

Study Abroad as a High-Impact Educational Practice: US–China Exchanges and the Kean–Wenzhou Kean University Experience

Qian Li

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-5084-4190>

Wenzhou-Kean University, China

Ning Chen

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0001-0172-3281>

Wenzhou-Kean University, China

Shentian Ying

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-8315-6453>

Wenzhou-Kean University, China

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultivating students who demonstrate cross-cultural understanding, cooperation in multicultural environments, and social responsibility has become an important mission for higher education. Various models of study abroad have emerged as the major pathways for fostering global learning in recent decades, as students in these programs tend to gain immersive experiences in a different cultural context. This chapter synthesizes the current understanding of study abroad programs as high-impact educational practices and aims to examine the evolution of global learning objectives, especially the shift in focus from international mobility to the

cultivation of students' global awareness and intercultural competence; to analyze the mechanism through which study abroad functions as a high-impact educational practice; to evaluate the strengths and limitations of different study abroad models in supporting students' holistic development; and to discuss the opportunities and challenges of an applied case of global learning through the partnership between Kean and Wenzhou-Kean University.

1. INTRODUCTION: FROM INTERNATIONALIZATION TO GLOBAL LEARNING

1.1 Global learning in higher education

As global connectivity has increased, “globalization” is no longer limited to fundamental changes in economic and political structures but also profoundly reshapes the goals and responsibilities of higher education. There is an increasing demand for college students to understand and actively participate in discussions concerning global issues, such as climate change, the development of artificial intelligence, and international relations. Cultivating students who demonstrate cross-cultural understanding, cooperation in multicultural environments, and social responsibility has become an important mission for higher education. Therefore, global learning has emerged as a crucial topic in higher education.

Multiple international organizations have addressed the significance of promoting global learning and supporting students to develop intercultural competence within higher education. Both the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasized that education should focus on the development of students' global competence, which includes critical thinking to analyze important international issues, perspective-taking skills to understand and respect others' values and views, social competence to interact with individuals with diverse backgrounds with respectful and open attitude, and initiative and actions to work toward human well-being and sustainability. The emphasis on global learning indicated that education should extend beyond knowledge acquisition and academic development, and also focus on cultivating global citizens with social responsibilities and multicultural understanding. Thus, global student mobility and cross-cultural collaboration should become an integral component of the higher educational system.

This trend of global learning and international mobility is particularly evident in China and the United States. The U.S. Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education, 2023) indicated that in 2022, more than 1,057,188 foreign students registered with U.S. institutions, and about 27% of them were Chinese students. In the

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