

New Study Abroad Destinations: Trends and Emerging Opportunities

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Overview—Current student destinations

The number of United States undergraduates studying abroad for academic credit continues to grow each year by double-digit percentages. The *Open Doors* survey of the Institute of International Education shows an increase in overall numbers from 70,727 in 1989-90 to 129,770 in 1998-99. As seen below, the past decade has seen a shift in the region of study away from Europe and toward Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania.

Distribution of U.S. undergraduates

Region of study	1989-90	1998-99
Europe	76.7%	62.7%
Latin America	9.4%	15.0%
Asia	5.0%	6.0%
Oceania	1.9%	4.9%
Africa	1.3%	2.8%
Middle East	2.7%	2.8%
North America	0.8%	0.1%

The figures in parentheses throughout this article are the 1998-99 totals of undergraduates studying abroad for credit as reported by the U.S. institutions surveyed by IIE for *Open Doors 2000*.

Europe (81,367) continues to draw the largest mass of U.S. students with 78,018 American undergraduates flocking to Western Europe while only 3,349 ventured further east on the continent to study. However, the total Eastern European numbers increased from 1993-94 to 1998-99 by 29%. Russia (1,196) remains at the top of the list, but its numbers have shrunk slightly in the past five years while the second-ranking Czech Republic (999) has tripled its numbers in five years. Hungary (448) and Poland (310), the only other Eastern European countries with more than 100 students, are also growing.

Latin America/Caribbean (19,464) is the second most-frequented region for study abroad, and the 1998-99 numbers increased impressively in one year from 7% to 15% of the entire U.S. study abroad contingent. Total numbers of U.S. students in Latin America have nearly doubled since 1993-94.

In Central America, Mexico (7,363) and Costa Rica (3,499) are the only two Western Hemisphere coun-

tries in the top 15 study abroad destinations. In the past five years, Belize (576) has overtaken Guatemala (355) on the Central American list, followed by Honduras (287) and Nicaragua (165).

In South America, Ecuador (1,273) remains the leading destination with nearly twice as many students as five years ago. Second-ranking Chile (966) is followed by Argentina (731) which displaced Brazil (594) in third place. Fifth place Peru (310) has seen its numbers grow from 20 in 1993-94 with an impressive 64% growth in 1998-99; it is definitely a destination to watch. Venezuela (263) and Bolivia (101) complete the South American list of countries with over 100 students.

The total Caribbean numbers increased from 1993-94 by an astounding 191%. The Dominican Republic (687) and the Bahamas (499) are likely to be soon overtaken by fast-growing Cuba (499) that saw its 1998-99 numbers increase by 172%. Jamaica (377) moved down the list from the first place rank it enjoyed in the early 1990s. Barbados (162) and Trinidad & Tobago (102) were the remaining Caribbean countries with more than 100 U.S. students.

Asia (7,781), the third most important destination for U.S. undergraduates, attracted only a slightly larger percentage of students than a decade earlier. However, the total numbers of U.S. undergraduates in the region increased by 13.8% over 1997-98 and 56% over 1993-94.

East Asia (5,729) contains the only two Asian countries to rank in the top 15 world destinations: #11 Japan (2,485) and #12 China (2,278). They both saw modest growth in 1998-99. The Republic of Korea (479) and Hong Kong (289) grew at more impressive double-digit rates, while Taiwan (165) remained level.

The total South/Central Asia numbers (1,098) increased from 1993-94 by 86%. The leading destinations were India (707), showing modest growth over the previous year, and Nepal (296) that grew at 25% in one year. The third ranking country in the sub-region, Sri Lanka (67), grew at 179%.

The total Southeast Asia numbers (954) increased from 1993-94 by 89%. Thailand (374) continued to lead the sub-region both in absolute numbers and with its 77% growth rate over the previous year. Stu-

dent growth led CIEE's Council Study Center at Khon Kaen University to augment its summer and fall semesters with a new spring semester, beginning in 2002, to focus on Comparative Community Studies in Globalization. Second place Indonesia (201), where some programs have been suspended, is likely to be overtaken by the Philippines (129) and Singapore (124) whose numbers are growing at twice the Indonesian rate. Fifth place Vietnam (95) moved slightly down from its peak numbers, but its numbers have nonetheless doubled from those of five years earlier and are likely to grow substantially in this decade. The growth would be facilitated by the possible establishment of a cooperative Center for Southeast Asian Studies to enrich and expand the curricular options in Vietnam.

Oceania (6,353) has seen its total numbers increased from 1993-94 by 143%. English speaking Australia (5,368) and New Zealand (803) account for almost all of the increase and have made successful efforts to attract and serve visiting students.

Africa (3,672) is the fifth most frequented world region, having more than doubled its portion of U.S. study abroad students in the past decade. Its numbers of study abroad students grew by 19.6% over the previous year, and 149% since 1993-94.

East Africa (1,248) saw only a modest growth of 3%, while Kenya (561) saw its 1998-99 numbers diminish by 7% from the previous year. Zimbabwe (325) and Tanzania (240) continued to show modest growth.

West Africa numbers (900) increased 27% in one year and are up by 205% since 1993-94. Ghana (627), the sub-regional leader and the second most important destination on the continent after South Africa, grew at 29% over 1997-98 and more than five fold since 1993-94. Senegal (154) grew modestly as the only other West African country with more than 30 students.

The total North Africa numbers (402) increased from 19% over 1998-99 and by 83% over 1993-94. The growth was entirely accounted for by Egypt which grew by 38% over the previous year while Morocco (126) shrank slightly.

In Central Africa, the only significant destination, Cameroon (57) increased its number of U.S. undergraduates in 1998-99 by 12% over the previous year and 81% since 1993-94.

The Middle East (3,578) saw the U.S. undergraduate population in Israel (3,302) increase by 66% in 1998-99 over the previous year, making it the ninth most frequented country in the world by U.S. under-

graduates. The second ranking Middle East destination, Turkey (126), fell by 17%. Jordan (70), Lebanon (28), Bahrain (12), the Palestinian Authority (10) and the United Arab Emirates (10) all saw their 1998-99 numbers increase. The shifting political situation in the region produces high volatility in the numbers of students in Israel and other countries in the region such as Lebanon.

Factors influencing new directions

The shifts in numbers noted above are driven by both student interest and institutional opportunities that are made available to them. The growth of interest in studying outside Western Europe has reflected the increasing diversity of participants in study abroad. Growing numbers of students interested in exploring their roots may be drawn to do so in Latin America or Africa rather than Western Europe. A second factor affecting the shifts in numbers has been the broadening of the overseas curricula from the traditional area studies focus on language and culture to include offerings in business, natural sciences and other subjects not formerly offered in the typical non-European study site. Thirdly, the development of internships and other program enhancements has attracted a broader range of undergraduate interests. Fourth, the increasing number of programs requiring less than a full academic year commitment has broadened the appeal of new venues. Fifth, instruction in English has made broader range of sites available, especially in countries whose languages are less commonly studied. Sixth, as the awareness of the need for global education has become more widespread, overseas experience in developing economies is increasingly perceived as a positive addition to a resume. The brochure for the University of California Education Abroad Program launched in the Philippines this year illustrates these key points.

The factors affecting the individual countries noted above as having particularly impressive growth in their numbers of American undergraduates are those with an educational infrastructure which can support study abroad programs. Mexico and South Africa are good examples. On the other hand, growth in Vietnam is hampered by an insufficiently developed infrastructure to support U.S. study abroad programs. The fast-growing countries also have a perceived satisfactory level of public order and are not subject to currently negative political assessments or actions by the U.S. government. Unserved North Korea and growing Cuba provide an interesting contrast at this time. The role of perceptions of personal danger can

be seen in the volatility of the numbers of students going to certain countries noted above in the Middle East and Africa and elsewhere.

Consortia have played a significant role in the development of study opportunities in many new venues. IIE's *Academic Year Abroad 2000-2001* lists 50 consortia of academic institutions sponsoring study abroad programs in one or more sites, and the number is much higher if one defines "consortium" to include all of the public university systems with joint programs. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) has played a pioneer role in consortial development of Council Study Centers at host institutions in almost all of the countries cited above with significant numbers and growth. At the other end of the higher education spectrum, the increasing participation in study abroad at the community college level has given rise to numerous consortial efforts in recent years such as the California Colleges for International Education (CCIE).

Finally, special funding plays an important role in the development of non-traditional study sites. For nearly a decade, the undergraduate scholarships of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) have provided essential support for sophomores, juniors and seniors at two year and four year institutions to study abroad outside Western Europe. The inclusion of community college students and the emphasis on less commonly taught languages has helped broaden the scope of study abroad although NSEP scholars tend to reflect the general preference for destinations like Russia, Japan or China over the less frequented areas. The NIS Regional Language Programs, administered by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) and the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS) have also been important in the support of study in Eastern Europe, Russia and Eurasia. Private sector support from such sources as the Ford Foundation, the Freeman Foundation and many others has also played a leading role in developing institutional capacity and providing funds to enable educational exchange.

The increase in the portion of study abroad students going to non-Western European destinations has shifted significantly in the past decade, but all indications are that the trend will intensify in the decade ahead as student perceptions and institutional leadership support the development of quality programs in less-frequented locales. The richness of the curricular and co-curricular offerings will continue to be dependent on the human and financial resources that can be organized to provide effective support for the venture.