

Chapter 7

Decolonizing Global Learning and Internationalization: A Human-Scale Case Study of Innovation

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ABSTRACT

The implications and challenges of critical, responsible internationalization are central to the global learning aspect of Agnes Scott College's SUMMIT initiative, a reinvention of the curriculum and co-curriculars. Partly due to the human-scale size of a small liberal arts college, it has been able to take an unusually bold and integrated approach to internationalization, which includes providing faculty-led global immersion to every student but from a unique angle. This chapter will outline an approach to global learning that centers a critical focus on colonialism/imperialism/diaspora in its curriculum, including in its required, first-year interdisciplinary Journeys course; co-curriculars on the local impacts of globalization and migration; and assessment and research. This approach also manifests in taking into account the intersectional effect of students' multiple identities on these issues. The authors will share sample learning outcomes, activities, assignments, and faculty development strategies, as well as lessons learned for decolonizing global learning.

INTRODUCTION

When Agnes Scott College in 2015 implemented a required faculty-led study away course for all first-year students as part of its new SUMMIT initiative, faculty were aware of the advantages and challenges of this format. On the one hand, for both students and parents faculty-led courses have become an attractive element in an institution's curricular programs, making it the fastest growing segment of study abroad and study away in U.S. Higher Education today (Redden, 2019). On the other hand, short-term study away courses under the guidance of professors also appear to run counter to some of the core goals of providing a transformative education.

At many institutions of higher education, such courses form a core part of international or global learning, often connected to goals that emphasize critical inquiry and global citizenship. But notwithstanding the often very sophisticated and innovative on-campus classes to which the faculty-led courses may connect, these courses seem to be ineffective when it comes to changing North American students' acculturation to the Grand Tour model of study abroad and its imperialist and colonialist underpinnings (Ogden 2008, 36-39). For instance, any cursory review of publicly available faculty-led course titles offered by U.S. universities and private study abroad providers reveals an ongoing North – South divide: courses with destinations in the Global North emphasize the achievements of Western civilization and feature visits to centers of political and economic power as well as dominant cultural and historical sites and attractions; courses visiting destinations in the Global South tend to foreground service learning and community involvement where students can observe the problematic legacy of colonization. Faculty-led courses thus appear to represent in a particularly condensed form the problems that a growing body of research identifies in U.S. study abroad projects in general: they “reproduce hierarchies of power and colonialism, perpetuate views of an exotic cultural ‘other,’ and privilege tourism over education” (Pipitone 2018, 55). This is less the fault of individual faculty leaders or study abroad professionals and more a reflection of the general commodification of education in the public discourse. Education has become an industry and learning a commodity, a “thing that can be purchased,” and “study abroad commercialization has in many ways paralleled the commodification of higher education [such] that many people now perceive of international education as a prepackaged experience, in which students are passive consumers” (Zemach-Bersin 2009, 305). For some authors, the tendency to combine ever shorter study abroad programs with ever more complex notions of global citizenship and global competencies runs the danger of producing a “colonial system” of education abroad, in which U.S. students' short and carefully curated encounters with “locals” mainly serve to enrich U.S. students' resumés (Ogden 2008, 39-40).

While Agnes Scott College's faculty was and remains fully aware of these critical aspects, faculty members also identified an opportune moment for channeling students' heightened interest in this form of learning and designed a global learning framework that underscores and amplifies the relevance of a liberal arts education in today's globalized world. This chapter provides a case study of Agnes Scott's integrated approach to decolonizing global learning through a set of curricular and co-curricular elements: a required, first-year interdisciplinary faculty-led study away course; co-curricular experiences that center on the local impacts and challenges of globalization and migration; and a campus-wide focus on how intersectional effects of race, gender, and sexual identity shape students' learning and the teaching and assessment practices of faculty. From student learning outcomes to curricular and co-curricular activities, faculty development, and assessment practices, Agnes Scott's global learning initiative interrogates the role of power and privilege in internationalization practices and pedagogies. The following sections will provide an overview of the global learning initiative's theoretical underpinnings, discuss specific

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