

# **THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA: AN ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AND STUDY ABROAD EDUCATION WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

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Tony Henthorne, Ph.D.\*

Tim Hudson, Ph.D.\*\*

\*Dr. Henthorne ([tony.henthorne@usm.edu](mailto:tony.henthorne@usm.edu)) is Professor of Marketing at the University of Southern Mississippi. He has written a number of articles on international education and recently completed a Fulbright Fellowship to India. Over the past 15 years, he has led study abroad programs to numerous countries, including Cuba, Jamaica, and Mexico, and has acted as a resource to other universities in the development of their study abroad programs.

\*\*Dr. Hudson ([HUDSONT@UH.V.EDU](mailto:HUDSONT@UH.V.EDU)) is President of the University of Houston-Victoria and is a member of the Association of American Colleges and Universities international committee. He is the recipient of an ITT International Fellowship for research in Colombia and two Fulbright awards. During his 25-plus years in academic administration, as a dean, a provost, and president, he has designed and led hundreds of study abroad courses, providing students and faculty the opportunity to live and learn in other cultures.

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This report is the result of a request from key administrators at the University of South Alabama to assess and provide guidance for its study abroad enterprise. In addition to background and secondary source research, the authors visited the campus for three days in late September, 2006, and conducted numerous interviews with stakeholders, students, faculty, administrators, and staff.

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## **Executive Summary**

Significant national attention has been focused recently on the importance of study abroad in this era of global literacy and interdependence. In November, 2005, for instance, the U.S. Congress declared 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad.

Moreover, an American Council on Education poll found that almost 80 percent of Americans believe that students should have a study abroad experience sometime during their college years and more than 50 percent of college-bound high school students have expressed an interest in participating in some form of study abroad program.

With a long history of engagement in international and study broad education, the increasingly international profile of its regional business community and its one of kind port location, University of South Alabama is poised to become a leader in international and study abroad education. Pending faculty/staff turnover (retirements) and growing interest in international education among faculty, staff and students, makes the present a window of opportunity for development and change. USA can claim study abroad and international education as a part of its continually emerging brand identity.

To achieve leadership in this highly valued and increasingly important aspect of contemporary higher education, the following recommendations are forwarded.

Include international and study abroad education as an institutional priority, both by words and by actions. The USA mission statement and those unit statements cascading from the mission harmonize with this priority. Top administrators should articulate transformative power and importance of study abroad on all affected parties.

Establish The Office of Study Abroad and International Initiatives, absorbing most of the functions of the current Office of International Programs, and headed by an individual with terminal qualifications who will serve as a strong advocate for study abroad and international education both within and without the university.

Transparently incorporate engagement in international and study abroad programs and related initiatives into the faculty evaluation and reward system.

Utilize study abroad as a tool for faculty recruitment, retention and development.

Offer a variety of study abroad programs to accommodate student characteristics and faculty interests. Programs should be offered of varying lengths and in multiple disciplines; some USA “owned” and others as a consortium member.

Establish clear accountability for programs and measurable deliverables including resource development and the strengthening of ties between the university and the local business community.

Act now. This window of opportunity is open and local and national attention to the issue is at an all time high.

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*“What nations don't know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent.”*

*- The Lincoln Commission*

## BACKGROUND

In late November, 2005, the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States declared, by unanimous vote, 2006 as the *Year of Study Abroad*.

In doing so, Congress recognized the importance of study abroad in increasing global literacy, cultural understanding, and foreign language skills of U.S. students. These competences are viewed as especially critical during this era of global trade, global interdependence, and (unfortunately) growing global terror. In making this proclamation, they also acknowledged the relevance of international experience on sustained and responsible U.S. leadership, competitiveness, and security.

Specifically, the U.S. Congress acknowledged that:

Living in a foreign country helps students understand other cultures, as well as their own;

Studying abroad improves foreign language skills;

Study abroad accelerates skill building and strengthens strategic relationships;

Studying abroad opens the door to more career options;

Recent federal reports cite a language and cultural skill shortage in more than 70 agencies critical to national security, public diplomacy, and economic competitiveness;

It is important to prepare our graduates to live and work in a global society and study abroad is one of the ways this can be accomplished.

The American Council of Education found that almost 80 percent of national respondents remarked that the presence of international programs would positively impact the choice of college or university for them, or their children (ACE 2005). Moreover, according to a 2002 American Council on Education poll, 79 percent of people in the United States believe that students should have a study abroad experience sometime during their college years. Additionally, in excess of 50 percent of college-bound high school students have expressed an interest in participating in some form of study abroad program, and approximately 75 percent believe it is important to study or participate in an internship abroad at sometime during their academic years.

Distressingly and of significant import, National Geographic Society global literacy surveys from 2002 and 2006, found that 87 percent of students in the United States between the ages of 18 and 24 cannot locate Iraq on a world map, 83 percent cannot find Afghanistan, 75 percent

cannot find Israel on a map of the Middle East, 65 percent cannot locate Great Britain, and 58 percent cannot find Japan. Of even greater concern is that 50 percent cannot locate New York on a map of the United States, and 11 percent of students cannot even find the United States.

### **Why Study Abroad?**

*“An understanding of the diverse cultures of the world, especially those of developing countries, should be an essential component of the 21st century education of our nation's students.”*

*- The Lincoln Commission*

To lack knowledge about the international environment in today's competitive global arena is to be under-educated and “at risk” in the future (Henthorne, Miller, and Hudson 2001). The reasons for studying abroad are many and varied, as are the benefits to be derived. Study abroad opens a students' window to the world. Students' perspectives will be broadened and future employers will value their experience. Study abroad allows students to educate themselves about the ever-expanding global marketplace. Burn (2002) calls study abroad the powerful “internationalizer of undergraduate education.”

Studying abroad can enrich the home campus experience. **Students return home with a greater degree of independence, confidence, and an enhanced ability to adapt to change. Study abroad students return home better learners.** The experience becomes part of the student's “core” educational experience, allowing the benefits achieved by studying abroad to cascade throughout their learning career, thus making a difference in their lifelong learning process. Study abroad allows students to meet people from other cultures who can give them a different perspective on life (Hadis 2005, Black and Duhon 2006). Students' worldview will be tested and strengthened through the relationships they build during the study abroad experience.

Through study abroad, students can improve their foreign language skills and gain international work experience, thus enhancing their own marketability. Through study abroad, students become more self-aware, permitting the opportunity for increased or enhanced self-reflection and the challenging of individual values and ideals. Such activities serve as catalysts for creative thinking, for intellectual curiosity about how others in the world live, work, and play. Such activities serve as the building blocks in the creation of a “global citizenry.”

### **Who is Studying Abroad?**

*“The exchange of students...should be vastly expanded...information and education are powerful forces in support of peace. Just as war begins in the minds of men, so does peace.”*

*- President Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Study abroad has long been viewed as a privilege of the student elite. It was something that could only benefit a few individuals, mostly at private institutions (Lecaque 2005). That reputation is changing. **Study abroad is NOT only for the elite.** Study abroad is for all future citizens who will increasingly be engaged in decisions that impact the world and whose decisions and lives will, in turn, be impacted by the global marketplace. We, as a society, no longer have the luxury of believing and behaving as if we live in an isolated microcosm, controlled totally by us, uninfluenced by others, with knowledge of the global environment inconsequential.

Research has indicated that students who participate in study abroad programs perform academically equivalent to their performance on the home campus (Ransburgh-Hudson 2001). Such information further negates the view that study abroad is only for the “best and brightest”

**Table 1: Percent of U.S. Study Abroad Students**

(Source: Open Doors 2005a)

	1994/95	1995/96	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
<b>Classification</b>					
Senior	16.3	16.2	20.4	20.19	20.20
Bachelor's, Unspecified	17.5	18.1	11	15.26	17.10
Master's	4.1	3.7	4.7	4.77	4.30
Junior	43.0	41.6	40.7	38.05	36.20
Doctoral	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.93	0.50
Sophomore	10.8	12.1	13.6	11.76	12.60
Freshman	2.5	2	3.2	2.87	3.20
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	62.2	65.3	64.9	64.70	65.60
Male	37.8	34.7	35.1	35.30	34.40
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
Caucasian	86.4	84.4	82.9	83.22	83.74
Asian-American	4.9	5.1	5.8	6.02	6.13
Hispanic-American	4.5	5	5.4	5.12	4.96
African-American	2.8	2.9	3.5	3.39	3.38
<b>TOTAL</b>	84403	89242	160920	174629	191321

of students. Such knowledge assists in overcoming the sometimes held belief (or “fear”) that the average student will be a problem student on study abroad programs.

From an historical perspective, females have been more inclined to participate in a study abroad program than their male counterparts. Currently, approximately two-thirds (65.6 percent) of those who study abroad

are female and one-third (34.4 percent) is male. As a point of comparison, the total undergraduate population is 56.4 percent female and 43.6 percent male. (Refer to Table 1.)

African-Americans and Hispanics each represent around 12 percent of the total U.S. undergraduate population. However, only about 3.8 percent of those who study abroad are black and 5 percent are Hispanic. Historically, these traditionally under-served populations have been under-represented in study abroad.

Humanities/Social Sciences majors (14.6 percent of total undergraduate enrollments) comprise 30 percent of all students who study abroad. Associatively, Business students make up the second largest student group studying abroad, comprising 17.5 percent of all study abroad students. Foreign language majors account for approximately 7.5 percent of study abroad students, while Education majors consistently make up a little over 4 percent of the total. The fields of study supplying the least percentage of students for study abroad are Engineering (3 percent) and Math or Computer Sciences (1.7 percent).

## How Long are They Staying and Where are They Going?

*“Today, the defense of U.S. interests, the effective management of global issues, and even an understanding of our Nation’s diversity require ever-greater contact with, and understanding of, people and cultures beyond our borders.”*

*- President Bill Clinton*

In the 2003/04 academic year, approximately 54 percent of study abroad participants took part in programs of less than one semester. This continues the steady trend of the past several years as

Destination	2002/03	2003/04	% Change
United Kingdom	31706	32237	1.7
Italy	18936	21922	15.8
Spain	18865	20080	6.4
France	13080	13718	4.9
Australia	10691	11418	6.8
Mexico	8775	9293	5.9
Germany	5587	5985	7.1
Ireland	4892	5198	6.4
China	2493	4737	90
Costa Rica	4296	4510	5
Japan	3457	3707	7.2
Austria	2798	2444	12.7
New Zealand	1917	2369	23.6
Cuba	1474	2148	45.7
Chile	1944	2135	9.8
Greece	2011	2099	4.4
Czech Republic	1997	2089	4.6
South Africa	1594	2009	26

(Source: Open Doors 2005b)

students shift away from the semester- or year-abroad programs and opt for shorter, more intense programs. Many immersion programs offer the student a concentrated, in-depth experience by combining on-site experiences, with class lectures, and directed student research (Henthorne, Miller, and Hudson 2001). These programs of shorter duration are becoming increasingly popular during a time when more and more undergraduate students are burdened with family and/or increasing financial commitments. Shorter programs provide a mechanism by which students may still gain international experience while, at the same time, maintaining local obligations.

### **Most Popular Destinations**

As can be seen in Table 2, the traditional destinations of England, Italy, and Spain continue to dominate as the most popular destinations for study abroad. However, of increasing interest is the tremendous growth taking place in

“non-traditional” destinations. From 2002 to 2003, China experienced a 90 percent increase in the number of students choosing to study abroad within its borders. Granted, the increase is coming from a relatively small base, but none-the-less, the numbers are impressive.

Other countries experiencing rapidly increasing numbers of students choosing to study abroad there are Cuba (46 percent increase), South Africa (26 percent), and New Zealand (24 percent). Cuba represents a study abroad opportunity unlike any other; as a result, study abroad activities to Cuba have been experiencing substantial growth over the last 10 years. However, recently implemented restrictions put in place by the Bush Administration have significantly slowed this growth.

## MOBILE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Mobile is the largest metropolitan area on the Gulf of Mexico between Houston, Texas and Tampa, Florida. Mobile is the nation's 14<sup>th</sup> largest port, based on tonnage. Mobile is served by five Class 1 railways. On a typical day, approximately 2,500 railcars pass through the city.

Mobile is truly an international city. A multitude of foreign-owned or foreign-affiliated companies call Mobile home. Highly visible examples include EADS, Degussa, and Ciba.

**Representatives of Mobile-area foreign-owned companies have expressed strong interest in hiring students with some form (any form) of international experience.**

The University of South Alabama is ideally situated to capitalize on the strengths of Mobile's port-city location. No other Alabama institution of higher learning enjoys the location attributes of the University of South Alabama. USA's port-city location gives it a strategic geographic advantage when considering the countries of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. No other Alabama university has the geographical proximity to so many large and growing foreign-owned or foreign-affiliated companies.

Importantly, international experienced-based education (i.e., study abroad) has not been effectively "claimed" by any other Alabama educational institution. That "brand" and activity is ripe for leadership. Additionally, no other area university is currently offering what would be considered an overly strong study abroad hand.

The following table (Table 3) highlights study abroad offerings for selected universities for the 2005-2006 academic year. It is important to note that although specific programs or individual course offerings within programs are listed, this is not an indication that program or course was actually run for the year or the number of students enrolled or faculty participating. This is only a listing of what was offered for the year. Additionally, all programs listed are those of shorter duration – less than one semester in duration.

Auburn University offered the greatest number of study abroad courses (22) followed closely by USM (21). However, as can be seen from a review of the table, USM only offered a total of 6 programs. Auburn required 15 separate programs to run their 22 courses. University of Alabama offered a total of 14 programs with 17 separate course listings.



**Table 3: Competing Offerings of Area Universities**

<u>Location</u>	<u>University of AL</u>	<u>Auburn</u>	<u>Southern Miss</u>
Austria	L		
Brazil	L		
Canada		LA	
Caribbean (Jamaica)		B	AN,B,BI,FS,R,HN,SW
Central Europe		B	
China	B,G	BS	
Costa Rica		ID	
Ecuador		HN	
England	B,E	AG,B,MC,TD,SN, FS	A,B,E,L,G,H,MC,PS,S O,SP
France	L	L	
Ghana	G		
Greece	CL		
Honduras			P
Italy	A,L	AR, BS, W	
Japan	HN,L	B	
Mexico	SW	L	L
Portugal		LA	
Scotland		EG	
South Korea	AS,B	B	
Spain	L		L
Taiwan		ID	
Vienna			H
	14 Offerings, 17 Courses	15 Offerings, 22 Courses	6 Offerings, 21 Courses

**Key:**

A-Art	CL-Classical Civilizations	L-Language	SP-Speech
AG-Agriculture	E-English/Literature	LA-Landscape	SW-Social Work
AN-Anthropology	EG-Engineering	Architecture	TD-Theatre/Dance
AR-Architecture	FS-Food Science	MC-Mass	W-Western Civ
AS-Asian Studies	G-Geography	Communication	Requirement
B-Business	H-History	P-Psychology	
BI-Biology	HN-Health Care/Nursing	PS-Political Science	
BS-Building Science	ID-Industrial Design	R-Religion	
		SN-Sports Nutrition	
		SO-Sociology	

**INTERNATIONAL AND STUDY ABROAD EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA**

The University of South Alabama has enjoyed a degree of success and stability in its international and study abroad program efforts that would be the envy of some schools. Under the current structure, the Office on International Programs has facilitated the study abroad efforts

of countless students, in multiple disciplines, to numerous countries, for a number of years. Their professionalism and dedication to furthering the goals of international education can never be doubted. Conversations with previous program participants (students) show that they not only enjoyed the programs, but they believe the experience gave them a better understanding of the global community. They all said the experience was worth MORE than the financial costs. There was universal recognition of the role USA played in the international study experience. But, there was also universal recognition that many more South Alabama students needed to be part of the experience.

After conducting background research utilizing primarily secondary sources and a number of university generated documents, for a period of three days (September 20-22, 2006), we visited the University of South Alabama. During this time, we had the opportunity to meet with a multitude of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, almost all whom were there because they expressed a keen interest in study abroad and/or international education in general at South Alabama. (See the Appendix for a partial listing of contact individuals, groups etc.). Additionally, we received input from area economic development authorities and other area community leaders who expressed a desire for greater international experiences for South Alabama students and faculty and provided excellent context information.

From these interactions, the following points may be concluded.

South Alabama students need much greater exposure to the international environment.

The number of South Alabama students currently studying abroad is unacceptable to faculty, staff, and administrators and low by the already low U.S. norms.

To continue international and study abroad education is the current structural manifestation is undesirable and untenable.

The current organizational structure supporting international and study abroad education is inefficient and cumbersome and key personnel turnover is inevitable.

Lack of consistent programs oversight and/or fragmented responsibility has resulted in some less than desirable outcomes.

Area employers are seeking new hires with greater global awareness and understanding.

Area employers are having difficulty locating these new hires in the local area, from local institutions of higher learning. Significant advancement opportunities focused on the growing international business community are being unrealized.

This University is at a crossroads. Recent undesirable program outcomes, coupled with substantial pending faculty/staff turnover (retirements), makes this a window of opportunity for change.

### **Program Recommendations and Justifications**

**The University of South Alabama is poised to claim study abroad and international education as part of its continually emerging brand identity.** We want to brand the University of South Alabama as connecting to the world, as being a part of the global environment – not just a passive bystander, but a significant player. In saying this, we are making a **promise**. We are saying to the student that if they choose to come to USA, then we are making the promise that they will have the opportunity to study abroad.

This branding, this promise of international activity can be a potent part of the package used in recruitment of highly desirable and coveted students to USA and its Honors program. These may be students that otherwise may not choose to select USA as their university of first choice.

Likewise, a strong brand identity that includes this “promise” of study abroad may be used as a powerful tool in the recruitment of the best possible faculty, in the development of that faculty, and in the long-term retention of that faculty. Strong faculty members are a product in demand. Many of these individuals want exposure to the international arena or, having had some form of prior exposure, they are looking to expand their world view. Offering them the availability of study abroad experiences is one significant way to assist them in pursuing their individual research agendas and individual growth.

**We urge the University of South Alabama to include international and study abroad education as an institutional priority.** Anything valued by the university and overtly expressed as important by the university should be manifested in all university documents, starting with its mission statement, and protocols, including tenure and promotion. Whether international and study abroad participation is nested in teaching (a non-traditional teaching approach), research (enhancing one’s individual research agenda), or service (extending the university into areas it does not typically enter), its importance must be made transparent in the T&P process. Additionally, the necessary resources must be made available to support study abroad. Particularly at the onset, necessary funds must be available to adequately support the growth and development of this endeavor. To withhold such support would likely result in underperformance of the unit. If properly seeded and managed under traditional professional/continuing education models, study abroad can generate sufficient revenue to be revenue neutral within the larger framework of the university budget.

**International and study abroad programs at South Alabama would benefit most from a form of centralized control.** We recommend that all international and study abroad programs fall under the auspices of the Office of Study Abroad and International Initiatives (or some other appropriately agreeable name). This office would **replace** the currently existing Office of International Studies, but carry with it their staff and O&M. The EFL, effective in its current structure, would NOT be fall under the auspices of this new office.

This office would hold responsibility for ensuring minimum standards for all university abroad programs. Additionally, this office would collaborate with appropriate university personnel and faculty to approve, coordinate, facilitate, and support all study abroad activities. This office should not just be a passive purveyor of information, but an advocate for all international and study abroad programs, new and old.

This office should be “entrepreneurial – with a focus.” While we advocate centralization, it should not be done to the exclusion of individual interests or initiatives. In its best manifestation, study abroad is both institutionally strategic and faculty driven. From individual faculty come new program initiatives. Instances of such initiatives already exist within the USA community. These initiatives become the heart of new program offerings. However, it is important that these individual program proposals “fit” into the overall university focus of study abroad. Rogue programs or programs that do not mesh with university objectives should not be allowed to operate.

The success of international and study abroad programs require emphatic, repeated and programmatic support from the highest levels of administration. The Director should have the active support of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and work closely with the Deans to develop and implement international and study abroad programs.

**There must be a Director of Study Abroad and International Initiatives to oversee and take responsibility for all Office of Study Abroad and International Initiatives activities (see above recommendation).** It is imperative that this be an individual who can work effectively with all stakeholders within and without the university environment. These will include, but should not be limited to, university administration, college administration, individual faculty members, students, and the local business and economic development community. This person should be one who can work with all units, be considered non-threatening and acceptable to all. USA must select a director who will be both a catalyst and activist for international and study abroad activity.

Very strong consideration should be given to this individual possessing a terminal degree or the equivalent. Barring this, the chosen candidate should have, at the very least, extensive experience in the field. However, the selection of an individual who holds academic rank has so many advantages. The holding of an academic appointment allows the director to speak with other academics (both administrative and faculty) from more of a level of perceived equality. Such a position would make it much easier to encourage others to assist, cooperate, and/or participate in study abroad.

A national external search should be undertaken to fill the position of Director of Study Abroad and International Initiatives. The dynamic opportunity profile of USA would inevitably attract a talented pool of applicants. USA offers the advantages and opportunities which would make it an attractive choice for the dynamic, driven individual needed to optimally fill this position.

While it is necessary for USA to adequately and amply fund this international and study abroad initiative, in the long term, it is not possible for the university to provide the magnitude of funds necessary to aggressively expand study abroad into all areas and regions desirable. Additionally, funds generated from student enrollment fees will not be enough. Securing of outside funding would be a necessary component of the Director of Study Abroad and International Initiatives job description. The Director would hold responsibility for overseeing an aggressive federal and foundation funding initiatives to develop funds for study abroad education.

This position needs to be filled by a special advocate whose goal would be to work him/herself “out of a job” as study abroad becomes internalized into the USA culture.

The Director of Study Abroad and International Initiatives must be ultimately responsible for the success or failure of programs.

**USA should consider a variety of study abroad programs.** These programs should be based on spatial geography (e.g., a southern coastal port city), individual faculty interest, desired institutional interest, and program length. Program length should vary from the short (e.g., 1 week, 10 days, 3 weeks, etc.) to the long (for example, the traditional semester or year abroad). Having said this, it is important to remember that students are opting more and more for shorter

term programs. However, exchange-type programs of semester length may be the most appropriate for the sciences and professional disciplines. Such programs may be arranged at the college level using the model of “swapping” students with vetted foreign partners. This activity alone can lead to considerable faculty development as colleagues reach across boundaries to find other colleagues.

Study abroad courses must be structured in a manner so that they may easily substitute for major core courses. A student interested in furthering their international exposure should not be penalized by having the course count only as an elective in their program. Doing so would significantly limit those willing to study abroad. What are the basic learning outcomes for a term-length course? If a study abroad course can accomplish those basic outcomes in a 3 week period of time, there should be no concern with substituting it for the term course.

USA should consider “pre-professional” study abroad courses. These would be courses that may substitute for university core requirements (e.g., World Civilizations). The introduction of such pre-professional courses would open study abroad to a much wider range of students, much earlier in their academic careers. Research has shown that students who study abroad earlier in their university experience are more likely to take another study abroad later in their program.

Consideration should be given to developing a number of “owned” programs – those programs where USA has the in-house interest and ability to make it happen (the Spanish language program in Xalapa is an excellent example). The institutional payoff for developing and managing your own programs would be significant. Home grown programs would allow USA to retain the SCHs generated and could act as a vehicle for faculty development and involvement. Inevitably institutions developing and owning their own programs exhibit greater levels of enthusiasm for those programs, which translates and trickles down to increased faculty and student interest. USA may well be in a position to lead consortia of universities or even community colleges on some of its more robust “owned” programs.

Conversely, for those programs of interest where USA does not have the in-house ability or interest, alignment with other key schools or consortia would be a usable alternative. Keep in mind that the institutional payoff under such an arrangement would be limited. USA would forfeit revenue, much faculty involvement, and ownership. However, the students could still be afforded a quality educational product and this could be consequential in branding USA as a “go to” place for study abroad.

**USA’s English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Institute and its rotating cadre of international students should play a key role in the development of international and study abroad initiatives.** Currently, approximately 900 foreign students study at the University of South Alabama. Many of those students are enrolled in the university’s respected EFL program in an effort to further their mastery of the English language. These students represent a number of geographically and culturally diverse countries. These students serve as a valuable university asset. EFL students or degree graduates returning home can act as a conduit, help to bridge the divide between their home country and students wishing to study there. These former students would be invaluable in making contacts, opening closed doors, and facilitating USA study abroad efforts.

Additionally, these students could be utilized as “guest” speakers in classes and/or pre-departure seminars. The knowledge and insights they have to offer of their home countries to USA students is irreplaceable and under tapped.

**Measurable deliverables must be required of all study abroad programs.** To operate such programs without requiring concrete deliverables would be to encourage no one to take “ownership” of the programs. It is necessary that program accountability be in place. Deans must be held accountable for success/failure of programs that are housed in their respective colleges. Deans, department chairs, and others must be encouraged to engage in this activity. Following this, measures of success or failure on these dimensions must be provided. The Director of Study Abroad and International Initiatives must work collaboratively with and be able to demonstrate how s/he actively HELPED the deans reach the goals of study abroad on which they are measured and judged.

The current study abroad ad hoc committee comprised of faculty and staff should be continued in some form and perhaps expanded. To date, this committee has raised basic concerns and offered direction which has influenced the call for this study abroad audit. Such insight will prove even more useful and valuable as this endeavor grows and flourishes.

**Study abroad participation should be viewed as an integral tool in the faculty development process.** Study abroad participation should be developed as a tool to assist faculty in reaching their long-term personal and professional goals. Global awareness should not be just a goal for of student enrichment. Global awareness is equally vital for an informed and effective faculty. The faculty are our key providers of knowledge. For USA to allow its faculty to be globally under-informed is a disservice to the development of that faculty and their long-term productivity and classroom effectiveness. Faculty development is a key component is the overall success of the university. Study abroad participation is an integral component of that development. Additionally, an engaged faculty will be avid promoters of the student study abroad experience. Engaged, enthusiastic faculty are your strongest recruiting tool.

**If a student has the initiative to study abroad, they should be facilitated in this and not challenged to make it happen.** Scholarship monies should be made available to assist students in defraying the cost of the programs. Additionally, there must to be a smooth flow of information between all affected university parties – Financial Affairs, University Bursar, Registrar, and others to ensure that students have available to them the monies necessary for program participation and that the credit received is recorded as needed and agreed upon for the individual student. Everybody has to be on the same page. Centralized oversight of the program should do a lot to further this goal. USA’s Honors Program should be able to offer its students a study abroad experience as a part of its “package” of advantages, thus abetting the program’s efforts in attracting high ability students to Mobile.

**Important players in study abroad should be afforded international experiences.** The important players in study abroad are faculty and key staff members (such as those mentioned in the prior point). Providing these players with program familiarization experiences/trips gets them into the action. Bringing these parties on board and extending to them the chance to see first-hand what study abroad is all about would create additional advocates for the concept and practice of study abroad; thus, spreading the word, causing increased excitement, and bringing

more students to the table. Another significant outcome of expanding the international experience to key players is an improved study abroad product. It is inevitable that the insights and observations of these constituents would lead to useful program modifications with the beneficiary being the student.

**Attention should be directed to further strengthening the ties between USA and the local Chamber of Commerce and other economic development entities.** The University of South Alabama is an integral part of the Gulf Coast region. Substantial interest exists in the economic development community concerning study abroad. It is necessary to explore what synergies may exist to extend the ties between USA and the local economic development community. The community wants and does support the university, but some may believe that there is nothing truly special for them to support. Given the university's already strong ties with the Chamber, this may provide an excellent opportunity to foster the growth of international education. Educating students to the global environment may be that "something special." Significant monies may be available for study abroad scholarships from local industry. As previously stated, the Mobile area is home to a number of international organizations (for example, EADS, Ciba). Industries such as these have repeatedly expressed interest in hiring students with *ANY* international exposure. Yet they cannot find them to hire. **International and study abroad education may be the hook that brings them to the scholarship table.** These may be industries that would not normally consider providing funds to the university. USA should consider asking the local Chamber director or similar to serve on its study abroad committee.

**It is important is for the President and the Provost to speak with passion about the importance of international education and study abroad to the university due to its context.** It is not required for the President and the Provost to speak with specificity about particular Study Abroad programs. No prestigious university exists without considerable "intuitive" connections to its context. For USA, this makes international and study abroad education a good candidate for engagement.

Top administrator's messages should focus on the transformative power of study abroad on individuals and on the importance of study abroad, not only to Alabama, but to the region, and the country. International education is a necessity in today's increasingly competitive world. It is not a luxury.

As leaders, we should aspire to claim leadership in international and study abroad education. We should then seek recognition for that claim of leadership in and commitment to study abroad. It is necessary to integrate this message in a number of different forums and repeat it often. International and study abroad education is vitally important. The university should become more visible in regional and national organizations that support international education and support with enthusiasm the world of possibilities available through study abroad. In this manner, it will be in a position to breathe life into study abroad education through action.

*"Study abroad is not merely a life-changing experience for those who pursue it; as the world becomes smaller, it is essential that our citizens understand other nations. To maintain our global leadership, we must give our students greater international educational opportunities."*  
- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

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## Appendix

### Partial Listing of Contacted Individuals and Groups\*

Mohammad Alam - Electrical & Computer Engineering	Zoya Khan - Foreign Languages
David Bowers - Political Science & Criminal Justice	Mohan Menon - Marketing
Isabel Brown - Foreign Languages	Harrison Miller - History
Ana Burgamy - International Programs	Vaughn Millner - Behavioral Studies & Educational Technology
Bob Coleman - Honors Program	Dorothy Mollise - Student Success & Retention
Patsy Covey - Provost	Carl Moore - College of Business
Frank Daugherty - English Language Center	Gordon Moulton - President
Richard Hayes - College of Education	Stephen Morris - Political Science & Criminal Justice
Samual Fisher - Political Science & Criminal Justice	David Nelson - Mechanical Engineering
Robert Fornaro - International Programs	Phillip Norris - Continuing Education
Jason Guynes - Visual Arts	Maggie Pyle - Sponsored Programs
Melissa Haab - Admissions	Janice Sauer - University Libraries
Ellwood Hannum - School of Continuing Education & Special Programs	Rick Schaffer - Bursar
Keith Harrison - Assoc Vice President for Academic Affairs	Bill Sisson - Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
Richard Hayes - College of Education	Deborah Spake - College of Business
Brenda Henson - International Student Services	John Steadman - College of Engineering
Robert Ingram - Baldwin County Economic Develop Alliance	Richard Talbott - College of Allied Helath Professions
Emily Johnston - Financial Aid	Thomas Wells - School of Continuing Education & Special Programs
David Johnson - College of Arts & Sciences	Lois Wims - College of Arts & Sciences
Calvin Jones - Foreign Languages	Melissa Wold - Registrar
Mathew Joseph - Marketing & International Business	Richard Wood - University Libraries

6 students

\*This is a partial listing of the individuals whose opinions and insights were sought during the September visit. Some names may have been inadvertently omitted. All contacts were encouraged to e-mail us with any additional thoughts or concerns they might think of following our visit.