



**Undergraduate
International Experience**
College of Health & Human Services, San Diego State University

College of Health & Human Services 2011 Study Abroad Interest Survey: Student Experiences and Preferences in Study Abroad Programs

Introduction

The College of Health and Human Services conducted a survey of undergraduate students within the college. Many of these students are required to complete the CHHS undergraduate international experience prior to graduation. The purpose of this survey was to collect information regarding students' previous travel experiences and preferences in choosing study abroad programs. The results of the survey are reported here, in order to enlighten everyone on student experiences and interests in the further development of study abroad programs.

Demographic Profile

Of the total universe of 2354 students surveyed, 420 completed the survey. Reflecting the demographics of the CHHS, 88.6 percent of the respondents were female, with a median age of 20 (all data is self-reported). The majority of respondents were nursing majors, and it should be noted that ENS students are not subject to the requirement until Fall 2012 (Table 1). 62.9 percent of respondents entered SDSU as first time freshman and 37.1 percent entered as transfer students. Over half of respondents were upper classman (Table 2).

International Travel Experiences

As reflected in Table 3, over half of the respondents have previously traveled abroad at least three times, and more than twenty percent have done so six or more times. The most popular destinations for prior travel were North America, Latin America, Western Europe, and Southeast Asia (Figure 1).

Preferences and Personal Goals

The most preferred location for international travel among these respondents was Western Europe, followed by Eastern Europe, Latin America, and South America (Figure 2). The majority of students would like to travel for five weeks or less (Table 4), although there is significant interest in a full semester abroad. Half of respondents would like to accomplish their travel in the summer, with another twenty percent preferring Spring break (Table 5). Finally, the top goals of students for study abroad are gaining an appreciation for new cultures, traveling to new places, and learning about health and human services in other countries (Table 6).

First-time Freshman Versus Transfer Student Preferences

When looking at the responses given by those students who entered the university as a first-time freshman and those who entered as a transfer student, there is a clear difference in preferred amount of time to commit to a study abroad program. Almost half of the students surveyed who entered SDSU as a transfer student preferred to commit 1-2 weeks to a study abroad program. Those who entered as first-time freshman had varied answers, but the majority preferred to spend a full semester abroad (Table 7).

Preferences by Major

It is interesting to note over half of the students in Social Work/Gerontology and Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences entered SDSU as transfer students (Table 8). In contrast, the majority of students in Nursing and in Public Health entered as first-time freshman. A student's major, however, had no effect on the most preferred location to study abroad. Western Europe was most popular for all students (Figure 3). A student's major did have an effect on their preferred amount of time to study abroad. For students in Public Health, a full semester was most popular. Students in Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences and Nursing were more evenly distributed between the options, while Gerontology/Social Work students preferred the least amount of time abroad, 1-2 weeks (Table 9).

Discussion

Although not a scientific study, this survey provides some insight into the global interests of CHHS undergraduate students. The international requirement is designed to foster greater understanding of the global environment that CHHS students will face in their future careers. Nearly everyone responding seemed to be enthusiastic about the requirement and aware of the many advantages of experiencing an international educational program. It is interesting that the majority of students would like to meet the requirement through a short-term study abroad program. Due to the structured nature of many of the degree programs within CHHS, students look to shorter international programs to meet their needs. First-time freshman were more interested in full semester or more long-term programs than transfer students. Because transfer students have a limited amount of time at the university to meet graduation requirements, it would make sense that they are not as interested in committing more time to a program. Summer and Spring break are clearly the preferred time frames, as they are the shorter time periods available. Southeast Asia, North American and Latin America were the major locations of previous travel. This perhaps implies a large number of students who have traveled to visit family in these locations. Finally, even though many students have some international travel experience, it is probably fair to infer that most are looking for more opportunities to broaden their experiences and credentials in an increasingly global world.

Tables & Figures

Table 1: Student Major Distribution

Major:	Response Percent
Kinesiology/Foods & Nutrition	0.7%
Nursing	58.3%
Public Health	17.4%
Social Work/Gerontology	13.3%
Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences	10.2%

Table 2: Student Class Standing

Class Standing:	Response Percent
Freshman	29.0%
Sophomore	14.8%
Junior	27.4%
Senior	28.8%

Table 3: Student Previous Travel Experience

# of times student has traveled outside of the U.S.:	Response Percent
0	18.8%
1-2	35.8%
3-5	23.0%
6+	22.5%

Table 4: Student Preference in Program Length

Preferred amount of time to commit to a study abroad program:	Response Percent
Full year	2.0%
Full semester	21.2%
6-8 weeks	16.3%
3-5 weeks	28.4%
1-2 weeks	32.1%

Table 5: Student Preference in Time of Program

Preferred time of year to study abroad:	Response Percent
Winter Break	9.9%
Spring Break	20.0%
Summer Break	50.9%
Semester	19.3%

Table 6: Primary Goals for Study Abroad

Primary goal in completing a study abroad program:	Response Percent
To become conversational in a language other than English.	6.9%
Gain greater understanding and appreciation of another culture.	36.3%
Gain greater understanding and appreciation of American culture.	1.2%
Increase self-confidence, maturity and self-awareness.	8.6%
Meet new people from other cultures.	3.7%
Travel to new places.	20.0%
Learn about health and human services outside of the United States.	20.0%
Build my resume for future career-building.	3.2%

Table 7: Comparison in Program Length Preference

Preferred amount of time to commit to a study abroad program:	Did you enter SDSU as a first-time freshman or transfer student?		Response Percent
	First-Time Freshman	Transfer	
Full year	2.30%	1.30%	2.0%
Full semester	28.90%	8.10%	21.2%
6-8 weeks	18.80%	12.10%	16.3%
3-5 weeks	28.10%	28.90%	28.4%
1-2 weeks	21.90%	49.70%	32.1%

Table 8: Comparison Between First-Time Freshman and Transfer Students in Major Choice

	Major:					
Entered SDSU as a first-time freshman or transfer student?	Gerontology	Nursing	Public Health	Social Work	Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences	Response Percent
First-Time Freshman	1	188 (76%)	41 (56%)	13	18	62.6%
Transfer	4 (80%)	57	32	38 (74%)	25 (58%)	37.4%

Table 9: Comparison in Preferred Program Length by Major Choice

	Major:					
Preferred amount of time to commit to study abroad:	Gerontology	Nursing	Public Health	Social Work	Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences	Response Percent
Full year	0	4	3	0	1	2.0%
Full semester	0	50	22 (31%)	4	9	21.1%
6-8 weeks	1	41	9	6	7	15.9%
3-5 weeks	1	74 (31%)	16	14	10	28.6%
1-2 weeks	2 (50%)	68 (28%)	20	24 (50%)	16 (37%)	32.3%

Figure 1: Student Previous Travel Experience

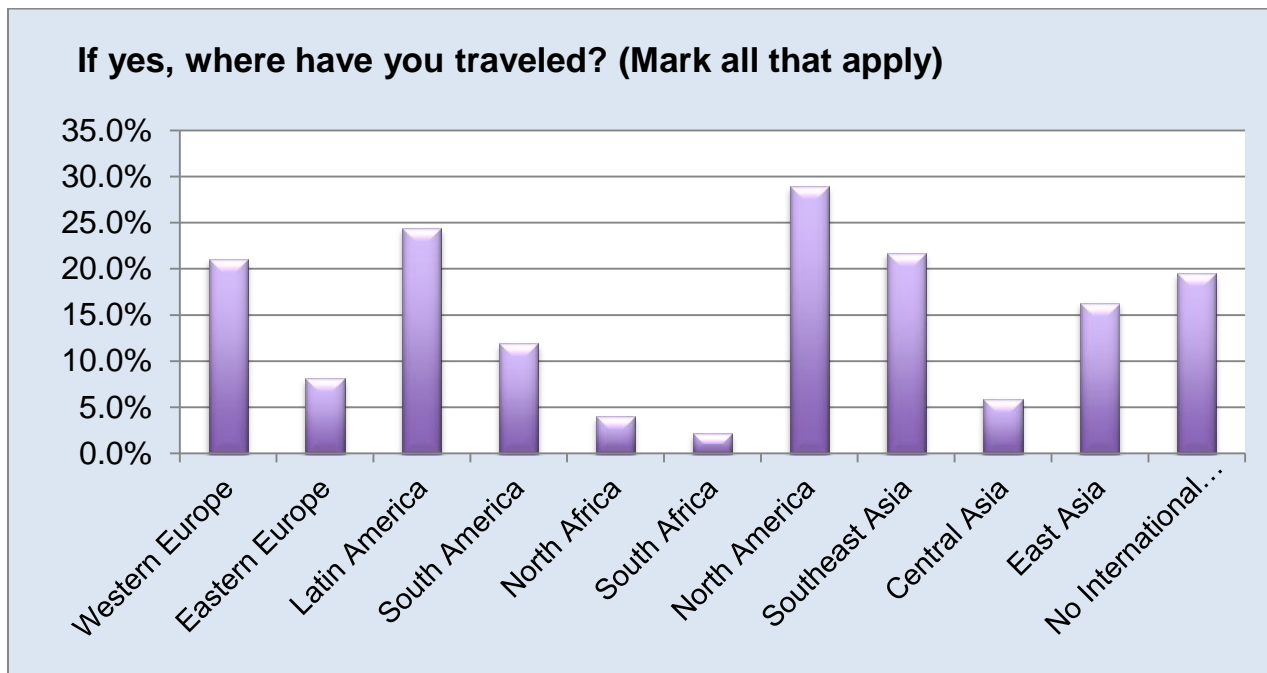


Figure 2: Student Preference in Study Abroad Location

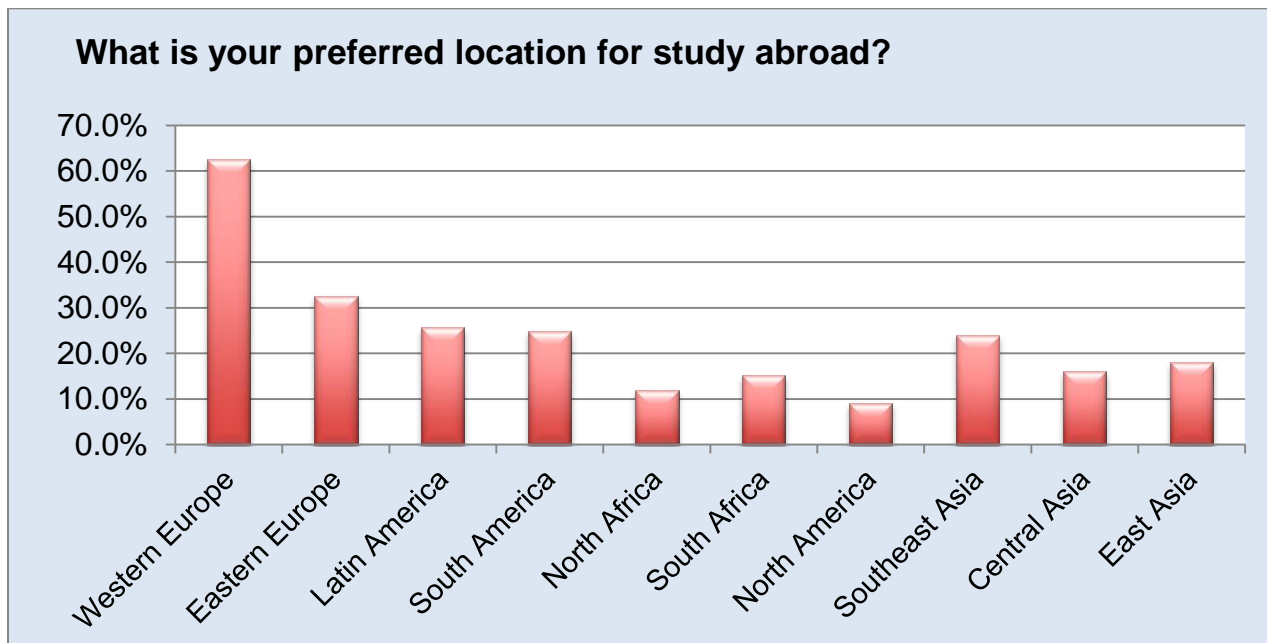


Figure 3: Student Preference in Study Abroad Location By Major

