



Global Engagement Seminar Report

Enhancing Mechanisms to Promote Global Engagement
at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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Global Engagement Seminar Report

How do we help students to develop global awareness and cultural competency? How can we best prepare them to be active global citizens with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly globalized world?

A key goal described in the 2013-16 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Strategic Plan is to provide students with transformative learning experiences. Integrating international experiences with undergraduate curricula is one of the proposed methods outlined in this plan. The specific target listed in the strategic plan is to provide 25% of undergraduate students with an international experience by 2016. As one important form of global engagement, international service learning is increasingly promoted by universities as a way to extend their global impact, while also using international encounters to create transformational student learning experiences.

On October 2nd 2013, 31 participants from various academic departments and programs met together at the University YMCA to consider how to enhance global engagement across the Urbana-Champaign campus. The seminar participants included a variety of stakeholders—ranging from students, faculty, and university staff and administration. Ten colleges and departments were represented, as were eight administrative programs. Representatives from community-based organizations also participated in the symposium. (The participant list is included in the Appendix).

The primary objective of the seminar was to examine action steps needed to help the University to meet its strategic plan by expanding concrete opportunities for students to experience transformative learning through global engagement, and by promoting campus-wide awareness and exposure to these opportunities. This is a brief summary report of

ideas and recommendations that emerged during the seminar.

Overview of campus global engagement initiatives

The seminar began with an overview of participants' global engagement initiatives following two guiding questions. First, what is the added value of global engagement initiatives such as international service learning; prosocial research partnerships with international universities, companies, or nonprofits; outreach with international alumni; or global engagement by student organizations? Second, what policies, practices, and programs are currently in place to realize global engagement across the Urbana-Champaign campus?



Many participants noted their surprise about the breadth and variety of global engagement activities already occurring across campus. They emphasized the need for coordinated mechanisms to enhance awareness and reduce transaction costs for students, staff, and faculty to participate in global engagement initiatives. For instance, the Department of Urban & Regional Planning and the School of Social Work organize applied field experiences, service learning, and global engagement activities as an integrated part of students' educational plans. Other units on campus such as the College of Engineering and the Department of Human & Community Development organize campus wide

service learning classes with nonprofit partners in other countries, while Spanish in the Community provides students with opportunities to work in local and international communities, using their Spanish skills to support nonprofits and educational institutions.



Administrative units on campus also provide many international student learning opportunities. For instance, the Office of Volunteer Programs helps students to organize volunteer projects overseas, while the Study Abroad Office and the College of ACES organize faculty led and non-faculty led international service learning courses in low-income countries.

In addition, participants listed more than 20 faculty and student-led organizations across campus such as Entrepreneurs without Borders, Engineers without Borders, International Illini, and various discipline-specific “Global Brigades” that work with disenfranchised people in low-income countries to help address many of the intractable problems facing these communities.

Based on their experiences working with these varied groups, participants noted a significant added value from international service

placements beyond traditional study abroad initiatives. In particular, they emphasized that international service provides opportunities for students and faculty to gain a more empathic and realistic understanding of community problems in the context of global power dynamics. Experiential-based learning also imparts a deeper appreciation for the needs and assets of communities—changing the role of students from observer to participant.

As the university reaches towards its strategic goal to become more broadly internationalized, experiential-based global engagement and service learning will play increasingly important educational roles.

Challenges to global engagement

Following the initial overview of engagement activities available across campus, participants worked to more fully unpack barriers and challenges to global engagement on campus. Two guiding questions directed this discussion. First, what practical mechanisms are needed to enhance global civic participation at the University? Second, what additional roles and structures may need to be in place to realize the University’s civic mission?

A highly interactive dialogue among participants outlined gaps in the current university system that may prevent students, staff, and faculty from taking more full advantage of global engagement and service learning opportunities. While participants described many global engagement activities and resources available to students across campus, these activities are often performed individually, sporadically, and typically with resources that individual faculty members can pull together. Given the high transaction costs resulting poor coordinating mechanisms, organizing global engagement opportunities often becomes a burden for students and faculty. Mechanisms to help students and faculty avoid “reinventing the wheel” with each new program would make planning global engagement initiatives much easier, and more probable.

Participants also stressed that although students, staff, and faculty often have good intentions for engaging in international service, they are often not well prepared to offer the types of services needed by international communities. A point of contact is needed where effective practices and standardized protocol can be shared and agreed upon. In particular, participants stressed the importance of reciprocity or mutual benefit in international service learning, and the need to enhance student and faculty awareness about potential paternalistic, neo-colonial or imperialistic imperatives often inherent in international service learning initiatives. In addition to training, there is currently no mechanism for screening and recruiting students with the skills and mindsets that can be best matched with community needs.

Effective practices demonstrate that preparation prior to service, institutional support during service, and re-entry and integration after service are critical to effective learning. The Study Abroad Office provides opportunities for short-term international service through the Faculty-Led Courses Abroad program, along with a brief pre-departure orientation. Beyond this limited support, however, there is little campus wide effort to provide students with curricular preparation before, during, or after international service. In addition, students who desire to have an experiential based service learning opportunity are often unaware of the breadth of opportunities and resources available across campus, and cannot easily receive credit for their work abroad.

The cost of participating in international service learning was seen as potentially prohibitive for many students, who are already struggling to cover tuition and living costs. In particular, engagement programs should ideally be accessible to minority and low-income students. Although service learning in low-income countries may be more affordable than traditional study abroad, internal and external funding may be needed to enhance access to global engagement initiatives with a strong track

record of providing high impact transformative learning experiences.



Given the various administrative units across campus that have responsibility for international programs, participants noted a substantial duplication of effort and overlap of responsibilities. Some duplication also appears to exist between department-level and campus-level administration related to international programs. Given the many stakeholders involved in international education across campus, participants stressed that it would be critical to develop a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities before moving forward.

Finally, considering that in 2013, more than 21 percent of students on campus come from abroad, participants suggested that service learning could create transformative learning experiences for these international student as they engage in service activities in the Urbana-Champaign community. The new administrative position of International Student Integration within International Programs and Studies is a one outlet for moving this idea forward.

Strengthening mechanisms for global engagement

Following a brief presentation describing models of global engagement and international service learning programs at five peer universities, participants brainstormed how we might draw on similar models. There appeared to be consensus that global engagement and service

learning should be a more integrated part of the student experience, and could help define what it means to be a student at the University of Illinois. Participants noted significant potential for collaboration with registered student organizations, and across academic departments and programs, based on efforts already underway.

The discussion during this session was directed by three guiding questions. First, how can we specifically create more coordinated and engaging mechanisms for global engagement at the University? Second, what are the suggested recommendations and specific action steps?



Given the decentralization and size of the Urbana-Champaign campus, participants suggested that a central resource is needed to coordinate activities and to disseminate information about international service learning and other global engagement initiatives. A long line of engagement research shows that students are more likely to engage when they are asked to participate or when they have direct exposure to available programs. A centralized resource would provide information to enable faculty and staff to align their efforts with current knowledge of effective practices at all stages including preparatory, experiential, and post-experience/re-entry programming. It could also provide resources to incentivize participation and a method for tracking how many students currently participate in service learning placements. A number of participants suggested that the Study Abroad Office fits this model, though there would need to be a re-

branding and a potential shift of central resources.

Participants suggested developing a partnership model and working with service learning sites that are already established via agreements and MOUs from existing partnerships. Research on effective practices for global engagement indicate that sustainable partnerships are much more effective for both students and partner communities than one-off projects that carry little institutional commitment. Sustainable partnerships also allow for greater oversight and safer environments for students. Partnerships could also be strengthened with third party providers of service learning that have a history of high impact work and provide learning experiences that serve legitimate community needs.

Given the lack of coordinated preparation, participants suggested offering structured coursework and additional pre-departure training workshops to better prepare students serving abroad. In addition to the pre-departure training already offered through the Study Abroad Office that cover issues of health, safety, and travel; preparation is needed to cover issues such as the ethics of international engagement, the nuances of serving across cultures, ethnocentrism and paternalism, and the history and culture of specific hosting communities—particularly when students are serving in post-colonialized states. One suggestion was to offer an international service certificate that could further incentivize pre- and post- abroad experiences and engagement. Another suggestion was to expand faculty-led courses by allowing academic professionals to take a leading role in the process.

With more carefully structured coursework, a centralized resource could also provide mechanisms for students to receive academic credit and academic support for international service learning experiences. Credit is currently offered for study abroad courses; however, there is not currently a parallel structure for experiential-based international service learning

projects beyond independent study and faculty-led seminars. Participants suggested adding international service learning curriculum to select 100/101 courses.



Given the prosocial nature of international services, participants also identified a number of potential sources for external funding from donors, alumni, private foundation, and Title VI grant mechanisms. As one example, the Duke Engage program received \$15 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide financial support to Duke University students to engage in immersive international service learning.

A few participants suggested offering service learning exchanges to enhance the reciprocity and mutual benefit of global engagement, which is all too often a one-way unilateral endeavor.

Students often refer to international service placements as transformational or turning points in their lives. As such, avenues are needed for returned students to apply their knowledge once they return home. A centralized resource was suggested as a way to enhance awareness of local service learning opportunities, advocacy projects, and reflective coursework. It could also be a tool for students to share their experiences, and to provide opportunities for continued engagement on campus and in the Champaign-Urbana community. In order to effectively apply transformational learning experiences to real world situations, students need avenues to

reconstruct their knowledge through reflective practice.

Going forward: Action steps and proposed recommendations

The seminar ended with a discussion of specific action steps that participants could take to help the University to meet its strategic plan by expanding concrete opportunities for international engagement:

- ∞ A sub-group of participants volunteered to be part of a task group to advance the discussion of global engagement in other forums. The task group will consider funding opportunities and begin to work through practical and administrative hurdles.
- ∞ The University YMCA in collaboration with the School of Social Work and other campus partners will continue to develop an International Service learning Initiative, to consolidate resources and efforts currently dispersed across campus. This initiative will be focused on developing practical tools that, in the short term, can enhance and deepen the international service learning experiences for students on campus. The YMCA has hired a part-time project manager, Enrique Rebolledo, to help move forward a number of suggestions from the symposium including:
 - A manual or virtual handbook for facilitators of international service learning based on research of effective practices.
 - Examples of preparatory, in-country, and re-entry curricula for use by faculty and staff designing service learning courses.
 - A website to coordinate the initiative, increase its visibility, and make information more readily available to students, staff, and faculty. The site will also represent the many global engagement activities already occurring across campus. The webpage for this initiative is located at:
<http://publish.illinois.edu/serviceabroad>

- A student centered conference on international service learning that encourages registered student organizations to help plan and organize the event as a way to promote student engagement in identifying issues, developing strategies and promoting effective practices.



In addition to follow-up action steps, the participants suggested a number of recommendations that campus administration might consider. These recommendations are intended to enhance transformative student learning experiences by integrating international experiences with both undergraduate and graduate curricula.

- ∞ Organize a project committee with the Associate Provost for International Affairs to strengthen the mission and vision for global engagement on campus, and to consider additional recommendations for moving forward.
- ∞ Develop a centralized administrative resource to enhance campus-wide

cooperation and strategy related to global engagement/ international service learning. Participants stressed that, to optimize buy-in and usage, the center should avoid prescriptive policies but should be an open resource for students and faculty. It was suggested that the Study Abroad Office fits this model, though there would need to be a re-branding and a potential shift of resources. Alternatively, the university could develop a center for service learning to encompass both domestic and global engagement initiatives.

- ∞ Incentivize existing colleges and departments to develop and offer structured coursework and pre-departure training workshops to better prepare students serving in low-income countries. Pre-departure and re-entry coursework could also provide mechanisms for students to receive academic credit and academic support for international service learning experiences.
- ∞ Develop a resource for international students to more easily engage in service learning in the Champaign-Urbana community upon re-entry. This might include expanding the Community Learning Lab at the School of Social Work, which is currently supported by the Office of Public Engagement.
- ∞ Consider offering service learning exchanges to enhance the reciprocity and mutual benefit of global engagement. Reciprocity could be enhanced through exemptions, tuition waivers, or scholarships to international students engaged in US-based international service.

Global Engagement Seminar

Enhancing Mechanisms to Promote Global Engagement at the University of Illinois

Date: October 2nd 2013, 8:30am-1pm

Location: University YMCA, 1001 South Wright Street, Champaign, IL, Room K1/K2

8:30-9:00: Breakfast and registration

**9:00-9:30: Welcome and introduction of seminar participants
Overview of participants' global engagement initiatives**

Guiding Question: What policies, practices, and programs are currently in place to realize global engagement at the University of Illinois?

9:30-10:00 Breakout Discussion: Unpacking the global civic mission of the University

Guiding Questions: (i) What practical mechanisms are needed to enhance global civic participation at the University? (ii) What additional roles and structures may need to be in place to realize the University's unique civic mission?

10:00-10:15 Report back from breakout discussion

10:15-10:30 Coffee Break

10:30-11:00 Presentation and discussion: Models of global engagement

Guiding Question: What policies, practices, and programs at other colleges and universities might we draw on to realize the University's global civic mission?

11:00-12:00 Breakout Discussion: Strengthening mechanism for global engagement

Guiding Questions: (i) How can we specifically create more coordinated and engaging mechanisms for global engagement at the University? (ii) What are the suggested recommendations and specific action steps? (iii) How will we know that our global civic mission is being realized?

12:00-1:00 Lunch and report back from breakout discussion

Host: Mike Doyle, Executive Director, University YMCA

Facilitator: Benjamin Lough, School of Social Work

Appendix: Global Engagement Seminar Participants

Jessa Barnard, Visiting Experiential Learning Coordinator and Academic Advisor, ACES

Meredith Blumthal, Director, ACES Education Abroad Programs

Jan Brooks, Teaching Associate, Child Development Laboratory

Greg Damhorst, PhD student in Bioengineering, Student Director of the Global Health Initiative at the University of Illinois

Laura Davis, Undergraduate Advisor, Department of Anthropology

Keilin Deahl, engineering student and project manager, Mali Water Project

Mike Doyle, Executive Director, University YMCA International Programs

Bryan Endres, Interim Associate Provost for International Affairs and Interim Director, International Programs and Studies

Jennifer Ewald, Associate Director, Study Abroad Office

Anna Fairbairn, Specialist for International Projects, Study Abroad Office

Barbara, Hancin-Bhatt, Associate Dean, Student Academic Affairs at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Adam Heinz, Specialist for International Projects, Study Abroad Office

José Hualde, Professor and Acting Head, Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese

Earl Kellogg, Professor Emeritus Former Associate Provost, International Affairs

Wynne Korr, Dean and Professor, School of Social Work

Nicole Lamers, International Education Specialist, College of LAS

Bruce Litchfield, Professor and Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs, College of Engineering, Director of Learning in Community (LINC)

Benjamin Lough, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work

Rajeev Malik, Acting Associate Director, International Programs and Studies and Illinois International Training

Mary Maurer, Assistant Dean for Field Education, School of Social Work

Hellen McDonald, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Social Work

Jennie Miller, Programs and Advising Assistant, Study Abroad

Sebnem Ozkan, Outreach Coordinator, European Union Center

Ken Salo, Lecturer, Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Nicole Tami, Director of International Student Integration, International Programs and Studies

Eileen Walz, Graduate Student, GIS-LIS; founder of Be Global at the University of Illinois

Timothy Wedig, Associate Director, LAS Global Studies