
Going Global

Strategies for Study Abroad at the School of Public Service, DePaul University, Chicago

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We offer rational, practical models and examples of successful strategies for study abroad that are appropriate for master-level, working adults in nonprofit management programs. The models illustrate how to forge partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, institutions, and individuals to meet curricular goals while developing faculty and students. Aligned with university values of being Vincentian, Catholic, and urban, faculty developed a plan to become “international by design.” Over a dozen years, its study abroad offerings grew to fifteen courses in about ten countries annually, extending more and more to developing countries because of institutional mission, faculty and staff interest, and available means.

Keywords: education, universities/colleges, mission, curriculum

We should be trying to build a world, at this unique moment in history, that we would like to live in when we're not the only big dog on the block.

—Bill Clinton (2005)

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL of Public Service offers graduate programs within the university's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Located at its Loop Campus in Chicago, the school offers more than seven hundred students—both preservice and working

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professionals in the government and nonprofit sectors—five master degrees through courses on campus, online, and abroad. The mission of DePaul University is to offer quality academic programs as a Vincentian, Catholic, and urban institution. The School of Public Service strives to “educate women and men to be effective public service leaders in the global community guided by the values of St. Vincent de Paul.” The curriculum distinguishes the school by emphasizing leadership, ethics, and being international by design.

Initial Strategies

The School of Public Service faculty decided to become intentionally international in the late 1990s. Faculty started this process by creating an international master’s degree in public service and by recruiting faculty and students from other countries. In the past few years, the school has admitted students from a dozen or more countries, including Angola, China, India, Brazil, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Ukraine, and Nigeria. These students help diversify the classrooms in Chicago and abroad as they enroll in study abroad courses. Furthermore, recent faculty hires included international scholars from India, China, Italy, Nigeria, and Kazakhstan. The school has also hired part-time faculty from India, Ireland, and Brazil, two of whom hold full-time positions at their own institutions. This diversity was purposeful and planned as a means of building on the school’s mission and motto, “International by Design.” As a continuation to these efforts, the school director actively searches abroad for institutional partners and academic opportunities for students.

The first reason for seeking opportunities abroad was to internationalize the curriculum at home by sending faculty abroad to gain international experience and bring it home to students in Chicago. However, faculty became convinced that graduating students without any international awareness was a disservice not only to them but also to our global community and the school’s mission. A second reason to go abroad was to extend DePaul’s mission of service to others in the world, wherever welcome. If the School of Public Service could internationalize its curriculum while also bringing its expertise to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions of higher education in other countries, it could exercise the university’s common mission of service and collaboration.

A third reason for internationalization was to extend the reputation of the university, with the goal of attracting undergraduate and graduate students to DePaul University’s programs. As DePaul’s patron, St. Vincent de Paul, once said, “There is much charity but it is poorly organized,” and “It is not enough to do good, it must be done well.” The School of Public Service, therefore, is about organizing well in order to do good. One student put it this way (Jackson,

2004): “A core value of DePaul University is providing service to others. The university began with a commitment to education as service for the many, not the few. The basic concept of doing good by serving others takes on real meaning when turned into action.”

First Experiences

The School of Public Service’s first experience abroad was cohosting an international conference in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1999. In July 2000, the school offered its first course abroad at All Hallows College in Dublin to fourteen American and nineteen Irish students. By 2012, the school was offering six courses per year in Ireland to DePaul and All Hallows students from the United States and Ireland, but also from the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe, India, and several African nations. It was relatively easy to offer courses at this location when Ireland’s economy—known as the Celtic Tiger—flourished. The experience in Dublin provided expertise and standards to expand study abroad offerings elsewhere.

Students and faculty quickly pushed for study abroad opportunities in developing countries—based on mission and personal interests. We offered courses at the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Belgium and over time added courses in Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Italy, India, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines, Spain, Germany, and Turkey. In creating these international learning experiences for its students, the school formed relationships and created joint programs with institutional partners in Ireland, India, Belgium, the Philippines, and Brazil. In these joint programs, the school combines its students with those of its partners in a single course and classroom—and sometimes in the field.

Recognizing the value of these courses and the relationships established through them, UN ambassador and former DePaul honorary visiting professor Ahmad Kamal (2005) said, “At DePaul University we have a disadvantage and two advantages. The disadvantage is the general American culture that sadly lacks geographical and historical knowledge. The first advantage is working in an institution whose clear mission is its desire to do good. DePaul University’s mission is your greatest asset. The other advantage is your knowledge and linkages with the community, both locally and internationally.”

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Course Designs and Models

The study abroad program at the School of Public Service is founded on these principles:

- It is created and designed for graduate students only.
- Each course must be integral to one or more degree programs *before* faculty consider it for study abroad.

- Mission and curriculum drive the creation of the study abroad syllabus.
- Each course has a faculty champion.
- The school and its faculty are entrepreneurial and responsive to partners and invitations.

Moreover, all study abroad courses use the executive, or short-term, model of one week to ten days abroad. This is a better fit for students, many of whom work full time. Students also report that the one-week format works well because instructors can link learning from lectures and experiences that are only a day or two apart rather than a week or more.

When students take courses at partner institutions, they tend to learn as much or more from their intercultural interactions with other students as from their classes. As a key design of the school's study abroad programs, faculty encourage student interactions through extended coffee breaks, common meals, social events, and evening forays to local pubs. The school has designed several study abroad courses that combine students going abroad for seven to ten days with scholars who complete only the U.S.-based classroom portion. Last, most of the courses abroad extend DePaul University's service-learning mission as an aspect of learning purposefully built into syllabi.

Faculty use a variety of models to accommodate courses, countries, curricula, and purpose for study abroad experiences. Models evolved with experience based on whether a host institution offered an invitation, a faculty champion sought out an opportunity, the university academic calendar afforded creative scheduling, and so on. The models provide structure and direction for how the school designs and delivers programs. Interactions with local NGOs, students, faculty or speakers, housing, transportation, service and experiential learning, and pedagogy all flow from the program model.

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Model A: Partnerships

The School of Public Service has formed formal relationships with institutions in four countries: All Hallows College, Dublin; DePaul Institute of Science and Technology, Kerala, India; Pontifical Catholic University, Curitiba, Brazil; and Adamson University, Manila. In each case, institutional representatives sign general and specific agreements to collaborate. Each partnership originated from a personal connection with the school director or faculty members. Three connections came through the international Vincentian community. Nevertheless, the partnerships became possible because of personal relationships based on common visions and missions.

We use two kinds of partnerships. In the first case, DePaul students are engaged in the classroom and community with students from the host partner. In Ireland, for instance, DePaul students share the classroom with All Hallows' master of arts in management students. In India, DePaul students study with master of social work students. In the second case, DePaul scholars are engaged in the community. In Manila, they work with Adamson faculty and community leaders to build capacity and sustainable development in NGOs. In India, DePaul negotiated a memorandum of agreement with the Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), where students learn from, and work with, local professionals and members of the community in policy implementation—as directed by WOTR professionals. WOTR had already been internationally recognized, with an infrastructure of exchange focused on donors. The DePaul chair of the India program knew WOTR through his experience as an India native. He met with the WOTR founder and CEO to assess capabilities and the possibility of a partnership. A key element in this partnership was the faculty member's initiative, creativity, and energy to champion an idea. WOTR had all logistics in place to host and direct our students, so DePaul was able to conserve resources and improve student experiences as a client-partner of an NGO in place.

In Nairobi and Brazil, DePaul signed memoranda of agreement with Tangaza College and the Pontifical Catholic University of Parana, respectively. In Zagreb, DePaul has an agreement with the newly founded Catholic University of Croatia to offer a joint degree program in nonprofit management, should the university become strong enough to launch the degree.

How did these relationships come about? It all began with the Congregation of the Mission, the religious community of men founded by Vincent de Paul. The congregation sponsors DePaul University as well as Adamson University and All Hallows College. A similar sponsorship exists at the DePaul Institute of Science and Technology in India. In each case, someone from those institutions approached the director of the School of Public Service at DePaul with an invitation to collaborate. The director is a member of the Congregation of the Mission and was in a good position to understand how to find commonalities in mission and vision. The director is always alert for connections to colleagues in the international Vincentian family—more than forty organizations inspired or founded by Vincent de Paul and working globally—for potential partnerships.

Model B: Specialized Courses

Because many students study in public policy or public administration degree programs, faculty developed a course at the European

Union and NATO in Brussels, Belgium, that focuses on the global public sector. Through this program, students experience the “capital of Europe” by observing EU public policy processes, interacting with NATO and EU officials, and visiting a variety of NGOs in Brussels. The course occurs each spring quarter; we use the Irish Institute of Public Administration as a partner to provide housing to DePaul students through the institute’s facility in Leuven. Similarly, the school offers specialized courses in Nairobi and Beijing based on faculty leadership and student interest.

Model C: Conferences

In July 2008, seventeen students, alumni, and faculty attended and presented papers at the biennial conference of the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) in Barcelona, Spain. In July 2010, twenty-four attended the same conference in Istanbul, Turkey. In each case, student participation in the conference was a key component of their research methods course. Jon Van Til, a respected authority in nonprofit management education, remarked, “The future of ISTR is in good hands with all the students and faculty DePaul is sending to its conference.”

Model D: Reversing the Flow

In this model, the school engages faculty from abroad to teach at the DePaul Loop Campus in Chicago. Faculty from Brazil, Ireland, and India have participated for one or more terms. This strategy helps to internationalize the curriculum further for students unable to travel abroad. Also, a few members of the faculty at Adamson University in Manila pursue our master’s degrees online. Last, Vincentian priests from the Philippines, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Brazil have earned master’s degrees from the school by attending classes in Chicago and abroad through a scholarship program sponsored by the Vincentian Community.

Student Participation

The School of Public Service’s master of science degree in international public service requires a foreign language and an international internship. We encourage students in all degree programs to study abroad, however—and we design courses to appeal to all degrees, both required and elective courses. More than one hundred School of Public Service students go abroad each year, and many of the seven hundred students take a course abroad at one point during their studies. (Students typically spend two to five years in their degree programs.) Mostly professionals and fully employed, students involved in study abroad range in age from twenty-three to thirty-five (but age is no limit; a sixty-year-old student has studied abroad).

All students arrange their own transportation, usually adding a few days on the front or back end of a course to explore the country and culture. Recognizing the financial concerns that most students have, the director works to raise scholarship funds; financial aid for study abroad is a priority but still available only in small amounts.

These efforts have proved valuable because DePaul students who study abroad bring their international experiences back into the classroom in Chicago, exposing classmates to additional global perspectives and becoming strong partners in the internationalization of the curriculum. In most courses, it is rare for any class to pass without some reference to, or application of, international experiences or cases. For instance, one student published a paper from his thesis on NGOs in Thailand in the *UN Chronicle*. Students also collect data for capstone projects or theses in nearly every country where study abroad takes place. Recently, two alums were able to land full-time jobs in India based on their study abroad experiences there.

In the spirit of partnership, bringing students from abroad to DePaul classrooms in Chicago would be a great opportunity to further internationalize the curriculum and advance the university mission. To date, however, no students from partner institutions have traveled to DePaul to take courses because the high travel costs and U.S. government's visa restrictions are off-putting—especially since the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

Faculty Participation

The School of Public Service's study abroad instructors are convinced that teaching intercultural groups of students in the same classroom is the best teaching experience they have ever had. This support is essential to the survival of the program because directors cannot do it all; each partnership and study abroad course needs a champion. For example, in the case of the DePaul–India partnership, the faculty member who first reached out to WOTR was committed enough to take the lead on the partnership, which has expanded from two to five courses in two cities and a rural area.

This experience with study abroad and an internationalized academic environment began with senior faculty who led the courses to Brussels and Ireland. New faculty followed by championing courses to India, China, Mexico, and Italy. One faculty member had conducted dissertation research with the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico. He was quick to develop a study abroad course there. A second faculty member cohosted three international conferences for academics at three universities in different Brazilian cities, establishing a U.S.–Brazil dialogue of sorts. Two partnerships and books by faculty and students resulted from these. Two more international conferences, cohosted by DePaul and All Hallows, in which faculty and students from both institutions participated took place in Dublin.

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In Chicago, two faculty members serve as chair and director of Vincent on Leadership: The Hay Project, which collects data worldwide on Vincentian leadership. It serves students in the United States, Ireland, India, and the Philippines and supports the internationalization of nonprofit degree programs by connecting students to partner institutions and topics as well as supporting courses abroad. It also offers a free ten-week, online certificate program in values-centered leadership. The Chaddick Institution for Metropolitan Development is also a partner to the school and supported the course in Curitiba, Brazil.

Study Abroad Programs and Faculty Research

Participation in study abroad programs through the School of Public Service has instigated the completion of several studies by our faculty. The director of the India program completed several papers regarding strategic planning and measurements of social capital that were made possible by his connection with WOTR data. Other faculty and students have presented papers at the ISTR conferences in Bangkok, Barcelona, Istanbul, and Siena. Similarly, they have brought their research to paper presentations at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) conferences and the recent BenchMark 3.5 conference sponsored by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC). One faculty member received a Fulbright scholarship in Brazil that led to several presentations and journal articles coauthored with Brazilian colleagues.

Promotion and Tenure

Faculty of the School of Public Service greatly value study abroad experiences in the pursuit of tenure and promotion because it is so tightly tied to the school's mission of being "international by design" and the DePaul mission to internationalize the curriculum. While there is no metric to judge how much influence these study abroad efforts contribute to promotion and tenure, at least at the department level, faculty take teaching abroad seriously and value it highly.

The Experience of Teaching

Faculty report that the most rewarding part of teaching abroad is watching students teach and learn from one another. Crafting a challenging discussion question, assigning an appropriate case with an international theme, or creating a class exercise generates lively exchanges among students through which they teach each other to think differently. Faculty return to classrooms in Chicago with a rich experience that energizes and expands their teaching. Teaching abroad also provides opportunities to interact with students

from diverse professions, experiences, and nationalities. Consequently, classrooms have become places for intense interaction and exchange of information, with cases, presentations, and discussions based on students' international experiences. Some faculty—firm believers in Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frameworks for analyzing how organizations work—suggest a fifth: the international frame.

Because of study abroad experiences, faculty are more likely to be creative in their teaching at home. For example, some faculty bring guest speakers from all over the world into their classes via Skype. Students and faculty who study urban planning and transportation in Curitiba, Brazil, take internships and otherwise work with the city of Chicago's planning department or local transportation offices.

Obstacles and Challenges

In late November 2008, students and faculty had no sooner finished their Thanksgiving dinners than they saw the news accounts of the hotel bombing in Mumbai. Faculty assessed the situation as too risky to send students scheduled to depart the next day and postponed the India trip until spring break. Other DePaul students arrived in Brussels just as the United States was going to war against Saddam Hussein. This required careful and impromptu adjustments by the instructor to ensure safety, but it paid rich dividends for students who experienced firsthand anti-American demonstrations and international relations in crisis.

Trips to Haiti and Kenya have had to wait because of travel restrictions imposed by the university and the State Department. Faculty then reassess and make adjustments, oftentimes starting up new programs in other countries to replace the restricted ones. For instance, discontinuing Chiapas allowed us to offer study abroad programs in Colombia and Cuba. Students sometimes have to choose between two good alternatives because of scheduling; sometimes space is limited in a program because of available housing or even the size of the bus available for local travel. Occasionally, students get sick or are overextended. These are serious concerns for all, but especially for the faculty member who is trying to teach the course and attend to the ill student. By far, the greatest obstacle students face is affordability. Most students finance the program fee and tuition through loan programs, thereby adding to their debt.

Some faculty excel at the creative side of study abroad but are not as good with trip details such as scheduling, expenses, and general administrative duties. When possible we send a second person—faculty or staff member—to assist. Faculty must also endure a complex approval process involving the international programs office, the office of the general counsel, travel agents, and so on. Study abroad is

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a great deal of work that often distracts from research and challenges the management skills of the individuals involved. Once the program is approved, faculty then turn their attention to approving students who apply, holding information sessions, and generally preparing students to go abroad without becoming the “ugly American.”

The best marketing of the study abroad program comes from students who talk about their experiences to other students who have yet to participate in the program. Faculty also inspire them to study abroad and are usually intricately involved in marketing programs. The study abroad office of the university also conducts marketing, but mostly for undergraduate programs.

Once abroad, all the usual challenges of travel, language, customs, and culture apply. Graduate students are usually good about handling these details and rely on fellow scholars. Often enough, they are traveling abroad for the first time in their lives; a recent student took her first airplane flight for study abroad in Mumbai. For such students, extra precaution and advising are necessary.

It Is All About Mission

The School of Public Service uses a combination of core courses, electives, and special topics courses to make it easy for students to take courses abroad. Field trips are included in most study abroad courses. In India, for instance, Indian students take American students to spend a full day with them at their internship sites. In Brussels, students visit leaders of the EU and NATO, and in China students visit rural and urban sites and meet leaders in both places. In Mexico, students interact extensively with indigenous peoples, while students on the Manila trip work with local NGOs. An additional strategy meant to further engage students in study abroad is to combine faculty and student research interests with study abroad topics and sites whenever possible.

For the faculty, one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching abroad is meeting people and making new friends and research partners. Besides class discussions, social exchanges take place frequently during coffee breaks, meals, and after class. In Dublin, students and faculty find their way to local pubs, listen to Irish music, celebrate U.S. Independence Day with an Irish-hosted bar-beque, and so on.

Everything at the School of Public Service starts and ends with mission, university-wide or schoolwide, because partners with similar goals develop stronger ties. Partnerships evolve through personal connections and relationships not merely because they make good sense, but also because of common goals. The school recalled its mission in deciding against an invitation to offer the master in public administration (MPA) in Bahrain; this was a mission mismatch and would not serve current students well.

Making Connections

The School of Public Service benefited greatly from connections made through the Congregation of the Mission. We used other means as well, often forging partnerships with universities and institutions abroad through academic connections such as friendships with coauthors. Cosponsored conferences on special topics sometimes can launch relationships that will result in study abroad programs. We found international friends easily through membership in NACC and organizations like ISTR and ARNOVA. Non-profit management programs can also work together to develop and share study abroad programs. These efforts are usually mired in administrative red tape but are worthy of consideration, especially for smaller programs.

Internationalizing the faculty by hiring practice and preferences helps. Bringing in an international scholar to teach for a term or deliver an annual lecture may lead to a partnership. Fulbright scholars can open doors, too. Our experience led to a strong partnership with a university in Brazil and several conversations about collaboration with other Brazilian institutions.

Finally, students can lead the way by indicating the kinds of policy they want to study and the problems they want to solve. They often have connections in their native country or in countries where they worked as Peace Corps volunteers, teachers, or for U.S. organizations operating abroad, such as Rotary International and the Lions Club.

Effects of Mission Beyond the Classroom

Only after gaining experience in an English-speaking and developed country like Ireland and observing increased student demand and faculty interest did we offer developing world experiences. This strategy worked in practice as we fueled student demand by creating a culture of study abroad and started witnessing practical and global articulations of the school's mission.

Social Networking and New Experiences

The social interactions that take place among students, faculty, and new colleagues in host countries foster the development of new networks and friendships that reduce national and cultural boundaries. In Dublin, class activities and social interactions outside class trigger close relations among students of various backgrounds and opportunities to build partnerships and networks among group members. These students are building networks of professional colleagues around the world.

The study abroad program also offers students experiences they normally would not get at home. One summer, for example, students

in Dublin met Irish prime minister Bertie Ahern (he left office in 2009) strolling the grounds at All Hallows or nearby at Fagan's Pub, where he was quick to pose for photos with them. Last, as the result of a faculty member taking advantage of a domestic DePaul University connection, we have been able to design and deliver a course each September at the United Nations. The course is not abroad, but it is intensely international and speaks volumes to the power of networking and making new connections.

Founding Nonprofits and Student Associations

Students returning from their study abroad trip to Chiapas, Mexico, continued meeting long after the course formally ended and then chartered their own 501(c)3 organization, Chiapan Echo, which supports the indigenous people they met. Together with faculty, these students hosted an international conference in Chicago that raised funds to bring their Chiapan hosts to the United States. One student described her experience in these words (Jackson, 2004): "The Chiapas program provided a cultural contest for learning about sustainable development in indigenous communities and the role nongovernmental organizations play in these initiatives. The experience allowed me to distance myself from my world reality as I dropped into the lives of others. It is an enriching quality of learning that occurs while embedded in a different culture. My window on the world changed."

In India, WOTR was interested in expanding the partnership, which we accomplished by creating the nonprofit American Friends of Water (AFOW). As a result of their experiences abroad, students teamed with faculty to establish this U.S.-based nonprofit fundraising organization to support WOTR's work in India. WOTR expanded its fund-raising success and global exposure through the work of DePaul students who participated in the formation of AFOW.

Study Away

Inspired by study abroad trips, faculty and students responded to an invitation from a DePaul trustee and Vincentian priest to help him and his community in post-Katrina New Orleans. In December 2005, sixteen students traveled to New Orleans, met with local leaders and members of the community, and drafted a community development plan they presented a month later. In subsequent courses, students studied grant proposal writing in the context of the New Orleans community, with community members learning alongside. Another intensive class focused on how to create nonprofit business plans in the context of post-Katrina New Orleans using the local community as a laboratory. These courses caught the imagination of faculty and students because of the mission, the service-learning component, and the widespread experience of

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intensive learning abroad brought home. The Rebuild Center in New Orleans stands as a monument to student–faculty–community partnerships in service learning.

Fostering Partner Developments

At All Hallows College in Dublin, faculty from both institutions worked together to create an All Hallows master's degree program based on, and inspired by, the program at DePaul. It has become the largest graduate program at All Hallows, and the only non-profit master's degree program offered in Ireland. Following the maxim that "Big guys should help little guys," the director of the School of Public Service, who also served as chair of the board of trustees of Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan, invited faculty there to offer study abroad courses. Siena Heights offered its first course abroad at All Hallows College in July 2005, with cross-listing for U.S. and Irish students.

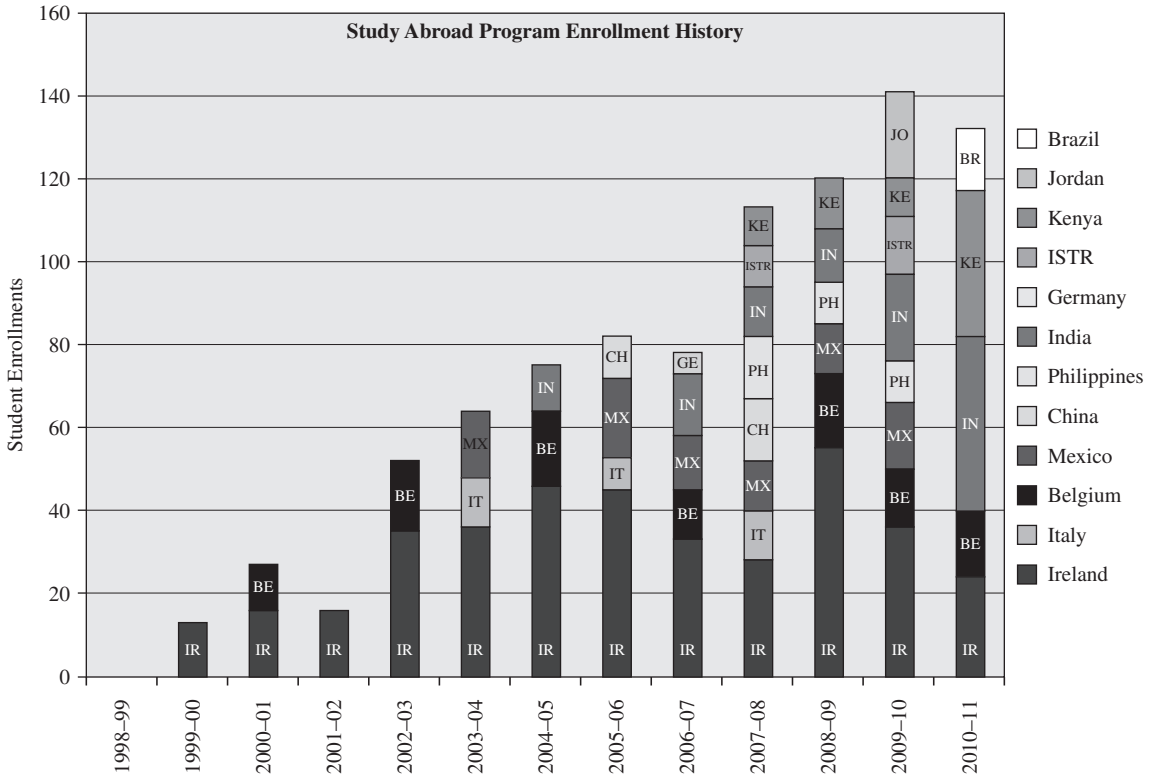
Measurement of Success and Plans for the Future

Two measurable results are the improvement in the quality of student research papers and the increase in enrollments. School of Public Service students now complete internships all over the developing world, write papers based on study abroad experiences, and have research papers accepted at national and international academic conferences. This is something that never happened before the onset of the "international by design" mission emphasis.

Regarding enrollment, under the maxim of "If you build it they will come," registrations in study abroad courses increased steadily over ten years, as indicated in Figure 1. Other success factors regarding faculty development include the following:

- Faculty changed how they think about themselves and the mission.
- Faculty created a specialized degree anticipating demand; the master of science in international public service has become one of the school's most popular degrees.
- Faculty created two new nonprofit organizations to benefit partners abroad.
- Faculty advanced the international mission of the university and school.
- Faculty built capacity within the school and in partner institutions.
- Faculty helped partners develop new degree programs in Ireland, and they have received invitations to develop degree partnerships in China, Croatia, Kenya, and India.

Figure 1. Study Abroad Program Enrollments for the School of Public Service, DePaul University



On the Horizon

The School of Public Service launched its first study abroad to Curitiba, Brazil, in early 2011. Plans for 2012 include new programs to Cuba, Colombia, South Africa, and Rotterdam. Faculty have developed service-learning and study abroad courses for Haiti, but for safety reasons the university currently does not allow student travel there. The school has discontinued its program in Chiapas, also for safety reasons.

Regardless of these adjustments, there are many reasons to study abroad; there is good research on its benefits for students and hosting countries. With this, we offer a few models for consideration here on how to deliver study abroad experiences that differ from traditional undergraduate models. More important, perhaps, is the underlying motivation and commitment to internationalizing the curriculum and the experience of the next generation of Americans who will live in our global village.

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