

# **Stony Brook University The President's Council of Student Advisors Report Summary for 2016-17**

## **Obstacles for Student Participation in Study Abroad Programs**

Stony Brook University is home to dozens of Study Abroad programs for undergraduate students to take part in over the course of their undergraduate career. Unfortunately only a small number of students take part in these experiences each year. Through the use of campus-wide online survey methods, focus groups, and interview methods, a comprehensive investigation was conducted on the undergraduate student body, as well as associated faculty and staff to identify what factors may be holding students back from taking part in such programs, and what modifications can be made to encourage greater student participation. In addition, Study Abroad programs and opportunities offered at other AAU institutions were examined for potential implementation at Stony Brook University. Areas of concern were found to fall under three main categories: perception & outreach, finances, and program structure & modification.

One of the greater issues found to be affecting student enrollment in Study Abroad programs was misperception of cost and program flexibility. On average, programs cost less than or the same as living on main campus, and offer accredited course options for all majors and tracks. However, the majority of students surveyed believed programs to be more expensive than living on campus and had concerns regarding timely degree completion. As a means of alleviating these misperceptions, students were presented with several routes of mitigation and indicated preference for including informational sessions into new-student orientation programs as well as first-year and transfer seminar courses, and increased walk-in hours. In addition, new search engine and website designs were created, allowing students to more easily search by program/major of study rather than location.

To alleviate financial constraints, merit-based scholarships for program enrollment and stipends to reduce travel costs were proposed. Furthermore, to mitigate obstacles identifying expected costs and financial aid availability, a financial aid calculator prototype was developed to allow for students the opportunity to more easily assess the expected cost of their study abroad experience and the potential amount(s) of financial aid that they will be eligible to receive. This would allow students to have a clearer understanding and expectation of how their costs would compare to their current living situation. Finally, several program-structure-based suggestions were made regarding Study Abroad. To encourage pre-professional students, the implementation of track-oriented Study Abroad Programs that would allow students to more easily take sequence-based courses in different countries was suggested. In addition, the prospect of supplementing academic-based programs with 1-credit activity-based (i.e. recreational programs, etc.) courses was found to be highly appealing to students.

Finally, students found the prospect of global internship/research opportunities to be highly alluring, allowing them to not only earn credit hours for their fieldwork, but to become more competitive in an ever-growing global market. Therefore, taking advantage of our global partnerships (i.e. HeForShe, etc.) and allowing students to earn accredited internship hours while studying abroad was suggested. It is with these changes and modifications that we believe that Stony Brook University students will be more driven to participate in our diverse Study Abroad Program, and can continue to grow and thrive outside of the classroom.