safety of students is whether to accept students going to sensitive countries into a cohort. Given the explicit encouragement to be active in their faith, SSA has decided not incur the liability risk of accepting such participants. What countries are
deemed to be sensitive (hostile towards Christianity) will be determined on an ongoing basis by monitoring world events, security alerts, and country policies regarding religious freedom.

**Budget**

The budget is contingent on support raised from Assemblies of God churches across the nation. Realistically, a full-time program coordinator cannot be supported. Rather an extremely dedicated volunteer (or group of volunteers), along with the SSA Director and the national staff, would administer the Strategic Study Abroad program. Never-the-less, the following spreadsheet demonstrates an ideal operating budget.
## Strategic Study Abroad Budget

**FY 17 (July-June)**

**Total Participants:** 12

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</table>
Evaluation Measures

Evaluation happens within two contexts: participant competencies gained and program evaluation. Given that Strategic Study Abroad is a supplemental program, evaluation must be limited to less taxing methods. For instance, quizzes and required journals would not fit the nature of a supplemental program, and shouldn’t be used. Instead, an end-of-program evaluation survey, informal communication with the leaders abroad about their interaction with the student, and enrollment figures might serve as evaluation indicators.

An initial plan for participant evaluation would include 1) a self-reported growth portion of an end-of-program survey, and 2) informal conversations with the leaders abroad about their experience with the student, and 3) conversations with participants at alumni events about their past experiences. Program evaluation would also utilize the end-of-program Survey Monkey generated surveys by participants, and measure items such as communication effectiveness of the leader abroad and the program coordinator. For a sample of the student evaluation survey, see appendix H. Surveys would also be administered to the missionaries and church leaders abroad. For a sample of the mentor evaluation survey, also see appendix H. In addition to evaluation surveys, enrollment numbers will also be used to evaluate the program according to growth. Each year, the results of all indicators will be written into a summary report to evaluate whether SSA is meeting its goals.

Concluding Remarks on the Challenges Ahead

Strategic Study Abroad is unique, visionary in nature, and is on the forefront of incorporating faith development into the study abroad experience. Pioneering has a specific set of challenges to implementation; such as setting up the rationale for the program, getting buy-in
from early-adopters, and making a clear presentation of the program to potential participants.

Beyond this, SSA has its own set of challenges. These are:

- Students have no tangible incentive for participation.
- Students have limited time while abroad to devote to additional clubs or programs, which will limit what SSA can hope to achieve with its students.
- Developing a mass network to connect any student to a missionary or church leader in any location will take extraordinary manpower and cooperation.
- Consistency amongst student experiences with their matched leader will require all parties to agree to a similar set of expectations and guidelines. Having buy-in from missionaries and church leaders who typically operate autonomously may be difficult.
- Communicating to students who are going to sensitive countries and want to be a part of SSA.

This set of challenges causes concerns regarding the viability of SSA. One might ask, why continue? The answer is because Chi Alpha is strategic about being a community. An inclusive and caring community will make it a priority to keep their participants engaged and effective, no matter where they are. Strategic Study Abroad is all about doing just this: engaging Chi Alpha students to be effective witnesses of their beliefs by developing their faith abroad, and making the most of their time abroad by learning from and serving the foreign community.
References


Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
### Appendix A: Theory Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eras</th>
<th>Erickson</th>
<th>Piaget</th>
<th>Kohlberg</th>
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Appendix B: Snapshot of Current Strategic Study Abroad Website

STRATEGIC STUDY ABROAD

Strategic Study Abroad is a new initiative we’re launching to help students be missional while studying abroad. Its our goal to help connect Chi Alphans who study abroad with missionaries/ministries nearby.

We are very much in the early stages of development. We are currently working to add additional missionaries to our list of partners. In addition to the list below, we are happy to work with you to coordinate a Strategic Study Abroad opportunity not listed. To inquire about an opportunity below or to have us consult with you regarding your specific situation, email us at go@xaexpeditions.com.

Regardless of whether you’re interested in an opportunity listed here or something catered to your situation, you will need to consult with the appropriate departments at your university to ensure all academic requirements will be met. Although every university has exchange program relationships with specific universities around the world, we’ve found schools willing to let students study abroad elsewhere if those students were willing to do a little research to present the university for approval.

AMMAN, JORDAN

University of Jordan – Amman,  American University – Madaba
Conversational English and relational outreach to university students
On-Site Point Person: Scott M

TOKYO, JAPAN

The University of Tokyo, Waseda University, Meiji University
Work with Chi Alpha, Japan in Tokyo
Appendix C: Chi Alpha Organizational Structure Chart

CHI ALPHA ORGANIZATION
Effective September 2012

Students

Local Leadership
(Chi Alpha Personnel, Church Staff, Volunteers, and Student Leaders)

DXAD / DXAR
District Chi Alpha Director or Representative

Area Representatives

Executive Chi Alpha (EXA)

National Director

Appendix D: Needs Assessment Survey

Needs Assessment Survey

Initial Questions for all Chi Alpha students:

1. What is your student status?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
   e. Graduated

2. What type of college do you currently attend? If you have graduated, please indicate what type of college you did attend during your undergrad.
   a. Public school
   b. Private, non-religiously affiliated school
   c. Private, religiously affiliated school
   d. Community or 2-year college
   e. Technical school

3. Please check which boxes apply to you regarding your level of involvement with Chi Alpha. If you have graduated, please indicate your level of involvement while a student.
   a. I come to events occasionally
   b. I attend a small group occasionally
   c. I attend a small group all or most of the time
   d. I lead a small group
   e. I serve a ministry within Chi Alpha
   f. I lead a ministry within Chi Alpha
   g. I serve on outreaches with Chi Alpha
   h. I lead outreaches with Chi Alpha
   i. I am not involved with Chi Alpha
   j. I used to be involved with Chi Alpha, but am no longer

4. Have you studied abroad (excluding within the United States) for a quarter, semester, or longer?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. If not, do you plan to study abroad in the future?
   a. Yes
   b. I’m not sure
   c. No

HAVE studied abroad questions:

1. How long ago did you study abroad?
   a. Last quarter/semester
   b. Last year
   c. 1-2 years ago
d. 2+ years ago

2. Did you study abroad through a Christian organization? (i.e. Veritas, BestSemester)
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Did you attend a church or campus ministry while you were abroad?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. If not, what kept you from attending a church or campus ministry?
   a. Open response

5. How long did it take you to find a church or campus ministry?
   a. I found one right away!
   b. Within 2 weeks of arrival
   c. 3-5 weeks in
   d. 6+ weeks
   e. I didn't find one

6. Did you receive help finding a church or campus ministry?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. Did you participate in service projects abroad?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. If yes, what types of projects and how frequently?
   a. Open Response

9. How would you rate your level of commitment to your spirituality while abroad versus before you went abroad?
   a. A lot less than before studying abroad
   b. Slightly less than before studying abroad
   c. About the same
   d. Slightly more than before studying abroad
   e. A lot more than before studying abroad

10. Which of the following people did you receive spiritual support from while abroad? (check all that apply)
    a. Campus pastor(s) back home
    b. Other pastor(s) or spiritual mentor(s) back home
    c. Parents
    d. Friends back home
    e. Study abroad program administrators or faculty abroad
    f. Your peers abroad
    g. Pastors in the foreign country
    h. Missionaries in the foreign country
    i. The local church or campus ministry abroad
    j. No one
    k. Other (open response)

11. In what ways did you feel supported, or did not feel supported, by those checked above?
a. Open Response

12. Would you have benefited from an established spiritual mentor while abroad?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I had one and liked it
   d. I had one and did not like it
   e. I’m unsure

13. Would you have benefited from peer support from other Christians studying abroad at the same time?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I had one and liked it
   d. I had one and did not like it
   e. I’m unsure

**Yes, I’m not sure, PLAN to study abroad questions:**

1. Do you plan to participate in a Christian study abroad program? (i.e. Veritas, BestSemester)
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I’m not sure

2. When you study abroad do you want to participate in service projects abroad?
   a. Totally!
   b. Maybe
   c. No way

3. How would you rate your level of commitment to your spirituality right now?
   a. Highly committed
   b. Moderately committed
   c. Occasionally committed
   d. Not at all committed

4. Realistically, who would you anticipate or expect to give you spiritual support while abroad?
   a. Campus pastor(s) back home
   b. Other pastor(s) or spiritual mentor(s) back home
   c. Parents
   d. Friends back home
   e. Study abroad program administrators or faculty abroad
   f. Your peers abroad
   g. Pastors in the foreign country
   h. Missionaries in the foreign country
   i. The local church or campus ministry abroad
   j. No one
   k. Other (open response)

5. Who would you love to give you spiritual support while abroad?
   a. Campus pastor(s) back home
   b. Other pastor(s) or spiritual mentor(s) back home
c. Parents
d. Friends back home
e. Study abroad program administrators or faculty abroad
f. Your peers abroad
g. Pastors in the foreign country
h. Missionaries in the foreign country
i. The local church or campus ministry abroad
j. No one
k. Other (open response)

6. Do you think you would benefit from a spiritual mentor while abroad?
   a. Totally!
   b. I'm not sure
   c. No way

7. Do you think you would benefit from a peer support group of other Christians studying abroad at the same time?
   a. Totally!
   b. I'm not sure
   c. No way

**ALL Participants Questions**

1. Are there any other comments you would like to add to this survey?
   a. Open response

2. Are you willing to participate in a follow up interview to discuss your answers? (Would last about 20-30 minutes via phone or Skype)
   a. Yes
   b. No
      i. If Yes a contact information box will pop up

3. Thank you for your participation!

4. Submit button
Appendix E: Student Participation Timeline

### Student Participant Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>While Abroad</th>
<th>Re-entry</th>
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<td>4 months-3 weeks before going abroad</td>
<td>2 months-3 weeks before going abroad</td>
<td>1st week while abroad</td>
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<td>4 months-3 weeks before going abroad</td>
<td>4 months-3 weeks before going abroad</td>
<td>2 weeks before going abroad</td>
<td>2nd week while abroad</td>
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</table>

- Inquiry: Submit Request for Participation (rolling admission)
- Pre-departure: Approved for Participation
- Complete Online Training and Forms
- Have first cohort online session
- Have initial meeting with Christian leader abroad
- Have first cohort online session while abroad
- Have at least two more cohort sessions
- Have final meeting with Christian leader abroad
- Re-entry: Attend Alumni Events
Appendix F: Pre-departure and Re-entry Items to Cover

Pre-departure content to be covered

1. Cohort Introductions
2. Orientation of Expectations
   a. Benefits of Participation
      i. Continued spiritual growth
      ii. Fulfilling the Great Commission
      iii. Meet new people
      iv. Engage in the local community
      v. No cost to them for mentorship and support from the coordinator
   b. Limits of Participation
      i. No credit offered
      ii. Any community service hours must be awarded by the institution if applicable
   c. Safety and Health
      i. Follow common sense in public places
      ii. Never be alone with a member of the opposite sex, no matter how well intentioned
      iii. Medical Service cautions
      iv. Construction or Labor Volunteering cautions
   d. Insurance and Emergencies
      i. Completion of Emergency Contact Sheet
      ii. If considering Medical or Labor Volunteerism, we STRONGLY encourage additional insurance through the Assemblies of God for the duration of service. (some universities have limitations of insurance to while participating in the program)
3. Expectations and Suggestions for Participation
   a. Online cohort discussion
      i. Will be given two questions to discuss for each session
      ii. If you would like the Coordinator to be included, feel free to contact him/her
      iii. Uphold each other’s confidentiality by not inviting others into the discussions unless agreed upon by all members
   b. Service
      i. Strongly encourage you to participate in your church’s outreach programs to see Christian social justice in action.
c. Meeting with mentor
   i. Make sure you meet at least twice to process your experiences and to ask questions
   ii. Everybody’s missionary or church leader is different, and you will have different experiences
   iii. If things are not going well, feel free to contact the SSA Coordinator

4. Announcement of Christian leader of missionary they have been paired with

5. Give assignment of writing a letter to themselves to complete before leaving on their trip and begin to think about ways they will be strategic about their spiritual growth and community engagement

Re-entry content to be covered in video

1. Educate students on the culture shock cycle
2. Tips for re-engaging back into the local Christian community
   a. Talk with your local USA church leaders
   b. Present your experience to your local Chi Alpha group
   c. Journal your emotions and experiences
   d. Attend alumni events
   e. Be sure to complete the online session with your cohort
   f. Continue spiritual habits developed abroad (i.e. Bible reading, attending church)

3. Give contact information for Coordinator if ever need to talk
4. Consider the ‘Give a Year, Pray About a Lifetime’ program if you want a deeper missions experience
Appendix G: Potential Facilitation Questions for Online Cohort Discussions

Potential Facilitated Questions for Online Cohort Questions:

1. What ways do people make meaning, or have faith, in your country’s communities? How does this differ or relate to Christian principles?
2. What challenges have you faced up to this point?
3. How are you continuing your spiritual growth? Are you?
4. Talk about the differences between your home church and the church abroad. If you have not been able to attend church, talk about the differences of religious expression in the community between the society abroad and the United States.
5. Have you been able to express Jesus to others? What challenges did this bring?
6. Let’s talk about cultural relativism. What do you think the Bible would say about this?
Appendix H: Potential Evaluation Survey Questions

Potential Participant Evaluation Questions

Participant Growth

1. Likert Scale: I have a sense that I grew spiritual while abroad. (agree, disagree…)
2. Likert Scale: I have a greater appreciation for the differences amongst Christian practices. (agree, disagree…)
3. Likert Scale: I can communicate better with people of different cultures then before I went abroad. (agree, disagree…)
4. Likert Scale: I feel more prepared to share Jesus with people from different cultures. (agree, disagree…)
5. Likert Scale: I am more confident in my beliefs. (agree, disagree…)

Program Evaluation

1. Likert Scale: The objectives of the program clear. (agree, disagree…)
2. Likert Scale: Strategic Study Abroad met my expectations. (agree, disagree…)
3. Likert Scale: The facilitating questions for your online cohort discussions stimulated my learning. (agree, disagree…)
4. Likert Scale: For the following, rate how beneficial each was
   a. Online cohort discussions (very helpful, not helpful…)
   b. Mentor abroad (very helpful, not helpful…)
   c. Pre-departure orientation (very helpful, not helpful…)
   d. Attending church regularly (very helpful, not helpful…)
   e. Community engagement through service projects
5. Likert Scale: If you had contact with the Director of Strategic Study Abroad, how would you rate your encounters? (very helpful, not helpful…)
6. Likert Scale: The SSA Program Coordinator was attentive to my needs. (agree, disagree…)
7. Likert Scale: How would you rate your encounters with your paired mentor abroad? (very helpful, not helpful…)
8. Open ended: What did you like about your mentor? What did you not?
9. Open ended: What changes would you make for this program?
Potential Mentor Evaluation Questions

1. Likert Scale: The objectives for communication with Strategic Study Abroad participants were clear.
2. Likert Scale: The level of commitment was: (too much, too little..)
3. Likert Scale: The mentor handbook was: (helpful, not helpful…)
4. Likert Scale: I enjoyed my communication with the SSA participant. (agree, disagree…)
5. Likert Scale: I feel I contributed to the learning experience of the SSA participant. (agree, disagree…)
6. Likert Scale: The SSA participant was ____ to learn. (motivated, not motivated..)
7. Likert Scale: I would partner with SSA again. (agree, disagree…)
Appendix I: Program Implementation Timeline

Program Implementation Timeline

Early 2016- Begin Developing Marketing Materials (See Marketing and Recruitment Plan) and Handbooks

Summer 2016- Go Live With Website

Late summer 2016- Discuss Roll-Out with Regional Directors & Key Group Leaders

Fall 2016- Mass Communication to All Groups, A/G Districts, A/G Headquarters Staff, Missionaries and Ministries Abroad

Jan 4-6, 2017: Official Launch of Strategic Study Abroad

Jan 2017- Begin Recruiting and Taking Requests for Involvement

Spring 2017- Develop Curricular Aspects Of SSA (Online Cohort Questions, Etc.)

Fall 2017- First Cohort of SSA; Recruit Spring 2018 Cohorts

Dec 2017- Acknowledge Completion of Program for First Cohort; Pre-Departure For Spring 2018 Cohorts

Winter/Spring 2017- Launch Second Semester of SSA Cohorts

Winter 2017- Evaluation of Program, Participant Experiences, and Marketing Efforts
Appendix J: Crisis Management Draft Plan

Crisis Management Draft Plan

Chi Alpha’s Strategic Study Abroad is a supplemental program that encourages voluntary participation while abroad on a separate study abroad program. Students are not given any tangible benefits, nor are they charged for services at any point during their affiliation with the program. Abroad, Chi Alpha does not administer the student’s study abroad program, nor do they have a partnership with the university or program provider. All responsibility for learning and participation is placed upon the student. For comparison, SSA has the same status and power as an extracurricular club. Given this unique position, SSA cannot assume responsibility for a student or intervene in an emergency situation while the student is abroad on their study abroad program. However, SSA does encourage engagement in the local church and community for learning. Therefore, Chi Alpha has put together the following plan to coordinate with the student’s primary university or program provider should an incident or emergency occur during the student’s free-time spent with the local church and community.

Definitions

Crisis: a prolonged situation of intense difficulty.
Emergency: a situation that necessitates serious and immediate attention.
Critical Incident: a situation in which a non-life threatening event has occurred and has consequences of liability.
Primary provider: The administrator of the study abroad program in which the student has enrolled and is participating in abroad.
Sensitive country: A country in which either practicing Christianity is illegal or persecuted.

Participants’ Assumption of Risk

Each Strategic Study Abroad student assumes their own risk when off their primary study abroad program’s campus or on-site location. By entering into activities with the church and local community, the individual is voluntarily assuming risk of participation. A signed form by each participant ensures awareness of this assumption. (see forms).
Risk Reduction

The following methods are used to reduce the risk of liability.

**Monitoring for travel warnings**

- State Department Travel Warnings: http://travel.state.gov/travel

**Monitoring for religious freedom and persecution environments**

- Cooperation with the Assemblies of God World Missions for notification of any environmental changes that occur world-wide.

**Participant Orientation**

Before a student participates in Strategic Study Abroad, they must provide

- Their primary provider contact information
- Emergency contact information, including a signed release to discuss emergency information with the contact
- A signed assumption of risk form

Students will also be oriented on:

- Behavioral suggestions for safety
- Who to contact if an incident has occurred during participation

**Mentoring Guidelines and National Staff Training**

All missionaries and church leaders who a student is paired with will be given a mentoring handbook, which includes contact information for the national Chi Alpha staff in case of an emergency or critical incident.

**Sensitive Countries**

Students requesting participation in Strategic Study Abroad and are studying in a sensitive country will not be approved for participation. What is deemed sensitive is determined on an ad-hoc basis after review of the International Religious Freedom Report and discussions with the Assemblies of God World Missions department.
Medical or Labor Volunteer Service

Students who wish to participate in medical or labor (i.e. construction) service within the community or church, must assume their own risk and are strongly encouraged to purchase additional insurance coverage for the time that they will be volunteering. The Assemblies of God requires that all short or long-term volunteers on A/G sponsored trips be insured through Guaranteed Trust Life (GTL). The recommendation for additional coverage is consistent with this Assemblies of God regulation. However, since students are operating independently, it can only be encouraged.

Assigned Roles and Contact Information

Students will be directed to contact the director of Strategic Study Abroad should a non-emergency incident occur during their volunteered time with the local church. The in-country missionary or church leader must also notify the director.

Emergencies should be reported immediately to both the SSA Director and Chi Alpha Executive Director. The Director will then immediately contact the student’s primary study abroad program provider and/or university within the foreign country.

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<td>Executive Director, Chi Alpha</td>
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Major Medical and Accident Insurance

Chi Alpha has secured additional General Liability insurance through AG Financial Solutions for Strategic Study Abroad. This is consistent with Chi Alpha’s chartered groups to be insured within the United States. The plan provides $1,000,000 per occurrence liability for bodily injury and property damage, and includes sexual misconduct coverage and counseling liability.

Forms

- Assumption of Risk
- Emergency Contact and Release Form
Assumption of Risk Agreement

I ____________________________, freely choose to participate in Strategic Study Abroad, a ministry of Chi Alpha, The Assemblies of God U.S.A. In consideration for voluntary participation, I agree that:

1. I am a volunteer participant, not a student or employee of Chi Alpha, The Assemblies of God World Missions, or the General Council of the Assemblies of God U.S.A.
2. I am aware of all hazards and risks to my person and property associated with engagement in the community, local church, and service. These may include, but are not limited to, injury, increased stress, accident, disease, in adequate medical services and supplies, death, criminal acts—including terrorism—natural disasters, and government action. I accept full responsibility for behavior that might increase such risks. I voluntarily assume all risks of death, injury, illness, and damage to myself, my family, and to my personal property. I further recognize that such risks have always been associated with missionary service (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).
3. I attest and certify that I have no medical conditions that would prevent me from caring for myself or participating in voluntary activities.
4. I acknowledge that if choosing to participate in a physical or medical activity associated with the church or missionary abroad, I am STRONGLY encouraged to purchase insurance coverage described in the A/G GTL insurance brochure for the length of my service.
5. I waive and release any and all claims for damages which I, or my heirs or successors, may have against Strategic Study Abroad, Chi Alpha, Assemblies of God World Missions, The General Council of the Assemblies of God, any district council of the Assemblies of God, the church or missionaries abroad, or any agent or employee of any of such organizations; arising from my death, injury, or illness, or any property damage or loss occurring during my voluntary service.
6. I understand and accept the following policy of the Assemblies of God World Missions regarding ransom payments:

   The Assemblies of God World Missions Executive Committee has determined that it will not pay ransom nor yield to the demands of anyone who takes one of our missionary family or staff hostage. The Assemblies of God World Missions pledges itself to every effort in prayer and all other appropriate means to obtain the release of one taken hostage, should it ever occur. This policy was made after sufficient study of the policies of other evangelical missionary societies and after considering the advice of the United States Department of State.

7. I expressly waive any defense to the enforcement of any provisions of this commitment arising from a claim of lack of consideration and warrant that this commitment constitutes a legal, valid, and binding obligation upon me enforceable against me in accordance with its terms.
8. I expressly agree that this assumption of risk and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by law.

Signature: __________________________________________
Date: ____________________________
Emergency Contact / Permission to Release Information

Study Abroad University or Program:
Institution: ____________________________________________
In-country Contact: _____________________________________
Title: _________________________________________________
In-country Address: _____________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________________________
Email Address: _________________________________________

Third-Party Study Abroad Program Provider (if applicable):
Organization: __________________________________________
Contact: _______________________________________________
Title: _________________________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________________________
Email Address: _________________________________________

Home University or College:
Institution: ____________________________________________
Study Abroad Advisor (or equivalent): _______________________
Title: _________________________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________________________
Email Address: _________________________________________

Emergency Contact:
Full name: _____________________________________________
Relationship: __________________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________________________
Alternate Phone Number: _________________________________
Email Address: _________________________________________

______ I agree to release information to the above mentioned contacts in the event of an emergency
______ I agree to release information to the above mentioned contacts in the event of an emergency
with restrictions: __________________________________________

______ I decline to release any information.

Signature: _____________________________________________
Date: ___________________________
Appendix K: Marketing Tactics and Recruitment Efforts

Marketing Tactics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rollout Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participating Staff</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Evaluation Measurements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early 2016</td>
<td>Design postcards and email templates</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director, Communications Chi Alpha Staff</td>
<td>Produce an initial amount of 500</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>Produce promotional videos</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director, Communications Chi Alpha Staff</td>
<td>1 targeting participants; 1 targeting directors, group leaders and churches</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td>Design website and go live</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director, Communications Chi Alpha Staff</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Google Analytics on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Summer 2016</td>
<td>Send email and make phone calls to regional directors</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director</td>
<td>Email with link to website and promotional video</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis of communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>Send mass email to all group leaders and make strategic phone calls to key group leaders</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director</td>
<td>Email with link to website and promotional video</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis of communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>Send out internal press release to A/G personnel, districts, and missionaries</td>
<td>SSA Coordinator and Director, Chi Alpha Executive Director</td>
<td>Email with link to website and promotional video</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis of communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 4-6, 2017</td>
<td>World Missions Summit Booth and Information Session</td>
<td>SSA Director and Coordinator</td>
<td>Postcards, inquiry cards, promotional video</td>
<td>Number of response cards completed at booth and information session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cont. on next pg.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participating Staff</th>
<th>Evaluation Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Missions Summit</td>
<td>Every 3 years (next one Jan 2017)</td>
<td>To make an official launch statement for recruitment for the Fall 2017 cohort</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Number of response cards completed at booth and information session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional SALT Conferences</td>
<td>Jan-Feb each year</td>
<td>To reach students considering or made a commitment to study abroad for the next academic year</td>
<td>Regional Directors, SSA Director and Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Number of inquiries received in the month immediately following</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L Sample Print Material