



April 25, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Bruno
iVCAA and VCR

FROM: Sarita Rai
Director

John Casken, Chair
Council on Study Abroad

Sarita Rai
John Casken

RE: Response to the External Reviewers' Report: Five year Program Review

The Study Abroad Center (SAC) and its Council appreciate the detailed report provided by the external reviewers. As the people charged with overseeing the success of its programs, we are pleased to note that the reviewers found the new four goals and initiatives of the Study Abroad Center for the next five years to be appropriate for the unit and recognized that:

"SAC programs have a strong faculty oversight; offer faculty professional development; benefit from a strong faculty "buy-in"; provide good logistical support, training and orientation for both faculty and students; offer programs of various lengths, locations, and disciplines and have the capacity to accommodate growth in participant number." (page 1)

The report had numerous recommendations. However, it was difficult to discern whether the reviewers were discussing Study Abroad Center Programs or the Mānoa International Exchange (MIX) or other programs such as the National Student Exchange (NSE) or "study away" from UHM. Since all of the aforementioned programs are designed for undergraduate students, it was unclear whether the reviewers understood that these separate programs have different reporting, oversight responsibilities, authorities, and controls. For that reason, many of the issues highlighted are beyond the scope of SAC's authority or control. Unlike the Study Abroad Center, most of the programs provide support services without faculty oversight and do not deal with academic requirements, have varied admissions criteria, course registration and financial requirements.

With these clarifications, our responses to the recommendations are as follows:

Page 3: Database:

We have explored database programs for several years and have determined that third-party provider database systems are not as secure as our own in-house one; are costly in terms of purchase, upgrades and maintenance. The Center is working with UH-ITS to develop a tailor-made system for the Study Abroad

Center that will handle applications both for students and faculty, and to plug into the developing platforms for advising.

Page 4: Registration:

The SAC shares the evaluators' concerns regarding student registration issues. We believe that students should not be experiencing gaps in registration, nor should they be dropped from courses without notice, nor should students be enrolling in courses without knowing that these courses involve travel. We note that students enrolled in SAC programs have not experienced any of these issues. The registration for each student in Study Abroad Center programs is handled by SAC staff, and the students are in fact registered in courses with UHM course alphas. Therefore, transfer of credits is not necessary, and SAC students maintain continuous enrollment and ultimately graduate on time.

The issue the external reviewers are addressing here is that Outreach College should not charge Study Abroad Center for placeholders courses. SAC has explored this issue with Outreach College and found that there is little that SAC can do. Outreach College charges the Study Abroad Center for every course that is offered through the Center, regardless of whether the course shows no enrollment, or enrollment of one student or 20 students. Thus to minimize the cost of paying for courses that show zero enrollment and/or placeholders, SAC staff completes each program's student registrations at UHM after receiving notification from overseas regarding our students' actual enrollment in courses. Financial Aid disbursements follow federal guidelines and occur at least 10 days prior to the first day of instruction abroad. All three offices, Financial Aid, Outreach College and SAC, work together to ensure that students maintain continuous enrollment and receive financial aid.

Page 4: GPA requirement:

Currently, students are required to possess a GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale to participate in SAC programs. During the 1990s the Study Abroad Center's requirement was 2.0, on par with the UHM's overall GPA. However, SAC's experience demonstrated that C-average students were not able to perform well overseas both in terms of academic and socio-cultural adaption. Additionally, many of our partner Universities require that we select students with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Exceptions are sometimes made for students with lower GPAs (e.g., 2.8) on a case-by-case basis, with approval from our partner universities. Lowering the GPA globally to achieve greater diversity is controversial and challenging, but we take this issue under advisement and will continue discussions.

Page 4: Dedicated Study Away Resource Center

This recommendation is duly noted. Based on student surveys, Study Abroad Center participants access the Study Abroad Center's website for any and all information regarding programs. Thus, the Center's website is designed for all types of platforms, including mobile devices. Because lack of space is acute at Mānoa, this need may be partially fulfilled by developing a comprehensive website for all of the "study away" options for students. The responsible program would update content for their programs.

Page 5: Explore a Broader Definition of Study Abroad Programs

The Study Abroad Center programs are very specifically mapped out to meet the curricula needs of the departments or to fulfill general education and/or graduation requirements including internships, service

learning, capstone projects, etc. The constraints of a specific degree program may limit participation due to the sequential nature of the courses. However, these students too are able to participate in Study Abroad programs and complete their general education and/or other graduation requirements. The current program offerings can accommodate growth in enrollment. This is noted in the external reviewers' report on page 2. Therefore, it is unclear what the reviewers mean by "explore broader definition of study abroad," and what need this comment was addressing.

Page: 6: Greater campus-wide collaboration for all study away activities

According to the reviewers "The output of the SAC (in terms of program offerings, support for students and faculty, pre-departure orientations, emergency support) appears to be robust, professionalized, and within national standards for study abroad."

We thank the reviewers for this endorsement. Indeed, SAC standards are high not only in terms of support, but also in terms of academic programs, assessment of student learning, reducing time-to-graduation, student retention, faculty teaching, research and mentorship. However, within this sub-heading, the reviewers cite 10 items that do not apply and/or are not directly relevant to the Study Abroad Center.

1. Safety and security management.
2. Shared marketing will require extensive resources and coordination because fundamentally Exchange programs and Study Abroad programs are different in many respects, not to mention the "study away" initiatives. SAC has addressed the external reviewers' recommendation for the neutral view of each program. See <http://www.studyabroad.hawaii.edu/students/study-abroad-vs-exchange/>
3. Study Away Resource Center.
4. New Database recommendation for all "study away" programs on campus.
5. Establish one common point of communication to address multiple and disparate issues that include grade posting and who has the authority to change grades and who has the authority to place financial holds. The Study Abroad Center follows University policies in these matters (grade-posting, change of grades, and financial holds).
6. Standardize support structure offered to students.
7. FaSST has been addressed below.
8. FaSST has been addressed below.
9. Establish Shared participation goals - to be established across campus. As far as we are aware, there are no specific goals or targets for participation in "study away" programs at UHM. The SAC has always supported the campus goals for academic programs. That is, we have always aimed to provide cross-cultural and international education opportunities while promoting academic success and decreasing time-to-graduation. It is not clear whether the reviewers are suggesting a consensus numerical target (e.g., 30% participation in overseas education), or whether all "study away" opportunities (NSE and MIX) share the same academic programmatic goals, or something else that would require an administrative reorganization. The latter is difficult to address within the context of a five year (academic) program review of the SAC.

10. The reviewers have recommended that NSE be included in “this” model. Here too, the reviewers are recommending an action which would require a reorganization to accomplish.

Other “study away” programs may need to be brought up to SAC’s standards in terms of risk management, administration, advising, and student support. The Principles of Study Abroad Programs may be applied to other programs with differentiation. However, as noted earlier this is easier said than done. We are willing to participate in developing university-wide criteria and standards. Perhaps the new campus reorganization discussions could take these ideas into consideration.

Page 8: Standardize the support for FaSST programs:

The intent of the FaSST program is to enable faculty to be able to offer a niche program based on their and student’s unique interest. The Study Abroad Center provides risk management for both faculty and students, and ensures that students’ needs are indeed met. Most faculty who wish to participate in FaSST program would like to do so because they have a specialized short-term opportunity, such as an international field-research opportunity, or because they cherish the autonomy and the freedom to offer innovative programs while benefiting from the support and expertise offered by the SAC. For ordinary programming, SAC develops long-term programs with rotating resident faculty directors to lead the programs. While providing support for such innovation, the Study Abroad Center retains the prerogative to reject a FaSST program if it deems that the project incurs too much liability for the University and is a duplication of existing Center offerings. Recent examples are Egypt (liability) and Berlin (duplication) offerings.

Page 10: Office Climate

We take note of the advice in terms of SAC staff relationships and the office climate. It is perplexing that the external reviewers have commented on this but were not sufficiently specific to warrant appropriate action. It is unclear what they are concerned about and how and with whom SAC should collaborate with and in what ways.

Page 10: Funding Consideration

Again, this aspect of the review and recommendation does not apply to the Study Abroad Center.

In conclusion, the scope of the review ranged broadly across all “study away” opportunities available to UHM students, making it difficult for the Study Abroad Center and its Council to respond to some of the recommendations. Had the review been limited to the Study Abroad Center and its programs then the report would have focused on academic programs, student learning outcomes, teaching and research. What was disappointing was that the reviewers did not report on any student feedback when in fact they did meet with several students. As an academic unit, we value constructive criticism that will help us to improve our programs, and we were disappointed that more focus was not devoted to this aim.

The Study Abroad Center and its programs are high impact programs and a showcase for recruitment, retention, faculty mentorship, and an excellent vehicle to improve time to graduation for students. In addition, it is also a program that provides venues for research, professional development, and development of new courses for faculty and recruitment of new faculty. This is what makes UH Mānoa’s

Study Abroad programs distinct and unique from other university programs. In this regard, we will take this review under consideration, act upon what we are able, will gladly participate in any future academic review, and are willing to collaborate with other entities to strengthen Manoa's undergraduate programs.

Cc: R. Anderson Sutton, AVCIEP