

Off-Campus Study
Assessment Report
Fall 2008

Mission: The Office of Off-Campus Study supports the mission of Wells College to prepare students to live in interdependent worlds. This is achieved by providing opportunities for members of the College community to develop intercultural knowledge and competency

The Goals of the Office of Off-Campus Study include:

- Support the educational mission of Wells College by integrating study abroad into the academic requirements of majors and concentrations.
- Assure that opportunities for developing intercultural knowledge and competency are accessible to all students.
- Meet the standards of good practice for programs abroad as set out by the Forum on Education Abroad.
- Support the College financially in order to further the mission of the institution.
- Provide structured opportunities for cultural reflection for all members of the campus community.

During the 2007/08 35 students studied abroad for a semester or year for academic credit. This represents an increase from 30 students in 2006/07. The number of different programs students participated in also increased from 12 in 2006/07 to 13 in 2007/08. Of the 35 students who studied abroad, 30 participated in affiliated programs. Those who did not participate in affiliated programs were seeking either language opportunities (China and Korea) which are normally not offered by Wells, or courses not available (Book Arts in Cortona Italy). In general, it would appear that our affiliated program list is meeting the needs of our students.

In 2007/08, 80% of all program participants reported that they heard about the study abroad program in which they were participating from either the off-campus study office or a faculty member/academic advisor. Given the structure of Off-Campus study at Wells with faculty members serving as program directors, this shows that our structure is impacting on student choices about study abroad.

When asked about learning objectives before starting the study abroad program, 57% of respondents reported that Learning about the culture in which I study and Learning more about myself were very important. After their study abroad experience, 78% said they achieved their objectives very well of learning more about the culture in which they studied while 86% reported having very well achieved their objective of learning more about themselves. It is interesting to note that 71% of students listed learning more about an area of study not offered at Wells as very important or somewhat important before they went abroad and the same percentage of students reported having achieved those goals either very well or somewhat well. Expanding upon courses of study is a unique contribution that study abroad can make at Wells given our small size. Student feel as though study abroad offers an opportunity to expand on the curriculum on offer at Wells.

On the other hand, while 35% of students reported that improving their foreign language ability was very important, only 14% felt that objective was very well achieved. This may be due more to unrealistic expectations than the quality of programs abroad. Students often feel that one semester will allow

them to become fluent in a language and that is simply not a realistic expectation. Setting realistic expectations for language acquisition and helping students to develop some skills to maximize language learning while abroad is an area that might need some additional focus in pre-departure advising and preparation.

When asked an open-ended question regarding what they were proudest of accomplishing while abroad, students typically cited characteristics of personal development including independence, confidence, and goal-setting. One student wrote "I am so much more confident. I believe in myself more than I ever have. I used to think about certain goals that I would like to achieve, or think about the kind of person that I would like to be, and now I feel like I am actually doing what I wanted and being who I dreamt of. I no longer sit back and let life happen to me, I take charge, and if something is not what I want, I change it and I am unintimidated to do so." More informal conversations with students during the OCS 272 course revealed that students also were thinking about their majors in new ways and the academic component of their study abroad program had impacted them. The high number of students who study abroad do a senior thesis that is significantly impacted by their study abroad experience is a further sign that study abroad does have a significant academic impact. Collecting information on whether a student's senior thesis has been impacted by their study abroad experience is something that should be pursued in the future.

In 2007/08 the new format of OCS 271 as a course offered the second half of the semester before going abroad was implemented. 92% of students going abroad in Spring 2008 reported that the course was very or somewhat helpful, however this statistic is still difficult as a means of assessing the course since students going abroad still qualified under both the old and new formats for OCS 271. From informal feedback in the course, it is clear that more specific information in preparing students for their experience abroad is being delivered. While the new format of OCS 271 seems to be effective, it also became apparent that a different means of advising students who were planning on going abroad about the application process was needed. By the time OCS 271 begins, students should already have applied and been accepted into their program of choice so the course is not an effective place to talk about that part of the process. In Fall 2008, study abroad information sessions have been introduced to outline the study abroad application process for students. Thirty students attended the first two general info sessions. These information sessions will continue and be expanded in spring semester.

While Off-Campus study was a topic of discussion with the Ten Year Academic Planning Committee, the amount of discussion with individual faculty members, majors, or divisions regarding how study abroad fits into the academic structure at Wells was very limited in 2007/08. These discussions need to be more of a priority in 2008/09 to make sure we have the right affiliated programs to support our academic majors effectively at Wells. Students from across all majors are studying abroad and are taking major courses while abroad, but more can be done in this area.

With regards to non-Wells enrollments in Flagship programs, 2007/08 saw a record number of students enrolled. 265 non-Wells students were enrolled in flagship programs; an increase of 11% over 1006/07. However, this growth was almost solely on the Florence program. Sevilla continues to struggle to attract non-Wells students while Paris and Dakar remain pretty stable with enrollments. Mumbai, which was held for the first time in Spring 2007 had three non-Wells students along with three-Wells students.

Another assessment goal for Wells in 2007/08 was participating in the Belief, Events, Values Inventory (BEVI). While a goal of having 50 Wells students complete the BEVI was set, it was not reached. Many students reported technical problem with linking to and completing the survey.