Developing Intercultural Competence in Art & Design Students
Evaluation of the impact of an international experience requirement

M school of art & design

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ABSTRACT

This poster presents initial benchmark findings of an evaluation of a new international experience requirement, implemented at the University of Michigan School of Art & Design. This study will measure the impact of the new requirement on students' intercultural competence through student surveys, analysis of artists' statements, and a faculty/staff focus group. Much research has focused on individual effects of study abroad, but what is the impact of a school-wide international experience requirement on the student body and culture of the school?

Intercultural Competence: The development of intercultural competence is a process in which one builds authentic relationships by "observing, listening, and asking those who are from different backgrounds to teach, to share, to enter into dialogue together about relevant needs and issues" (Deardorff, 2009, p.xiii). Global learning is a "high impact practice" (Kuh, 2008), and Hovland (2009) suggests that intercultural competence is one of the essential learning outcomes of a liberal education, but what can colleges and universities do to cultivate this important type of learning?

"This series of landscapes is inspired from my time spent in Turkey over the winter semester of 2010. Everything there was different: the language, the people, the customs, and even the natural and man-made landscapes. This work is an interpretation of the feeling of being in such a new and different world."
-- Lauren Chernekoff (4th year A&D student, 2010, work displayed with permission)

RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

The School of Art and Design's new requirement calls for undergraduates to choose from a menu of international experiences to develop their intercultural competence, ranging from formal study abroad programs to journaling during a self-guided international trip. To assess the impact of the requirement, we have been engaged in a three-pronged project, using both quantitative and qualitative methods as recommended by Deardorff (2006).

1 To assess students' cognitive, self-knowing, and interpersonal development, we administered the **Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) survey** (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009) to sophomores, before and after implementation of the international experience requirement. (In the future, we will administer the survey to two cohorts of seniors.) **The response rates for both years were 69%.**

Table 1: Mean Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) Scores

	Pre-Requirement Sophomores, Fall 2010 (N=104) (SD)	First Year of Requirement Sophomores, Fall 2011 (N=97) (SD)
Overall GPI score	3.6 (0.3)	3.7 (0.3)
Benchmark comparisons with other public doctoral universities	A&D students surpassed benchmarks in one subscale: cognitive knowing.	A&D students surpassed benchmarks in three subscales: cognitive knowing, affect, and well-being.

Note: Scale is 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree, with 11 questions reverse coded. Overall GPI increase was not statistically significant, although there were significant gains in two of eight subscales: cognitive knowing (+.14, p<.05) and affect (+.12, p<.05).

2 We record changes in student work and reflection on their work (i.e., artists' statements) at a school-wide exhibition. **Artists' statements were coded** using a modified version of the AAC&U VALUE rubric on intercultural knowledge and competence (AAC&U, 2010).

Table 2: Mean ratings of artists' statements by rubric categories, all class years
Scale is 3 = mentioned in a meaningful way, 2 = mentioned, 1 = not mentioned at all

Rubric component	Pre-Requirement N=21	First Year of Requirement N=26
Overall	1.6	1.6
Location of international experience	2.1	2.1
Posing complex questions	2.0	1.8
Personal or academic change	1.5	1.7
Experience of cultural difference	1.3	1.4
Cultural self-awareness	1.3	1.3
Interactions with culturally different others	1.3	1.1

3 **Three focus groups** were held with faculty and staff to benchmark perceptions of students' internationalization and school culture, as well as to assess potential future impact of the requirement:

Faculty and staff who led international trips
- Faculty and staff report that international experiences meet a critical educational purpose, for students to experience a culture different from their own.
- Trip leaders indicate that the experience also contributes to their own understanding and professional development.

Faculty who taught the senior "capstone" course, the Integrated Project Experience
- Currently, faculty describe study abroad experiences as "sporadic," with many students traveling to Europe if they venture outside of the United States.
- Faculty anticipate seeing increased personal awareness, self-confidence, and self-reflection among students who have fulfilled their requirement, as illustrated by students' capstone projects.

Staff advisors
- Staff report that the requirement is a key "selling point" for prospective students.
- Participants anticipate that the impact of the requirement on students' personal growth will be very positive.

Potential challenges expressed by all three groups include developing students' language training, encouraging a diversity of international placements, and staggering experiences so that large numbers of students are not away at once.

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