

## What is Working Inside University-Supported Educational Tourism Creativities?

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### Abstract

This article is a response to two previous articles *Professional Conferences, Social Capital and Tourism: Is the Alliance in Jeopardy?* where the authors converged on social capital and educational tourism and *Educational Tourism Empowerment: Implications for Flexible Learning and Digital Equity* (<http://omicsgroup.org/journals/audio-files/JTH/JTH-1-e109.html>). In these articles, it was suggested more research is needed to understand the underlying phenomena to enhance understanding about why it is significant to continue expanding and sustaining educational tourism as a field of study and other scholarly activities that connect the world through global learning and travel quests. In this article, the purpose was to theorize connections between what appears to be divergent views between the ideas of tourism and global education. Inferring new understanding could serve to advance knowledge about the interrelationships among highly debatable and tentative theories about the value of educational tourism in higher education. Research shows that universities are central competitors in the global development of knowledge economy, alongside being significant contributors to the economic and social capital development of their host cities. The absolute number of universities now establishing international campuses abroad and online is evidence that universities are making a significant investment in the knowledge enterprises supported by educational tourism. Such partnerships make them more valuable as the largest suppliers of the human and intellectual capital on which the worldwide knowledge-based economy depends. This article shares knowledge about the role universities in helping faculty and students make connections between divergent disciplines and the interrelationships among highly debatable and tentative theories about the value of educational tourism to international education creativities (a.k.a. programs). A recent *Open Doors Report* published by the Institute of International Education, the leading not-for-profit educational and cultural exchange organization in the United States, reports that *study abroad by students enrolled in U.S. higher education has more than tripled over the past two decades* and especially to less traditional regions of the world.

### Introduction

*What is working inside University-Supported Educational Tourism Creativities* is a review of educational tourism expansion, which is represented by an unprecedented growth in international education partnerships between ministries of education and higher education worldwide. Vicari defines organizational creativities as “the result of the conditions the whole organization is in” [1].

This editorial explores the trend of how educational tourism and economic interests are expanding in universities in ways designed to attract and sustain young professors and the most creative-minded students. Questions that emerged during this exploration included: How are universities supporting and growing this new segment of international learners while building social capital, flexible learning and equity through Web-based learning connections? How does educational tourism reinforce student and faculty development, collaboration and research needs?

Although this article will not attempt to provide conclusion to these questions, ideas underlay the significance of the questions and potential answers will be discussed in brief, followed by conclusions.

### Background

A U.S. Department of Commerce report on the economic impact of international students or creative minded international students recently published that students participating in these growing university programs contribute over \$21 billion to the U.S. economy, through their expenditures on tuition and living expenses. The reports also shows that Higher education is among the United States’ top service sector exports, as international students provide revenue to the U.S. economy and individual host states (citation) while Open Doors

shows the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China, remained the top host destinations for international educational tourism.

Perhaps, many students no longer have to travel other countries, stand in long lines for student visas, endure intensive interviews and investigations to participate in high quality educational opportunities, but what about young faculty in high demand disciplines. *Where are the students going to engage their educational tourism, study abroad interests?*

Fifteen of the top 25 destinations were outside of Western Europe and nineteen were countries where English is not a primary language. What are the implications for new faculty entering higher education who bring these experiences with them after graduation or who desire to continue their creative-minded research interest that extend beyond the university walls?

### Related Issues

Recently a conversation between three professors (Science,

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Received November 20, 2012; Accepted November 20, 2012; Published November 24, 2012

Citation: Pittman J (2012) What is Working Inside University-Supported Educational Tourism Creativities? J Tourism Hospit 1:e122. doi:10.4172/2167-0269.1000e122

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Engineering, and Mathematics) resulted in three scenarios that depict how faculty and students are leading a fascinating trend in the growth of educational tourism.

The scenarios describe educational tourism concerns that emerged in a conversation among four professors from different disciplines. The dialogue began with an intense focus on before, during after tenure and the availability of resources to support creative scholarly travel adventures for teaching, research and cultural development.

**Scenario 1.** The first young professor revealed that after receiving tenure about two years ago would love to travel and get more involved in international teaching but worries about university funding Shortfalls University and the increasing competition for limited grant opportunities.

**Scenario 2.** The second professor of mathematics, in the first teaching position wants tenure, but also is concerned about how to maintain adventures and creative learning through travel experiences that were valuable during years.

**Scenario 3.** The third professor of chemistry expressed a desire to be involved in more research collaborations beyond university whether it is domestic or abroad to feel more connected to the world.

The agendas desired by each professor would require empowerment through flexible learning and research opportunities made possible through web-based technology and world travel.

What then is the meaning of social capital, educational freedom and equity in new educational environments? How is flexible learning a form of "social capital and freedom"? What is the responsibility of the university and society to support worldwide educational tourism as a primary venue for the opportunities that emerge and contribute to economic and social capital?

In the next section, research demonstrates a strong growth trend in educational tourism through study abroad programs. Such growth could make the three conversations the professors quite different in the future. New generation professors are seeking more opportunity to explore, develop or connect their true interest to their professional goals and objectives for a more "wholistic" experience though educational tourism --*taking into consideration the whole body or person. Wholistic means considering the mind, body and spirit (May also be spelled "holistic").*

## University-Supported Educational Tourism Creativity Growth Abroad

*A recent report shows that study abroad by U.S. students rose in 2009/10 with more students going to less traditional destinations.*

*Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, reports an increase in U.S. students studying abroad; 270,604 U.S. students studied abroad for credit during the academic year 2009/10, compared to 260,327 the previous year.*

The report also shows that the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China, continue as the leading host destinations. In addition, there has been a surge of interest in study in China in the past decade, with nearly 14,000 students studying in China in 2009/10 compared to fewer than 3,000 in 1999/00.

The report found notable increases in U.S. students going to study in many of the less traditional destinations. Fifteen of the top 25 destinations were outside of Western Europe and nineteen were

countries where English is not a primary language. There was a 44 percent increase in U.S. students going to India. Israel, Brazil and New Zealand also showed large percentage gains. Substantial increases were reported in U.S. students going to Egypt.

## Open Doors Research Report Highlights on International Study Creativities

### Top destinations

According to Open Doors, the United Kingdom remained the most popular destination, with a total of 32,683 (a 4 percent increase). Italy is second, (increasing 2 percent to 27,940), followed by #3 Spain (25,411, up 5 percent), #4 France (17,161, up 2 percent), and #5 China (13,910, up 2 percent). There were other destinations in the top 25 were: #6 Australia (9,962, down 11 percent), #7 Germany (8,551, up 3 percent), #8 Mexico (7,157, down 2 percent), #9 Ireland (6,798, down less than 1 percent), #10 Costa Rica (6,262, down 2 percent). To see more ranking you can follow the full report [2-4].

## Leading Universities in Educational Tourism and Creativities Study

Both large and small universities are sending their students abroad in greater numbers. The Open Doors Report shows New York University is the leading sending institution, reporting that it gave academic credit for study abroad to 4,156 of its students. Other leading institutions include Michigan State University (2,589), University of Southern California (2,500), University of California- Los Angeles (2,363) and University of Texas- Austin (2,284).

It is interesting to note that while large institutions were more prominent in the numbers of students traveling abroad from to and from their institutions, increasingly trend among smaller institutions is suggests they are sending a higher proportion of their students abroad.

Open Doors 2011 data on study abroad participation rates show that "24 institutions reported sending more than 70 percent of their students abroad at some point during their undergraduate careers" (Open Doors Report, 2011).

## What Are the Leading Fields of Educational Tourism and Creativities Study?

According to Open Doors 2011, the leading fields of study for Americans studying abroad are the social sciences (22 percent of those studying abroad and business and management (21 percent). Others notable subjects were humanities (12 percent), fine or applied arts (8 percent), physical/life sciences (8 percent), foreign languages (6 percent), health sciences (5 percent), education (4 percent), engineering (4 percent), math/computer science (2 percent) and agriculture (1 percent). [2]

## Conclusion

This article attempts to show what is working in university-supported tourism. Universities have an enormous role in helping faculty and students make connections between divergent disciplines and understanding interrelationships between and among highly debatable and tentative theories about the value of educational tourism to international education creativities or study abroad projects.

Now, to answer the questions posited in this article: How are universities supporting and growing this new segment of international learners while building social capital, flexible learning and equity

through Web-based learning connections? How does educational tourism reinforce student and faculty development, collaboration and research needs?

It is clear that these questions and related issues are potentially being addressed by 43 percent of the educational tourism study abroad projects and programs in universities, which based on this limited research, are concentrated in social sciences, business and management.

While this research is theoretical, clearly there is a need for more research about increasing creativities in the hard sciences, engineering, math/computer sciences, health sciences and agriculture, which many countries need more human expertise to solve the world's education, hunger, technology and health crises.

Increasing collaborative educational tourism, interdisciplinary projects in these areas could help identify solutions to support research opportunities to solve real-world problems. In addition, such opportunities might attract and gain more participation of faculties

from these critical disciplines that are underrepresented in the study abroad programs in higher education.

#### Notes

For a full report on growth of Educational Tourism as represented by international creativities by universities, visit the website:

<http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2011/2011-11-14-Open-Doors-Study-Abroad>.

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