



## History of Curriculum Integration at the University of Minnesota

In the late 1990s, the University of Minnesota (UofM) began a pilot project to test new ways to integrate study abroad into the curriculum. This pilot project increased student participation substantially, doubling participation each year. It offered a model for interactions with other academic units. Meanwhile, the leadership of the UofM placed priority on providing international perspectives as part of the undergraduate experience. Past presidents Mark Yudof and Robert Bruininks enthusiastically supported study abroad as one way to integrate international perspectives into the curriculum.

With encouragement from top administrators, the Learning Abroad Center (LAC) pursued grants to fund the development of this model in a way that could be shared with other institutions. The LAC received grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and then the Bush Foundation. The University expanded integration work to nearly every college on all UofM campuses (four at that time). The focus was on the long-term impact that a transformation of study abroad attitudes and behaviors could bring to our institution.

## The Minnesota Model

The UofM's "Minnesota model" of study abroad, which became known as curriculum integration, incorporates several guiding principles and concrete goals. This model is built on a broad and deep collaboration with executive leadership, faculty, academic advisers, student services professionals, and study abroad professionals, as well as others who interface with students to further motivate students to study abroad.

## Learning Abroad Enrollment Data

- In 2005, the LAC worked with the Office of Measurement Services to investigate "time to graduation" data for undergraduate students of all colleges of the University of Minnesota.
- UofM undergraduate student experience abroad participation has grown from 861 (1998–99) to more than 3,000 (2018–19) a year.
- The Bush Foundation Grant included a goal to increase the enrollment of students of color. Between 2001 and 2004, 11% of the students who studied abroad were students of color. In 2018–19, it increased to 19.2%.
- In the academic year 2018–2019, of UofM undergraduate students who received degrees, 35% studied abroad.

## Scholarships & Funding

- Since 2002, approximately \$9.2 million in scholarships has been awarded system-wide.
- Each year, our students have benefitted from more than \$420,000 in fee reductions the Learning Abroad Center pre-negotiated with our affiliate partners.
- Since 2001, more than 307 students have received Gilman funding, totaling more than \$1,260,000.
- Since 1998, 44 students have received Boren Awards.

## On-Site Program Engagement Opportunities

Since the late 1990s, the LAC has engaged more than 450 campus partners on program reviews, familiarization visits, and program development opportunities.

## Assess, Match, Motivate —> Facilitate & Evaluate

The initial methodology focused on the need to assess learning goals for departments and majors, find matches abroad, and motivate students to pursue the opportunities. However, it quickly became obvious that the current portfolio of program options could not accommodate many areas of the curriculum. To incorporate the need for program development as well as a rigorous plan for evaluating resources, and program quality, the LAC added "facilitate" and "evaluate" to the methodology of curriculum integration.

### Other needs the LAC defined:

- The University needed to expand options through a targeted effort to identify more external quality program partners for gaps and curricular niches.
- It was imperative to develop more options in direct collaborations with academic departments. In 2019–20, the LAC offered more than 200 programs in 60 countries.
- Short-term instructor-led programs and new programs at old sites needed to be part of the strategy. (Since 1999–2000, students have gone abroad on more than 860 short-term programs.)

## Learning Abroad Center Sponsored Event Participation

Since 2000, overall campus attendance at LAC-sponsored events has exceeded 5,000 attendees.

## Career Integration

In 2012, the Learning Abroad Center developed a campus-wide committee to apply the methodology of curriculum integration to a specific focus on career planning. Once again, LAC partnered with campus colleagues to further integrate learning abroad into career advising structures and articulated individual program outcomes while further assisting students in maximizing career reflection and opportunities on site.

## Why Was Curriculum Integration So Successful?

*“Curriculum integration was successful due to the collaboration between the Learning Abroad Center and the departments across the University. We were able to intentionally create courses and curricula that combined the academic focus of the departments with the strength of education abroad: experiential and intercultural learning. This allowed us to develop meaningful experiences for students that counted toward degree requirements.”*

—Christine Anderson, PhD, Academic Director, Learning Abroad Center

*“Partners around campus began to understand our role in improving undergraduate education, and I think that’s a really important reason why it succeeded. While we were developing these relationships across campus, we were working with the colleges and respecting their curricular choices.”*

—Martha Johnson, PhD, Assistant Dean, Learning Abroad

## Curriculum Integration Today

Curriculum integration is woven into everything at the Learning Abroad Center and the University of Minnesota. Although the funding from the Bush Foundation Grant ran out long ago, the LAC has built a sustainable model that speaks to the success of the innovations that are still part of our work.

## A Strong Relationship with the Peace Corps

Since 2005, more than 1,019 UofM graduates have put their education and experience to work as Peace Corps volunteers. Over the past 21 years, the University has ranked in the top 10 nationally on the annual list of colleges that produced the most Peace Corps recruits. This achievement is in part a result of the efforts of the Peace Corps Campus Recruiter, a position housed in the Learning Abroad Center. This recruiter applies the methodology of curriculum integration to engage with students, faculty, and staff from a wide variety of academic disciplines to help prospective participants envision how their degree and experiences could translate to a Peace Corps volunteer.

## Awards & Recognition

- 2009 Simon Award for Campus Internationalization
- 2009 Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Inaugural Institutional Award for Global Learning, Research, and Engagement
- The Institute of International Education (IIE) Andrew Heiskell Awards 2015 Honorable Mention: University of Minnesota, Bridging Loan Program