

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



Annual Report

Academic Year 2020–21



Message from Martha

Dear Friends,

In an era of constant change, instability, social change, and an unprecedented global crisis, the imperative for intercultural connection has never been greater. We, at the Learning Abroad Center, are proud to continue to act as a catalyst for internationalization at the University of Minnesota. We're looking forward to the future and rebuilding on our strong past. The following annual report summarizes our efforts over the course of the most challenging year in our history. It tells the story of a seminal year in education abroad at the University of Minnesota. While the numbers are far less than in previous years, the care, effort, and work detailed are unprecedented.

Sincerely,
Martha Johnson
Assistant Dean, Learning Abroad



About the Learning Abroad Center

The Learning Abroad Center (LAC) in the Global Programs and Strategy Alliance is the University of Minnesota's comprehensive resource for study, intern, community engagement, research, and volunteer experiences worldwide.

The LAC is a leader in providing innovative international learning experiences that expand and redefine the world for a diverse population of students, colleagues, and staff. LAC staff and University of Minnesota faculty and staff participate in numerous leadership opportunities and serve on the advisory boards of organizations that provide and/or support education abroad programs. Through collaboration and individual attention, the LAC continues to promote empowerment, development, understanding, and responsibility in the global community.

The LAC creates a learning climate that respects and celebrates diversity. We are committed to and accountable for strategically addressing barriers affecting marginalized groups by providing inclusive advising, program and curriculum design, global faculty and staff recruitment and training, and campus stakeholder engagement.

Student Participation

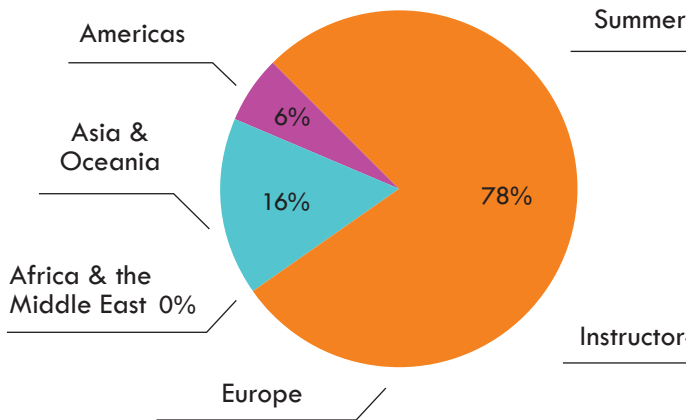
Open Doors is an annual report that provides statistics on study abroad participation by US students and international student enrollment at US institutions. The report is published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York, with support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the US Department of State.

Twin Cities campus ranking (in number of students sent abroad on credit-bearing programs):

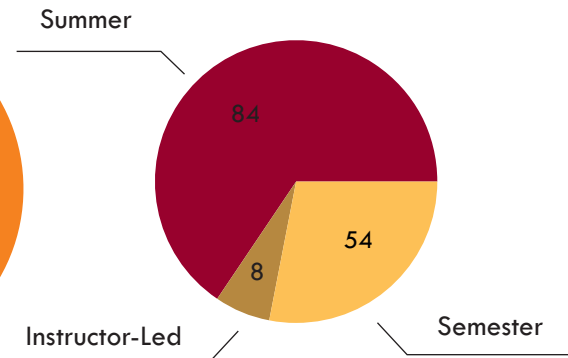
1. **11th among doctorate-granting universities.**
2. **5th in the Big Ten.**

We're thrilled to be **ranked #23** in the US News and World Report's **Best Study Abroad** category. As a large, land-grant public institution and national program provider, it's an honor to be surrounded by these schools and be nominated and positively perceived by the public in this qualitative study. We're collectively committed to constantly improving our work and offering high-quality programs. Only one public institution, Michigan State University, is ranked above us.

Where Do Gophers Go?



By Term



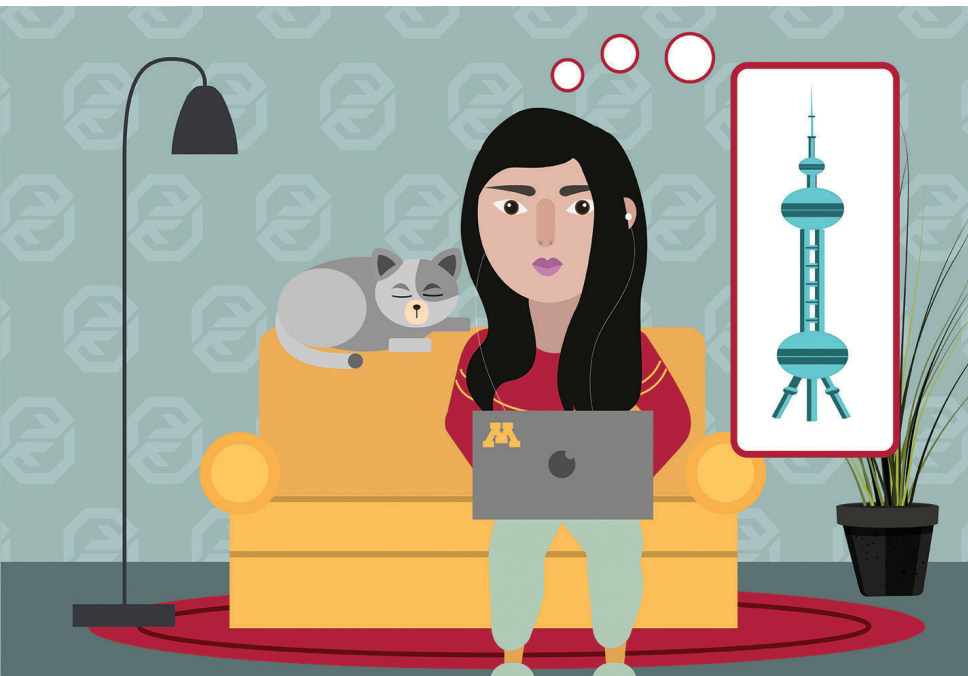
Top 5 Destinations

- 1 Spain
- 2 China
- 3 Italy
- 4 Denmark
- 5 France/United Kingdom

A Return to International Experiences

Virtual Internships

In 2020–2021, we pivoted to a virtual international internship model, in which students earned 4 credits and worked on projects from the US for an international organization. The internship experience also allowed them to add a global perspective to their professional work experience. In spring 2021, 92 students interned in 15 different countries. In summer 2021, 21 students interned in 7 different countries.



Study Abroad

Throughout 2020, to help ensure safe study abroad experiences, we worked closely with our on-site staff to establish safety protocols and follow new public health guidelines. Then, in spring 2021, we sent 28 students abroad to Denmark, France, and Spain.

Student Advising & Support Services

We offer a full range of advising and support services to students, including program selection, academic planning, financial planning, registration, credit, cultural adjustment, and re-entry.

Advising is a critical part of supporting students through the program selection process and helping them prepare to go abroad once they have applied for a program. Our 20 full-time advisers meet individually with students to answer their questions about study abroad and guide them through the application and enrollment process.

2020—21 Highlights

- **61** students attended our You Can Afford to Study Abroad information session to learn about how financial aid can be applied to study abroad, available scholarship opportunities, and how to write a strong scholarship application essay.
- **737** students met one-on-one with an adviser in the LAC for a Program Selection Advising meeting to discuss program options that fit their academic, career, personal, and financial goals and needs.
- **1,572** students completed a First Step session online to learn the basics about choosing a study abroad program, academic planning, and financial aid and scholarship opportunities.
- **113,431** unique users visited **UMabroad.umn.edu**.

Program Offerings

We have developed a variety of program options—**180 programs in 50 countries**—to address the diverse needs of students. Programs vary in length, level, academic focus, teaching format, language requirements, cost, and degree of independence required.

New Program Highlight

Design in Sicily

This program is geared toward design students who want to engage with Sicily in a meaningful way while learning from a College of Design instructor. Students can participate in an *Italian Design Studio* to use Siracusa as a classroom, working on sketches and exploring the many ways that design is incorporated into the city. They can also enroll in a workshop to engage in the design process with local and international designers.



Institutional Relations

We recruit undergraduate students from around the US for 20+ learning abroad programs. The addition of students from other institutions creates a more diverse and better learning environment for UMTC students. With the addition of these non-UofM students, we run more programs and add more courses to our existing programs, thereby creating more opportunities for UofM students. To date, we have more than **125 affiliate partnerships**.

Virtual Recruiting

In 2020–2021, in lieu of traveling nationally for events, the Institutional Relations team pivoted to virtual recruiting. Some of the new tools and events implemented include:

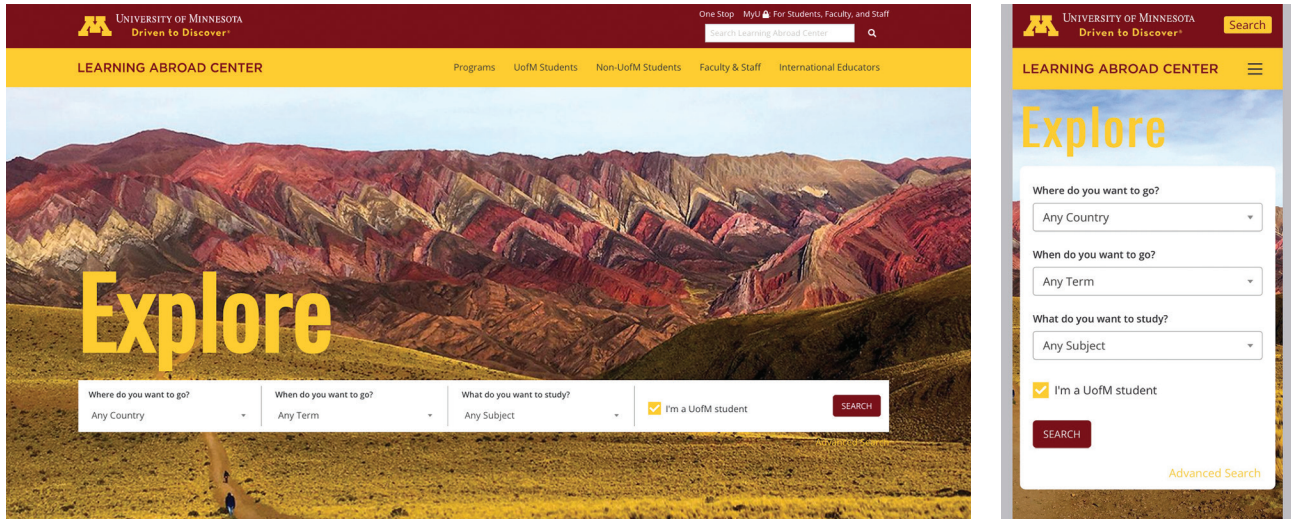
- Bitmoji virtual offices
- Handshake virtual platform
- Virtual presentations via Prezi
- Virtual study abroad fairs via LunaFairs and CareerEco
- Virtual Summit for Learning Abroad
- Virtual site visits for advisers to Senegal and Spain
- Virtual student info sessions via Zoom for Language & Culture in Southern France, MSID Ecuador, and Study & Intern in Toledo

Scholarships & Funding

- **275** applications were submitted by students, of which 58 (21%) were awarded a scholarship.
- **29** advisers, faculty, and staff from across the UMTC campus helped review study abroad scholarship applications and select award recipients.

New Website

In April 2021, we launched our redesigned website. It offers an accessible, modern, responsive design on desktop and mobile to inspire students, a vastly improved program search, and more. Since the launch, we've seen a significant increase in interaction with the program search and time spent on the site.



International Educator Outreach Events & Training

UMTC Education Abroad Network

The UofM Twin Cities Education Abroad Network (EAN) includes and serves professional advisers, faculty members, administrators, and others involved with education abroad. Preference is given to sharing of practices, benchmarking, and updates to foster communication and expanded, multidisciplinary collaboration with regard to study abroad. EAN Advisory Board members are from a variety of units and colleges across campus. This year, EAN offered two meeting sessions:

- What does virtual learning mean for the future of education abroad?
- Learning Abroad Center COVID-19 Updates & Policies

Excellence in Leading Learning Abroad Series

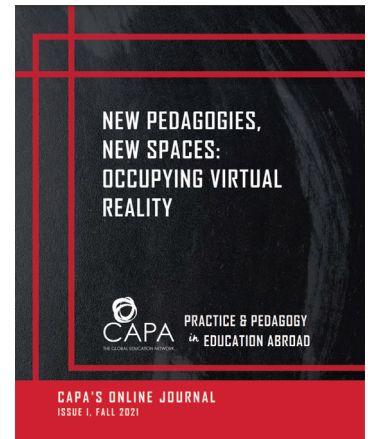
From August 2020–March 2021, we hosted six highly interactive sessions facilitated by campus experts and attended by 112 past, current, and future program leaders. Topics included:

- A Room of One's Own: Finding Balance as a Program Leader
- Forming–Storming–Norming–Performing: Supporting the Diversity within the Group
- Student Conflict Resolution Center: Supporting YOU as a Leader
- Beyond Band-Aids and Ibuprofen: Preparing for Student Mental Health Abroad
- Meaning Making through Short-Term Programs
- Tipping the Balance: Strategies Promoting Student Mental Health & Wellness Abroad

Publications

Pedagogy Publication

Martha Johnson and Christine Anderson published a chapter in the journal “New Pedagogies, New Spaces: Occupying Virtual Reality.” The journal focuses on the impact of the pandemic upon our community, as well as the implications of teaching and learning online in education abroad. In their chapter, Johnson and Anderson write about the impetus, philosophy, and practicalities of developing virtual internships spring 2021.



Curriculum & Program Oversight

Learning Abroad Center Advisory Committee (LACAC)

LACAC was established with the specific responsibility of assisting the Learning Abroad Center with program and curriculum oversight and review, as well as assisting with program development and school of record mechanisms with a focus on undergraduate education. It meets 2–4 times annually and comprises 5–7 faculty and/or administrative staff. The committee membership is designed to provide a breadth of guidance from across the University.

Responsibilities

- Assist with program and curriculum oversight
- Assist with academic policy
- Assist with program development
- Assist with school of record mechanisms
- Participate on program reviews
- Participate on occasional task forces
- Assist with Global Seminar proposals
- Engage with affiliate and university partners

2020–21 Members

Chair: **Christine Anderson**—Learning Abroad Center, Academic Director

Pamela Baker—University Honors Program, Associate Director

Kirsten Canterbury—Carlson Global Institute, Director, Education Abroad

Sauman Chu—College of Design, Associate Dean

Nanette Hanks—College of Liberal Arts, Assistant Dean

Kim Hindbjorgen—Learning Abroad Center, Assistant Director

Martha Johnson—Learning Abroad Center, Assistant Dean

Susan Kubitschek—College of Science and Engineering, Assistant Dean, Collegiate Life

Nikki Letawsky Shultz—College of Biological Sciences, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and International Programs

Zach Mohs—Learning Abroad Center, Associate Director

Tricia Todd—Pre-Health Student Resource Center, Director

Michael White—College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences, Associate Dean

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