CURRENT and prospective athletic training students often ask me if they can take a semester off to study abroad. Unfortunately, athletic training education programs seldom allow students the opportunity to study abroad for a semester due to curricular progression and clinical education demands. A good solution to this problem is a faculty-led, short-term study abroad (STSA) program. Enhancement of athletic training students’ learning experiences through STSA is worthy of consideration.

Globalization of athletic training is inevitable. Students need to be prepared for changes in the profession, and academic program leaders need to better understand the important benefits that STSA could provide for their students and the academic program (Table 1). Many educators are aware of the benefits of international study, but very little research has elicited feedback from STSA participants. Authors have begun to shift from a purely theoretical discussion of the pros and cons of international education to a more analytical approach.2-4

While I applaud the efforts of agencies that arrange STSA opportunities for athletic training students, I challenge academic institutions to review the benefits of making STSA part of the academic curriculum. These programs provide both an academic and cultural experience that cannot be duplicated in the classroom.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief description of STSA programs, a step-by-step description of STSA program development, and the potential benefits of a STSA program to the student.

**What Is a Faculty-Led, Short-Term Program?**

A faculty-led STSA program is a course that provides academic credit and that involves travel to another country to explore aspects of the country’s language, culture, history, society, environment, architecture, and art. From an athletic training perspective, examination of athletic health care and the culture of sport and physical activity is an appropriate goal. STSA programs are structured to take advantage of the destination’s unique

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**Key Points**

- Faculty led, short term study abroad (STSA) programs provide academic, social, and cultural benefits.
- STSA programs require continual planning and preparation.
- STSA programs need to have specific learning outcomes.

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**Table 1. Potential Benefits of Faculty-Led, Short-Term Study Abroad Programs**

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<th>Benefit</th>
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<td>1. Personal growth.</td>
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<td>2. Greater understanding of different cultures.</td>
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<td>3. Intellectual stimulation and development in the academic domain.</td>
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<td>4. Gain a different perspective on American culture.</td>
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<td>5. Develop an understanding of the globalization of athletic training.</td>
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resources and therefore provide an academic, cultural, and social experience that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. STSA programs can be conducted during the winter, spring, or summer semester and usually last from two to four weeks. An STSA program could either fulfill an elective requirement or a multicultural general education requirement (depending on the institution’s curriculum requirements).

An international experience should foster both academic and cultural growth. Opportunities to interact with citizens and to visit historical and cultural sites should be included. The academic component should be a shared experience for both the faculty and students. For example, during a recent STSA program, we offered a lecture exchange. Faculty from the U.S. shared evidence-based research findings pertaining to common causes of knee injuries, and faculty members from the host institution provided information on the same topic. Both students and faculty exchanged ideas as similarities and differences in presentation content were reviewed. This sharing of ideas enriches the academic experience and heightens awareness of cultural differences. Professors and clinicians from host country institutions provide perspectives that cannot be obtained from the regular athletic training education program faculty. When designing the STSA, its objectives should be clearly articulated (Table 2). Providing these objectives to both the students and the host institution will enhance the quality of the international academic experience.

**Planning Stage**

From the conception of the trip to departure, approximately 16-18 months will be needed to formulate plans and to make necessary arrangements. The amount of time depends on the complexity of the trip. Much of the time is often dedicated to the establishment of international relationships, collaboration with your institution’s international office, and development of a curriculum proposal. During the planning stage, it is essential to assess the need for the program and the potential for sufficient enrollment. The concept, objectives, and goals of the program need to be discussed with your department chair, department colleagues, and other faculty members. If you have an international office at your institution, it is important to notify that office of your intent to develop a faculty-led STSA experience. It is important that both the international office and university administrators support the proposal.

Course approval must be done according to the normal curriculum review process, which is ideally obtained 12-16 months prior to the anticipated program implementation date. Once the course is approved, you will work with the department chair and the Registrar’s Office to ensure that the course is listed in the appropriate course schedule. As soon as the course is approved, you can begin to promote your course and actively recruit students.

**Finalizing Program Design**

Many trip details can change during the time that passes between your initial proposal development and final proposal approval. In finalizing your proposal, you will need to ensure that communication has been established between your institution and the host site. Continual communication is essential to ensure all parties are clear about the expectations for the course and trip itinerary. The course description and learning objectives need to be provided to the host institution and/or the agency within the host country that will provide assistance in arranging for course activities and travel. The proposal should include details of cultural and historic site visits, lectures, and any other activities that are not specified in the course syllabus. The proposed itinerary, including travel dates, accommodations, transportation, and vendor agreements should be finalized (Table 3). Signed agreements with third-party carriers need to be secured, which include documentation of liability insurance, indemnification, and scope of services that will be provided. The faculty leader must determine whether any special requirements exist for entry into the country (e.g., a visa and/or immunizations). At least two predeparture meetings should be scheduled with students.

**Table 2. Course Outcomes**

1. The student will identify similarities and differences between the traditional athletic training functions with those functions from other cultures.
2. The student will gain an understanding of the globalization of athletic training.
3. The student will appreciate the language, art, religion, etc. of the host cultures.
4. The student will gain an understanding of how his/her intended field (academic/professional) is viewed and practiced in different cultural contexts.