

WORKING TOGETHER

Education Abroad and Virtual Exchange in 2023 and Beyond

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Stevens
Initiative

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Executive Summary

This multi-site case study research project, supported by The Forum on Education and the Stevens Initiative, explored the state of international education programming after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on education abroad and virtual exchange. Data was collected in summer 2023 for 11 cases representing the following categories: (a) four-year, large public higher education institutions, (b) small and/or private four-year higher education institutions, (c) community colleges or two-year institutions, (d) K-12 education institutions or systems, (e) governmental organizations, and (f) education abroad providers. Data collection included interviews with 16 staff members at the different institutions and organizations as well as analysis of institutional/organizational websites. The aim of the study was to gain insights into current international education programming at the institution or organization as well as professionals' thoughts about the future of international education programming.

Key Findings

- While institutions are returning to education abroad programming, this return has been slow and not all institutions/organizations have been able to return to pre-pandemic. At the same time, the pandemic introduced many participants to virtual exchange and the hope is to continue and expand these offerings.
- The pandemic led to human resource shortages, which negatively impacted and continues to impact international education programming (education abroad and virtual exchange).
- Participants highlighted the value of offering both virtual exchange and mobility programming to foster global education but noted challenges in communicating the value of virtual exchange to constituents.
- Participants noted that while virtual exchange can increase access and minimize power differences, access concerns and ethical dilemmas exist within these types of programs as well.

This report highlights opportunities and considerations for international education scholars and practitioners, as they re-image, revamp, or expand international education programming to scaffold global learning more intentionally at their institutions.

About The Forum on Education Abroad



The Forum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad. The Forum provides training and resources to education abroad professionals and its *Standards of Good Practice* are recognized as the definitive means by which the quality of education abroad programs may be judged. The Forum's mission is to cultivate educators who champion high quality education abroad experiences that ignite curiosity, impact lives, and contribute to a better world. The Forum's institutional members include U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, organizations, and foundations who are committed to improving education abroad. Learn more: <https://www.forumea.org>.

About the Stevens Initiative



The Stevens Initiative is an international leader in virtual exchange, which brings young people from diverse places together to collaborate and connect through everyday technology. Created in 2015, the Initiative invests in virtual exchange programs; shares research, resources, and promising practices to improve impact; and advocates for broader adoption. Learn more: <https://www.stevensinitiative.org/>.

The Stevens Initiative is a program of the Aspen Institute and is supported by the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. The J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative is a U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program administered by the Aspen Institute.

Why We've Partnered on This Project

Since 2020, the Stevens Initiative and The Forum on Education Abroad have been engaged in a collaborative partnership to support their common stakeholders, exchange expertise, and identify possibilities and innovations that will move the field of international education forward. Out of this collaboration, questions have arisen about how education abroad and virtual exchange – also referred to as virtual and in-person mobility – intersect in practice. These questions have included how these two different approaches might work together to develop global competencies in students, how educators and administrators perceive the value of these experiences and the relationship between them, and how we can advance those discourses to improve participation rates and learning outcomes for all types of mobilities in the future. This joint report represents one collective effort to move that conversation forward.

Introduction

Education abroad is often seen as the most effective way to foster students' global learning (Knight & de Wit, 2018; Stearns, 2009). But while participation in education abroad consistently increased prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Institute of International Education, 2022), scholars have raised concerns about access to education abroad (Goldstein & Lopez, 2021; Salisbury et al., 2010; 2011), questioned the effectiveness of education abroad in achieving its intended outcomes (e.g., Niehaus & Nyunt, 2023; Nyunt, Niehaus, & Benavides, 2022; Vande Berg et al., 2012), and highlighted inequities that are embedded in current forms of education abroad (George Mwangi & Yao, 2021).

While education abroad continues to be central to many institution's internationalization strategies (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2023), international education programming has for decades included other initiatives such as the internationalization of the curriculum (Stearns, 2009) and virtual exchanges (O'Dowd & Dooley, 2020). As the COVID-19 pandemic led to a disruption in global travel, scholars argued that international education practitioner should use this disruption to rethink international education programming, creating more comprehensive approaches to internationalization and addressing the inequalities existing within current models (e.g., Beelen & Doscher, 2022; Bruhn-Zass, 2022; Dietrich, 2020; Leask, 2020; Quan et al., 2023). Virtual exchange offerings at higher education institutions increased during the pandemic (Stevens Initiative, 2020; 2021; 2022b) but it remains to be seen if the level of interest in virtual exchange will be sustained beyond the pandemic and if virtual exchange becomes an integral aspect of institutional internationalization efforts.

The purpose of this multi-case study research project was to explore the current state of international education programming, with a specific focus on education abroad and virtual exchanges, at different types of institutions and organizations in the United States. This report aims to provide practitioners and scholars insights into current operations at the institutions and organizations and their plans for the future. The report highlights opportunities and considerations as readers reflect on their own international education offerings.

How To Use This Document

Readers are encouraged to jump around in this report, focusing on the sections most applicable or interesting to them. Different sections of the report are linked, so you can easily click on the hyperlink to jump to a related section or an appendix with additional information.

This report includes the following sections:

Terminology: This section provides an overview of commonly used terms in this report and how these terms are used throughout the report.

Context: This section includes some basic contextual information about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education abroad and virtual exchange.

Research Project: This section describes the basic research design and shares information about each of the cases examined and interview participants.

Findings: This section highlights the overarching themes that emerged from the data. The section includes a short overview of each theme, linked to a longer description of each theme.

Opportunities and Considerations: This section includes information on innovative practices as well as questions readers should ask themselves as they re-imagine, revamp, or expand international education programming at their institutions.

Conclusion: This section provides some concluding thoughts on the findings and the future of international education programming.

References: A reference list of all the sources used throughout this report.

Appendix A, Methodology: This appendix includes a more detailed description of the methodology used for this research project.

Appendix B, Case Descriptions: The appendices include detailed descriptions of each of the 11 cases explored in this study.

Terminology

Education Abroad refers to “education, including, but not limited to, enrollment in courses, experiential learning, internships, service learning, and other learning activities, which occurs outside the participant’s home country, the country in which they are enrolled as a student, or the country in which they are employed as personnel” (The Forum on Education Abroad, n.d.). Education abroad includes study abroad as well as other learning or professional preparation activities that take place outside the individual’s home country or the country where a student is pursuing a degree.

Study Abroad is “a subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student’s home institution” (The Forum on Education Abroad, n.d.). This definition “excludes the pursuit of a full academic degree at a foreign institution” (The Forum on Education Abroad, n.d.). Study abroad programs can last anywhere from a year to a few weeks. Short-term study abroad programs (defined as a summer or 8-weeks or less during the academic year) have risen in popularity in recent years with 65% of students participating in short-term study abroad programs in the

2018/2019 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2022). Approximately 17% studied abroad for less than two weeks that year (Institute of International Education, 2022). Study abroad programs also include a variety of program formats from students being enrolled in courses at a host institution to students taking courses with an instructor from their home institution to housing arrangements with host families or with other U.S. students. For more details on different program types, see Engle and Engle (2003).

Virtual Exchange refers to the “engagement of groups of learners in extended periods of online intercultural interaction and collaboration with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations as an integrated part of their education programmes and under the guidance of educators and/or expert facilitators” (O’Dowd, 2018, p. 5). Virtual exchange is used as an umbrella term that includes a variety of different learning activities.

COIL stands for collaborative online international learning, a term coined by Jon Rubin based on his work with the State University of New York (SUNY) COIL Center in the early 2000s. COIL is often considered a specific type of virtual exchange methodology. COIL Connect (n.d.) defines COIL as “link[ing] two or more classrooms, their teachers and their students in a collaborative intercultural engagement.” Professors from different countries collaborate to create the COIL course. In the course, students from different countries collaborate to complete different activities. For more information on COIL, go to <https://online.suny.edu/introtocoil/>

Blended Programming: Blended programming combines programming that uses virtual modalities (e.g., virtual exchange or COIL) and mobility programming (i.e., education abroad). Some colleagues in the internationalization space also refer to these as hybrid programs.

Note regarding terminology: Higher education practitioners, scholars, and students often use terminology such as education abroad and study abroad or virtual exchange and COIL interchangeably. The definitions highlight how these terms are utilized within this report; however, direct quotes reflect the terminology participants used. When needed, clarifications are added in the text.

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant disruptions to the operations of higher education institutions (Crawford et al., 2020; Smalley, 2021). In March 2020, institutions shifted most of their instruction online to minimize the risk of student and faculty exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Crawford et al., 2020). Students who were participating in education abroad programs at the onset of the pandemic were told to return to their home institutions (Pedersen et al., 2021). As institutions resumed

instruction for the fall 2020 semester, many did so with a mix of online and hybrid courses and strict health and safety regulations in place for in-person interactions (Chronicle Staff, 2020).

Education abroad was particularly impacted by institutions' regulations and restrictions related to global travel impact. Education abroad participation of U.S. students had experienced growth each year with over 347,000 U.S. students going abroad in 2018/2019 (Institute of International Education, 2022). In comparison, in 2020/2021, only 14,549 U.S. students participated in education abroad (Institute of International Education, 2022). Education abroad offices experienced budget cuts and staff reduction (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020). Many institutions shifted to virtual exchange programming in an effort to keep international education alive (Nyunt et al., 2023; Tong et al., 2022). In The Forum on Education Abroad's 2021 State of the Field Report, 60% of respondents indicated that they were providing new virtual offerings.

Virtual modalities have been used for international education programming for decades. In the 1920s, virtual exchange emerged as school pen pal programs and multimedia exchanges (O'Dowd & Dooley, 2020). In the 1990s, the internet provided new opportunities for virtual exchanges (O'Dowd & Dooley, 2020). In the early 2000s, COIL emerged as one specific type of virtual exchange focused on collaboration among professors and students. Virtual exchange was already increasing in popularity prior to the pandemic (O'Dowd & Dooley, 2020). Research has highlighted the learning and positive outcomes of virtual exchange including the development of intercultural competencies (Lee & Song, 2019; Soria & Troisi, 2014), increased knowledge about other countries and cultures and improved cross-cultural communication and collaboration (Stevens Initiative, 2022a) as well as increased open-mindedness (Verzella, 2018) and curiosity for other cultures (Lee & Song, 2019). Some researchers have, however, questioned if online courses can lead to the same student investment in learning (Honey et al., 2019) or the necessary sense of community and connectedness required for intercultural learning (Laux et al., 2016). With the move to virtual modalities during the pandemic, faculty and staff have likely become more familiar, comfortable, and skilled in the use of virtual modalities. Research highlighted how virtual exchange fostered students' intercultural learning during the pandemic (Liu & Shirley, 2021; Tong et al., 2022).

As pandemic-related restrictions were lifted, institutions slowly returned to offering education abroad opportunities. Pandemic-related restrictions continued to impact students' experiences abroad in fall 2021 (Levine-West et al., 2023). The Forum on Education Abroad's (2023) State of the Field Report and the Institute of International Education (Baer & Martel, 2023) reported that institutions were slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels of engagement in 2023, though some institutions had not yet recovered. Providers and higher education institutions continued to expand their virtual exchange offerings and participation in these programs increased (Stevens Initiative, 2022b). Little is known about the thoughts of professionals working with international education programming on the future of international education programming, especially as it relates to offering education abroad programs and virtual exchanges.

This research project explored this gap in the literature to get a better sense of the future of international education programming including virtual exchange and education abroad in the United States.

About the Research Project

This qualitative research project used a multi-case study approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). A case study is an in-depth exploration of a clearly bound case (Yin, 2014). Each institution or organization served as a case or unit of analysis. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do international education professionals perceive the landscape of international education programming to be different, if at all, after the pandemic?
2. How are international education professionals approaching programming after the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What modalities of programming (e.g., virtual, mobility, blended) do international education professionals focus on in their current approaches to programming and why?
4. How do international education professionals envision the future of international education programming?

The cases analyzed for this study were:

- 3 four-year, large public higher education institutions
- 1 small, private four-year higher education institutions
- 3 community colleges or two-year institutions
- 2 K-12 education institutions or systems
- 1 governmental organization
- 1 education abroad provider

One or multiple participants for each case were interviewed, a total of 17 interviews. Interview participant demographics are noted in the table. Participants' years of experience in international education programming ranged from 4 to 30, with an average of over 15 years of experience. A more detailed table can be found in the [appendix](#).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Woman	14	82
Man	2	12
Prefer Not to Answer	1	6
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	3	18
White/Caucasian	11	64
Prefer Not to Answer	3	18

Findings: The Current State of International Education Programming

Four themes emerged from interviews with 17 professionals working in international education programming at 11 different institutions or organizations and review of institutional and organizational websites. The first theme highlights an overview of the landscape of international education programming, while the other three themes dive into aspects of or challenges related to international education programming that emerged from the data. Brief summaries of each theme are provided below. Clicking on the title of a theme will redirect you to the longer description of the theme with examples from various cases that support the theme, highlight how these themes showed up within different organizational contexts, and compare these themes to available data on education abroad and virtual exchange.

Changes in International Education Programming During and Post Pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a pause or at minimum a significant reduction in the quantity of education abroad offerings. At the same time, the pandemic led to an increase in virtual offerings, with many institutions and organizations launching their first virtual exchanges during the pandemic or expanding existing offerings. As pandemic-related travel restrictions were lifted, institutions slowly returned to in-person education abroad offerings with some, though not all, participants reaching pre-pandemic participation levels and number of offerings

by summer 2023. Despite the return to in-person travel, most participants emphasized the hope to continue or even further expand virtual exchange at their institution or organization.

The Impact of Human Resource Shortages on International Education

Programming: The COVID-19 pandemic and institutional responses to the pandemic led to a reduction in human resources for international education programming. Many institutions experienced significant staff turn-over due to a mix of layoffs and voluntary departures due to the uncertainty of the future of the field, which negatively impacted institution's ability to offer international education programming post pandemic. In addition, faculty and teacher burnout negatively impact institution's ability to continue or expand their international education programming post-pandemic.

Developing a Comprehensive International Education Programming Portfolio:

Participants noted the importance of developing a comprehensive international education programming portfolio that includes both education abroad and virtual exchange. Participants emphasized the value of scaffolded or blended programs, though not all were able to organize these types of programs due to limited resources or challenges with organizational structures. Participants, however, also noted that many stakeholders were more familiar with education abroad as a strategy for fostering global education than virtual exchange and that they encountered challenges in articulating the value of virtual exchange to some of their constituencies.

The Opportunities and Limitations of Increasing Access and Minimizing Power Differences Through Virtual Programming:

Participants highlighted how virtual exchange can advance equity by increasing access to international education programming and minimizing power differences between individuals from different countries. Despite these opportunities to advance equity, several participants also noted inequities and ethical dilemmas that arise in virtual exchange.

Changes in International Education Programming During and Post Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant reduction in the quantity of education abroad offerings. At the same time, the pandemic led to an increase in virtual offerings, with many institutions and organizations launching their first virtual exchanges during the pandemic or expanding existing offerings. As pandemic-related travel restrictions were lifted, institutions slowly returned to in-person education abroad offerings with some, though not all, participants in this study reaching pre-pandemic participation levels and number of offerings by summer 2023. Despite the return to in-person travel,

most participants emphasized the hope to continue or even further expand virtual exchange at their institution or organization.

Institution type, resources, and commitment to international education shaped the return to in-person education abroad offerings.

- *Four-year higher education institutions* were better able to weather the challenges of the pandemic and dedicate resources to education abroad during and beyond the pandemic, though even participants from four-year institutions noted that the return to in-person offerings was slow.
- *Community colleges* faced greater challenges in keeping international education programming alive and trying to return to pre-pandemic offerings and participation levels for education abroad, which had not yet happened for any of the participating institutions. The enrollment crisis at community college post-pandemic impacted the availability of resources at institutions and community college students were impacted more than their four-year college student peers by the pandemic.
- In the *K-12 sector*, international education programs that were just trying to be established pre-pandemic encountered greater setbacks than more established programs.

The findings of a slow return to education abroad post pandemic aligns with data from The Forum on Education Abroad's (2023) State of the Field Report, which indicated that 1 in 3 survey respondents were still unsure when participation levels in their education abroad programs would return to pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the Institute of International Education reported that 52% of institutions had not yet reached pre-pandemic participation levels during the 2022/2023 academic year, though many institutions anticipate growth in participation for the 2023/2024 academic year (Baer & Martel, 2023). The qualitative data shared in this report highlights which institutions may struggle, in particular, with rebuilding their education abroad programs.

Virtual exchange filled in gaps in international education across different institution types. While many participants noted that their experiences during the pandemic led them to become advocates for virtual exchange, some also shared that the interest in virtual exchange at their institutions was waning. Institutions who implemented the COIL methodology or similar classroom-based project-focused virtual exchanges seemed committed to expanding these opportunities, while the availability and interest in other virtual exchange offerings (e.g., virtual internships or virtual service learning) had decreased. Several participants also noted push-back about virtual exchange from stakeholders (e.g., parents, institutional leadership) who are more familiar with education abroad than virtual exchange, indicating a need to further educate stakeholders about the benefits of virtual exchange.

Reports by The Forum on Education Abroad (2023) and the Institute of International Education (Baer & Martel, 2023) also indicate that some institutions are continuing with virtual offerings post pandemic, though what percentage of institutions greatly varies. More than half (58%) of respondents to The Forum on Education Abroad's

(2023) State of the Field Report reported that their institution offers online global learning or virtual exchange, a 22% increase since 2020. The Institute of International Education, on the other hand, reported that only 19% of institutions were still offering virtual programs along with in-person programs in summer 2023, a reduction from the 30% of institutions who offered these types of programs in 2021 and 2022 (Bear & Martel, 2023). It is important to note that respondents for both of these reports are likely employed in education abroad offices; thus, they may not necessarily be aware of virtual exchange or COIL programs offered through academic units. The Stevens Initiative (2020; 2021; 2022b) has collected data on institutions and organizations hosting virtual exchange since 2020. Their report indicates a growth in virtual exchange. Notably, data from the most recent report (Stevens Initiative, 2022b) shows that among institutions who responded to both the 2021 and 2022 survey, the number of offerings and participation levels of virtual exchange increased from 2021 to 2022. The qualitative data shared in this report does not provide insights into the percentage of institutions offering virtual programs but highlights why institutions may choose to offer virtual exchange or COIL after the pandemic as well as why some institutions or organizations may return to only in-person programming.

Education Abroad at Four-Year Institutions

[Atlantic Large Public](#) was one of the few institutions that was able to offer a study abroad opportunity during fall 2020, offering students to study in South Korea based on a matrix of approximately 20 different data points related to the pandemic. While the institution was careful in what education abroad programs were offered and has not yet opened up programming in all countries, the institution was able to keep education abroad active during the pandemic and has returned to or even surpassed pre-pandemic levels of participation. Matthew, a senior leader overseeing education abroad at Atlantic Large Public, explained, “We have our largest number of students ever participating in our summer programs.” Similarly, Alexis, a staff member in an education abroad office located within a specific college at [Midwest Large Public](#), shared that her application numbers “are up and they might even surpass pre-COVID numbers.”

But while four-year institutions are returning to the level of education abroad engagement that they had pre-pandemic, the return to these numbers were slower than anticipated by many. Margaret, who serves in a director-level position in education abroad at Atlantic Large Public, explained:

“ *A lot of people expected students to just want to leave and, I think, there were some students that did just want to leave and get out . . . The dangerous thing is that there was this expectation that there was going to be this deluge, and when it wasn't the deluge for some of these [education abroad] offices, it was bad for that office.* ”

While some students were eager to go abroad again, others had concerns about travel. Institutions were also hesitant to open up education abroad too quickly, consulting with

risk management and legal counsel to identify when it was reasonable to allow travel to certain locations again. Staffing or resource challenges, discussed in later themes, also contributed to the slower than anticipated return to education abroad at four-year institutions.

Education Abroad at Community Colleges

Participants from community colleges shared that their institutions had to completely pause education abroad and they had not yet returned to pre-pandemic engagement levels. [Midwest Community College](#) did not offer education abroad programs until Spring 2022 and [Midwest Technical College](#) did not offer any education abroad until spring 2023. Both institutions had lower numbers of offerings and levels of participation at the time of interview than pre-pandemic. Debbie, a staff member overseeing education abroad and virtual exchange at Midwest Community College, explained:

“ It feels really dangerous to me to continue the conversation of study abroad being back bigger and better than ever, which is what I’m sort of hearing on the national level of, you know, everything’s great. We’re just back and that’s not true for all institutions. . . I, initially from the pandemic, was really quite concerned that it would further divide the haves and the have nots within study abroad and I am concerned that is continuing to happen.

Debbie added that at her institution, education abroad programs that attracted more traditional students such as some of their semester programs, had similar participation as prior to the pandemic. However, their faculty-led programs, which were typically more representative of the diverse community college population, had much lower numbers than pre-pandemic.

Some participants shared that education abroad was not a priority at their institution. Jackie, a faculty member from [East Coast Metropolitan Community College](#), explained that global education at their institution had been primarily ad hoc initiatives spearheaded by faculty. The enrollment crisis at community colleges further limited resources available for global education. At institutions with more established global education or education abroad offices, the enrollment crisis, budget issues, and staffing shortages limited their ability to return to their pre-pandemic education abroad numbers. Sarah, the staff member overseeing all international education initiatives at Midwest Technical College, explained that advocating for more staff or resources was a challenge. She said,

“ It’s a catch 22; it’s a double-edged sword. It looks like we don’t [need additional resources] because we have no capacity to grow at this staffing level.

The return to education abroad at community colleges was not only hindered by a lack of support from the administration and a lack of resources; many community college students were also impacted more by the pandemic, making them less willing or able to travel abroad post-pandemic than their four-year college peers. Debbie, for example, explained how the two largest barriers to education abroad are “reluctancy by students” and “finances”. Many of her students were frontline workers during the pandemic and “they were the hardest hit financially, emotionally, and physically.” Education abroad is not a priority for them right now, as they try to make ends meet and recover from the impacts of the pandemic. She added that community college students already believed that education abroad was “not for them” and the pandemic has exacerbated the barriers community college students encountered to participating in education abroad.

Education Abroad in the K-12 Sector

Participants from the K-12 sector shared how the pandemic had paused the momentum international education was gaining in their schools. For example, Julia, who oversees the language immersion program at a [Southern Charter School](#), explained how her school had tried to establish an education abroad program prior to the pandemic but had not gotten enough interest from students to run the program. The pandemic led to a pause and exploration of virtual options. Now, her colleagues and Julia returned to working on developing a study abroad program. Similarly, Nichole, who oversees internationalization efforts of the curriculum for [Large Metropolitan Public School District](#), noted how schools that had internationalized curricula could not continue implementing their programs to the fullest extent during the pandemic. Programs had just gained momentum when the pandemic started, so these programs “were definitely set back by the pandemic,” Nichole explained.

Introduction to and Expansion of Virtual Exchange during the Pandemic

The pause or reduction in education abroad offerings provided an opportunity for participants to explore virtual exchange across all institutional types. At some institutions, virtual exchange was seen as a replacement for education abroad while travel was not possible. Parvati, who serves in a director-level position focused on internationalization at home at Atlantic Large Public, explained that virtual exchange “was started as something that would be a substitute for education abroad.” But while the initial intention was to use virtual exchange to keep international education alive during the pandemic, Parvati and her colleagues are now committed to continuing and scaling up virtual exchange at their institution. Parvati explained:

“ Now, having gone through it for two years, there is a realization that COIL is not a substitute for study abroad at all. Study abroad is now once again, has picked up, is more robust than it was pre-pandemic, but we still are pushing COIL as a completely different modality to deliver global learning and intercultural awareness... And

so it is, it's in its own right, a very robust modality to do that. And hence we are still going to keep that. And it's not at all a substitute or replacement to study abroad. It is just going to be there, and we are going to push it.

Experiencing virtual exchange and seeing what students can gain from participating in virtual exchange led Parvati and her colleagues to adopt virtual exchange as an important strategy for fostering the internationalization of the curriculum.

Others came across virtual exchange by coincidence. Nick, a faculty member at Southern Large Public, shared how he had not considered offering virtual programming. He was looking for a grant to support an international collaboration with an institution in Morocco. When their initial grant was denied, he came across the Stevens Initiative. He said:

“ It was really the Stevens Initiative and their emphasis on virtual exchange, I think, that influenced us in some ways, because . . . we did not focus on virtual exchange [in the initial grant application.]”

Finding an opportunity to apply for a grant made Nick consider changing the format of the international collaboration he had planned to use a virtual modality.

Others had wanted to do virtual exchange, but the pandemic provided an opportunity and impetus to follow through on these intentions. For example, Debbie from Midwest Community College explained that she and her colleagues had been aware of virtual exchange prior to the pandemic and had been interested in facilitating virtual exchanges but never got around to it. She said, “[Virtual exchange] was something that we had, for years, wanted to do and just never sort of floated to the top of the priority list.” When the pandemic led to the shut-down of in-person instruction, Debbie and her colleagues applied for a grant for virtual exchange, which allowed them to pilot some virtual programs with their partners in summer 2020. Similarly, Juan, who serves in a coordinator-level role focused on internationalization of the curriculum in a specific college at Midwest Large Public and is involved in efforts to advance virtual exchange campus-wide, explained:

There were several people who were aware of, for example, with COIL, what COIL was doing but we didn't really get started until the pandemic happened and traditionally, physically, mobile study abroad programs were shut down and COIL or [name of COIL-type programs on campus] emerged along with other virtual exchange kind of stuff, so internship service learning, having these provider programs that we worked with. . . we were saying, you know, yes, we weren't doing this until now but we should have been doing this. . . we always started these as not a substitute for traditional study abroad but as a complement.

For Juan and his colleagues, the pandemic provided an opportunity to implement COIL courses, but they always knew that they wanted to continue these offerings beyond the pandemic.

Increased Commitment to and Capacity for Virtual Exchange

Seeing the learning that can occur through virtual exchange, many participants shared that they are committed to continuing and expanding virtual exchange at their campuses. For example, Debbie from Midwest Community College said:

“ I always say that I was very skeptical and was probably the most skeptical person about virtual exchange but I’m 100% in favor now. Our students have had really amazing experiences, especially with the pilot that we initially did.

Experiencing virtual exchange led Debbie to become a supporter of virtual exchange and she hopes to continue offering virtual exchange at her institution.

The pandemic also increased stakeholders’ understanding of virtual modalities and the capacity to utilize this modality for international education programming. Samantha, who works for a state department and oversees language and international education initiative, explained:

“ The most notable [change with the pandemic] for global learning opportunities is the shift to virtual teaching and learning and the capacity that was developed through that necessitated shift. So, we went from very few educators having had experience with facilitating online learning to almost universal participation... It built an infrastructure or capacity for us to envision global exchange through virtual means.

As Samantha highlights, advancement in technology and increased level of familiarity with virtual modalities and how to utilize them for teaching and learning created a greater capacity for virtual exchange.

Participants noted how virtual exchange is particularly popular at institutions that may not be able to offer many education abroad programs or where students may not be able to participate in education abroad. Angela, who works for an education abroad provider, noted the popularity of virtual programming for community colleges. Her organization offered virtual programming during the pandemic but has stopped offering some of these programs. The ones they do offer are, however, “very, very popular with our community college clients,” Angela noted.

Barriers and Set-Backs in Expanding Virtual Exchange

While participants, overall, wanted to expand virtual exchange, some of them also encountered barriers and setbacks in doing so. For example, at four-year institutions, participants noted that while interest in COIL courses and similar classroom-based, project-focused virtual exchanges continued, interest in and availability of other virtual exchanges was decreasing. Juan from Atlantic Large Public explained:

With the virtual exchange, non-COIL stuff, the internships and the service learning, that has kind of tapered off quite a bit. And so, this idea that it wasn't a substitute, it was a compliment seems in practice to not be true.

Noting the decrease in interest, Juan questioned if these programs were truly a compliment to education abroad or had really just been a replacement when travel was not possible. Some of the challenges may also be related to fewer offerings of these types of programs. Matthew from Atlantic Large Public explained that while his office is interested in offering a robust portfolio of virtual exchange, many of their providers have not maintained their virtual offerings. Angela, who works for an education abroad provider, explained that virtual offerings are not as profitable for her organization as mobility programs, leading her organizational leadership to question whether continuing virtual is a good organizational move. She explained, "There's also been big discussions organizationally about. . . the future of virtual, just because it's not profit generating. . . It's not yielding the same return as faculty-led [programs]." But while Angela recognized that virtual may not be profitable, she still saw the value in it and was trying to figure out ways to make a case to her organizational leadership about continuing or possibly even expanding virtual offerings.

Institutional resources also impacted the ability to continue or expand on virtual exchange. Participants from community colleges noted how their lack of resources (particularly staffing and funding) limited their ability to continue or expand virtual exchange. Some participants, particularly those from K-12 education, further shared that their institutions were moving away from virtual and focusing on education abroad because stakeholders were more familiar with this type of international education. For example, Julia, a staff member overseeing language programs at Southern Charter School, explained: "A lot of our families work internationally, or they work with an international company, or they are from another country and for them, they really want that in-person experience for their child." Even at larger institutions, more education is needed to increase buy-in for virtual programming. Sofie from Midwest Large Public noted that mobility programs are "what leadership understands." Thus, there appears to be a need to further educate institutional leadership and administrators on the value of virtual exchange and how these programs can complement, rather than substitute, mobility programs.

The Impact of Human Resource Shortages on International Education Programming

The COVID-19 pandemic and institutional responses to the pandemic led to a reduction in human resources for international education programming. Many institutions experienced significant staff turn-over due to a mix of layoffs and voluntary departures due to the uncertainty of the future of the field. Staffing shortages became particularly problematic for education abroad offices post-pandemic, as travel restrictions were lifted and interest in education abroad rebounded. Offices that were able to return to pre-pandemic staff sizes also encountered issues as many of their new staff members needed time to onboard and adjust to their new roles. In addition, faculty and teacher burnout negatively impact institution's ability to continue or expand their international education programming post-pandemic.

The Forum on Education Abroad's (2020, 2023) State of the Field reports similarly highlighted challenges with staffing. In October 2020, 40% of respondents reported that they had experienced staff reductions (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020). By 2022, about half of the offices had returned to their pre-COVID size while slightly less than half said the staff had been reduced from its pre-COVID size and 15% had grown their staff (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2023). Respondents highlighted high turnover, major restructuring of their staff, and challenges of working with many new and/or less experienced colleagues (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2023). Moreover, only 20% of respondents reported that their institution or organization was adequately staffed (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2023).

Challenges with faculty burnout also showed up indirectly in The Forum on Education Abroad's (2023) State of the Field report. Respondents from U.S. institutions reported that one of the barriers to increasing education abroad participation was a lack of faculty or staff interested in leading education abroad programs. Faculty burnout may especially impact education abroad at community colleges, as the Institute of International Education reported that 92% of education abroad students at community colleges participated in faculty-led programs (Baer & Martel, 2023). If faculty are less willing to lead these types of programs, community colleges will continue to struggle to rebuild their study abroad offering.

Staffing for Education Abroad

Staff turnover or reductions occurred across all institutional types. For example, the review of institutional websites showed that [Southern Large Public's](#) education abroad office went from a 12-person office in 2018/2019 to a 7-person office in 2022/2023 with only one staff member remaining from the 2018/2019 staff. Midwest Technical College went from 4 full-time and 1 part-time staff member to 2- full-time and 1 part-time staff members. The lower staffing creates challenges now as education abroad and other internationalization efforts are increasing. Sarah, the staff member overseeing all international education initiatives at Midwest Technical College, explained that this staffing structure makes it difficult to avoid burnout for her other full-time staff member, who is now responsible for both education abroad and international student services.

She explained, “We both thought that there would be an end in sight that she’d be doing both roles for a finite amount of time, and it now feels infinite.” With the enrollment crisis, Sarah was unsure if the situation would change any time. The staffing limits the office’s ability to increase offerings and services provided to students. Sarah said, “We have a really finite capacity for growth.”

At Atlantic Large Public, the education abroad office also experienced huge turnover but was returning to its previous staff size. The office, which is self-funded, was able to keep its staff on during the onset and first year of the pandemic but eventually, due to limited resources, had to lay off some staff and others chose to leave. That led to the 23-person office in fall 2021 becoming a 5-person office by May 2022. The staff was smallest just as education abroad was taking off again, which led to a push to hire and re-grow the staff. Matthew explained:

It’s been kind of a whirlwind. Because a year ago there, yeah, there were 5 of us doing everything, you know. And I was advising students for the first time in probably 10 years and actually doing program development and all these different things and program management. And so, it was crazy stressful across the board. It helped us to innovate a lot of things and put some new processes into place, but we really definitely needed the people.

The lack of staff created challenges, as the office was trying to grow its education abroad offerings after the pandemic. While the office was able to hire new staff members to address their growing staffing needs, many of the new staff members do not have a background in study abroad or international education. Margaret from Atlantic Large Public explained:

“ *It is good in some sense, because we’re getting more out of the box thinking of people coming in from different fields, who are a little bit more savvy in that, and are really getting us to think more, which I think is great. But it is, it does kind of, there is a slow period of slowing down first and then growth.*

While having new staff members led to more innovation and creativity, having to onboard and train these staff members took a little bit longer due to their lack of familiarity with education abroad jargon and processes.

Having to pick up other staff members’ work and trying to support their offices and organizations through uncertain times also led to burnout for some staff members engaged in international education programming. For example, Angela shared that staff at the education abroad provider she works for were encountering burnout. She said:

“ *People never really even took leave during COVID. They were working really hard. They just wanted the organization to survive.*

So, you know, putting in extra hours, lower pay, all of that kind of stuff. And also, just the trauma from COVID.

Staff members had been so focused on helping their organization survive during the pandemic that feelings of burnout did not hit them until after operations at their organization recovered. This burnout, however, also made it difficult for the organization to continue growing its programming during a time when demand for education abroad was increasing.

Staffing for Virtual Exchange

The lack of resources impacted institutions' ability to continue or expand the number of staff members dedicated to virtual exchange. Many institutions did not have a dedicated staff member to oversee virtual exchange. Instead, virtual exchange had been added to staff members' responsibilities, as the institution started to explore these opportunities. Participants who worked with virtual exchange thus had to split their time among many different responsibilities. For example, Juan from Midwest Large Public University, said, "This is not my main responsibility on campus." He noted that, if funding was not an issue, he would advocate for a full-time virtual exchange coordinator to oversee efforts to expand virtual exchange at the institution. Jackie shared that at East Coast Metropolitan Community College, faculty spearhead virtual exchanges without administrative or even graduate assistant support. Even institutions like Atlantic Large Public, where "the support that COIL got from leadership and virtual exchange got from leadership was tremendous," as Parvati shared, still need to continue building a better infrastructure to allow for the expansion of virtual exchange, something that requires time and resources which are often limited.

At less resourced institutions, some participants noted that they had to make choices between what types of programs they offered due to limited resources. Sarah from Midwest Technical College shared that her office hopes to continue offering at least one virtual exchange each year. This year, however, due to a lack of faculty to staff programs and their own limited capacity, they were unable to do so. She said, "Hopefully next year, we can work a virtual experience in there as well, but this year, if we can pull off five physical experiences, that's probably about all we have the capacity to manage."

Faculty and Teacher Burnout

Faculty or teacher burnout negatively impacted education abroad and virtual exchange. Chelsea from Large Metropolitan Public School District shared how teacher burnout has been a challenge as they tried to expand virtual exchange in schools within the district. She explained,

“ Even our teachers and administrators who really believe in global education have a lot of different priorities that are coming at them.

Chelsea and Nichole have been working on trying to find ways to align international education programming with the existing curriculum, so that virtual exchange does not feel like something “extra” that teachers have to do. In addition, Nichole tries to provide a lot of support and resources to teachers to minimize the additional workload. She said, “It’s about kind of coming back in like, it’s not extra and this is just a shift in the way that we’re doing it.” Other participants noted that creating virtual exchanges or education abroad programs is additional, often not-rewarded work, but, like Nichole, believed that providing additional resources and support can be one way to overcome faculty and teacher burnout. Elia, the staff member overseeing education abroad at [Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution](#), explained, “We have a pretty dedicated faculty that is, a lot of them are excited about [study abroad]. So, we filled [the programs] but it’s hard to get it.” Elia’s institution is committed to global education and requires all students to participate in an education abroad or related experience; thus, Elia’s office has to organize a certain number of programs. Recognizing that faculty burnout may negatively impact the institution’s ability to follow through on their promise for global education, Elia applied for a grant related to faculty support. The grant provides language training for faculty who may not speak the language of the host country, allows for course releases the semester before faculty facilitate an education abroad experience, and led to the creation of summer workshops for developing education abroad curricula. Elia added:

“ *It’s all about faculty support. And I think it’s giving an indication to our faculty that we see them. We understand how stressful it is, and we’re trying to address that. So, I think that’s appreciated.* ”

While Elia’s office was able to provide a variety of resources and individualized support to their faculty, other participants discussed efforts to streamline or institutionalize processes to minimize workload that falls on faculty. For example, Nick from Southern Large Public shared that he created and had a basic virtual exchange syllabus approved through curricular processes, which allows other faculty to use this syllabus to create their own virtual exchange courses. The resources staff were able to provide to faculty and teachers depended on how well-resourced their own offices or institutions were. Less-resourced offices and institutions felt the impact of burnout more. For example, Debbie from Midwest Community College shared, “Our faculty are totally stretched thin; our office is stretched thin.” Despite their faculty having been impacted more by the pandemic than their four-year institution peers, Debbie noted that her faculty were amazing, and many were still willing to take on additional work. To minimize their workload, Debbie and her office work closely with the faculty in developing education abroad or virtual exchange opportunities. She said,

“ *We really take the lead on the program. The faculty are the ones that really develop the curriculum, you know, they create the* ”

initial groundwork for the program but then we are close partners in moving it forward.

In particular, Debbie's office takes care of marketing, student applications, advising for students, managing the finances and budget for the program, and more. Providing that support makes it possible for faculty to still engage in international education programming despite the demands put on them.

Developing a Comprehensive International Education Programming Portfolio

Participants noted the importance of developing a comprehensive international education programming portfolio that includes both education abroad and virtual exchange. Participants emphasized the value of scaffolded or blended programs, though not all were able to organize these types of programs due to limited resources or challenges with organizational structures. Previous research has highlighted the importance in incorporating international education programming throughout the curriculum and providing scaffolded experiences to students, as one stand-alone program often does not result in drastic changes in intercultural learning (e.g., Niehaus & Nyunt, 2023; Nyunt, Niehaus, & Benavides, 2022). Participants saw opportunities to utilize virtual exchange to prepare students for education abroad experiences. Participants, however, also noted that many stakeholders were more familiar with education abroad as a strategy for fostering global education than virtual exchange and that they encountered challenges in articulating the value of virtual exchange to some of their constituencies.

A Comprehensive International Education Programming Portfolio

Participants emphasized the importance of providing different international education programming opportunities to students. For example, Atlantic Large Public aims to provide all students with an international experience. Matthew, a senior leader in the education abroad office, explained that about half of their population participated in education abroad and "virtual, COIL, remote internships are the way to hit the other 50% who can't go abroad." In particular, participants highlighted the value of virtual exchange in reaching a larger number of students as, "the one area that a student can't escape is the curriculum," as Parvati, who serves in a director-level position focused on internationalization at Atlantic Large Public, explained.

Having different opportunities can increase access to different populations such as non-traditional students, undocumented students, or students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (see the theme on access below). Participants from community colleges stressed the value of offering virtual exchange in an effort to increase access to international education programming. Even at institutions like Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution, where the leadership was

committed to in-person international education programming, a virtual option existed for students in a highly sequenced academic program.

The Value of Scaffolded or Blended Programs

Participants emphasized that scaffolding or blending virtual exchange and education abroad may be particularly effective in fostering students' global learning. For example, Julia from Southern Charter School shared how having some virtual activities starting as early as third grade may be a good option to start getting students engaged in global learning. Students could meet students from another country via a "pen pal"-type program, get to know them, before meeting them in person during an education abroad program or the other students coming to visit Julia's school. Similarly, Samantha from [Midwest Governmental Organization](#), noted,

“ Virtual exchange will lead to more meaningful on the ground experiences, especially if they forged relationships over the course of a school year and then that relationship is culminated by an in-person experience.

Participants from institutions who were able to offer blended programs talked about the value of these programs. Debbie from Midwest Community College explained, "Some of our programs did a virtual exchange before they went abroad this last year." She added:

“ The first couple of days of the [mobility] program was always sort of having people get to know each other, figure out how to pronounce that name, like, where are they going, you know, all of this stuff. And now they just like, you know, they meet, and they already had a connection. They already know things. They're more willing, the hosts ... were so willing to go and take their hosting responsibilities to an entirely different level because they already knew the students.

Being able to connect prior to meeting in person allowed students and hosts to move past the awkward getting-to-know-you phase and toward deeper connections and learning faster.

The Impact of Organizational Structures on Scaffolded or Blended Programming

Organizational structures impacted participants' ability to create scaffolded or blended programs. Participants like Alexis who oversees all international education programming within a specific school at Midwest Large Public or Debbie from Midwest Community College, whose office handles both education abroad and virtual exchange, have the ability to create scaffolded or blended programs. While decentralized

structures at larger institutions or being at a smaller institution may lend itself to developing blended programs, resources can be an issue at some of these institutions. Juan, who works at the same school as Alexis, noted how less resourced colleges may not be able to offer virtual or in-person programming due to their limited resources. Similarly, smaller institutions or community colleges may not have the resources, whether financially or staffing, to create these types of experiences.

Organizational structures where education abroad and virtual exchange are located in different units or divisions also create challenges for developing blended programs. Nick from Southern Large Public who spearheads virtual exchange initiatives at his institution shared that he was no longer connected to the education abroad office at his institution; thus, there were no connections between virtual exchange offerings at the institution and education abroad opportunities. Nick, however, felt that more connections between the two could be beneficial. He said, "I think there should be more attention on virtual exchange, because I think it will both increase interest and help students be more prepared for the study abroad experience." Similarly, at Atlantic Large Public, education abroad and virtual exchange are located in different units and while infrastructure exists to support each of the initiatives, blended opportunities have not yet been created despite a collaborative culture at the institution. Matthew explained:

We are very collaborative, and I don't know that that's the case in all other institutions. . . We've sort of left it up to each faculty member and the COIL office and like, hey, this is an opportunity and we're happy to help support this, if you want to do it.

While the intention for collaboration exists at Atlantic Large Public, blended programs have not yet happened due to the organizational structure.

Articulating the Value of Virtual Exchange

Participants across all institution types and organizations indicated a need to continue to educate various stakeholders about the value of virtual exchange. For example, Parvati noted, "We understand the value of COIL in terms of intercultural learning. We are not always able to percolate that down to the faculty." Parvati stressed the importance of educating faculty on how virtual exchange can foster intercultural learning but also help them see other benefits that may come out of facilitating these experiences such as opportunities to publish or expand their international networks. Participants in the K-12 sector noted the importance of explaining the value of virtual exchange to stakeholders like parents or administrators. Chelsea from Large Metropolitan Public School District, noted that while her district office sees the value in virtual opportunities, some schools still focus on how "travel is cool" and thus want to offer education abroad regardless of challenges with cost and risk management.

Another group of stakeholders that may be skeptical of virtual exchange are institutional or organizational leaders. Sofie from Midwest Large Public noted how leadership at her institution is more familiar with education abroad than virtual exchange. Angela, who works for an education abroad provider, noted how staff within

the organization disagree on whether or not they should continue to provide virtual exchange. She explained:

There's also been big discussions organizationally about . . . the future of virtual, just because it's not profit generating. . . And whilst there is a huge amount of buy-in, I would say, and even amongst our team members I see, like, a huge belief and passion for virtual exchange, it's just not yielding the same kind of returns as faculty-led. So, I think even within our organization, you have someone like me who doesn't think about money. And then, you know, you have a commercial director, that's saying, 'But look at the cost benefit ratio and the amount of time that it takes someone to put together a customized virtual exchange.'

Angela added that she was still trying to figure out ways to advocate for a continuation of virtual exchange.

As participants strive to educate stakeholders on the value of virtual exchange, they indicated a need to collect concrete data on the benefits and learning of virtual exchange, including longitudinal data on outcomes, as well as stories about positive experiences with virtual exchange. Samantha from Midwest Governmental Organization said,

“ We need stories. We need teachers, administrators, and students who have participated in virtual exchange to speak to their experiences.

Samantha believed that these stories, in combination with quantitative data, could win over those skeptical of virtual exchange.

Opportunities and Limitations of Advancing Equity Through Virtual Programming

Participants highlighted how virtual exchange can advance equity by increasing access to international education programming and minimizing power differences between individuals from different countries. Specifically, participants named the lower cost of virtual exchange and the ability of virtual exchange to overcome other challenges that create barriers to education abroad participation such as students' familial or work commitments, hesitancy to travel or safety concerns, and immigration status-related challenges. Respondents to The Forum on Education Abroad's (2023) State of the Field Report similarly noted that virtual programs are among the most effective strategies for increasing study abroad participation.

Despite these opportunities to advance equity, several participants also noted inequities and ethical dilemmas that arise in virtual exchange. Participants indicated that limited access to technology can prevent students from participating. While power differences between individuals from different countries may be minimized in virtual exchange compared to education abroad, power differences still exist and show up in

what platforms are used, what language is spoken, and who initiates the request to create a virtual exchange program. A recent issue of [Diversity Abroad's Global Impact Exchange](#) developed in collaboration with the Stevens Initiative highlighted similar issues to equity and dove into this topic in more depth.

Increased Access

Participants highlighted how virtual exchange can increase access by attracting different populations than education abroad. Chelsea, from Large Metropolitan School District explained, "It's a lot of money to send, you know, even just 100 students abroad. So, we could not do that for the entire district." She added:

“ I would never argue that study abroad is not valuable. I think it's incredibly powerful and you can see the change in such a short time with the students that come back. But I think that you can build that interest in the world and build those communication skills and get students interested in taking action on global topics, seeing the connections between their community and the global community through things like virtual exchange.

As Chelsea highlighted, the lower cost of virtual exchange increases access. While funding can often be a deterrent for students to participate in education abroad, virtual exchange also has other benefits. Jackie from East Coast Metropolitan Community College explained:

I felt that this [virtual exchange] is a great opportunity for community college students who cannot travel abroad because they're usually non-traditional students with families... they go to school full-time but they also work full-time and so they cannot leave physically.

Recognizing the barriers that non-traditional students may face when trying to participate in study abroad, Jackie found virtual exchange a great alternative to education abroad that provides access to global education to more students. Sarah from Midwest Technical College similarly noted that virtual exchange provided access to students at her college who would not be able to participate in education abroad. She explained:

One of the ways that we tried to find a silver lining [when shifting to virtual programs during the pandemic] was that there were definitely students, I would say students who either, even though we try to keep our costs really low for our programs, you know, there are some students that [study abroad] just won't be an opportunity for. We also kind of had an unintended outcome of having some of our undocumented students have the ability to participate because they also wouldn't be able to physically travel.

Offering virtual programming during the pandemic created access for students who had previously not been able to participate in education abroad. This realization led Sarah to advocate for the continuation of some virtual programs at her institution.

Access Issues Related to Virtual Exchange

Several participants shared concerns about inequities and access issues with virtual exchange. Jackie from East Coast Metropolitan Community College, for example, shared that some of her students lack the technological tools needed to participate in virtual exchange. She explained, “We have laptops that students could borrow for the semester, but we certainly don’t have as many as for the entire student body and a lot of the laptops are marginal. They don’t work well.” Jackie added that access to reliable Wi-Fi was another issue, though the pandemic actually helped with that as the institution received a grant to provide Wi-Fi access to students.

In addition to student-level challenges, inequalities also exist with which institutions or departments can offer virtual exchange. For example, Sarah from Midwest Technical College shared that due to a lack of resources, they were unable to offer virtual exchange at her institution. At Midwest Large Public, which has a decentralized structure for international education programming, inequities exist between different colleges or schools. Juan from Midwest Large Public explained that each college manages its own students and their portfolio of education abroad programs and virtual exchanges. Students from other colleges can participate in these programs but they are not geared toward them and may not fit into their major requirements. He continued:

When it comes to COIL, the problem with the decentralized model is, where does the funding come from? Right now, the funding comes from each individual college. . . what about those colleges that don’t have funds for this? So, a lot of colleges are left out. . . and it creates this system of inequities that’s probably precisely antithetical to the philosophy of what COIL is, where the people that have the, the units that have the most privileges wind up being the ones that do [COIL].

Juan highlighted how, even with COIL courses which strive to increase access and provide global education to those who may not have access to mobility programs, the way resources are distributed at an institution may create its own system of inequalities where only certain students – and likely not the ones who are in most need of these opportunities – have access to COIL courses.

Power Differences and Virtual Exchange

The environment within a virtual exchange program has the potential to minimize power differences between individuals from different countries, as you do not have dynamics of one group being the hosts and the other the visitors like in most education abroad programs; but power differences continue to exist and participants highlighted the need to consider those in developing these programs. Angela who works for an education

abroad provider operating outside the U.S. noted the benefits of participating in virtual exchange for local students. She said:

I would love to see us actually expand [virtual exchange] for the benefit of [local] students. . . I have seen evidence of how impactful and how far reaching the effects of virtual exchange can be for local students. I can't say that it is more or less impactful for the [U.S.] students studying abroad, international students, but just in terms of like resources and like what it takes to actually study abroad for many [local] students; it's just not a reality.

Angela believed one of the values of virtual exchange was its ability to provide access to global education for students from developing countries and engage them in collaborative spaces rather than having them serve as hosts to visiting education abroad students. That said, Angela also noted how power differences continue to exist even within these programs. She explained:

It starts off being uneven because you've got a client that comes in and said, this is what we want to achieve for our students. This is what we have funding for. These are our learning outcomes. How can you make it happen?

Angela explained that her organization tries to find a "middle way between what the client is looking for and what's best for our partners and our individual local environments" but because the initial request comes from a faculty member in a western country and not from a community partner or local students, the program starts off with unequal power dynamics.

Juan from Midwest Large Public also questioned what platforms were used to facilitate COIL courses or what language was used within the COIL space. He said:

“ So, for example, what does it mean that we have all these COIL projects but 90 percent of them are in English? There's an ethical question there about the politics of language or how do we use technology and like which university's learning management system are we on, you know?

Participants like Juan felt that there was a need to reflect on these ethical questions about how U.S. institutions engage with their partner in virtual exchanges. Thus, while virtual exchange may be able to increase access for some and minimize power differences between U.S. students and hosts or local students, access issues and inequalities exist within these programs as well.

Opportunities & Considerations

This section is based on innovative practices already in existence at participating institutions and organizations as well as practices interview participants are hoping to implement and questions interview participants are currently wrestling with.

The section is broken into four parts: opportunities and considerations related to

- (a) education abroad,
- (b) virtual exchange, and
- (c) education abroad and virtual exchange.

The section ends with a note on resources that would be helpful to international education professionals.

5 STRATEGIES INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS CAN USE TO ENGAGE MORE STUDENTS IN EA FAST



Minimize jargon on your website. We know what “direct-enroll” means. Our students don’t.



Work with peer mentors who share identities with the underrecruited and underserved populations you’re trying to reach.



Parents & Families info sessions can engage these key stakeholders as supporters, not detractors.



Be super transparent and proactive when communicating the financial obligations and opportunities for support to fund EA participation.



Address mental health and wellbeing proactively by engaging students in self-assessment, preparing faculty program leaders, and engaging cohorts in more team building before their departure date.



Stevens
Initiative

Education Abroad



Recruitment of Underrepresented Students

While participation of underrepresented students has increased in the past decades, Black and Latinx students continue to be underrepresented among the students who participate in education abroad (Institute of International Education, 2022; Nyunt, Veron, & Sledge, 2022). Elia from Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution highlighted innovative practices her institution used to increase the participation of underrepresented students.

- *Peer Mentors*: The education abroad office recruited peer mentors who identify as Latinx to support Latinx students interested in education abroad.
- *Scholarship Fund*: The institution created a new scholarship fund to financially support Latinx students.
- *Info Session for Latinx Students and Parents*: The education abroad office hosted an information session for Latinx students and parents. Information about education abroad was shared in Spanish and past students and parents shared their experiences with education abroad at the session.
- *Heritage-Seeking Programs for Latinx Students*: The institution increased its offering of heritage-seeking programs for Latinx students. During information sessions, Latinx alumni of those programs shared what they got out of going on a heritage-seeking program.
- *On-Going Assessment of Efforts*: When the education abroad office initially developed these new approaches to recruiting Latinx students to education abroad, staff got feedback from Latinx students and parents. As the office continues with these efforts, they plan to hold regular focus groups with Latinx students to see if their efforts continue to meet students' needs or how they may need to be tweaked or revised.



Proactively Addressing Students' Financial Needs

Finances can be a barrier to students' ability to participate in education abroad (Whatley, 2017). Proactively addressing students' financial needs can help increase the number of students who can participate in education abroad, particularly for students from minoritized or lower socio-economic backgrounds. Margaret from Atlantic Large Public shared how her office tries to address students' financial needs:

- *Individual Financial Guidance*: The education abroad office hired a part-time financial aid staff member. This staff member meets with every student who

receives some financial aid and helps them figure out their options for participating in education abroad.

- *Transparent Financial Information:* The education abroad office also includes financial information about education abroad in every aspect of the application process to increase students' financial literacy and address myths about the cost of education abroad.



Minimization of Jargon on Websites and in Advising Sessions

Education abroad, as many other fields, uses a lot of jargon that may be difficult for students to understand. One way to increase access to education abroad and ensure that students choose education abroad programs that align with their interests is to reduce the use of jargon on websites and in advising sessions. Below is an example of how to reduce the use of jargon:

- Rather than describing programs as “direct-enroll” or “faculty-led” programs, staff at Atlantic Large Public try to describe how these types of programs differ from the perspective of students. Descriptions focus on what students' experiences in the program will be like, who they will spend time with, where they will live, and so on.



Proactively Addressing Mental Health Issues Via Self-Assessment

Mental health issues among students have been on the rise prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (American College Health Association, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic led to further negative impacts on student mental health (Charles et al., 2021; The Healthy Minds Network & American College Health Association, 2020; Nyunt, McMillen, et al., 2022). Proactively addressing student mental health prior to sending them abroad is important in minimizing issues that arise abroad. Elia from Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution shared her office's approach:

- *Student Self-Assessment:* Rather than asking students to disclose medications and provide information from their doctor or counselor, students are asked to self-assess their mental health and other challenges they may face abroad. This self-assessment is used to encourage students to make informed decisions on whether they should go abroad or the supports they need to put in place to be successful when going abroad.
- *Faculty Training:* Health and wellness staff provide information to faculty leaders on what to look for regarding students' mental health. Counselors are available to do assessments remotely or meet with faculty and/or students remotely during education abroad programs.

- *More Team Building Prior to Going Abroad:* Staff now focus more on team building during education abroad orientations to help students feel part of a group before going abroad and provide them with a peer support network.

Utilization of Virtual Modalities for Trainings, Information Sessions, and Advising

The pandemic increased staff, faculty, and students' comfort level with using virtual modalities. Several participants shared that their offices were using virtual platforms to facilitate training sessions for faculty, information and advising sessions for students, and other meetings related to education abroad. Below are examples of activities that staff conducted using virtual modalities:

- *Education Abroad 101 Sessions:* Atlantic Large Public university encourages students to first attend an Education Abroad 101 session to gain a better understanding of education abroad and the different types of programs. These sessions are offered virtually and in person. By learning about the basics of education abroad first, students are better prepared for their first individual advising meeting and these advising meetings can go into more depth.
- *Faculty Training Sessions:* Several participants noted that they utilize virtual modalities for faculty training sessions. At some institutions, these sessions are offered as asynchronous online sessions that faculty can complete on their own time; at other institutions, these trainings are held synchronously online.

Questions to Continue Wrestling With in Education Abroad

As institutions return to offering education abroad programs, there was hope that international education programming would be re-imaged to be more equitable. In reality, however, participants shared that while there were some innovations, many institutions have returned to old models for education abroad. Education abroad professionals and scholars should continue wrestling with the following questions:

- *Student Needs:* Participants noted that student needs have changed since the pandemic. Margaret from Atlantic Large Public noted that there was a need to "re-learn" what students are looking for post-pandemic. Having had less contact with students during the pandemic may have led to some disconnect. Margaret explained, "We are seeing different behaviors technologically and advising, I still struggle with what they're going to like. There are certain things that are popping up that we've never seen before." Angela from [Transformative Study Abroad Provider](#) similarly noted that students' behaviors had changed, and her organization was trying to figure out how to address these changes. Angela, in particular, noted the following behaviors she had heard staff members struggle with: "withdrawal, not wanting to engage in activities as much as perhaps prior. . . overstimulation is happening quite quickly. Fear and anxiety." She noted that these behaviors were particularly prominent among middle and high school students.

4 INNOVATIONS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS CAN USE TO ENGAGE MORE STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL EXCHANGE FAST



Incorporate virtual exchange into introductory or general education courses.



Make it easy for students to identify if a course includes virtual exchange in course management systems and course catalogs.



Develop a clear process for faculty to propose new virtual exchange courses. Consider template syllabi, consultation hours, a faculty handbook.



Connect the proposal process to support. Even a small seed grant can help overcome the hurdles that get in the way of virtual exchange development.



Stevens
Initiative

Virtual Exchange



Institutionalizing virtual exchange and incorporating it into large introductory or general education courses

As institutions strive to scale up virtual exchange, many participants shared a need to develop procedures or processes for creating virtual exchanges. Participants emphasized the importance of focusing on course-level implementations of virtual exchange, so courses do not depend on one faculty member's passion and knowledge but can be taught by different faculty and exist beyond one faculty member's involvement in a program. In addition, participants noted that virtual exchanges were primarily being offered in higher-level, specialized courses but to maximize the impact of virtual exchange, these courses should be incorporated into large introductory or general education courses that all students are required to take.

The process of how go about institutionalizing virtual exchange may differ by institution but the following bullet points highlight different approaches and considerations for scaling up virtual exchange:

- *Intentional Incorporation into Courses Required for Students:* Introductory courses to a specific major or general education courses may be good courses to incorporate virtual exchanges. That way, more students will be required to take the course and gain access to virtual exchange. In addition, these courses often focus on relationship building and teamwork in addition to course content. Parvati from Atlantic Large Public and Alexis from Midwest Large Public both talked about trying to identify larger, introductory courses for virtual exchanges and Nick from Southern Large Public talked about the value of having virtual exchange courses count toward general education requirements. Nichole from Large Metropolitan Public School District talked about trying to make global education (including virtual exchange) “the common practice, not like a niche thing.” Her office is currently working on ways to make that happen such as incorporating global learning outcomes into standard education goals and requirements.
- *Easy Identification of Courses:* Several participants noted working on ways to identify virtual exchange in their course management system, so students could search for these types of courses or would be provided with an explanation of what virtual exchange is before signing up for such a course.
- *Clear Process for Proposing New Courses:* Several participants discussed creating systems or processes for new faculty to propose virtual exchanges. Nick from Southern Large Public created a syllabus template that was approved through the institution's curriculum process. Debbie from Midwest Community College developed a process for faculty to apply for either virtual exchange or education abroad courses. Debbie then meets with faculty one-on-one to develop

the program. Debbie also has a handbook she shares with faculty that lists various considerations for developing a virtual exchange.

- *Funding for Courses:* Juan from Midwest Large Public is working toward a centralized funding source, which would provide more equitable access to funding for faculty from different colleges or schools. Having explicit funding guidelines and centralized sources of funds can encourage faculty from various departments develop virtual exchanges.



Utilizing Virtual Exchange to Introduce Younger Students to International Education

Participants from the K-12 sector talked about the value of virtual exchange for introducing younger students to international education. While education abroad has started to be available to high school students, travel can get very complicated with younger students (i.e., middle school or even elementary school).

- *Virtual Exchange for Middle School Students:* Large Metropolitan School District has been offering a virtual exchange program that pairs a middle school classroom with a classroom in another country. This experience gives students in middle school an introduction to cross-cultural collaborations.



One Size Does Not Fit All

Participants highlighted the importance of developing your own virtual exchange programs that fit your students' needs and align with institutional missions and goals. Participants shared a variety of approaches that work well for their unique student needs:

- *Incorporation of Community-Based Learning:* Parvati from Atlantic Large Public noted how her institution is striving to incorporate more community-based learning into their virtual exchanges, in what she called a “modified COIL course”.
- *Different Models for U.S. Institutions and International Partners:* Nick from Southern Large Public shared how the structure and model may differ between the U.S. institution and the international partner. For his program, all activities in the United States were incorporated into a course, while in Morocco, the virtual exchange was set up as extracurricular activities. Despite the lack of course credit students from Morocco received, his colleagues in Morocco had more interested students than they could accommodate.
- *Virtual Engagement Laboratory for Pre-Service Teachers:* Melissa from Midwest Large Public shared that the college of education offers a global laboratory. Middle school students from 15-20 different countries join a virtual club. Pre-service teachers at Midwest Large Public facilitate sessions for the middle school's students focused on sustainability goals. International students from

Midwest Large Public also support this initiative by collaborating with the pre-service teachers. The initiative provides a laboratory for pre-service teachers to hone their skills in teaching online, facilitating sessions with students from different cultural backgrounds, and practicing how to teach collaboration across cultures.

- *Career-Focused Programs for Community College Students:* Debbie from Midwest Community College noted that her students were very focused on preparing for their careers; thus, virtual exchange as well as education abroad initiatives need to focus on career-related skills. Debbie explained that virtual exchange could be used to help students realize why intercultural skills are important in their future career as they may end up communicating with international suppliers or be part of an international company with offices in different countries.
- *Virtual Exchange as an Introduction to International Education for Elementary and Middle School Students:* For Nichole at Metropolitan School District, virtual exchange was primarily about introducing younger students (e.g., elementary or middle school) to global learning, so they would get excited for mobility programs and deeper global learning offered in high school.



Questions to Continue Wrestling With in Virtual Exchange

As institutions develop virtual exchanges or scale up existing program offerings, there is a need to move from a focus on technology and logistics to the curriculum of these courses and ethical questions that this type of international education programming brings up. As most of the participants were relatively new to virtual exchange, many mentioned that they had not yet been able to do so. Below are some questions that professionals and scholars should continue wrestling with:

- *Power Differences:* Participants raised questions about the power differences between U.S. participants and international partners that are embedded in the structure of a specific virtual exchange program. These differences may exist because a U.S. institution decides to create a virtual exchange and looks for a partner, or because the course is offered in English or uses the learning management system of the U.S. institution. Participants raised the need to identify, reflect on, and strive to minimize these power differences.
- *Access:* While virtual exchange can increase access, participants noted that funding and resources of different schools within one institution or between different institution types may impact who has access to virtual exchange. Students may also be limited in their ability to participate due to a lack of access to the necessary technology or because the time frame conflicts with other commitments they have. Thus, professionals need to continue asking questions about who can access these opportunities and develop strategies to increase access.

EDUCATION ABROAD + VIRTUAL EXCHANGE =



Make global learning a priority.

Incorporate international education and global competencies into standard learning outcomes, mission statements, and graduation requirements.

Start them young! Virtual exchange participation during K-12 schooling can be an efficient strategy for exposing students to the world around them and making them curious to explore it without fear as they grow up.



Relationships are everything. Blended programming or virtual exchange that precedes education abroad programming in the partner's community lengthens the timeline and multiplies the opportunities for students and faculty to have time to build relationships, invest in the process, and learn from each other.

Challenge students to apply their global learning in different contexts. Working across cultures abroad or in a virtual space can build competencies for working across cultures within one's local community, too.



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Education Abroad and Virtual Exchange

Scaffolded and Blended Programs

Participants highlighted the value of creating scaffolded and blended programs. These types of programs allow for more in-depth and sustained engagement across cultures. Being able to build relationships prior to meeting in person can minimize the awkwardness of these initial in-person encounters and make students feel more comfortable about traveling abroad. Debbie from Midwest Community College stressed how scaffolded or blended programs were particularly useful for language students at her institutions “who are fairly nervous about having to speak in another language.” Having been able to interact with students from another country in the foreign language prior to traveling abroad “has been sort of a stepping stone for many of our students,” Debbie explained. In addition, scaffolded or blended programs allow for moving to in-depth conversations and learning faster as the early relationship building already occurred during virtual meetings.

- *Virtual before Travel:* Participants who organized these types of programs talked about typically having the virtual component first, as it allows for initial connections and relationship building. Once students have developed these relationships, the travel component occurs.
- *Important Questions to Consider:* When creating scaffolded or blended programs, it’s important to consider inequalities and power differences that these programs may reinforce. For example, will only one group of students travel? If so, how may that impact the dynamics between the two groups? For language programs, what language is spoken during which parts of the program? How might choices around primary language impact power differences between participating student groups?

Faculty/Teacher Professional Development

As institutions strive to expand or scale up virtual exchange or continue to offer education abroad programs, participants stressed a need to focus on faculty or teacher professional development. For example, Samantha from Midwest Governmental Organization, stated, “Our efforts to meet this goal [international education for all students] are going to be comprised of teachers themselves and school leaders aren’t invested in supporting that.” Providing faculty or teacher professional development can emphasize the value of international education programming, re-energize faculty and teachers, who may feel burnt out, and provide faculty and teachers with the tools needed to create international education programs. Participants shared different innovative practices for faculty/teacher professional development.

- *Faculty Language Training:* Using grant funding, Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts College offers language training for faculty interested in facilitating an education abroad program. Faculty can participate in an immersive summer

language study in the host country. The institution also has several global scholars teaching language courses on campus.

- *Course Release and Summer Workshops:* At Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts College, faculty receive a course release the semester before they lead an education abroad program. This course release allows them to put time toward developing the course. In addition, the education abroad office hosted summer workshops for putting together the curriculum for education abroad courses.
- *Teacher Academy:* Samantha from Midwest Governmental Organization shared that her organization hosted a teacher academy that prepared teachers for facilitating virtual exchanges. The academy itself was a virtual exchange, as 20 nations were represented among participants. Teachers, thus, not only learned about virtual exchange but experienced participating in a virtual exchange themselves.
- *Balance of Virtual and In-Person for Faculty/Teacher Training:* Nichole from Large Metropolitan Public School District emphasized the importance of finding a good balance between virtual and in-person opportunities to maximize learning and engagement but minimize the workload and commuting time for teachers. Nichole said, "Working with the teachers, I think there's a lot of value in being able to be in person but it's a lot harder to get teachers to come in person right now because there's so much that they're expected to do." This year, the teacher professional development program, which has been virtual since the onset of the pandemic, will have two in-person days in addition to monthly virtual meetings to allow for both in-person relationship building and the convenience of virtual meetings.

WHAT FACULTY WANT:

4 Supports to Make Engaging in Education Abroad & Virtual Exchange Work for Overworked Faculty



Focus on learning. Logistics and technology can take up a lot of time. Don't let them overpower the critical thinking and creativity that goes into designing a meaningful global learning experience. International education administrators and faculty deliver the best results for students when they work together as thought partners and draw on their respective strengths to bring a program to life.

Offer professional development. Being a good teacher means being a lifelong learner, too. Support professional development around VE and EA to carve out time for faculty to focus on these efforts and build their skill sets and community around them.



Give examples. Syllabi templates and model course set-ups in a learning management system can help faculty imagine how a program comes together and reduce their administrative burden so they can focus on student learning.

Money matters. Start-up or course development funds help offset the additional labor that comes with designing a new course or program. Course releases can also be used as an alternative if the cash isn't available.



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Connect International Education to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

Several participants discussed how connecting international education to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives could be beneficial for both efforts. The two initiatives have similar intended outcomes, and both need to be incorporated in what all faculty and staff at an organization do to be successful. Participants shared different approaches to creating this connection:

- *Reporting Structures:* At many institutions, international education and DEI offices are however located within different divisions, which limits collaboration between the two offices. Debbie from Midwest Community College talked about how she advocated for a “dotted reporting line” to the vice president of DEI to improve her ability to collaborate with DEI at her institution.
- *Programming Connections:* Samantha from Midwest Governmental Organization shared that as part of the Global Scholars program students have to apply what they learned through global education programs to the local context via 20 hours of local community service that aligns with a global learning theme. Creating programs that challenge students to make the connection between global learning and DEI efforts at home can help highlight the similarity in skills and competencies required for working across cultures within one’s home country or abroad.

Incorporation of International Education into Standards or Requirements

Several participants discussed efforts to include international education into standards or requirements. For example, Nichole from Large Metropolitan School District shared how she was trying to find ways to incorporate global education into the structure of K-12 education. Samantha from Midwest Governmental Organization talked about how she has been working on incorporating international education learning outcomes into education standards in her state. At the university level, Nick from Southern Large Public talked about incorporating international education into general education requirements. Below are some possibilities for incorporating international education into standards or requirements:

- *Education Standards:* Incorporate international education learning outcomes into standards in the K-12 settings.
- *Mission Statements:* Incorporate international education in institutional mission statements.
- *General Education at Higher Education Institutions:* Get virtual exchange or education abroad courses approved as general education requirements or require students to participate in an international education program as part of their general education requirements.

Questions to Continue Wrestling With for Both Education Abroad and Virtual Exchange

Participants noted several questions they continue to wrestle that apply to both, education abroad and virtual exchange:

- *Faculty and Teacher Burnout:* Participants discussed how faculty and teacher burnout has made it more difficult to find individuals willing to organize international education programming. Angela from Transformative Study Abroad Provider also noted how she has noticed changes in faculty behavior, which may be due to burnout. She explained that faculty seem to be putting more pressure on program designers and local facilitators and seem to be more anxious about facilitating their programs and engaging with locals. International education staff at their institution need to continue working with administrators to find ways to incentivize or reward faculty for organizing international education programming, while continuing to create resources and support systems that minimize faculty workload.
- *Assessment:* Assessing the learning that occurs in education abroad and virtual exchange continues to be a challenge. While participants noted that various different tools exist, none of the participants seemed to find any of the tools particularly useful. Most tools rely on students rating their intercultural skills or competencies. Some participants noted that they were starting to look at qualitative data more, for example assignments or projects students completed as part of their international education programs or after completion of these programs. Analyzing this data, however, is much more time intensive. Some participants also questioned the value of assessment and whether there would ever be an effective way to assess students' learning in these experiences. International education professionals and scholars need to continue wrestling with how the learning in international education can best be assessed or what other ways professionals can use to showcase the value of international education programming.
- *Impact of Virtual Engagement on Interest in Study Abroad:* Several participants noted that virtual may increase interest in education abroad, though this was typically based on anecdotal evidence. Debbie from Midwest Community College, for example, noted that virtual exchange can help ease anxieties of language students, as they can practice speaking in a foreign language in their virtual exchange courses which then better prepares them to go abroad. Nick from Southern Large Public similarly noted that students may be more prepared to go abroad after engaging in virtual exchange but also pointed out that some students may not want to go abroad, as they become more aware of the challenges of engaging across cultures. Melissa from Midwest Large Public shared that one student mentioned to her that she no longer needs to participate in education abroad, since she has had the opportunity to engage in a virtual engagement opportunity. At the same time, Melissa noticed that several students

who participated in virtual opportunities also chose to participate in education abroad and some asked to engage in virtual opportunities while abroad. More research is needed to understand how virtual engagement impacts interest in education abroad and vice versa.

Resource Gaps for International Educators

Networks for Different Institution Types: Participants noted that, as they tried to revise or scale up international education programming, being able to share resources and problem-solve with others from similar institutions or organizations would be helpful. For example, Nichole from Large Metropolitan School District mentioned how it would be helpful to have a network or partnership with other larger school districts to get a sense of how others are incorporating international education into the K-12 system within a large district. Julia from Southern Charter School noted that she would love to hear how other schools manage study abroad programs. These networks, thus, seem to be particularly needed for K-12 education. Participants from higher education institutions noted that they were able to access some of these networks and communities via professional associations. Participants from community colleges, however, noted that there is sometimes a focus on four-year institutions, though in recent years they've seen more of an emphasis on community colleges. Thus, ensuring that individuals from different types of institutions and organizations have access to a network or community and resources would be beneficial in trying to expand international education programming at different institution types.

Cliff Notes Version of the Stevens Initiative's *Virtual Exchange Guide*: Debbie noted that the Stevens Initiative's handbook for virtual exchange is very useful but can, at times, be overwhelming for faculty. She would love to have a condensed version, similar to a cliff notes version, of the guide to share with interested faculty, so they can get a basic overview of what virtual exchange is and what it entails.

Funding: Across the board, participants noted challenges with funding. Grant opportunities to support, in particular, institutions that are struggling to rebuild or expand their international education programming will be essential in providing access to international education programming for students at different institution types.

Conclusion

The return to international education programming after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic has been slow, particularly for less resourced institutions whose students, faculty, and staff were more impacted by the pandemic. High staff turnover in the international education field, faculty or teacher burnout, and limited budget continue to create barriers for rebuilding or expanding international education programming. At the same time, the pandemic provided an opportunity to explore virtual programming for many participants and led participants to see the value in continuing virtual exchanges beyond the pandemic. Participants highlighted how virtual exchanges can increase access to international education for students and faculty. Institutions are creating their own versions of virtual exchanges that address their students' unique needs and interests. Many are also starting to experiment with scaffolded or blended programs. As virtual exchange offerings increase, international education professionals will need to spend more time focused on the pedagogy of virtual programming, assessing the learning that occurs within these programs, and examine inequalities that may exist within these programs and wrestle with ethical questions related to virtual programming.

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Appendix A. Methodology

This qualitative research project used a multi-case study approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). A case study is an in-depth exploration of a clearly bound case (Yin, 2014). Each institution or organization served as a case or unit of analysis. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do international education professionals perceive the landscape of international education programming to be different, if at all, after the pandemic?
2. How are international education professionals approaching programming after the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What modalities of programming (e.g., virtual, mobility, blended) do international education professionals focus on in their current approaches to programming and why?
4. How do international education professionals envision the future of international education programming?

Cases were selected that fall into the following categories: (a) four-year, large public higher education institutions, (b) small and/or private four-year higher education institutions, (c) community colleges or two-year institutions, (d) K-12 education institutions or systems, (e) governmental organizations, and (f) education abroad providers. Cases were identified based on existing data on institutions collected by The Forum on Education Abroad and the Stevens Initiative. Cases represented institutions or organizations that had not been early adopters of virtual exchange but reported offering some virtual exchanges since the pandemic. Twelve cases were initially identified with the goal of having at least one case representing each category.

Potential participants at each of the identified cases were contacted via email in May and June 2023. Participants were initially invited to participate in one 60-90-minute interview and a 45-60-minute follow-up interview. The hope was to gain an in-depth understanding of international education programming at the participants' institution, then conduct additional interviews with other staff members at the institution based on the initial participant's recommendations, engage in initial data analysis, and then conduct the follow-up interview. Participants were offered a \$35 electronic gift card as an incentive for participating. Due to low response, the researcher changed the data collection plan to one single 60-minute interview and an incentive of \$20 per participant. When different staff members oversaw education abroad and virtual exchange, the researcher conducted interviews with multiple staff members at one institution. When no participant volunteered representing a certain category, representatives from The Forum on Education Abroad and the Stevens Initiative facilitated e-introductions between professionals they knew at certain organizations and the researcher.

Cases and Participants

All institutions/organizations and interview participants were assigned a pseudonym. Limited institutional and organizational context is shared in this report to protect individual's confidentiality. As larger institutions often have multiple individuals working with international education programming in different units or divisions, most cases focused on larger institutions have multiple participants while smaller or less-resourced institutions and organizations with a smaller staff within one office may only have one interview participant. Information about each case and demographics of interview participants are shared below. Terminology regarding race and ethnicity reflects how participants self-identify based on responses to open-ended questions.

Category	Institution/ Organization Pseudonym	Interview Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Current Position	Years of Experience in International Education Programming
Four-Year, Large Public	Southern Large Public University	Nick	Prefer Not to Answer	Prefer Not to Answer	Faculty	30
	Atlantic Large Public	Margaret	Woman	Asian, Filipino-A merican	Senior Director, Education Abroad	17
		Matthew	Man	Caucasian	Associate Dean, Education Abroad	26
		Parvati	Woman	Asian, South Asian, Indian American	Associate Director, Global Education	10
	Midwest Large Public	Alexis	Woman	White	Assistant Dean, College of Engineering	17
		Juan	Man	Caucasian	Global Learning Specialist	5
		Melissa	Woman	White	Director, International Programs	25

		Sofie	Woman	Asian	Director, Education Abroad	15+
Four-Year, Small Private	Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts College	Elia	Woman	White	Director, Global Engagement	20
Community College	East Coast Metropolitan Community College	Jackie	Woman	Prefer Not to Answer	Lecturer	4
	Midwest Technical College	Sarah	Woman	White	Senior International Officer	10
	Midwest Community College	Debbie	Woman	White	International Education Manager	17
Government	Midwest Governmental Organization	Samantha	Woman	White	World Languages & Global Education Consultant	33
K-12 Education	Southern Charter School	Julia	Woman	Prefer Not to Answer	Director, Language Programs	Prefer Not to Answer
	Large Metropolitan Public School District	Nichole	Woman	White/ European American	Specialist, Global Studies	4
		Chelsea	Woman	White	Manger, Global Education	8
Education Abroad Provider	Transformative Education Abroad Provider	Angela	Woman	White	Academic Director	6

Data Collection and Analysis

As is common for case study research (Yin, 2017), data was collected via multiple methods. Data was collected in summer 2023 and consisted of interviews with one or multiple staff members working with international education programming at the institution or in the organization as well as analysis of publicly available information

shared on institutional or organizational websites. Prior to the first interview, the researcher reviewed and analyzed institutional websites to gain a basic understanding of the international education programming offered at the institution. The interviews were conducted using a conversational style of interviewing and a semi-structured interview protocol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher asked several general questions about the international education programming at the institution, then continued the conversation by asking follow-up questions based on what participants shared. When appropriate, the interviewer asked about other individuals to talk to in an effort to gain a more well-rounded understanding of international education programming at the institution.

As is common in multi-site case study projects, data analysis consisted of within-case and across case analysis (Stake, 2006). First, interview transcripts were transcribed. Then, the researcher analyzed each case on its own and developed a case description describing the current state of international education programming at the institution. Next, the researcher engaged in cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) to develop themes across cases. Case descriptions and emerging themes were shared with all participants via email with a request for feedback. Participants shared minor additions to the case descriptions, which were consequently revised prior to inclusion in this report.

Appendix B. Case Descriptions

This section includes descriptions of each of the 11 cases. Case descriptions are based on interview data and information published publicly on institutional or organizational websites.

Four-Year, Large Public Higher Education Institution

Atlantic Large Public University

Description of Institution

- Public research university
- Flagship institution of the state university system
- Enrollment: over 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students
- 14 schools and colleges that offer over 70 majors

Interview Participants

- Margaret, director-level position in education abroad
- Matthew, senior leadership position overseeing education abroad
- Parvati, director-level position focused on internationalization at home, i.e., incorporating global learning in the curriculum (including virtual exchange)

International Education Programming at Atlantic Large Public

- The institution has a focus on global education. Specifically, the institution guarantees that global education is available to every student and currently offers a menu of options of global education initiatives to students.
- The institutional website highlights that over 40% of undergraduates participate in education abroad (summer programs are most popular but the institution is also in the top 15 for long-term program participation among U.S. institutions). The website also highlights that the institution offers approx. \$500k in scholarships.
- The education abroad office is housed in the largest college. Some other colleges have their own offices and receive varying support from the centralized office based on their needs. Risk management is centralized in the main education abroad office, which is a change since the pandemic. The office is self-funded which means there is a high student fee for education abroad.
- Virtual exchange started in 2020/2021 with 19 virtual exchange courses. By 2022/2023, 30 virtual exchange courses were offered.
- The institution also offers other global education options like a special initiative focused on encouraging global careers (e.g., foreign affairs, national and international security).

The Current State of International Education Programming at Atlantic Large Public

Level of Participation: Education abroad participation has returned to pre-pandemic levels or is surpassing those. The education abroad office just had the largest number of students ever participating in summer 2023 programs. The office used a “very careful” approach toward mobility programs during and beyond the pandemic. Matthew shared that they developed a matrix of factors for deciding which countries to open up for education abroad. This matrix allowed them to offer a few programs even during fall 2020. To this day, they have not yet opened up all countries.

Virtual Exchange During and Beyond the Pandemic: The pandemic provided an opportunity to start virtual exchange on their campus, initially as a substitute for education abroad, but it has now become a different and robust option for students to engage in global learning that adds to, rather than competes with, study abroad. (Please note that Parvati referred to virtual exchange as COIL. While some courses focus on the COIL methodology, not all offerings do.) Parvati explained, “[COIL] was started as something that would be a substitute for study abroad.” She added, “But now that, having gone through it for 2 years, there is a realization that COIL is not a substitute for study abroad at all. Study abroad is now once again, has picked up, is more robust than it was pre-pandemic, but we still are pushing COIL as a completely different modality to deliver global learning and intercultural awareness, only because we feel COIL has greater access possibilities than study abroad. And so it is, it’s in its own right, a very robust modality to do that. And hence we are still going to keep that. And it’s not at all a substitute or replacement to study abroad. It is just going to be there, and we are going to push it.”

Parvati also noted that virtual exchange was supported by institutional support. She shared, “The support that COIL got from the leadership and virtual exchange got from the leadership was tremendous.” Thanks to this support, they were able to start with a “bang” and build infrastructure around virtual exchange, but Parvati noted that there is still lots of work left to do.

Future of Virtual Exchange: Parvati shared hopes to further increase virtual exchange offerings. The institution strives to have everyone participate in global education and, as Parvati noted, “the one area that a student can’t escape is the curriculum.” The ultimate goal is to internationalize the curriculum at all levels, so students can participate in a variety of experiences including virtual exchange, education abroad, and others.

Matthew also supported an expansion of virtual exchange. He explained that about half of the student population participates in education abroad and “virtual, COIL, remote internships are the way to hit the other 50% who can’t go abroad.” Matthew explained there is interest in continuing/developing a robust portfolio of virtual programming via the education abroad office, e.g., virtual internships or research, but a challenge is that many providers haven’t maintained the same level of virtual offerings that they had during the pandemic.

Scaling Up Virtual Exchange: The hope is to scale up virtual exchange until it reaches its plateau. Parvati shared how the initial implementation of virtual exchange was

focused on individual faculty, but they are now moving to course-level implementation, particularly for large courses with first-year students, which will increase the reach of virtual exchange. Parvati also shared that she hopes to incorporate more community-based learning in virtual exchange, creating “modified COIL courses” that align with the goals and mission of the institution.

- Organizational structures and understanding and awareness of virtual exchange create challenges for scaling up virtual exchange and other virtual offerings. Virtual exchange and education abroad are housed in different divisions, which makes collaboration more challenging despite a very collaborative culture on campus. The different offices currently support each other’s initiatives and there has been talk about “COIL Plus,” blended programs that include a virtual exchange course and a travel component. In addition, many faculty don’t really understand what virtual exchange is or what resources are available. The institution provides a wealth of support to minimize the “extra” work for creating a virtual exchange course, but faculty may not be aware of that.
- The initial implication of virtual exchange focused on technical aspects (i.e., how to set up a virtual exchange course, how to manage technology), there was a limited focus on intercultural learning. The hope was that intercultural learning would automatically happen within the courses and, as Parvati noted, “some of it might, but not – it’s not intentionally done.” Parvati now provides more information to faculty on how to foster intercultural learning. She noted that it can be difficult for faculty who “don’t see themselves as experts in intercultural learning.” Thus, there is a need to educate faculty, simplify what intercultural learning means, and standardize aspects of virtual exchange courses to ensure students achieve the intended outcomes.

Staffing in Education Abroad: The COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted staffing in education abroad. The office went from a 23-person office in fall 2021 to a 5-person office in May 2022 (some layoffs, some people left). They had the smallest staff when education abroad was starting to take off again, which led to a push to hire and re-grow the staff. Matthew explained, “It’s been kind of a whirlwind. Because a year ago there, yeah, there were 5 of us doing everything, you know. And I was advising students for the first time in probably 10 years and actually doing program development and all these different things and program management. And so, it was crazy stressful across the board. It helped us to innovate a lot of things and put some new processes into place, but we really definitely needed the people.”

As Matthew noted, the high turn-over among staff members allowed for more innovation and creativity. Margaret shared that the new staff is “a young dynamic group, but very green.” There is a lot of out-of-the-box thinking, which has been really beneficial, but there has also been a little bit of a slower learning curve as some staff members did not work in international education before and don’t know the jargon or some of the systems and structures. Matthew explained, “Nobody’s married to the past, I mean, some of the people that were that left had been in our office for 15 years plus. And so,

we had a very like, well, this is always the way things have been done. And now we've got this group of people who are very willing to innovate and explore every new option. And it's like, well, who cares how it's been done? The past, this is our chance to completely redesign how we structure education abroad on our campus. And the things that we're doing, and all the new ideas have been just amazing. And the enthusiasm has been amazing." The staff has made changes to process and structures, for example, how advising is done, or they reach different students.

Margaret noted that their staff has been very strategic in developing a portfolio that is "fresh and relevant to students." The goal is to have a portfolio that is robust and nuanced. They are starting to reach a good place. Matthew described it as "survive, revive, and thrive. So, we spent a long time just surviving, especially once we let people go. Now, students are coming back. Students are doing things. We've rebuilt our staff. So, we're definitely moving through the revive. And I keep telling everyone as we think, as we think about planning and getting away from the next cycle and making changes, we want to get to a place where we thrive and grow and can have a really big impact on our campus."

Changes to Student Behavior: Margaret noted that there is a need to "re-learn" what students are looking for, post-COVID, as student behaviors seem to have changed and there has been less contact with students over the past few years. She said, "We are seeing different behaviors technologically and advising. I'm still, I still struggle with what they're going to like. There are certain things that are popping up that we've never seen before."

Challenges Education Abroad Professionals Are Wrestling With: Many challenges that education abroad professionals wrestled with prior to the pandemic continue to exist (e.g., institution not really having unpacked what globalization or internationalization means and how to incorporate it in all aspects of campus; risk management; access; achieving intended outcomes for all students; funding). Some new challenges have come up and others have intensified (e.g., more competition with other high-impact practices, stricter curricula requirements which makes it more difficult to fit education abroad into students' time at the institution).

- **Proactively Addressing Financial Needs:** The office focuses on proactively helping students navigate finances of education abroad. They hired a part-time financial aid person to meet with every student who receives some financial aid and helps them figure out their options. They also try to include financial information in every aspect of the application process to increase students' financial literacy.
- **Education Students about Education Abroad Options:** The office hosts "Study Abroad 101" sessions (virtual and in-person) that provide students with basic information about education abroad, so they have a better understanding of what programs may work best for them. The staff also tries to move away from using

“jargon” like direct-enroll programs or faculty-led programs and instead describe how those types of programs differ from a student perspective.

Midwest Large Public University

Description of Institution

- Land-grant research university, classified as R1
- Flagship institution of the state system
- Enrollment: over 55,000 undergraduate and graduate students
- 16 schools and colleges that offer over 150 undergraduate and over 100 graduate programs of study

Interview Participants

- Sofie, director-level position in education abroad and global education
- Alexis, director-level position for international education programs housed within a college
- Juan, coordinator-level role focused on internationalization of the curriculum, involved in efforts to advance virtual exchanges campus-wide
- Melissa, director-level position for international education programs housed within a college

International Education Programming at Midwest Large Public

- The education abroad website highlights that the institution offers 300 programs each year in 50 different countries. Over \$500k are available for scholarships. In 2020/2021, there were 90 virtual exchange programs and 19 COIL classrooms.
- The institution uses a decentralized structure with education abroad/internationalization offices in each college, though there are some centralized support systems (e.g., risk management) and campus-wide committees.

Unique Aspects of the Case

Restructuring: Education abroad was going through a restructuring during the pandemic. The restructuring started around 2018 and continued through the pandemic. Participants shared that at times it's difficult to tell which changes are due to the pandemic vs. the restructuring. The restructuring focused on moving programming efforts to the individual colleges to allow for more academic oversight of international education programming. The central office continues to provide some support to less-resourced colleges but does not organize its own programming. Alexis shared, “People thought that we had plenty of time to do that [restructuring]. We were doing nothing in COVID and so this is a good time to like restructure. It was a terrible time! You know, in the world feels like it's sort of coming to an end and all this uncertainty and then to add this.”

The Current State of International Education Programming at Midwest Large Public
Level of Participation in Education Abroad: Education abroad is slowly returning (and possibly surpassing) pre-pandemic numbers. Some colleges may have returned or exceeded pre-pandemic numbers; others are getting close to pre-pandemic numbers.

Virtual Programming During and Beyond the Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased interest in virtual international education programming for students, not to replace mobility travel but add to offerings and experiences and increase access. Certain colleges were just starting to explore virtual exchange when campus shut down due to the pandemic. The pandemic provided an opportunity to try out different virtual programming. For some staff members, developing virtual opportunities provided joy that they did not find in other aspects of their job during the pandemic. Alexis shared, "To be honest with you, it's what saved me during COVID; it was the one thing that brought me joy."

Courses that incorporate the COIL methodology continue to grow and the hope is to scale up offerings of these types of courses, other virtual exchange offerings (e.g., virtual internships, virtual service learning) have decreased since mobility programs became available again.

- Ideal format would be COIL Plus or COIL and other global learning opportunities integrated in the curriculum but only at the starting point for some of that integration. Melissa shared how many of her students who engage in virtual exchange also choose to study abroad. She hopes that, by offering virtual collaborations that involve less popular education abroad destinations, students may become more interested in visiting these locations. Melissa also shared that one student mentioned to her that she no longer needs to study abroad because she already had this international experience online; thus, Melissa is interested in doing more research on the connection between virtual and mobility programming and whether or not engaging in virtual fosters students' interest in mobility programming.
- Some colleges are starting to add more COIL opportunities for first-year and second-year students, so that more students can experience global learning, not just upper-class students in very specifically tailored courses but the institution is still relatively "new" to COIL and so there is a need for much more growth.
- Many stakeholders still lack an understanding of virtual exchange including COIL. They are more familiar with mobility programs. For example, Sofie noted that mobility programs are "what leadership understands." The faculty involved in COIL are typically those who were already engaged in international education. Thus, there is a need to spread awareness beyond that group. Students also don't know what to expect from COIL and there is no way to identify a course as COIL and explain what that means in the course catalog. A positive outcome of this is that students cannot "self-select" out of COIL but it also limits the visibility of COIL or students' ability to find a COIL course.

Impacts of the Decentralized Structure: The decentralized structure has allowed for connections between virtual exchange and education abroad within different colleges. The same individual/office often oversees all global education efforts in the college. Juan explained, “The main positive is that you can tailor your programs. And you could tailor the relationships with the partners to specifically your students. So, you could work on those courses, right? So, if engineering has programs and partners that are specifically, you know, cater to engineering students. That’s probably incredibly helpful for course articulation, but also creating this study abroad experience that is in line with the track for engineering students or business students or in LAS, if you have students that are focused on particular majors, you can work with your particular partners and you could say, well, this is good for you, this program is good for you.”

At the same time, the decentralized structure has created challenges in terms of standardizing approaches across campus or developing centralized resources (e.g., training for faculty who want to do COIL or funding for COIL). What resources are available really depends on the college, which creates equity issues between better resourced and less resourced colleges. Sofie explained, “Colleges really have a lot of oversight or control over some of this. And so certain colleges had funding to support faculty to develop [COIL] classrooms with faculty from partner institutions and some colleges did not have those ones. And so, there’s a little bit of equity issues that we needed to sort out. But there was a lot of generosity, as well from some of the colleges that may have had more resources, who are willing to fund faculty from outside of their college because the content was adjacent, related. So, there’s a lot of energy around that.”

The structure also continues to evolve. Right now, the structure is very committee-heavy, which can at times make it inefficient. At the same time, the committee allows for connections across campus among individuals engaged in international education programming at the institution, which has allowed for resource sharing and development of consistent policies. Alexis explained, “All these things that we’ve always all wanted to standardize but’, like, it kind of, it’s been like a telephone game, right? Like, oh, you guys made this change. Okay. So now I’m going to make this change, right? Like that’s how I feel. Like most of my career has been like trying to keep up with everyone and what they’re doing as opposed to us all having the same conversation at the same time. So that’s been a real win.”

Continuing Challenges and Equity Issues: Sofie explained that there was “hope that things would be re-built differently” in international education after the pandemic but that did not necessarily happen. Many things are back to normal and similar challenges continue to exist (e.g., climate justice, DEI, faculty engagement and support for both mobility programs and COIL courses, curriculum integration, challenges with how to assess outcomes, course approval systems to ensure students can get credits). COIL addresses some ethical and equity issues of international education programming (e.g., increases access, lowers cost) but also brings up other ethical questions. For example, Juan noted how equity issues exist in COIL. He said, “So, for example, what does it mean that we have all these COIL projects but 90 percent of them are in English? There’s

an ethical question there about the politics of language or how do we use technology and like which university's learning management system are we on, you know?" The administrative burden of creating COIL courses has limited faculty and staff's ability to focus on the ethical and equity questions as well as the pedagogy related to COIL. There is a need to dive into some of these questions further.

Exacerbated Challenges: Some of the challenges of offering international education programming have been exacerbated by the pandemic and continue to exist at greater levels:

- Faculty and staff burn-out: There is a need to incentivize or compensate faculty for additional work but it's unclear where funding should come from. Right now, funding comes from colleges, but the COIL committee applied for centralized funding for COIL.
- Student resilience and preparedness for travel has decreased, though this may also be generational. There is a need to provide more explicit instructions to students of how to prepare for mobility programs.
- Students are more interested in programs perceived as "safer" (i.e., Europe) than programs in less popular education abroad locations.
- There is an increased need for scholarships.

Innovation During and Beyond the Pandemic: Some colleges were able to use the pandemic to be innovative. The college of education created a new global laboratory. Middle School students from 15-20 different countries join a virtual club. Each week, undergraduate pre-service teachers facilitate activities focused on sustainable development goals for a group of middle school students representing at least five different countries. Melissa explained, "We use this laboratory to really train our students to be able to teach online effectively, because we know in the future that's going to be a reality for them from time to time at least. And we also want to give them practice teaching sustainability." In addition, the program focuses on giving teaching majors practice in creating environments that foster collaboration. Melissa explained, "Being able to collaborate with other cultures to effectively accomplish a goal is probably one of the most important skills that future generations will need. And so that means that is what our students need to be able to teach. They need to be able to teach, create an environment where you can collaborate across differences on really complicated problems."

The program also involves international students from across campus who serve as partners to the undergraduate student teachers and bring in the perspective from their home culture. Melissa explained, "We've included international students from across campus because we've realized that there's this big translation piece that has to happen. So, if we bring in international students to work with our pre-service teachers, then we think that's a perfect mix to then work with the middle school kids." Melissa

noted that international students appreciate the connection to their home culture as well as the opportunity to collaborate with domestic students.

The program is set up as a laboratory. Pre-service teachers meet weekly to debrief and process their experience of facilitating the virtual sessions with middle school students. Melissa explained, "We've tried to just make a very open space where it's okay to succeed, it's okay to fail."

Melissa and her team are also collecting data in an effort to learn about what works with the program and what needs to be improved.

Southern Large Public University

Description of Institution

- Public research university
- Recently moved from classification of regional university to national university in U.S. News classifications; R-2 institution according to Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning
- Enrollment: over 40,000 students (undergraduate and graduate)
- 11 colleges offering over 180 different degrees and programs

Interview Participant

- Nick, faculty member who has been involved in international education his whole career, started at institution 25 years ago as the first full-time education abroad/international student advisor

International Education Programming at Southern Large Public University

- Over 700 students participate in education abroad programs
- 75 education abroad programs offered across 25 countries
- Faculty-led programs most popular
- Students voted in a global education fee that provides scholarships for education abroad

The Current State of International Education Programming at Southern Large Public University

Quantity of Programming and Staffing: Information on the website indicates that the institution is slowly returning to pre-pandemic numbers of students participating in education abroad. The institution has experienced significant staff turn-over for their education abroad office (12-person office in 2018/2019, now 7-person office with only one staff remaining from the 2018/2019 staff).

Virtual Programming/COIL: Nick came to do virtual exchange by coincidence. He was looking for a grant to support international collaboration with an institution in Morocco that the institution has a strong partnership with. When the first grant application was denied, they found the Stevens Initiative grant. Nick said, "It was really the Stevens

Initiative and their emphasis on virtual exchange, I think, that influenced us in some ways, because. . . we did not focus on virtual exchange [in the initial grant application].” The pandemic hit right as they were about to start the program. Nick explained, “It was like perfect timing for us, like we had a project that was pandemic proof or pandemic ready.” The virtual program allowed them to deepen their relationship with their partner institution as they were able to interact more frequently using virtual modalities. Nick said, “That’s definitely one of the big Aha’s for me. Our virtual exchange . . . definitely increased our interactions with our partner more than just study abroad.” Nick highlighted how virtual programming allows for more continuity and sustainability, while in-person allows for more intense periods to cement relationships.

View on Virtual Programming: Nick believes that virtual programming is not the same as mobility programming but still expands students’ worldview and allows them to gain an appreciation for another culture; can prepare them for travel. He said, “I’m a long-term advocate of international education and the value of travel and being immersed in another country and culture. And I don’t think that the virtual exchange comes close to approximating that experience, but it does give you a glimpse into just how different people are, and how people see the world, and that they have different backgrounds and perspectives.” Reflecting on the benefits of virtual exchange, Nick added, “Virtual exchange does allow for more prolonged interaction. . . it doesn’t have to begin and end with a trip.” Nick believes that there is value in continuing or expanding virtual exchange at his institution. He said, “I think there should be more attention on virtual exchange, because I think it will both increase interest and help students be more prepared for the study abroad experience.” Reflecting on the benefits of virtual exchange further, Nick noted, “It increases their interest in travel. I mean, you know, it might also seem a little more daunting in some ways like it’s mean to, you know, I think take their interest and get them more interested in travel and international education but in other ways they might see it and say, oh, that’s not for me or I’m not ready or, which is maybe not a bad thing either.”

Important Elements of Virtual Exchange: Nick highlighted how virtual exchange needs to provide opportunities for students to get to know each other; there needs to be some content on intercultural competencies and skills like being a good listener and learning from each other, and some interactive teamwork. Nick said that the focus needs to be on telling stories about each other and getting to know each other. He added that hearing other students’ stories can address “the danger of the single story.” He believes it’s important to emphasize getting to know each other before diving into collaborative projects. Nick also noted that needing to focus on getting to know each other first can be challenge as not every faculty member is prepared to teach the teamwork and intercultural competence pieces.

Future of Virtual Exchange: His experience with virtual exchange increased Nick’s interest in virtual exchange and inspired him to create a structure for virtual exchange

on campus. He said, "I would really like to see a lot more use of virtual exchange, especially in the humanities and social sciences. But really, in all fields, you know."

Challenges for Virtual Exchange and Potential Ways to Address These: Nick shared how there may be some challenges related to recruiting students for courses, as virtual exchange courses were not easily visible for students, and many did not fulfill major requirements. He believes there needs to be an easily visible way for students to identify if a course is a virtual exchange course and information on what that means. In addition, virtual exchange courses should be connected to degree requirements. Nick also highlighted how challenges differ for U.S. participants and international partners. He said that at his institution, it was difficult to recruit students while in Morocco, they had "too much" interest from students and had to figure out a way to select students. At this institution, all activities were course-based while in Morocco, all activities were extra-curricular. The important lesson was that a "one size fits all model" does not work.

- **Faculty Involvement:** Similar to education abroad, virtual exchange programming is dependent on a faculty member. Nick explained, "programs have lived and died on one faculty members' knowledge base and commitment." It can be challenging to get faculty to work on virtual exchange due to increasing responsibilities/workload of faculty. Faculty may also not be prepared to create an effective virtual exchange program. Nick believes that there needs to be more recognition for faculty engaged in this work, that it is important to share successful models within and across departments, there needs to be a mindset change toward more teamwork-oriented courses in the United States, and that institutions need to figure out ways to maintain knowledge of faculty by housing courses within departments.
- **Innovative Practices:**
 - Nick built the virtual exchange program with the idea that different faculty teach the courses. That way the information does not "die" with one faculty member, as many faculty as possible have the experience of teaching these courses. Each faculty member brings their own unique approach which enriches the program.
 - Nick created a process for starting virtual exchange courses by creating a new campus-wide course titled international virtual exchange. The course has a sample syllabus that indicates components that a course has to include to be called a virtual exchange course. The sample syllabus has been approved through the curriculum approval process. Any department/faculty can use the syllabus and alter it to address their unique needs. While this process for creating virtual exchange courses is still in its infancy, Nick noted that his institution successfully used a similar process for education abroad (i.e., faculty-led programs) and that process worked well.

Four-Year, Small Private Higher Education Institution

Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution

Description of Institution

- Private liberal arts college
- Religiously affiliated but open to students from all religious backgrounds
- Recently became a Hispanic-serving institution
- Enrollment: approx. 800 students (primarily undergraduate, approx. 50 graduate students)
- Approx. 50 different majors

Interview Participant

- Elia, director-level position focused on global education

International Education Programming at Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution

- Ranked in top 5 of “best study abroad programs” by Best College Reviews
- All students devote at least 12 credit hours to global citizenship and experiential learning by participating in a “study-service term.” Students can choose between a semester abroad, a hybrid semester (part of course in the United States and part in another location) and completing four courses related to a specific theme involving one or two 3-week travel periods. All options include at least 2 immersive programs or classes.
- All programs are faculty-led and organized by the institution’s own faculty.
- A small office oversees all global education efforts at the institution.

The Current State of International Education Programming at Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution

History of Education Abroad at the Institution: The institution has a history of encouraging education abroad, but students started to opt out of semester education abroad programs more frequently in recent years. Because of that, Elia’s office worked on a “refresh” of the program. This process started in 2018/2019 and was worked on during the pandemic. The gradual roll-out of the new program started a year ago.

- Institutional support was essential to allow for re-structuring/re-imagining programs during the pandemic while feeling secure in their employment and the future of the program. Elia explained, “This program is really central to the vision and mission of [institution] and the administration is bought into it. And so, they did not want to get rid of it during COVID. So, we really had the opportunity to do some work.”

Focus on Mobility and Travel: The focus for international education programming at the institution is on mobility and travel. There is only one virtual/local program for nursing

students because it's particularly difficult for them to go abroad for longer periods of time due to their full schedule. The program is a "community engaged learning class" where students complete a project related to a global health issue in a virtual class and complete an immersive course where they work with local health agencies. Elia noted, "We felt really good about [the program]."

Elia shared that her institution decided to focus on in-person travel for several reasons for focusing on in-person travel:

- One of the reasons was related to the resources available to the institution. The institution did not have partners who were ready to switch to virtual. They have local coordinators in host countries for each of their programs and these local coordinators were not savvy with virtual programs. Since they run all their own programs, they did not have access to providers that offer virtual programs.
- Elia also shared that her institution really values the relationships students build with host families and working in service-learning locations abroad. She said, "We just find that the relationships they form are the most important part of it. . .you can control the context a lot when you're on Zoom and walk away. And yeah, we want our students to be immersed in the culture and not be able to walk away."
- Elia, however, also noted that one benefit of virtual would be reducing their carbon footprint, something that is a priority for institutional leadership. Thus, Elia shared that her institution is not categorically opposed to using virtual modalities for international education programming.

Changes in Student Behavior: Elia shared that changes in student needs require them to keep revamping orientation each semester. Some of the changes Elia noticed were that students are less willing to commit and follow-through with a program. They are more likely to drop out last minute. In addition, students are opting for short-term programs over semester-long programs, which may be due to the high-quality short-term programs that Elia's office and faculty members developed, though they would prefer for students to go abroad for a semester. Finally, students seem to have more mental health issues and are more risk averse. Elia explained, "They need a lot more, what do you say, hand holding. They just need a lot more attention. Don't want to step out and take risks." Elia shared that, for example, students are hesitant to use public bus systems in the host country and need additional encouragement before they feel comfortable taking a bus.

Based on these differing needs, the Orientation program has been revamped to include a self-assessment of students' mental health and ability to go abroad. There is also more team building to help students feel part of a group before going abroad and the Orientation includes active learning rather than just information-sharing.

- **Student Mental Health:** Elia shared how her office moved to proactively addressing mental health issues of students via self-assessments. Students are

asked to self-assess their physical and mental health and other kind of challenges that they could face when going abroad. The process supports students in making informed decisions on whether they can go rather than having doctors or administrators decide based on a mental health screening. This change in process has led to positive outcomes with students being more prepared for the challenges they encounter abroad.

In addition, health and wellness staff provide information to faculty leaders on what to look for regarding students' mental health. Counselors are available to do assessments remotely or meet with faculty and students remotely while abroad.

Institutional Support for Education Abroad: While the education abroad program is an important aspect of the curriculum at Midwest Religiously Affiliated Liberal Arts Institution and there is a lot of buy-in across campus regarding the importance and value of the program (e.g., there is a new donor fund now to support education abroad), there is a need to constantly work on developing relationships and maintaining/improving the buy-in. For example, admissions is at times scared of sharing with students that they will have to go abroad as part of their education at the institution, as they fear that it may turn students away rather than attract them to the institution. Elia noted that it is thus important for her office to continue working with admissions on how to use education abroad as a draw for students and prepare students for what to expect.

Recruitment of Underrepresented Students to Education Abroad: The institution has focused on recruiting underrepresented students who were previously not participating in education abroad. Specifically, they worked with peer mentors, updated their website, developed a new scholarship fund, and hosted a session for local Latinx parents to share information about education abroad in Spanish. Past students and their parents shared their experiences with education abroad at that session. Elia explained, "When they come, they're kind of like, why in the world would we send our kids abroad, but we find that they're even excited about it when we finish." Elia also talked about creating more heritage-seeking programs for Latinx students. She shared that returning students have felt "proud about being Hispanic and feeling a connection with people in Latin American". Thus, her office is trying to highlight these programs more to encourage Latinx students to participate.

- **Faculty Support:** Recognizing the additional labor involved in organizing an education abroad program for faculty and proactively addressing concerns of faculty burnout, the institution applied for a grant focused on faculty support. If faculty don't have language competency, they can participate in an immersive summer language study in the host country. In addition, global scholars teach languages on campus. Faculty receive a course release the semester before they leave for their education abroad program to allow time to prepare for the program. A summer workshop was held focused on putting together the curriculum for education abroad programs.

- **Assessment:** Elia’s office has engaged in ongoing assessment of their programs. The office tracks the number of underrepresented students who participate. When they first started to make changes to the programs, they conducted interviews, in particular with Latinx students. Elia added, “We probably should come around again to do some focus groups to see what they think about the options [we are offering], what they see as the challenges.” In addition, Elia is trying to do some early assessment of the learning goals as they roll out the new programs. To do so, they are pulling information from student assignments to see how students are achieving the learning outcomes of the programs.

Community Colleges

East Coast Metropolitan Community College

Description of Institution

- Public community college serving a metropolitan area
- Part of city higher education system
- The institution had an enrollment of about 7,000 students prior to the pandemic. Enrollment has decreased to approximately 5,000 post-pandemic.

Interview Participants

- Jackie, faculty member who taught one virtual exchange course supported by a Stevens Initiative Grant and one virtual exchange course supported by another organization

International Education Programming at East Coast Metropolitan Community College

- Global education tends to be faculty-led, ad hoc initiatives at East Coast Metropolitan Community College.
- East Coast Metropolitan Community College encourages students on their website to participate in education abroad opportunities that exist for all students across the city system. There is limited information on institution-specific initiatives. The website lists an English Language Learner program with the most recent call for applications from 2021 and a report on a past initiative from 2014.
- Virtual exchange was started at the institution a few years prior to the pandemic. Faculty collaborated across the city system to start virtual exchanges at their institution. Faculty were able to secure grant funding to scale up their efforts for several years, but grant has now ended, and they are currently looking at other opportunities to secure funding.

The Current State of International Education Programming at East Coast Metropolitan Community College

Limited Ability for In-Person Travel: Jackie explained that education abroad is not typically an option for her students. She added that her community college students “cannot travel abroad because they’re usually non-traditional students with families, whose families depend on them, they go to school full time, but they also work full time, so they cannot leave physically.” Jackie noted that some of her students participated in education abroad, once they transferred to a four-year institution but not while at the community college. The students who ended up going abroad are typically traditional-aged students.

Virtual Exchange at East Coast Metropolitan Community College: Virtual exchange provided an opportunity to engage in global education without having to travel, thus making it more accessible to students at the institution. Jackie noted how participating in a virtual exchange course can address the imposter phenomenon many community college students may experience. She noted that these experiences can “confirm for them that they are capable of actually working on the global stage.” She added that students learn competencies related to teamwork and receive important workforce preparation. Jackie explained, “Unless you work with someone directly, you really don’t understand how you have to adapt, and all those kinds of things and those things really do serve you in the workplace.”

Future of Virtual Exchange: Jackie was unsure about the future of virtual exchange at East Coast Metropolitan Community College due to a lack of administrative and financial support. Jackie explained that creating a virtual exchange course requires additional labor from faculty and there is no compensation or recognition of that institutionally. She said, “It’s a lot of work, a lot of commitment with very little compensation” besides intrinsic rewards. Jackie noted how teaching a virtual exchange course is particularly labor intensive at the beginning of the course because students may need additional guidance on how to navigate collaborations with international partners. Jackie met with students individually to provide support. When Jackie taught her second virtual exchange course, she received a prepared curriculum and resources (e.g., modules to teach about culture), which was really helpful in making the workload manageable.

While the context at East Coast Metropolitan Community Colleges leads to many challenges regarding facilitating virtual exchange courses, the close relationship faculty have with their students also provides a unique opportunity. Jackie noted how students may be more willing to step outside their comfort zone because of the close relationship they have with her. Faculty can thus play an important role in encouraging students to participate in virtual exchange courses or other international education programs.

Access: While virtual exchange has increased access to global education for students at East Coast Metropolitan Community College, students have also experienced access issues with virtual exchange courses. For example, Jackie shared that students may not have had access to reliable Wi-Fi. The pandemic helped with that as the institution

received a grant to provide Wi-Fi to students. However, students may also not have reliable computers or laptops. Students can borrow laptops from the institution but those are often of low quality. Students have the ability to use technology at the institution, but, as Jackie noted, some of the students who have to balance full-time work and family obligations with their studies may not always be able to come to campus to do work.

Navigating Power Differences: Jackie noted that while virtual exchange courses are, overall, more democratic and collaborative than traditional education abroad programs, there is still a need to navigate power differences between U.S. students and students from international partner institutions. In Jackie's virtual exchange course, the U.S. students were from lower socio-economic backgrounds while students at Middle Eastern institutions were upper-class. Initially U.S. students went out of their way to accommodate their partners from the Middle East. Middle Eastern students showcased touristy locations in their introductory videos and produced high-quality videos. U.S. students did not have access to the technology to create high-quality videos nor were they able to showcase touristy places. Jackie noted that Middle Eastern students may have judged the U.S. students after these introductory videos and questioned their capability to contribute to the course projects. However, the dynamics changed when students worked on the projects, as Middle Eastern partners recognized the expertise the U.S. students brought to the projects.

Midwest Technical College

Description of Institution

- Nationally recognized, public 2-year technical college serving 9 counties in the Midwest of the United States
- Enrollment: over 20,000 students

Interview Participant

- Sarah, staff member overseeing international education initiatives including education abroad but also international student services

International Education Programming at Midwest Technical College

- Midwest Technical College has been engaged in international education in some capacity for about 15 years and has been more actively recruiting international students for the past 10 years.
- International student services tend to take up more time, which cuts into time to focus on education abroad or other international education programming.
- For education abroad: The primary focus has been on short-term faculty-led study abroad, often facilitated through third party providers. Prior to the pandemic, the institution had 8 programs planned for spring 2020. The institution did not run any education abroad programs until spring 2023.

The Current State of International Education Programming at Midwest Technical College

Level of Participation in International Education: Midwest Technical College has not yet returned to pre-pandemic numbers for international students and education abroad (e.g., 5 study abroad programs vs. 8). Sarah shared that it has been difficult to get back to pre-pandemic levels of offerings and participation due to a staffing shortage, budget issues (state support was less than expected) and the enrollment crisis at community colleges. Sarah explained, “It’s a catch 22; it’s a double-edged sword. It looks like we don’t [need additional resources] because we have no capacity to grow at this staffing level.”

Staffing: The international education office has experienced staffing challenges due to the pandemic and limited funding. They went from 4 full-time and 1 part-time staff member to 2 full-time (incl. Sarah) and 1 part-time staff member. This has created challenges as engagement has increased post-pandemic. Sarah shared, “We have a really finite capacity for growth.”

- The lack of staff has also made it difficult to avoid burn-out for Sarah’s one full-time staff member who has to balance working with both education abroad and international student services. Sarah explained, “We both thought that there would be an end in sight that she’d be doing both roles for a finite amount of time, and it now feels infinite.”

Education Abroad Programs: Education abroad programs are mostly faculty-initiated but Sarah’s office oversees most of program development and/or connects faculty with third party providers to assist with program development and facilitation, as faculty may not have much experience in creating education abroad programs. The programs tend to be very career-focused, rather than humanities focused (as is common at four-year public institutions).

Virtual Programming During and Beyond the Pandemic: Sarah’s office created “holistic virtual exchanges” during the pandemic. The first one was held in January 2021. The office worked with established partners, thinking through how to recreate education abroad programs online with in-person components in the United States (e.g., students participated in a cooking class focused on cuisine from the host country organized by the culinary program; students watched videos or virtual tours, attended synchronous lectures, and engaged in interactive activities that are traditions in the host country such as a gift exchange). Sarah explained, “We tried to have it feel different than a virtual exchange where it’s typically a class project or some sort of an assignment. [Students were not] interacting with fellow students, which is the neat part of virtual exchange, but it was trying to mimic the cultural immersion piece of being in-country without being in-country.” Students were masked during in-person components and had to follow strict health and safety guidelines. For some students, this session was the first time they were physically on campus, something students appreciated.

Virtual exchanges allowed Midwest Technical College to keep education abroad alive and led to some “silver linings.” Specifically, students who otherwise may not be able to afford to participate in education abroad as well as undocumented students were able to participate. Sarah said, “It was neat to hear the feedback of those who participated in the virtual experiences, just to hear how powerful [it was], even though there was no in-country component.” Thus, Sarah hopes to continue to offer at least one virtual program each year.

Future of International Education at Midwest Technical College: Sarah noted that there used to be a focus on internationalization across the board at her institution. Now it feels more like all international education efforts fall on Sarah’s office. She would love to get back to a more campus-wide approach to internationalization. In particular, she sees opportunities in connecting with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts at her institution. For example, when talking about DEI, these conversations could include a focus on the local and global aspects of DEI. To improve the connection to DEI, Sarah advocated for the creation of a “dotted reporting line” to the new vice president of DEI. She is still trying to figure out how to capitalize on this new connection.

Sarah also highlighted that there may be opportunities for more education abroad as the student population has become younger (i.e., more traditional age students) than the population her institution used to serve. Younger, traditional age students tend to be more interested and able to participate in education abroad.

Faculty Burnout: Faculty burnout is an issue at Midwest Technical College. In addition to the stressors of the pandemic, the institution recently moved to an 8-week course format, which has been more work intensive for faculty. Education abroad programs heavily depend on faculty, which makes faculty burnout a serious concern. In addition, if a faculty member retires or leaves the institution, the program often does not continue, which creates challenges for maintaining education abroad offerings.

- Sarah’s office organizes professional development sessions for faculty about once a year with former faculty leaders to highlight what organizing an education abroad program is like. These sessions are not necessarily focused on recruiting new faculty leaders but instead aim to raise awareness of the work that goes into leading an education abroad program and the value of doing so. That way, faculty can speak more accurately to the experience of education abroad.

Assessment of Learning in Education Abroad: Assessment used to focus primarily on student satisfaction but last year, Sarah added some more outcome-based questions. She is still working on reviewing that data.

Midwest Community College

Description of Institution

- Technical and community college serving 12 counties in a Midwest state
- Enrollment: over 30,000 students

Interview Participant

- Debbie, staff member overseeing education abroad and virtual exchange

International Education Programming at Midwest Community College

- Midwest Community College has an established center for international education that oversees education abroad, virtual exchange, the internationalization of the curriculum, international student support, and other international education programming. The center is about 20 years old and has established policies and procedures. They have a staff of 7 or 8 plus student workers and interns. Debbie noted that having such an established center with a large number of staff members is uncommon for community colleges.
- The center offers approximately 20 education abroad programs and 4-5 virtual exchanges each year. Some education abroad programs also have virtual components.
- The institution is part of a consortium that has long standing programs and partners. Membership institutions can encourage their students to apply to these programs and the partner who manages the program reviews the application. This consortium is particularly helpful for institutions that do not have the resources to manage their own programs.

The Current State of International Education Programming at Midwest Community College

Current Level of Participation: Education abroad at community colleges is not back and bigger. Debbie pointed out that recovery has been slow because community college students were more impacted by the pandemic (financially, emotionally, physically as many were frontline workers) and community colleges are facing an enrollment crisis. Community college students were already more hesitant to go abroad as many are older, have a higher financial need, are more diverse, and have familial responsibilities. Debbie said, "I, initially from the pandemic, was quite concerned that it would further divide the haves and have nots within study abroad and I am concerned that is continuing to happen."

At Midwest Community College, Debbie's office started offering education abroad programs again this fall. The level of participation is closer to pre-pandemic numbers for traditional aged college students and semester-long programs. Faculty-led programs, which tend to be more representative of the entire population at the institution, have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Institutional leadership is supportive of internationalization but that support has not helped overcome other obstacles. Debbie named the following challenges as leading to the slow return to education abroad:

- Enrollment crisis at community colleges
- The pandemic has exacerbated the typical challenges for community college students going abroad. Community college students were more impacted by pandemic. There is an increased reluctance to go abroad. Students are pulled in many different directions; they have fears about health and safety abroad. A primary issue continues to be funding and that community college students don't really consider going abroad but assume that education abroad is "not for them".
- The office lost a lot of partners during the pandemic. There is a need to restart the process of finding partners.
- Faculty Burnout: Debbie noted that faculty are less willing to take on additional work, though faculty at the institution are "amazing". Debbie said, "I would have to say our faculty here are the most amazing faculty I've ever worked with." However, community college faculty were impacted more than faculty in other higher education sectors, making it challenging to ask for additional labor from these faculty members. Debbie's office has created a clear and simple process for faculty to apply for and develop a program. Debbie's staff works with faculty one-on-one to develop programs. They also share a 100-page handbook listing various considerations for developing a program. Faculty are responsible for the curriculum while the education abroad office takes care of the program implementation from applications for students to advising to marketing to finances and budgets, etc. for both education abroad and virtual exchange.

Virtual Exchange During the Pandemic: Debbie shared that her office had been interested in doing virtual exchange but never got around to it. She said, "That was something that we had, for years, wanted to do and just never sort of floated to the top of the priority list." Her office applied and received a grant for virtual exchange as soon as the pandemic started (March or April 2020) and they were able to pilot some programs with their partners in summer of 2020.

- Debbie used to be skeptical about virtual exchange but the experience during the pandemic changed her opinion. She shared, "I always say that I was very skeptical and was probably the most skeptical person about virtual exchange, but I am 100% in favor now, just our students have had really amazing experiences, especially with the pilot that we initially did." Debbie added, "It's not the same [as education abroad] but it creates really amazing experiences and different cultural interactions, and it's just been such a positive growth experience for our students and, like I said, a really interesting access point. So, for a lot of our students, like I said, you know, there is like family pressure of this isn't for us or we don't do that or why would you do that. And it's hard for a lot of students to see the benefit. . . how is this going to help them be successful and get them to that job? So sometimes that's harder for students to see that connection. But then, really having them have the interactions in an existing course already on campus that

they're already enrolled in and seeing like, oh, I would use, you know, intercultural communication skills in my future career or, oh yeah, we'll have to interact with people that are different than myself or yeah, suppliers for whatever company I work for might be abroad and I'm going to have to deal with time zones and all of those sort of things – having students see the connection to their future career is also really beneficial.”

Future of Virtual Programming: Debbie's office is committed to offering virtual programming in the future. In addition to increased access for students, Debbie noted that virtual exchange can also increase access for faculty. Some faculty may not be able to develop an in-person education abroad program, but virtual exchange can be a great starting point for building relationships with faculty abroad. It may lead to an in-person program eventually, but even if it does not, it allows faculty to engage in international education programming.

Funding may lead to challenges for the future of virtual exchange at Midwest Community College. Debbie shared that she is unsure how to continue some of the virtual exchange and education abroad programs once grants run out. The cost for virtual exchange and education abroad often ends up being put on students, which prohibits them from participating.

Another challenge with virtual exchange is figuring out what software to use. International partners often use something different and institutional resources for new software are limited.

Blended Programs: Some programs combine virtual exchange with in-person travel. The virtual component happens first, then students travel abroad. Debbie explained, “So that's been a really great access point for students, and it's been a great, great point for us, especially our language students. I would say, who are fairly nervous about having to speak in another language, and so having that experience or getting to see someone from another country interacting with them, realizing that they can actually speak in another language, has been sort of a stepping stone for many of our students.” Debbie added, “The first couple of days of the program always was sort of having people get to know each other, figure out how you pronounce that name, like, where are they going, you know, all of this stuff. And now they just like, you know, they meet, and they've already had a connection. They already know things.” In addition, Debbie shared that she noticed an increase in hosts willingness to work with and accommodate students because of the prior connection.

Government

Midwest Governmental Organization

Description of Organization

- State department focused on public education
- Sub-division focused on languages and international education

Interview Participant

- Samantha, staff member overseeing language and international education

International Education Programming at Midwest Governmental Organization

- One of the first states to have a full-time staff member dedicated to international education (in 1990). In 2010, that staff position was merged with language education because the staff member had expertise in both, languages and international education.
- All international-related issues are routed through Samantha, though Samantha may redirect issues to other staff members who are better able to provide the support needed. But that way, Samantha is aware of all things international-related.
- The sub-division supports global learning in high schools by offering a global scholars programs, where students have to complete a set of requirements, and by recognizing educators who go above and beyond in fostering global learning.
- The sub-division maintains partnerships with international education agencies in other countries. For example, the sub-division oversees a program to send English as a Second Language teachers to Japan.
- The sub-division brings together leaders in education, business, and non-profit who focus on global education.
- Efforts to foster global education include incorporating global education into education standards. The focus is, however, not just on fostering global competence and skills in students but also in teachers and administrators.

The Current State of International Education Programming at Midwest Governmental Organization

Future of Virtual Programming: Samantha highlighted how the pandemic led to a shift to virtual teaching and learning. By doing so, the pandemic created a greater capacity for global exchange through virtual modalities as more (all) teachers/administrators are now familiar with virtual modalities. She noted that technology increased access to global learning experience. Samantha explained, "Technology opens the world. And it's through that access, there's an improved opportunity for equity in having those experiences that build relationships and perspectives, diverse perspectives and global learning, in ways that really were only possible for a limited population of teachers and students previously." In addition, technology allows for sustained relationships that can lead to deep and meaningful learning. She said, "I think an important dimension of that

global learning is global relationships. And through those meaningful and sustained relationships, deep and meaningful learning happens. It's designed, hopefully reciprocally designed by educators on both sides of globally interconnected classrooms."

- One challenge in creating more virtual programming is Zoom fatigue. Samantha shared that moving forward, she tries to make sure virtual exchange is new and different to overcome potential resistance.
- Samantha believes that incorporating virtual exchange into student learning could be a way to address achievement gaps as virtual exchange provides more engaged and interesting classrooms for students. She noted that often the focus is on achievement gaps "without making the connection to how global learning can engage and empower and [lead to] renewed interest in academic learning."
- Samantha highlighted the importance of having positive stories about virtual exchange as well as data to support the value of virtual exchange to students, teachers, administrators, and communities. Collecting data can, however, be a challenge. While schools survey graduates, most currently do not include global learning questions.

Balance of Virtual and In-Person Offerings: While the pandemic has increased interest in virtual exchange and led to expansion of work with global partners via virtual modalities, there is also a focus on continuing in-person experiences. The goal for the future is a both/and approach, rather than an either/or. Samantha explained, "My hope is that virtual exchange will lead to more meaningful on the ground experiences, especially if they forged relationships over the course of a school year, and then that relationship is culminated by an in-person experience. I mean that will be far more powerful than kids going on a two-week tour."

- Samantha noted that some communities may only be able to do virtual, but if in-person is available, the hope is that they will add virtual components to the in-person offerings (i.e., create blended programs or scaffold programs). Her focus is on promoting the virtual component due to equity issues with in-person travel. She said, "My primary goal would be to increase the number of schools in which there's a virtual experience over promoting the in-person experience. . . because of the equity piece and the duration and the reciprocal nature of it." Samantha noted that even if a school has an in-person program, there are capacity issues within the school of who can participate which creates equity issues. Virtual also avoids risk management issues. Virtual exchange can also address engagement and learning issues in school, as it's something new and exciting, and it makes learning relevant to students, and engages them in the content.
- Students are "digital natives." They are already connected across the globe via online and virtual communities. Samantha noted that since students are already

in this space, “let’s use this space for engaged global learning that’s relevant to kids and their interests.”

Importance of Agency-Wide Buy-in: Samantha highlighted the importance of getting the whole agency on board with global learning. She has provided seminars to educate colleagues and actively works on fostering relationships with partners in the agency.

Connection to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion: Samantha strongly believes in the connection between global education and diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Samantha explained, “I believe very strongly that learning about the world and our place within it is a really impactful way to prepare young people to better understand the linguistic and cultural and other forms of diversity within our local communities as well, and the skills that one develops when engaging with others around the world through virtual exchange and other means, those skills transfer to our interactions with our neighbors, our co-workers, etc.” Samantha, thus, tries to center equity in her communications and the design of her work.

- In the Global Scholars program, students are required to apply what they learned through international education programming to the local context via 20 hours of local community service that aligns with a global learning theme. The hope is to help students make the connection between global and local issues and recognize how the skills needed to address the two are similar.

Teacher Burnout: Samantha talked about challenges with teacher fatigue and burnout. Most teachers who’re interested in international education programming had a global learning experience themselves and so there are opportunities to tap into their passion and interests by reminding them of their own meaningful learning experiences. Samantha, thus, tries to introduce global learning/virtual exchange as an opportunity, not an expectation. She tries to create personal experiences for teachers that then lead to personal motivation for engaging in this work. Thus, the focus is on virtual exchange opportunities for teachers first, which will hopefully lead to virtual exchange offerings for students.

- Samantha partnered with the Stevens Initiative to have teachers from their state participate in a virtual teacher academy that prepared teachers to facilitate virtual exchange, but the academy was a virtual exchange experience itself with 20 nations represented among participants. The academy was an immersive global learning experience for teachers. They got to experience what they will facilitate. Samantha noted that it was really important to not just focus on students but on teachers/administrators. She said, “Our efforts to meet that goal [intl. education for students] are going to be compromised if teachers themselves and school leaders aren’t invested in supporting that.” Thus, Samantha’s focus over the next few years will be on professional development for teachers.

K-12 Education

Southern Charter School

Description of Institution

- Dual-language immersion charter school in a metropolitan area
- Started in 2013-2014
- Serving Kindergarten – 8th Grade
- Over 1,000 students

Interview Participant

- Julia, staff member overseeing language programs

International Education Programming at Southern Charter School

- Elementary School:
 - Dual language immersion school: half of the students' courses are in English and the other half in the target foreign language (Spanish, French, Mandarin)
- Middle School:
 - All courses in English and one accelerated foreign language course for high school credit
- Have not had a study abroad program yet but working on developing one

The Current State of International Education Programming at Southern Charter School

Development of Initial Study Abroad Program: Julia and her colleagues developed 10 features they would like to see in a study abroad program. They wanted to work with a provider to create their own program, which initially would just be for 8th graders from their school. They did a provider comparison and chose a provider, but they did not have enough students sign up for one of the two programs (French and Spanish; there were no Mandarin 8th graders yet). They ended up canceling both because they did not want to have this experience for just one language group. Julia and her colleagues polled parents to figure out why they signed up or why not. Cost was a concern as well as sending your 8th grader overseas. Julia and her colleagues then changed the program from Spain/France to Costa Rica/Quebec to lower the cost, but they had even fewer students sign up because parents were set on Europe.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Virtual Programming: Julia and her colleagues decided to take a break and figure out a good approach for their school. Then the pandemic happened. They found a local program (in the United States) that has “language villages” but the program was virtual. The school participated for one year in the virtual program, but the program wasn’t that exciting for students. Now Julia and her colleagues are back to figuring out a way to organize a study abroad program.

Current Considerations: Based on their experiences, Julia and her colleague are currently considering the following options:

- A study abroad program that is open to all students, not just 8th grade, so siblings could go together. This will lead to a bigger pool to draw from. They can offer one tour every year and rotate through languages.
- They are also considering some options to help families pay for the program such as encouraging families to open a bank account when kids enroll in school or developing a scholarship fund.

Focus on mobility programming: The focus is on in-person travel over virtual because “a lot of our families work internationally or they work with an international company, or they are from another country and for them, they really want that in-person experience for their child,” Julia explained.

Possibility of blended programming: Julia thought that a blended program may be ideal. There could be some virtual activities starting as early as 3rd grade, maybe some sort of “pen pal” program where they meet students from another school. Then later, students would be able to do an in-person trip to meet their pen pals and also have them come visit their school in the United States.

Challenges: Most difficult part is “just the getting started.” Julia explained that it’s easy to get caught up in all the little details. The school’s goal is to establish something in the next 5 years.

Assets: Julia and several teachers have experience in organizing and facilitating study abroad programs; they understand what goes into it. They also have highly motivated teachers at the school. Teachers are expected to create interactive activities, not follow a set lesson plan; thus, the school tends to attract teachers who are highly motivated and engaged with the students and willing to put in extra work.

Future: Julia shared that she feels hopeful about the future. The school started slowly with language immersion. Thus, the student population now is very different from what it was like a few years ago. Last year was the first year they had 14-year old’s pass the AP language exams. This new group of students who have been engaged in language learning from elementary school is likely more interested in study abroad opportunities.

Large Metropolitan Public School District

Description of Institution

- Local public school system overseeing PreK-12

Interview Participants

- Nichole, oversees internationalization efforts of the curriculum
- Chelsea, manager who oversees all global education initiatives in the school district

International Education Programming supported by the Large Metropolitan Public School District Staff

- The school district staff facilitates global programs (i.e., education abroad programs, programs focused on cross-cultural communication and collaboration, international food days, International Education Week programming) and oversees globally focused curricular initiatives (i.e., a teacher fellowship for incorporating global competence into teaching, schools with an international focus, virtual exchange initiatives). The district also offered a global scholar certificate pre-pandemic with students completing a set of requirements to receive the certificate; the district staff is currently working on bringing that program back.

Current State of International Education Programming in the Large Metropolitan Public School District

Impact of the Pandemic on International Education Programming: The pandemic made it more challenging to continue some of the global programming in the school district. Schools and the district office are now working on rebuilding their programs or returning to hybrid or in-person programs after having hosted programs virtually or just not having been able to implement programs to the fullest. Nichole shared that because programs were just gaining momentum when the pandemic happened, the pandemic definitely led to a set-back in international education programming. At the same time, the pandemic increased access to and understanding of technology and how to use it. Nichole explained, “The foundation of skills and technology is there for virtual exchange and people did start using it.”

Staffing: The global education staff in the school district office experienced high turnover during the pandemic. All three staff members started in or after December 2021. Turnover was due to personal reasons (e.g., families moving away during the pandemic, not necessarily related to the position). In addition, there has been a lot of turnover in the administration and staff at internationally focused schools. Chelsea explained, “So that has been challenging because now it almost is as if we’re starting back from the beginning because I think most of the administration [at globally focused schools] has turned over and then we have coordinators at each school, those have all turned over. And then there’s been a lot of staff turnover.”

Future of International Education Programming: Global education tends to “trickle down from college.” Education abroad is common in college and now exists at some high schools and is slowly getting into middle school. Nichole explained, “A lot of the programming that is already available tends to be on the higher end, but a lot of the programming that we’re developing [is in elementary school] . . . I think that the earlier we can start the better. . . I think if we get kids started earlier and starting to build that awareness and build understanding of the goal and then we can have a deeper understanding and engagement of that when they get to middle school.” Nichole hopes that some of the early programming will help increase students’ excitement to participate in programs offered at the higher levels (e.g., education abroad or virtual exchange).

Education Abroad: The school district started offering education abroad a few years before the pandemic. During the pandemic, education abroad consisted of globally themed programs in domestic locations. This past year, international travel returned.

Increased Focus on Virtual Programming: While the district offers funding to support education abroad participation, there are limitations on the number of students who can participate. Chelsea explained, “It’s a lot of money to send, you know, even just 100 students abroad. So, we could not do that for the entire district.” She added, “I would never argue that study abroad is not valuable. I think it’s incredibly powerful and you can see the change in such a short time with the students that come back. But I think that you can build that interest in the world and build those communication skills and get students interested in taking action on global topics, seeing the connections between their community and the global community through things like virtual exchange.” For the past two years, the district has organized two virtual exchanges: one for middle school students and one for high school students. Nichole emphasized how virtual programming increases access to global learning for those who can’t participate in education abroad or other in-person programming. Thus, Nichole hopes to continue to expand virtual exchange programming. She said, “I would love to expand virtual exchange more and that’s something that I’m really passionate about.” She especially wants to focus on younger students as virtual programming minimizes the complexity of coordinating the programs (e.g., it eliminates the risks related to travel, particularly for younger students) and reduces the cost, thus increasing access. For the future, they hope to start virtual exchange cohorts for teachers, connecting teachers from the same content area and grade level. Chelsea explained, “We’ll work with them to try to embed the virtual exchange into their unit and then it will be supported throughout.” The goal is to create virtual exchange opportunities that align with the curriculum for the grade level. Teachers are, in general, supportive of virtual exchange because, as Nichole explained, “if we talk to teachers about it, the teachers like it because it seems easier.”

- Some schools are still very focused on in-person travel. The school district staff is starting to push back and ask what the school is hoping to get out of travel and

if they need to travel to achieve these goals, but there is still this “travel is cool” piece that some schools focus on.

- The district is still relatively new to virtual exchange. Chelsea explained, “We haven’t had a lot of teachers do virtual exchange. So, we had those two programs, but it still wasn’t a ton of our teachers. So, we’re trying to get that teacher feedback about where we can come in, what challenges they’re having, but it’s still new.”
- For the global scholars certificate (i.e., program where students complete a set of required globally focused activities to receive a global scholars certificate), Chelsea hopes to continue offering some virtual options for students to complete the experiential global learning requirement. Education abroad and virtual exchange will likely both be able to fulfill that requirement.
- The district staff has also talked about creating a heritage program for students of African descent that will likely be a blended program, incorporating some virtual components and travel. This program is still in development right now.

Challenges for Scaling Up International Education Programming: A challenge with increasing global programming in general is the rigid structure of the U.S. education system. One of the things that Nichole’s position focuses on is fitting global education into existing structures. Nichole explained, “Getting [global programming] to align with some of the structure and rigidity of education systems in the U.S. is challenging and like standardized testing comes into play, right? And it’s not a priority. You can’t test global competence in the same way and like PISA is trying to, as you can see, in like terms of international assessment, but it’s even that is like new and it’s not something that the United States is by any means going to just take on and prioritize”. Nichole shared that they know anecdotally that global learning can lead to more engagement and motivation, but they need to figure out how to support that narrative with data to convince their stakeholders.

Another challenge is related to the lack of awareness internally (with schools, within the school district offices) and externally (with outside organizations). Nichole shared that at times, they are unsure how to reach their audience. Participation in global initiatives has, at times, been lower than hoped and responses from stakeholders indicated that they were not aware of the program despite announcements in newsletters and on social media.

Teacher burnout: While teachers get excited about virtual programming and other international education initiatives, they often worry about the additional workload. Chelsea explained, “Even if teachers think that it’s a great idea, they understand the importance of bringing in the global to their classrooms, it can still feel like something extra.” She added, “Even our teachers and administrators who really believe in global education have a lot of different priorities that are coming at them.” Similarly, Nichole shared, “It’s still, people get really excited but they’re like, I don’t know how to do that.

They don't know when to do it. I don't know how to do it. I don't have the support from the administration". She added, "It's about kind of coming back in like, it's not extra and this is just a shift in the way that we're doing it." Nichole explained that the goal is to make global education "the common practice, not a niche thing, not an extra thing." They hope to incorporate global education into the school district's curriculum. Nichole also provides teachers with lots of support to implement these programs. She said, "Part of you signing up in this program is like you will have our support. I will come into the classroom with you. I write curriculum with you. I will meet with you separately. I can share resources with you, so we're trying to push and show that I will have conversations with your principal, if you need to have, like, if you don't feel like you're being supported by them. But I think it's really hard still because it's an extra thing." Nichole shared that finding incentives for teachers to engage in international education programming can be challenging as there is limited funding for incentives. They can earn professional learning units, which teachers need for relicensing or just professional development, in general. Nichole adds, "When it comes down to it, teachers have only so much time in the day. And they're already being asked to do so much. And there's that burn-out piece, right?" Nichole noted that the lack of incentives leads to really motivated people in the program because they're doing it despite all these challenges, but it also limits how many teachers will participate.

Balance of Virtual and In-Person in Teacher Professional Development: Working with teacher professional development, Nichole shared that they are trying to find a good balance between virtual and in-person opportunities to maximize learning/engagement but minimize workload on teachers who are already stretched thin. She said, "Working with the teachers, I think there's a lot of value in being able to be in person, but it's a lot harder to get teachers to come in person right now because there's so much that they're expected to do." This year, the teacher professional development program (which had been virtual since the start of the pandemic) will have two in-person days and monthly virtual meetings.

Assessment: The district staff conducts some assessment, but it tends to be more self-rated or qualitative. They are trying to look toward products or actions (e.g., capstone projects students complete, actions like fundraising or clean-ups they engage in) to better grasp the learning that occurs but truly assessing the learning is really challenging.

Education Abroad Provider

Transformative Education Abroad Provider

Description of Organization

- Education abroad provider working with clients to develop and implement education abroad programs
- Focus is on transformative education abroad experiences in a specific geographic region
- 6 directors overseeing different aspects of operations; 8 program designers who work collaboratively with faculty to develop programs; 10 additional staff members

Interview Participant

- Angela, staff member overseeing academic aspects of the programs

International Education Programming at Transformative Education Abroad Provider

- Offer faculty-led, virtual exchange, service learning, school, and individual education abroad programs
- Program designers work closely with clients to develop customized program to address client's needs and achieves intended learning outcomes
- Faculty-led programs most popular: take care of all logistical requirements, assist with academic programming, taking an outcome-based programming approach
- 1/5th of faculty-led programs are hybrid; typically some online components for 2-3 weeks followed by in-person travel for about 2 weeks
- Still offer a few virtual exchanges, primarily for community colleges

The Current State of International Education Programming at Transformative Education Abroad Provider

Quantity of Programming: Organization is surpassing pre-COVID programming. As an education abroad provider who was able to weather the pandemic, there has been a lot of demand for programs. The organization has increased staffing, which has allowed for more program offerings. Angela noted, "I think we've almost doubled our team."

Staffing: The organization had some layoffs during the pandemic, primarily full-time facilitators as "there was nothing that they were doing during that time." Some staff left voluntarily – maybe due to COVID but also "because of the ideological shift" from focusing on logistics of education abroad programs to incorporating transformative learning into the philosophy that guides the organization; some staff members just realized that this was not what they were interested in. Some staff are also feeling burnt out. Angela explained, "People never really even took leave during COVID. They were working really hard. They just wanted the organization to survive. So, you know, putting in extra hours, lower pay, all of that kind of stuff. And also, just the trauma of COVID."

She added, "It's almost like the cup is empty and we need this space just for them to refill it, so that they can actually appreciate the work that they do again."

Ideological Shift: Organization was going through an ideological shift pre-COVID. Angela explained, "So we started implementing an educational philosophy in our programs" but the organization did not get to launch this new approach because of the pandemic. They are launching it now. Angela described the pre-pandemic approach as "very much, logistics provision with a little bit of sort of cultural guidance, facilitation on the ground." In 2019, 2020, the organization tried to revise this approach, "tried to implement sort of a targeted approach to outcome-based programming and train all of our program designers and hire new ones who are qualified to actually work according to outcomes."

Virtual Programming: The organization started virtual programming during the pandemic out of necessity, but Angela believes in its value though the organization found that virtual programming is not a good return on investment. Angela explained, "We do still have virtual [programming] as well that we offer primarily for community college groups. It's very, very popular with our community college clients." Angela added that these programs may not be a full virtual exchange, but 3 sessions focused on international perspectives from their region. While these programs have been popular, "there's also been big discussions organizationally about . . . the future of virtual, just because it's not profit generating. . . it's not yielding the same returns as faculty led." Angela recognizes the challenges for the organization but, not considering costs, she said, "I would love to see us offer more virtual exchanges. . . I would love to see us actually expand it for the benefit of African students. . . I have seen evidence of how impactful and how far reaching the effects of virtual exchange can be for local students. I mean, I can't say that it is more or less impactful for the students studying abroad, international students, but just in terms of resources, and like what it takes to actually study abroad for many African students. It's just not a reality." Angela is currently trying to figure out how to make the case for virtual programming with the leadership in her organization.

Power Dynamics in Virtual Programming: Angela discussed the power dynamics that exist within the virtual exchange programs they offer. She said, "Most of what we do is based on requests from a client. So, it starts off being uneven because you've got a client that's come in and said, this is what we want to achieve for our students. This is what we have funding for. These are our learning outcomes. How can you make it happen? . . . organization does pretty well in trying to find a middle way between what the client is looking for and what's best for our partners and our individual local environments. But I just think, because it's, I don't know, if that is, makes it inherently unequal always, but it starts off as an unequal relationship because the request is not coming from the community partners or contributors or local students." Partners tend to be quite accommodating because "the lure of the international engagement or the opportunity is exciting. So even if it's a little bit compromising, or something like that,

the tendency will be to say yes.” In addition, power dynamics and cultural differences also shape the interactions between students. Angela explained, “Especially in the U.S., where it’s more of a dominant culture, more of like a vocal culture, often voices can get silenced. And so, you really need skillful facilitation of those environments. . . I think sometimes local students. Their voices can be silenced, maybe because they aren't as assertive verbally in that type of environment, or, you know, maybe haven't built up trust enough to be able to be verbally assertive. . . But these are things, challenges, especially if you're having a sort of a shorter-term virtual exchange. It's difficult to always unpack all of these things, and sometimes people can leave with negative stereotypes reinforced because they didn't have, you know, enough time to unpack, and and so forth.” Local students may also be disadvantaged as they are often independent students, rather than a class; thus, they lack the camaraderie and support that exists within a classroom dynamic. Local students can also be seen as representatives of their entire culture. “I think, for the African students, because they often have to be like. Oh, I'm the representative of my whole culture or my whole continent, sometimes even as well. Because there's there's such a lack of education on the diversity of the continent.”

Future of Virtual Programming: The organization is looking to use virtual modalities as part of existing programs to enhance these programs. “Before COVID, it was like, no, we don’t want to do anything online. People must put their phones away when they travel. They must travel. They must, you know, nothing must be online. We’ve become so much better, I think, in integrating technology in a smart way in our in-country programming.” Specifically, the organization uses virtual modalities for pre-departure calls, assessment tools administered online. In addition, the organization has some blended programs. Angela explained, “[The blended modality] will help us reduce costs as well, but also build relationships and deepen learning.” She added, “They’re going to be working with local students in Kenya. And we’ll start with the relationship building online already that the student cohorts can meet and start brainstorming on projects and things, so that also it’s not awkward when they meet in country. That can also be super awkward, right? All of a sudden, you are put in a room with someone and you’ve kind of got to be friends.” Adding a virtual component thus adds value to the in-person mobility programs by providing students with the opportunity to develop relationships prior to meeting in person.

Assessment: The organization has been working on an assessment tool. Students take a pre- and post-test (mirrored tests) but also respond to some qualitative questions. The organization hopes to see patterns within the quantitative data and compare those to the qualitative responses. The assessment focused on transformative learning and is a new tool. Prior to this, the organization has used primarily satisfaction surveys related to accommodations, travel, and other logistical aspects of the education abroad programs.

Faculty burnout: Faculty burnout has created challenges for Angela's organization in their collaborations with faculty. Angela noted how there is more pressure being placed on program designers. She said, "There's a lot of pressure that's put on our program designers, I think, to do more and to handle more sort of from the programming side of things." Program leaders are also sometimes more difficult to work with. Angela explained, "The program leaders are exceptionally difficult this season, like exceptionally difficult and paranoid and anxious and overbearing in ways that we have not had in previous years. And I don't know if it's a result of COVID and anxieties. . . or because of burnout, because they are so overworked and they are having to do millions of things while they are here leading student programs." Program leaders seem to be particularly concerned about health and safety in the host countries. Angela shared, "We've got health and safety regulations and things like that and we have facilitators that will speak to faculty members and explain to them like, you're fine, but then they'll still go take their students to go buy tasers and, you know, like stun guns and things before they go on a hike, because they saw this article on the news yesterday."

Changes to Student Behavior: While Angela does not directly work with student, she has also heard stories about student behavior being different post-pandemic. She explained, "They are also coming with a lot of complexity and a lot of fear. . . it feels a lot more complex in terms of the facilitation of the groups." In particular, Angela said that her staff has noticed the following things: "Withdrawal, not wanting to engage in activities as much as perhaps prior, sort of isolation, wanting to be in the room a lot. Overstimulation is happening quite quickly. Fear and anxiety around like going into a township. . . it's more of an extreme leaving of the comfort zone now in the moment of travel than it was before." Students also struggle with changes such as changes to the itinerary. Students' behaviors, particularly for students in the school education abroad space (i.e., middle to high school) have made Angela question if students truly want to travel and participate in these programs. She said, "Normally students love to come and study abroad. . . but now it almost seems like they don't want to be there." Angela qualified that this observation was based on anecdotal information but highlights changes in behaviors that had not been noted prior to the pandemic.

Author Biography



Dr. Gudrun Nyunt is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Northern Illinois University. An Austria national, Dr. Nyunt brings a global lens to her work and research at U.S. higher education institutions. Dr. Nyunt holds a Ph.D. in Student Affairs from the University of Maryland. While most of her professional experience has been in the United States, working for residence life departments at various institutions and then as a faculty member, she also served as a Resident Director for the Fall 2012 Semester at Sea voyage and worked at Webster University's branch campus in Vienna for one year. Her research interests include study abroad, the experiences of international students at U.S. higher education institutions, and employment in higher education. She has published over 20 peer-reviewed articles in journals ranging from the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, the *Journal of College Student Development*, and *Frontiers – The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. From 2017-2020, Dr. Nyunt served as chair of ACPA's Commission for the Global Dimensions of Student Development.