While off-campus educational programs grow in number and in importance in American higher education, little systematic research has been conducted concerning their effectiveness and intellectual and developmental impact. The project described here compared students in three categories: those studying abroad; those studying off-campus in this country; and those who remained on their home campus. The implications of the findings of the research suggest that a rethinking of existing programs is appropriate, if off-campus educational programs are to realize their full potential. The authors offer concrete suggestions toward restructuring these programs.


Tandis que l'importance et le nombre des programmes d'éducation en dehors des universités s'accroît dans l'enseignement supérieur aux Etats-Unis, peu de recherche systématique a été effectué en ce qui concerne leur efficacité et leur impact intellectuel et de développement. Le projet décrit ici a comparé des étudiants de trois catégories: ceux qui étudient à l'étranger, ceux qui étudient hors des universités à l'intérieur du pays et ceux qui sont restés dans leurs universités d'origine. Les implications des conclusions de la recherche suggèrent qu'il convient de repenser les programmes existants, si les programmes d'éducation hors des universités doivent réaliser tout leur potentiel. Les auteurs présentent des suggestions concrètes quant à la restructuration de ces programmes.
Although faculty members and academic administrators encourage American undergraduates each year to study off-campus (either abroad or, to a lesser degree, in the United States)—thus supporting the notion of diversity as a component of a liberal arts education—educators know very little about the process of off-campus education or about its outcomes. It is assumed that cognitive learning occurs during a sojourn off-campus, but it is the experiential nature of the sojourn which cannot be replicated at the home campus institution. A liberal education is a perspective, not a formula. It includes the raising of awareness in the moral and ethical domains as well as the developing of rational capacities.

Less abstractly, demands for evaluation and accountability include domestic off-campus programs as well as those in other countries. Because many factors undoubtedly combine to produce the results, the assessment of the impact of off-campus study programs does not lend itself to nice or elegant solutions. As we are (painfully?) reminded by a monk of Froidmont, who noted with ecclesiastical dismay in the twelfth century:

The scholars are wont to roam around the world and visit all its cities, till much learning makes them mad; for in Paris they seek liberal arts, in Orleans authors, at Salerno gallipots, at Toledo demons, and in no place decent manners.¹

There have been several studies which have attempted to assess systematically off-campus study abroad programs for American undergraduates; few treat off-campus study programs in the United States.² The existing studies for both categories may be loosely sorted into two groups: those employing standardized instruments and those using instruments designed specifically for particular programs. The former tend not “to fit” a specific situation, while the latter, locally-designed, suffer from a lack of wider applicability. Concerning the research reported here, both approaches were initially combined.

Throughout this present study, numerous professionals long experienced in overseas education were consulted about the overall objectives of their overseas study programs and, then, about the development of the items for an inventory.³ These professionals agreed, for example, that academic learning (i.e., cognitive learning) abroad can be more or less duplicated in the United States, while, logically, the experiential character and the existential nature of another culture cannot be replicated. Second, those experienced in study abroad programs agreed that a sojourn abroad usually did improve a student’s foreign language flu-