

60-Second SoTL

Episode 21 – Comparing Impacts of Long-term versus Short-term Study Away

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:

Welcome to 60-Second SoTL! This week's episode is part of a short series by students in Elon University's Masters of Higher Education program. The students are exploring study away as a meaningful learning experience. Look for their blog posts at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org and listen for the other podcast episodes in their series wherever you subscribe to 60-Second SoTL.

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(Piano Music)

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Howard Chi:

Do impacts of study away differ in the length of the experience? That's the question for this week's 60-second SoTL from the Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Howard Chi.

00:38

(Piano Music)

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In the blog post "Adequate lengths for effective Study Away Programs," we explored the advantages of both program terms, with long-term programs having a natural advantage in terms of cultural immersion. We also showed that short-term programs can be just as effective in producing similar educational outcomes like critical thinking, global awareness, collaborative work, and empathy while being more financially and time accessible for students. However, the debate seems to continue among the scholarship if short-term programs can ultimately be the new norm of study-aways. Research showing additional impacts of long-term programs or semester programs after a previously engaged short-term one makes a compelling argument against this debate.

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In this podcast, we will delve into a five-year study of graduating seniors at Elon University in North Carolina that compared the impact of different terms. Additionally, we will discuss the factors that allow for educational impact to occur in study away experiences for future program recommendations.

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Researchers Coker, Heiser and Taylor (2018) conducted a five-year study of Elon University graduating senior's experience of study away across five different terms: No study abroad, semester, short-term, two short-terms, and semester plus short-term experience. There were several findings from this study. First, like existing scholarship, short-term programs were positively associated with how students rate their overall educational experience during study away as well as producing positive educational outcomes. The study also found that the educational outcomes was positively related to how students rate their experience. An interesting finding was that only semester programs' participants reported better outcomes in some categories like contributing to class discussion, diversity of perspectives, empathy, critical thinking, and collaborative work. This is evidence to the importance of depth in experiential learning programs like study away; in this case, this means an extensive time-commitment. Additionally, the authors concluded that participants can gain additional educational outcomes if they participate in a semester program after a short-term but not vice versa.

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This study opened a door to recommendations for study away programs. One is that short-term programs are not equivalent to semester program due to a broader array of positive outcomes that are associated with semester programs. Our recommendation is for institutions to prioritize semester programs and encourage students to participate in longer programs rather than short-term. At the same time, institutions should continue to offer short-term programs in those destinations most in-demand because of accessibility and its benefits compared to no engagement at all in study aways.

That is all for today's episode; thank you for tuning in!

3:46

(Piano Music)

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Jessie L. Moore:

Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

4:01

(Piano Music)