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# Students' Perceived Barriers, Benefits, and International Programmatic Preferences

Olivia Caillouet  
Lisa Wood, PhD

University of Arkansas  
Bumpers College International Programs Office

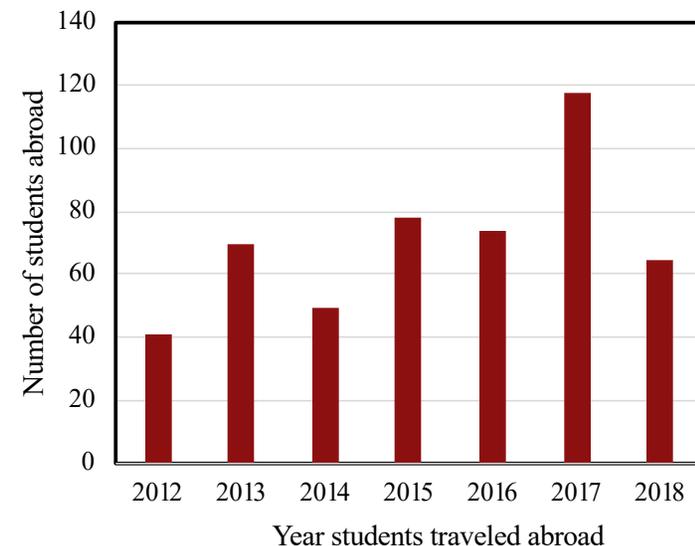
# Introduction

## Need for the study



- ❖ Increased efforts towards internationalization of curriculum to prepare students for an interdependent world (McGowan, 2007).
- ❖ International programs (IPs) promote changes in students' global perspective, attitudes towards cultural diversity, and self-efficacy (Zhai & Scheer, 2001).
- ❖ Students gain professional benefits by entering a career with a global perspective (McGowan, 2007).

However, only about 5% of Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences students participate in an IP.



*Figure 1.* Number of Bumpers College students who have traveled abroad (University of Arkansas Office of Study Abroad, 2019).

# Introduction

## Need for the study & Purpose



- ❖ IP offices are essential partners for globalization efforts of colleges of agriculture (Etling & Barbuto, 2002).
- ❖ The U of A strategic plan aims for 25% IP participation by 2020. However, Bumpers College remains at about 5%.
- ❖ Assessments need to be made to ensure IPs are serving to enrich faculty and student educational experiences (Hainline et al., 2018).

The purpose of this research was to determine students' perceived barriers, benefits, and preferred IP characteristics.

Information gained from this study could help with:

- IP development
- Student participation in IPs
- Student learning during IPs

# Introduction

## Research Objectives



- 1 Describe survey respondents' demographics.
- 2 Describe students' perceived barriers to participating in an IP.
- 3 Describe students' perceived benefits to participating in an IP.
- 4 Describe students' preferred IP characteristics (program location, program length etc.).

# Methods

## Research Objectives



- ❖ Random stratified sample of courses by academic level and department were surveyed (35 classes).
- ❖ Approximately 2,135 students enrolled in courses, but 672 completed the survey for a 31.5% response rate.
- ❖ Paper-form instrument which took approximately 15 minutes to complete (12 questions) was adapted from Edgar et al., 2018.

Barriers and benefits constructs were on the five-point Likert-type scale  
(1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree)

IP preferred characteristics were ranked  
(1 = most interested to 6 = least interested or no number to indicate not interested at all)

Several open response questions e.g. top country for an IP and willingness to pay for a IP experience

# Methods

## Data Analysis



- ❖ Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the barriers and benefits construct reliability, which was acceptable at **.791** ( $N = 648$ ) and **.862** ( $N = 661$ ), respectively.
- ❖ Data were analyzed using SPSS to determine frequencies, means, and standard deviations.
- ❖ The researchers calculated the open-response question that addressed students' willingness to pay for an IP and sorted responses into one of the 21 categories (determined appropriate for content-related validity by an expert).

# Results



Table 1  
*Perceived Barriers to Participating in an International Program (IP) (n = 669)*

Barrier statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cost is too high	3.93	1.00
Too busy with school	3.54	1.10
Too busy with work	3.16	1.31
I do not have the language skills needed to be successful abroad	3.07	1.31
There are not enough funding opportunities	3.03	1.09
IP courses do not fit into my degree plan	2.62	1.23
I do not have the skillsets necessary to be successful in an international program	2.14	1.14
I do not have friend/ peer support to participate in an IP	2.06	1.13
I do not have parental support to participate in an IP	2.02	1.16
I do not have academic advisor support to participate in an IP	2.01	1.09
An IP will not have an impact on my future career	2.00	1.09
My academic department does not encourage IP participation	1.91	1.06
I have a fear of traveling outside the U.S.	1.69	1.11
Grand Mean	2.54	0.61

*Note.* Scale: 1=Completely Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Completely Agree.

# Results



Table 2  
*Perceived Benefits to Participating in an International Program (IP) (n = 666)*

Benefit statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Socially/Culturally learn more about a host country	4.61	0.67
Life-changing opportunity	4.60	0.66
Positive impact on my future career	4.44	0.76
Sets me apart when applying for grad school/ jobs	4.43	0.79
Enhance my employment prospects	4.34	0.83
IPs are very effective in building career skills	4.26	0.86
Opportunity to work/live abroad afterwards	4.21	0.97
Learn more about my academic field	4.18	0.93
Experience the local nightlife (clubs, bars, etc.)	3.87	1.18
Grand Mean	4.33	0.59

*Note.* Scale: 1=Completely Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Completely Agree.

# Results

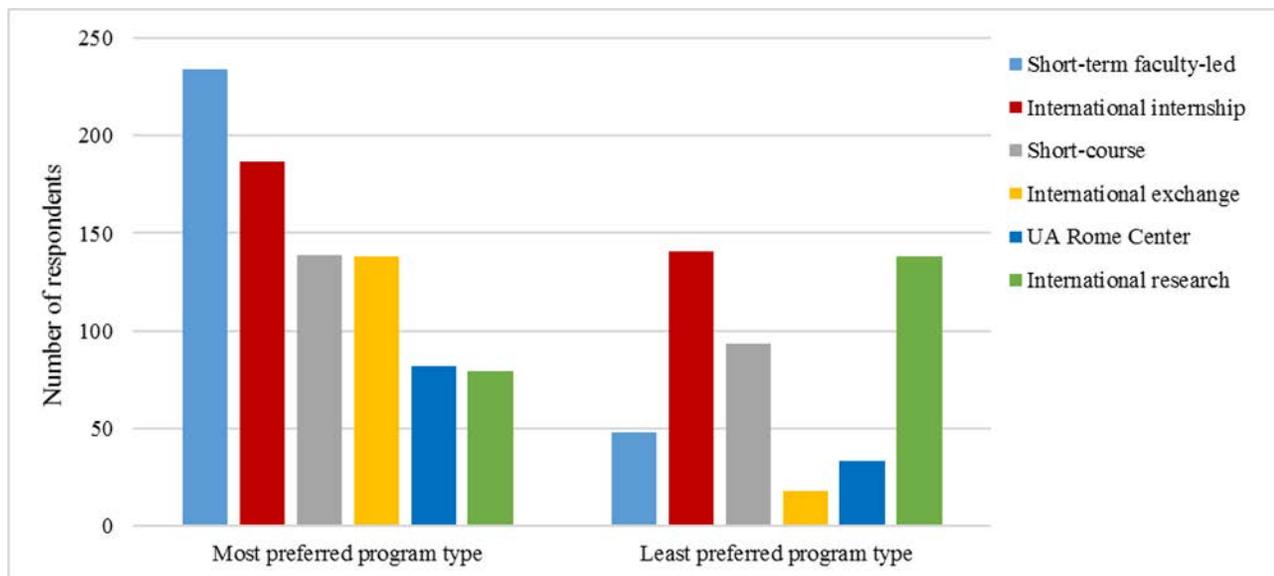


Figure 4. Most and least preferred program types for international program (IP) participation ( $n = 672$ ).  
(Note: Students could choose multiple program types.)

# Results

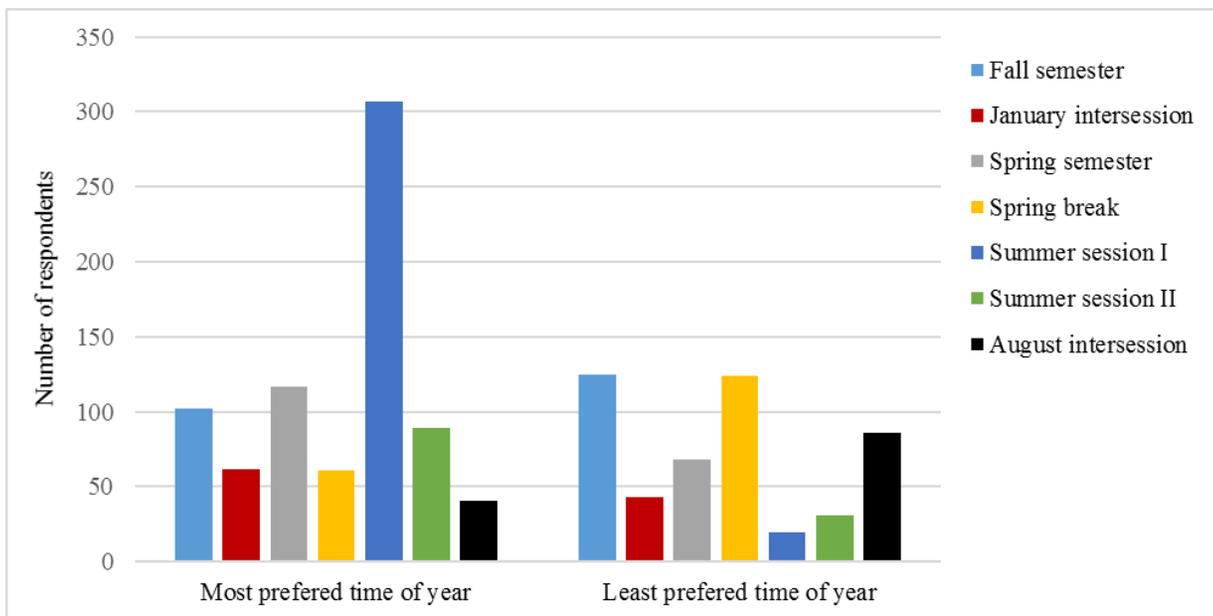


Figure 5. Most and least preferred time of year for international program (IP) participation ( $n = 672$ ).  
(Note: Students could choose multiple times of year for programs.)

# Results

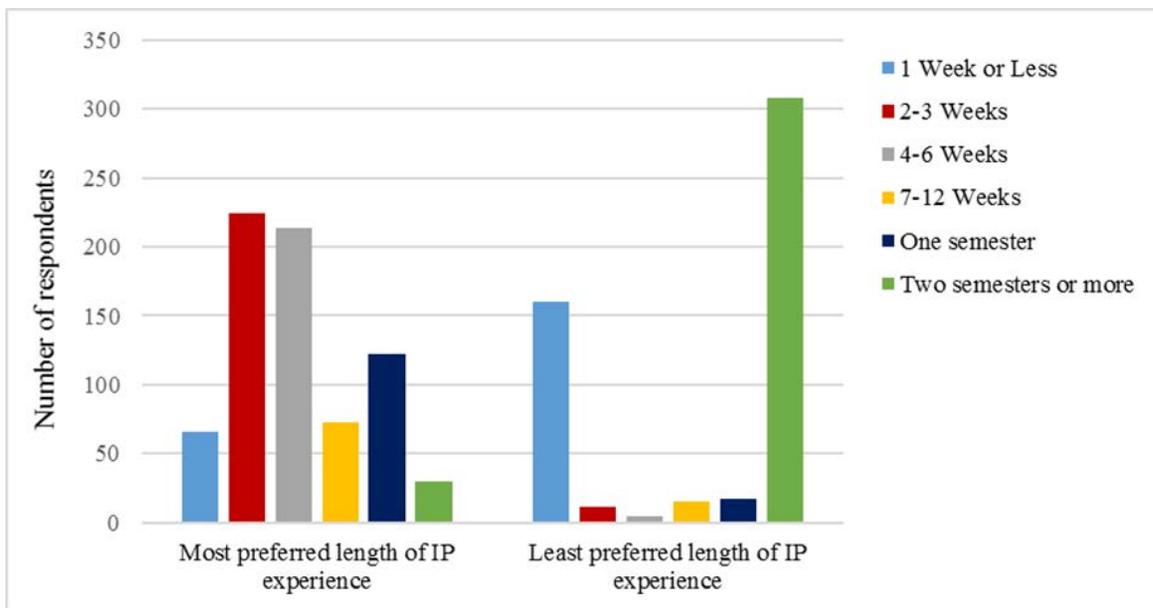


Figure 6. Most and least preferred length for international program (IP) ( $n = 672$ ).  
(Note: Students could choose multiple lengths of programs.)

# Results

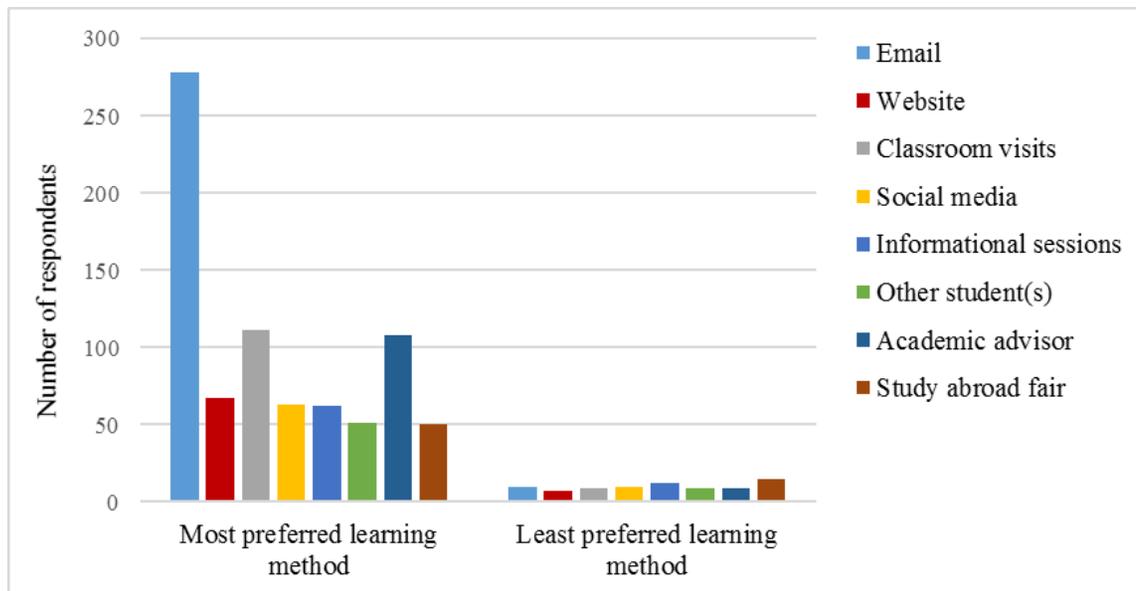
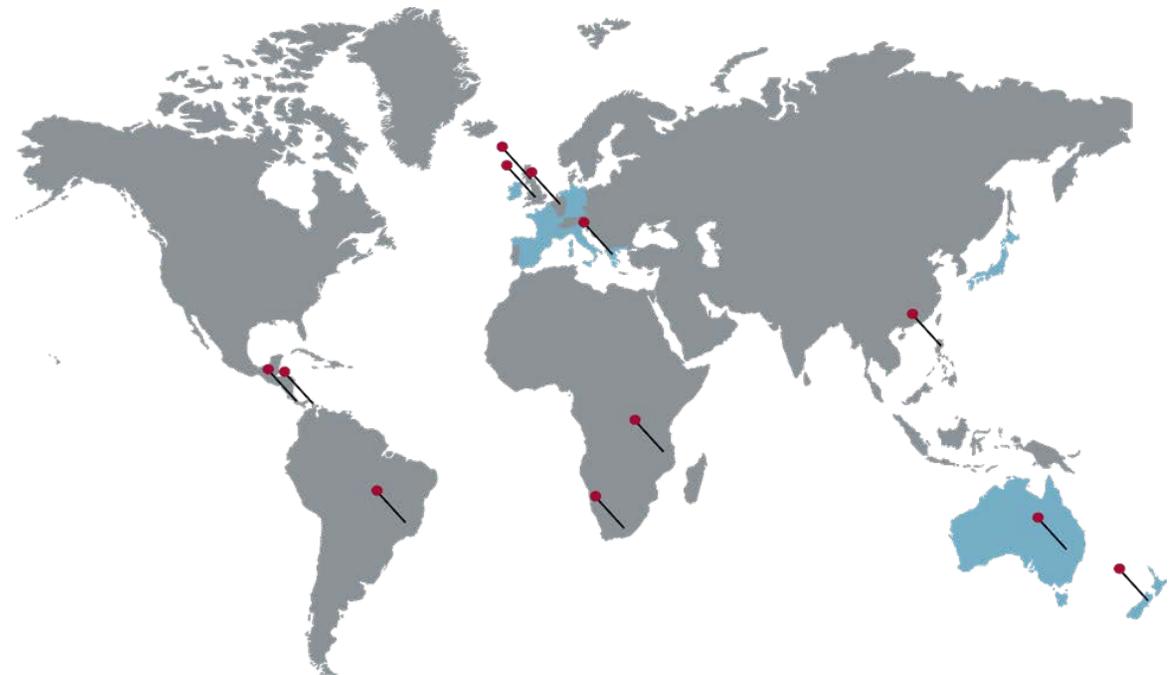


Figure 7. Most and least preferred method for learning about future international program (IP) experiences ( $n = 672$ ).  
(Note: Students could choose multiple times of year for programs.)

# Results

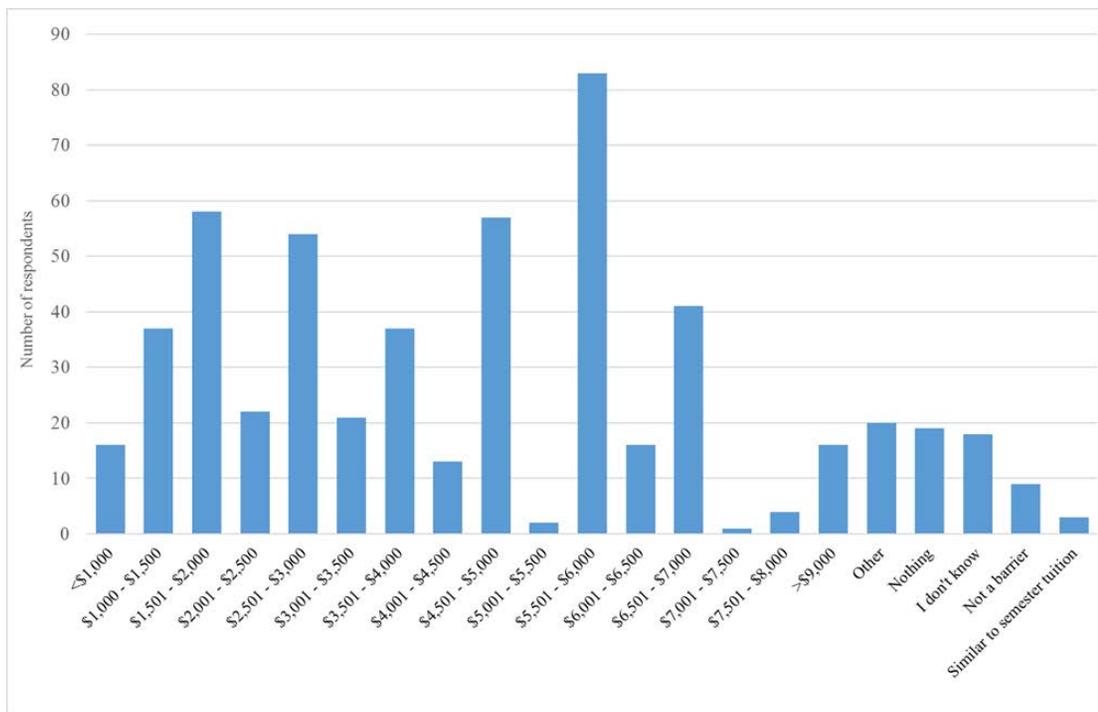


*Figure 8.* Top ten countries students wanted to visit for an international program (IP) ( $n = 672$ ).



*Figure 9.* The blue shaded area represents the top 10 preferred international program (IP) locations and the pins represent active Bumpers College 2018-2019 academic year program locations.

# Results



*Figure 10.* The most students were willing to pay for an international program (IP) ( $n = 555$ ).  
(Note: students' were told to assume the trip was between 10 days and three weeks long and would cost between \$5,800 and \$6,700.)

# Conclusions and Implications



- 1 Greatest perceived barriers were “cost is too high” and “too busy with school”.  
Increased scholarship availability and clear curriculum integration.
- 2 Greatest perceived benefits were “socially/culturally learn more about a host country” and “life-changing opportunity”.  
How students’ will gain these experiences should be clearly communicated.
- 3 Short-term, summer, faculty-led programs for a length of two-six weeks were preferred (Italy, Australia, Spain).  
These programs should be a high priority for Bumpers College.
- 4 Outreach efforts should use emails, classroom visits, and academic advisors to inform students of future IP opportunities.  
Development of informational material academic advisors can use to indicate IP integration within degree plans.
- 5 Students were willing to pay \$5,501 to \$6,000 for an IP. However, Edgar et al. (2018) stated the highest percentage of students needed more information to make an informed decision followed by students willing to pay \$1,000.  
These inconsistencies among willingness to pay indicated more research is needed to determine ideal costs of IPs.  
Research should determine if differences occur between students’ “willingness” to pay and “ability” to pay for an IP.

# Implications for Future Research



- ❖ Short-term programs are an ever-increasing part of international education (Hulstrand, 2006).
- ❖ However, semester-long or yearlong programs are designed to eliminate “cultural bubbles” by incorporating volunteerism, service-learning, and homestay experiences which have well documented benefits (Anderson, 2019).
- ❖ Research has tested strategies to enhance short-term programs that resulted in outcomes closer to longer term programs.
  - Link previous campus coursework to experiences abroad
  - Engage students in specific community-based research and or service-learning projects (Lewis & Nisenbaum, 2005)

- 1 Future research should determine specific program characteristics of service-learning and research focused IPs that imitate goals of semester long or yearlong programs.
- 2 Additional research should be conducted to determine how IP best practices can be incorporated into Bumpers College short-term, faculty-led programs with a length of two to six weeks.

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# Questions?