

Moving Beyond the Barriers:

Factors Influencing the Decision to Study Abroad for Students of Color

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CIEE 2009 Annual Conference

Istanbul, Turkey

November 14, 2009

Purpose for this study:

- Despite all of the literature on the barriers that this population of students face, the numbers of students of color who study abroad remain low
- I wanted to move beyond this literature and look at those students of color who *made* the decision to go....and explore what influenced their decision in order to inform future practice and initiatives

Percent of U.S. study abroad students

Race/ Ethnicity	1996- 1997	1997- 1998	1998- 1999	1999- 2000	2000- 2001	2001- 2002	2002- 2003	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006- 2007
Caucasian	83.9	84.5	85.0	83.7	84.3	82.9	83.2	83.7	83.0	83.0	81.9
Asian/ Pacific Islander	5.0	4.8	4.4	4.8	5.4	5.8	6.0	6.1	6.3	6.3	6.7
Hispanic American	5.1	5.5	5.2	5.0	5.4	5.4	5.1	5.0	5.6	5.4	6.0
African American	3.5	3.8	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.8
Multiracial	2.1	0.8	1.2	0.9	0.9	2.0	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2
Native American/ Alaskan Native	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5
TOTAL	99,448	113,959	129,770	143,590	154,168	160,920	174,629	191,231	205,983	223,534	241,791

Adapted model of decision to study abroad for students of color

PERSONAL FACTORS

- Perceived outcomes
- Perceived obstacles
- Personal characteristics

SOCIAL FACTORS

- Perceived social pressures
- Primary sources of information
- Experiences and recommendations of others

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

- Types of study abroad opportunities
- Eligibility requirements
- Advising resources and support
- Funding sources
- Recruitment and marketing sources

INTENTION TO
STUDY ABROAD

DECISION TO STUDY
ABROAD



Questions I explored:

- What personal, social, and institutional factors positively influence students of color to decide to study abroad?
- What are some of the barriers that students of color who have decided to study abroad have had to overcome in their decision to go overseas?
- How do these barriers differ from those discussed in previous literature?

Factors positively influencing their decision:



Personal Factors

- Perceived outcomes of personal growth
- Internal drive

Institutional Factors

- Program offerings
- Marketing
- Campus culture

Social Factors

- Peers/Significant others
- Past participants

Main barriers:

- Program cost
- Restrictions on financial aid
- Family resistance
- Culture norms/expectations

Culture norms/expectations:

“When you do things, like if you do the American things, you’re kind of ‘Whitewashed’. I’ve always been called that. I’m ‘Whitewashed’ because I go to college and now because I’m going to study abroad.”

“My parents have taken a different approach from our culture, because they actually want to change that. Growing up they were very careful with the friends they had to choose because some of them were criticizing me because I was doing well.”



Implications and Recommendations

Advising:

- Maintain database of returned students
- Personalize the advising process
- Collaborate with various academic and advising units throughout campus to increase efforts and make use of available resources in each of these units
- Make use of Peer Advisors

Outreach and Marketing:

- Early and more innovative outreach and marketing efforts
 - Use past participants and peers
 - Classroom presentations (discuss beyond First Step information)
 - Use of freshman seminar courses (TRIO, EOP. etc.)
 - Involve student groups (social, cultural, and academic)
 - Discuss in high school outreach efforts and during admissions process (key timing to send message to students)
 - Hold parent meetings on weekends and evenings
- Portray image and culture of international education in various University marketing tools

Programming, Administrative, & Institutional:

- Re-define image of study abroad for all students and from all disciplines
- Continue to implement short-term and affordable programs (variety of housing and academic options)
- Increase funding and ease financial aid restrictions
- Stress personal outcomes of study abroad

Conclusion:

- In and out of classroom experiences largely affect student's decisions and personal development in college
- Peers and past participants are critical to influencing the student's decisions
- The personal and social factors were the most significant factors influencing their decision to go abroad