



College of Arts & Media

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

July 30, 2020

Dear Dean Kaptain,

This letter serves as the report by the committee addressing specific concerns regarding curricular and program planning for a semester abroad program in SE Asia to study the creative industries, offered through the College of Arts & Media.

The committee is comprised of three faculty members, one from each department:

Film and Television: Associate Professor C/T, Jessica McGaugh

Music and Entertainment Industry Studies: Associate Professor, Sam McGuire

Visual Arts: Associate Professor, Travis Vermilye

In the Dean's charge for this committee, it was requested that a specific list of concerns be considered and addressed. The committee decided to approach each concern that we were presented with from the point of view of each department. Each committee member communicated with select faculty and Department Chairs from his/her respective departments in order to gather any additional concerns or comments. Overall, faculty seem to be in favor of such a program.

Trends in Study Abroad

The 2019 report from OpenDoors.org shows a 2.7% growth in study abroad expanding to 341,751 total students traveling in all types of programs. Asia showed a small decline of -.6% lowering to a total of 38,408 students traveling to all regions of Asia. China is traditionally the largest destination receiving 11,613 students (-2.5% from previous year) but Indonesia showed significant growth at 48.6% reaching 825 students. Both Singapore and Thailand showed contraction of -3.8% and -10.2% respectively. Singapore received a total of 1,121 students, which might indicate potential for growth considering the size of the country and its recent economic growth and growth in the arts. As a reference, Singapore has 4,632 students studying in the United States according to the same report.

Mid-length programs, such as the one this report explores for CAM, have seen consistent growth for many years. Here are two example institutions (opendoors.org) showcasing what is possible in successful semester programs:

2002/03

- The University of Colorado Boulder was ranked **#4** among doctoral granting programs for sending 827 students.
- The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor was ranked **#20** among doctoral granting programs for sending 465 students.

2017/18

- The University of Colorado Boulder was ranked **#5** among doctoral granting programs for sending 1,112 students.
- The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor was ranked **#11** among doctoral granting programs for sending 863 students.

While these programs are not direct peers, both are significant leaders in study abroad and in many ways are our study abroad inspirational peers. This data shows that sustained growth is achievable in mid-length programs and paired with the growth/potential growth in parts of Asia, suggests a significant opportunity to increase our efforts at CU Denver.

Response to Specific Study Abroad Concerns

As a broad response to the concerns presented, the committee feels that many could easily be addressed during the curricular planning and design phase of the semester abroad program. If there is a clear understanding of when in the degree/course sequence students will go on the semester abroad program and which areas of study are most applicable to a semester abroad, it should be possible to design in specific requirements and/or degree plan modifications specific to those students.

Responses to the five points of concern that were supplied to the committee

1) This will/could delay graduation.

While the committee agrees that, in some unique cases, delayed graduation may be a possibility, we also feel that this problem could easily be addressed through careful design of the semester abroad program. Furthermore, we believe that each department should be involved in the design and planning stages of the semester abroad program to help ensure that the potential for graduation delay is minimized. It is likely that existing degree plans in each department's offerings could be modified slightly to make study abroad for a semester a valuable and manageable option for students who are interested, without any graduation delay. There is indication from the current department chairs of willingness and desire to make this possible.

2) This could put CAM students at a disadvantage.

On the contrary, the committee feels that the semester abroad studies will likely put students who participate at a distinct advantage. Immersion for an entire semester in their field of study combined with cultural and creative industry experiences outside of the United States will very likely provide students with knowledge and ways of thinking that their peers who remain in the US for the duration of their degree programs will not be exposed to. The committee feels that, within each department and area of study, these types of exposures will help the semester abroad students stand out in the crowd and become even more desirable to potential employers and will expand the students' world view and confidence levels. In an article from IES Abroad titled [US: study abroad alumni have better job prospects](#), students who participate in study abroad show a reduction in the amount of time it takes them to gain job placement after graduation and an increase in the salaries they are able to secure.

3) The cohort model (in several CAM programs) could be disrupted.

While it is true that students who participate in the semester abroad studies will be separated from their peers back in the United States for a few months, the committee does not believe that this will cause any lasting negative impact. Online communication technologies such as FaceTime, Skype, and Zoom make it possible for students to keep in touch with their peers while they are meeting new people and expanding their existing networks in a different country. The two cohorts that would be disrupted most are DAC and FITV. However, the department chairs and advisors are dedicated to working with students on creating degree plans specific to students interested in a semester abroad.

4) Many CAM students have jobs and could not afford to go away for a semester.

It is true that a large percentage of our student populations have jobs, however there is anecdotal evidence that many of our students have been able and willing to put jobs on hold or secure extended time off for other types of travel. Additionally, the committee would like to point out that the semester abroad program is not a requirement and is likely only possible for a select group of students from each department each year.

5) It could interfere with the current 2-3-week (successful) study abroad programs.

The existing study abroad programs are indeed quite successful with high enrollment numbers. Typically, study abroad programs do not satisfy specific curricular requirements, but are instead elective credits. The committee views a semester abroad as a distinctly different type of program from a typical study abroad experience. Semester abroad should not only provide worldly experience in the creative industries, but should also be designed to fulfill specific curricular requirements for students who participate. We view the semester abroad program to be enticing to students who have planned ahead, and selected this experience early on in their academic careers. Existing study abroad programs only fulfill up to 6 elective requirements and are often a decision that is not planned years in advance. We feel

that while there may be occasional incidences where students choose the semester abroad over study abroad in the summer or winter months, the impact on the existing programs will be minimal and sustainable.

In addition to the five concerns above, the committee discussed the five points below.

1) Three CAM faculty have come forward and asked to be considered to live abroad for a semester, to mentor, and supervise a program of this nature.

The committee views this as very promising. For a program such as the semester abroad to be sustainable, it will require a dedicated group of faculty who are willing and able to live abroad for a semester along with the students and act both as chaperone and as mentor.

2) Two of CAM's 3 departments have had very limited study abroad opportunities.

Bolstering the existing study abroad offerings, which are heavily visual arts-weighted, with a semester abroad that is designed for any CAM student seems to be a worthy, and likely sustainable goal.

3) Because of the "upfront" costs of study abroad—a semester abroad may only be 2X the cost of a 2-3-week study abroad program.

The committee views this as promising news. If it holds true, this means that students could study abroad for an entire semester while gaining both elective credits and required curricular credit for a cost that is not much more than that of a typical semester at the College of Arts & Media (including housing and tuition).

4) A survey administered to a cadre of CAM students who went on a study abroad to Singapore, showed unanimous positive responses to questions about considering a semester abroad with the additional breadth of a program in the creative industries.

This survey of 12 student responses from students that ranged from freshman to senior standing and represented Business and Visual Arts. Across the board, students indicated that they were in favor of a semester abroad in SE Asia. One student notes that " I believe that learning how different economies do business is extremely valuable to know, and can be easily applied towards our own work as well as for potential transfer students from Singapore.". Another student had this to say, "I believe networking with other colleges and students around the globe can lead to new collaborative discoveries. The interaction would be beneficial for both the universities and the students as they experience study abroad programs and be inspired to find themselves in the vast world of art and design."

5) Anecdotal responses from parents indicate interest in learning more about a semester abroad.

It is not surprising that parents would like to see their children gain broad experiences through semester abroad offerings. The committee feels that the semester abroad offerings have the potential to make CU Denver/CAM a more enticing prospect for prospective students and their parents.

In general, the committee views a semester abroad program to be a beneficial endeavor for the college and it's students. As this project moves forward, we feel it is important that representatives from each department within the College of Arts & Media continue to be involved in the development and design of the program to help ensure it is beneficial for students and faculty and that it is in alignment with existing curricula as much as possible.

This concludes the committee's report. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve the college in this matter.

Sincerely,



Travis Vermilye



Jessica McGaugh



Sam McGuire