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**Closing the circle:
Comprehensive study abroad reentry programming in a small liberal arts college**

Dora Musini

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Master of Arts in International Education at
SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

Seminar start date: May 7, 2018

Advisor's name: Lynée Connelly

REENTRY PROGRAMMING IN A SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

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Dora Musini

May, 2018

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalized world, study abroad is growing in popularity. As a rising number of students study, work, research or simply move abroad, research by experts and practitioners has been focused on finding ways to maximize learning. An effective and wildly popular strategy adopted by most institutions is pre-departure orientation. However its counterpart, study abroad reentry, while also potentially transformative, isn't equally widespread.

This paper describes an effort to fill this gap through the creation of a reentry program for Marlboro College, a small, liberal arts college in Marlboro, Vermont. In order to tailor the program to Marlboro students' specific learning objectives and styles, preliminary research was conducted among students, faculty and staff members. The results highlighted the need for a reflection and discussion-based program offering ample opportunities for students to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Consequently, the semester-long "Back On The Hill" program was created. The experiential learning model was chosen as a foundational framework to guide the design of Back On The Hill as an interdisciplinary, collaborative curriculum based on three main components: reflection on one's own learning, contextualization of that learning and application of it. To effectively deliver these components, program sessions were chosen to be weekly and centered around activities ranging from open discussions to guest panels, student-led workshops and community-wide events.

To ensure accessibility and feasibility, the program was designed to fit smoothly into Marlboro's everyday activities. The practicality of the logistics, together with the curriculum chosen, were intentional and aimed at situating this program as a potential model for other small, liberal arts colleges to develop similar efforts towards implementing reentry programs.

Introduction

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”
-Heraclitus

The importance of internationalization of higher education institutions in these times of globalization is no secret. About half of American schools, colleges and universities include some level of global engagement in their mission and vision statements (Inside Higher Ed, 2017).

Marlboro College is no exception, mentioning that its students are “encouraged to acquire [...] a global perspective” (Marlboro College mission statements, 2018).

Like many other schools, Marlboro’s efforts to offer its students opportunities for global engagement range from foreign language teaching to programming on campus and from faculty diversity to bringing in international students. However, by far the most popular and widespread means for college students across the country to get in touch and learn about other cultures is studying abroad (Brajkovic & Matross, 2018). The popularity of study abroad among US college students is on the rise, as the Institute for International Education reports: the percentage of students studying abroad has steadily increased in the past three decades (Open Doors, 2017). Students can choose from a growing number of providers, university-based programs and opportunities, and exchange partners.

Over the years, the approach to study abroad has evolved from what LaBrack (1994) defined the “Dark Ages of training, marked by ethnocentric and Eurocentric assumptions” (p. 242) into an ever strengthening structure dedicated to supporting students through logistical preparations, financial strategizing and intercultural work, in order to allow them to overcome difficulties and both develop an ability for intercultural adjustments and be successful in their personal goals for the study abroad period. Pre-departure orientations are now common practice in every institution, with initiatives ranging from meetings with international office staff or one-time sessions for outgoing cohorts, to full-fledged, semester-long courses preparing students for their experience.

The usefulness of these initiatives is beyond question: students are more prepared for potential challenges awaiting them abroad such as culture shock, language differences and general

adaptation necessities. They are given the tools to adapt and adjust to a new environment more quickly, more effectively and more successfully, with obvious positive consequences on their achievements and successes. However, as LaBrack (1994) points out, while pre-departure orientations are improving in quality and comprehensiveness, there is a fundamental link that is missing from most institutions' handling of the student study abroad experience and learning: a post-experience reflection and analysis aimed at integrating the knowledge acquired abroad into the path ahead. Studies by Kammann (2008) and later Arouca (2013) show that while students feel prepared for the challenges they are about to encounter in a foreign culture, they don't feel that their institutions prepared them adequately for the difficulties they would encounter upon their return.

Students' confusion is often twofold. On the one hand, they might encounter psychological difficulties such as reverse culture shock and readjustment difficulties, and even identity crises for some. On the other hand, they have a hard time conceptualizing their experience and moving from an emotional understanding of their time abroad to an intellectual one that would allow them to rationalize their experiences and talk about them in different contexts and to different audiences in a compelling, precise and insightful way. A plethora of studies (Dwyer, 2004; Hansel, 2008, Paige, 2009, and others) boast the benefits of studying abroad, but are the students themselves able to explain their own learning and growth in an equally articulate way? Authorities in the field such as NAFSA and the Forum on Education Abroad have called for a more intentional approach to students' learning during study abroad experiences, with experts such as Lilli Engle (2013) speaking up about the need for more formalized structures for returnees to process their own learning and development.

How does this apply to Marlboro? As previously mentioned, Marlboro's efforts to internationalize its students' college experience are commendable and manifold: almost 30% of faculty members are international, around 50% of students go abroad in some capacity during their college experience, and while initiatives such as international recruitment and exchange partnerships are still in the developing stages, there has been increasing attention and efforts

devoted to students' global engagement through linguistic, cultural and study abroad experiences. Not only is global engagement included in the college mission, but expanding off campus opportunities, developing an appreciation for diversity and difference and helping local and global communities are now goals included in the president's yearly operational plan for the school.

Because these sound like quite standard goals for a college mission, it is useful to look at them keeping in mind the values that Marlboro declares to stand for. The school takes pride in its focus on self-directed learning: Marlboro students are not required to fulfill requirements other than studying broadly during their first two years, which creates extremely personalized and interdisciplinary curriculums uncommon in other schools. Study abroad is equally free of constraints: students can choose virtually any program if they make a case strong enough that the program will help them fulfill their academic goals.

Engaged citizenship is another one of the foundational values Marlboro College revolves around: the Marlboro community self-regulates through a town meeting that meets every week to discuss matters of general interest. The selectboard, including the head selectperson, are almost exclusively students, and there are many other committees in charge of all aspects of college community life that students are expected to participate in. Paige, Fry, Stalman, Josic and Jon, authors of the 2009 SAGE (Study Abroad for Global Engagement) project, state that civic engagement and social entrepreneurship are two of the five components that make up global engagement, and represent the two activities that study abroad returnees are most likely to engage in.

Given the tight relationship between study abroad and the development of skill sets and attitudes so valued at Marlboro, it is clear that the more students are encouraged and supported in their reflections on their experiences abroad, the better they will understand and fulfill expectations and the school profile, improving a sense of belonging and common purpose. Thus, the need emerges for a structured reentry program that responds to the needs and characteristics of Marlboro's student population. This paper will outline a proposal for "Back On The Hill", a comprehensive reentry program for Marlboro students who study abroad, based on the tools and

resources that the college is already utilizing and building off of those, and grounded in accurate research on current literature on the subject and on best practices in other universities.

The proposal for “Back On The Hill” is also firmly grounded in experiential learning theory, another framework that in recent years has been applied to study abroad programming more and more (Kolb and Passarelli, 2012; Montrose, 2002). Utilizing this lens makes sense especially in the light of Marlboro’s recent decision to merge the International services office and the Experiential learning and career development offices into the Center for experiential learning and global engagement. Both managed by SIT alumnae, the two offices have been given growing visibility and resources as internationalization and global engagement became more prominent in the college’s goals. “Back On The Hill” represents one more step toward the conceptualization of studying away from campus as something that is an integral part of the students’ academic curriculum. One of the goals of the program will be to educate students on experiential learning, to give them the tools to not only learn from their experience abroad, but to apply the same reflective framework to other, future experiences. Once students learn this, it will be clear to them how the study abroad experience is not a standalone episode, but a part of a larger process of academic, personal and professional learning.

To situate the program and this paper within a larger context of academic research and best practices, the following section will be devoted to analyzing more and less recent literature on the topics of what study abroad reentry is, how it affects students, and its relationship to experiential learning, as well as how these ideas and frameworks are implemented by higher education institutions throughout the United States.

Theoretical Foundations

Reentry defined

Study abroad reentry can be defined as a “continuum of experience and behaviors” (Westwood, Lawrence & Paul, 1986, p.223) that an individual encounters when returning home after having been immersed in a context that required a certain degree of adjustment in order to

function effectively. In simpler terms, reentry is “what happens when you come home from living abroad” (Citron & Mendelson, 2005, par.1).

As mentioned above, going abroad is an adjustment process. The pattern of experiences and behaviors that typically happens when a person is immersed in a different culture is called culture shock (Oberg, 1958): it is a largely known, and thus expected, phase of a sojourn abroad. What is less expected, however, is that coming home after spending time abroad also entails a degree of re-adjustment. So much so that the phase of disorientation, disconnection and conflicting feelings about being back that affects many returnees’ first weeks or months has been defined as “reverse culture-shock.” Two very effective and widely used models that describe the two parallel phenomena are the U-curve model (Lysgaard, 1955) and the deriving W-curve model (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). These models have been largely accepted by educators in the past decades, and lots of academic research, training designs and student activities have been based on them.

Lysgaard (1955) summarizes the fluctuation of mood and attitudes that expatriates typically experience in four main stages: honeymoon, culture shock, recovery and adjustment. The honeymoon phase occurs at the beginning, when everything about the new place is exciting and new and adjustment appears easy and successful. Following this happy stage, many people start noticing more and more aspects of the host culture that seem incomprehensible, confusing or annoying, to the point of experiencing intense feelings of maladjustment, disillusionment, alienation, resentment and even anxiety (Young, 2014): this is the phase defined as culture shock. As time passes, however, sojourners learn to master everyday life the host community, feeling more and more integrated into the society until life in a new culture or country becomes (almost) routine.

Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) extended Lysgaard’s model to include the readjustment process happening after returning home. “As a consequence of the resocialization experience in the alien environment, a sojourner tends to acquire expectation patterns compatible with his new social system. [...] The result, of course, is that the sojourner typically finds himself out of phase with his home culture on his return” (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963, p. 39). The W-curve, as the authors

define it, includes four additional phases: honeymoon at home, reverse culture shock, recovery at home, and re-adjustment.

In addition, Pusch's more recent "reentry worm" model (1988) is yet another useful representation of the range of feelings that students go through upon returning home. Its irregular shape has been praised for being better suited to describing feelings that don't necessarily happen in the linear sequence described by the previous two models. As many authors and Pusch herself pointed out, by no means do these behavioral models apply to the entirety of the returnee population, and some of the most recent researchers go as far as to qualifying them as having "validity mostly as a heuristic device to provoke discussion about acculturation" (Gray & Savicki, 2015).

Gray and Savicki are not alone in looking critically at these traditionally prevalent models, and in questioning their applicability today. A recent study by Chien (2016), for example, focused on whether these models still accurately describe the experiences of students and sojourners during the adjustment phases. Chien found that the complexity of this process could not be reduced to a simple shaped graph, and put forward the hypothesis that the fluctuations in feelings and attitudes toward the host country actually depend on a variety of both internal (student-specific) and external (situation-related) factors.

Chien looked at patterns of adjustment identified by students on both the academic and the socio-cultural levels, and found that only about 10% of students felt that their experience could be described by a U-shaped graph. Instead, they mentioned a number of factors that influenced the evolution of their adjustment process, such as cultural distance between home and host countries, previous intercultural experience and field of study. Chien's findings acquire particular significance when contextualized in the light of the research conducted throughout the years by other prominent international educators.

Reentry described

Regardless of their subscription to the U-curve or W-curve models, many authors have attempted to clarify the factors contributing to reverse culture shock and to the general emotional turbulence involved in coming home. LaBrack (2003) suggests applying Paige's (1993) classification of study abroad intensity factors to reentry, a conceptualization later supported by Gray & Savicki (2015). Martin (1994) outlines a systems-based theory of reentry adaptation based on four components: predisposition of the sojourner, home environment characteristics, communication abilities of the sojourner and re-adaptation outcomes. Juffer (1994) synthesizes five main factors causing culture shock, that parallel many of the factors Storti outlines in his 2001 book, *The Art of Coming Home*, as important contributors to the feelings of surprise and confusion people experience once back home. These factors are: confronting a new environment or situation, ineffectiveness of interpersonal or intercultural communication, threats to the emotional well-being of the sojourner, need to modify behavior to regain positive reinforcement, and growth experience.

Something most of the above-mentioned models and theories share is a degree of attention towards expectations. Paige puts it beautifully: "culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar; reentry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar" (Paige, 2005, p.143). Expectations can have a tremendous impact on the returnee's attitude, which in turn affects their success in reintegrating. As LaBrack (1994) explains, students have an idealized view of "home," and they tend to take for granted that they will be familiar with the environment they return to. Young (2014) adds that expectations from friends and family can also weigh the student down: many of the people closest to the returnee don't expect them to have trouble readjusting, contributing to the common "nobody gets it" feeling returnees so often report. Contrary to the beginning of the study abroad adventure, when the student's support group was well-defined and enthusiastic, now it seems to be shifting and unwilling, or unable, to help.

To better understand the impact of expectation and the source of so many misconceptions about returning home, it is useful to focus on the very words we use to describe and talk about our experiences. What do we mean when we say, “returning *home*?” Storti’s (2001) reflection on this is eye-opening. The author explains that what contributes to the expectation of a smooth reentry is an overlapping idea of “home” as both a physical space, but also as a mental place of routine interactions, predictable events and people, sense of belonging and mutual trust, a place where one can generally be themselves and feel safe. Storti then simply states that “this very realization, that home is really not home, is at the core of the experience of reentry” (p.4).

The “essence of home” (p.5) is broken down into three elements: familiar places, familiar people and routines and predictable patterns of interaction; this subdivision makes it easier to shed light on the changes that inevitably happen during the time a person spends abroad. Places that used to be familiar, for example, undergo sometimes a double metamorphosis: on the one side, houses get painted, new shops move in and old neighbors move out. On the other side, the returnee’s emotional reaction to even unchanged places isn’t the same anymore, as a new series of meanings gets attached to factors like traffic, noise, crowds or lack thereof. People that used to be familiar have changed as well: they went through life experiences that changed them, and the returnee has gone through life experiences that changed her, too. “Time hasn’t stopped for them anymore than it has stopped for you, though it has indeed stopped for both of you as far as shared experiences are concerned” (Storti, 2001, p. 9). Finally, because people and places have changed so much, inevitably the routines and interactions associated with them need to be modified too, preventing the returnee from being able to trust their instincts and “be themselves” until those routines are re-learned and the interactions re-established.

Clarifying expectations and discussing potential surprises that returning home might have for students, then, seems to be a good first step in helping them deal with the reentry process.

Young (2014), for example, mentions a student who, prompted to picture what might be changed upon her return home, shared that her parents were getting a divorce and she wouldn’t be returning

to her family home. Paige (2006) reports students finding that they had the hardest time coping with being back home when they were bored. Gray and Savicki (2015) noted that one of the factors that made it difficult for students to readjust was simply accepting that their study abroad experience was over. Discussing these potential issues beforehand, then, can be of significant help for students to adjust their expectations.

Furthermore, mentioning potential preparedness factors that could influence the level of challenge of the readjustment for the student is undoubtedly helpful. Both Gray & Savicki (2015) and Storti (2001) list a number of factors that overlap, entirely or partially, with Paige's (1994) intensity factors. Some of these include degree of cultural difference and of immersion in the host culture; age and previous intercultural experience; language fluency and degree of interaction with the host culture; and duration of the stay. LaBrack (1994) builds on Bennett's (1994) definition of ethnocentrism to define a common returnee behavior as "dual ethnocentrism: [...] the willingness of the students to rise to the defense of their 'adopted' culture [...] along with a tendency to lump Americans more readily into categories than before they left" (p. 257). Finally, Martin (1994) focuses heavily on communication skills and their role within the readjustment process: "better communication skills lead to better adaptation, and better adaptation leads to increased interaction" (p.309). Getting to know students and their backgrounds, then, is the best way to assess their intercultural sensitivity and communication skills, as well as their levels of past intercultural exposure and experience, and consequently adapt any trainings or conversations so they can be as beneficial for their specific case as possible.

While the impact of external factors and of students' preparedness is considerable, however, in order to provide a tailored reentry experience, an additional useful framework is the one of reentry styles. Based on personal characteristics of the returnee, Pusch (1998) and Paige (2006) describe respectively four and two styles of reentry.

Pusch, for example, identifies four kinds of returnees. The first, the free spirit, has thoroughly enjoyed being different in his host country, and seeks to maintain the same status by

acting eccentric back home. The detached returnee had established effective and positive experiences in her host culture, which causes her to act detached upon her return home.

Nevertheless, she is tolerant of any behaviors or events others would find hard to cope with. The reassimilator is happy to be back, and launches himself into activities, relationships and roles “just like before”. He is at a higher risk of “shoeboxing” his experience than other types. Finally, the integrator seeks to find a golden way to integrate her experience abroad with her old way of life, often acting as a mediator or advocate to bridge the two cultures she has been exposed to.

Paige (2006) approaches the classification from another viewpoint, focusing on suggested activities more than behavioral patterns. He describes an active kind of returnee, who enjoys engaging in dialogues, volunteering and getting involved in classes, presentations and events, and a reflective kind of returnee, who prefers to focus on letting the experience “soak in” (p. 155), reflecting on newly acquired skills, different senses of identity and the questions raised by the differences in values between host and home country.

Reentry and experiential learning

While the factors and variables listed above underline the very individual side of reentry, there are two overarching interpretations that surface throughout the literature. The first of these is reentry as a transition. Martin (1994) encourages “returnees to view the entire sojourn experience in the larger perspective of adult transitions” (p.314). The type of change returnees are confronted with, she argues, is similar to that of people who go through life transitions such as the death of a family member, settling into a new job, or a relocation. The themes of loss, adjustment to a new (possibly challenging) normal and opportunities for personal growth are common. Martin then recommends that trainers and educators build on the students’ experience, even if second-hand, of such a life transition, and help them apply similar coping strategies in order to not only survive, but make use of those learning opportunities. Storti (2001) puts forward a very similar argument, concluding that even if the student hasn’t been through a transition of this magnitude before, they can still reflect on a smaller transition they lived through. He refers to this as “taking the mystery out of the experience”

(p.46), in order to help students conceptualize their own feelings in a more familiar way. The reentry experience is not so different from other experiences the student already had, explains Storti, it's just on a different scale.

Martin, as well as many other authors, also makes a point of situating reentry within a larger context and framing it as both a process in and of itself, and a part of a larger process. In particular, Martin talks about reentry as part of the “cultural adaptation” process (p. 302), while LaBrack encourages students to “view their time abroad as an ongoing process of change and growth” (p.243), pointing out that “process” is an important key word when discussing reentry in general. Gray & Savicki (2015), in addition, mention that students need to look at reentry as a step (or multiple steps) in their ongoing work on sense of identity and values. Wong (2015) advocates for research spanning an extended period of time in order to properly assess the impact of study abroad; the author grounds his recommendation in a beautiful reflection by John Dewey, the father of experiential learning, who argues that living is a series of inter-connected experiences and that what a person has learned “in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow” (Dewey, 1938, p.44).

It is not surprising that in addition to the works mentioned above, in many other researchers' work the word “process” is very frequently used when talking about reentry. Kolb himself (2012) makes the connection between study abroad and the experiential learning cycle, suggesting that “experiential learning theory provides a model for educational interventions in study abroad because of its holistic approach to human adaptation through the transformation of experience into knowledge” (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012, p. 4). Montrose (2002) brings the reflection one step further by explicitly identifying the student's cultural immersion as the first part of the experiential learning cycle, the “doing” part. She then traces a parallel between the stages of the academic learning assessment and the experiential learning cycle: the “reflecting” part (students comparing their new experience with their previous ones), the “conceptualizing” part (students interpreting their

experience to look for meaning) and the “applying” part (students changing their behavior on the basis of the outcome of their reflections).

Many other authors substantiate more or less explicitly this overlap of the study abroad experience with the experiential learning cycle. LaBrack (1994) states that the overseas experience is only the beginning of an ongoing learning process, and Martin (1994) underlines how it is during transition moments such as reentry that growth and new levels of self-understanding can happen based on the previous experiences. Young (2014) encourages students to not put their experience behind them but to engage with it on a number of levels, and to see reentry as an opportunity to apply their new skills to a different environment. Gray & Savicki (2015) also call for a more holistic approach to reentry.

Tools and resources for reentry

While a thorough understanding of the dynamics of reentry is fundamental to take any action, the contributions of some of the above-mentioned authors are invaluable on the practical point of view as well. A true practitioner of experiential learning, LaBrack (1994) gives precious advice on how to put the view of study abroad as an ongoing learning process into practice. His recommendation, based on more than 15 years of programming and research, is to frame the experience abroad between a pre-departure orientation and a parallel reentry orientation that look at similar themes, but from different points of view. Students thus get the opportunity to encounter abstract theories during orientation, and then reflect on how those have been transformed in very concrete experiences during their time abroad. The two sessions together achieve a “synergistic effect, the sum being greater than the parts” (p. 275).

While LaBrack’s (1994, 2003) role in the reentry research is unequalled, many other authors also contributed valuable tools to the present wealth of reentry tools and resources. Paige (2006), for example, emphasizes journaling as a tool for continued reflection throughout the study abroad experience, interspersing reflecting prompts with anecdotal stories from previous students. The same story-based approach is used by Chisholm (2000), who parallels the phases of the study

abroad sojourn with Joseph Campbell's components of the universal myth. The power of metaphor and of stories, combined with the insight only a personal journal can provide, are optimal tools for students used to interdisciplinary reflection, extensive writing and general adventurousness such as Marlboro students.

More down-to-earth, but equally useful are the tips and tools listed by Kindred (2014), including programming ideas for effective reentry workshops and event, but also detailed rundowns of the departments that should be involved in the students' reentry phase and ready-to-print exercises for returnees to reflect on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they developed abroad. With Marlboro's reduced dimensions, communication and mutual support among departments is not only recommended, but also doable, requiring only slight adaptations of Kindred's directions.

Finally, Storti (2001), Citron & Mendelson (2005) and Young (2014) all provide useful tips such as dos and don'ts, logistical and emotional checklists and collections of skills, knowledge or feelings that students can use to compare their experiences against. Tips like these are perfect exercises that do not require an in-person meeting but still help students process their learning. In a context like Marlboro's, where the variety of study abroad experiences is very wide, a similar resource could go a long way in making sure all students have access to helpful resources to put their newly acquired skills and knowledge into practice. To complete this overview of reentry tools and resources, the last part of this section will look at the initiatives that universities and colleges in the United States implement for their students.

Reentry in practice

Institutions across the US dedicate varying amounts of energy to reentry resources and activities. A cursory research shows that regardless of size, academic focus or private or public status, institutions' study abroad website pages generally dedicate the most space and resources to program descriptions and academic information, some space to pre-departure orientation and logistics and rarely any space to reentry. When present, reentry sections almost always display a list of useful resources and ways to maintain one's involvement with the international community on

campus and beyond. Descriptions of reverse culture shock and tips on how to deal with it, program evaluation surveys and advice on logistical matters such as credit transfers appear quite regularly. Mention of courses or even events dedicated to processing the experience abroad is rare.

A 2016 review of various universities' reentry programming by SIT student Denver Miller offers a more detailed overview of the resources offered by small, private, liberal arts institutions, large, public schools and Ivy League member schools. From Miller's research emerges that the most common tools utilized by these types of schools to help students reflect on their experiences are a section of the website dedicated to returning students, returnee emails containing tips and evaluation surveys with an added reflective purpose, and alumni mentor programs. While Miller underlines that all of the institutions surveyed in his research provided at least a page on their website dedicated to returnees, it is important to point out that this research surveyed institutions with "prominent ranking in the IIE Open Doors report" and "over one thousand students sent abroad or over one third of the total undergraduate student body sent abroad" (p.15). These are universities that prioritize study abroad in their curriculum, or that have a high enough volume to justify the creation of targeted tools.

To balance out this review, a number of institutions considered "Marlboro peer institutions" have been surveyed. These include small, liberal art institutions with social justice foci and very small student populations. Marlboro peer institutions revealed similar patterns to the above mentioned research: only three of seven reviewed institutions have a "returnee" section of their website, one also referencing a student survey and only one mentioning student presentations of their research.

Needs assessment

Research design

In order to collect information about how Marlboro College has been managing the study abroad reentry process of its students, research was conducted in the form of interviews and surveys with current Marlboro students, alumni, staff and faculty members. In particular, current students

and alumni were invited to fill out a survey, administered through Survey Monkey (see appendix A), that contained 15 questions about their experiences abroad, the way those experiences impacted their future academic, personal and professional decisions and whether they felt that the college had helped them in the process. Students also had the chance to participate in an interview (appendix B) where those same topics were discussed in more detail. Both the surveys and the interviews were semi-structured, containing multiple choice questions and prompts but also providing opportunities for students to expand on their answers and go into more detail freely.

Staff and faculty were invited to participate in interviews about their experiences, ideas and suggestions about reentry at Marlboro (appendix C). Interviews were again semi-structured, with a number of questions that respondents could take in a variety of directions depending on their field of expertise and role with the college. The sampling for the research for “Back On The Hill” was thus a convenience type, the main requirement being some degree of experience with study abroad. In particular for the staff and faculty group, given the small size of Marlboro there would have been no possible comparison between different answers within the same department, as almost all teaching and administrative roles are covered by a single person. For purposes of inter-department comparison, however, the questions asked to staff and faculty members were the same across the board, to compare levels of awareness, initiative and experience with the topic.

While surveys helped collect a good amount of quantitative data, what was expected to be most beneficial for this research was the qualitative data collected from the open ended questions in both surveys and interviews. The narratives shared by all members of the Marlboro community contained precious information about the needs of students in the post-study abroad phase and answers to whether the college was doing enough to help them. They also provided a series of suggestions, ideas and advice rooted in their experience with the college. The active participation of a number of people in key roles in the study abroad process also ensured that important perspectives on the study abroad process were not missed out on.

While responsiveness from the part of staff and faculty was good, students and alumni didn't engage in the process in a similar fashion. 14 of them filled out the survey, but when those who agreed to participate in the interview were invited to set a time to meet, only one answered. Low engagement might have been linked to the timeline selected: surveys were sent out on February 19 and answers were collected until March 3, two weeks that coincided with midterms. Interviews were conducted during the same time span. The limited response on behalf of students, however, didn't affect the amount of insight into their experiences excessively, as, as stated above, the student interviews would have been exploring more in depth the questions that were asked in the surveys.

Discussion of results

While perspective changed according to faculty and staff's expertise field and students' study abroad experience, the survey and interview results showed substantial agreement among all participants on several key themes. Respondents agreed on the value of an experience abroad in terms of learning experience, with 13 out of 14 students selecting "completely agree" to the statement "I learned a lot while abroad", and faculty and staff members using words like "gift", "invaluable opportunity" and "really important" when asked about the learning that happens while abroad. Participant F shared:

I think in general, it's just broadening the worldview, I think there's nothing like putting yourself in a foreign location with different culture to kinda have that self-reflection on the environment that you grew up in that you kind of were immersed in, so in general I think that's a really valuable gift that you get from travelling abroad.

Students themselves talked about "broadening perspectives", "personal growth" and "cross-cultural understanding and empathy". One survey respondent wrote: "for me going abroad is mostly about personal growth by broadening my horizon and by walking out of my comfort zone." Another said "going abroad helped me cement my career/professional goals".

Research participants also had similar answers when asked about when the learning takes place in their opinion: many mentioned that they think it's after returning home, sometimes even

years after. Students unanimously agreed that they not only learned a lot while abroad, but were also later influenced in their career, academic and life choices, the latter being the most heavily influenced.

When asked to describe Marlboro's role in helping students readjust and apply their experience, responses from both students and faculty and staff were again consistent. While more than 65% of students mentioned receiving some pre-departure orientation, 80% stated that they received no preparation for reentry while abroad, and 50% said they weren't assisted once home. While this might mean that about half of the students did get some amount of help, a closer look reveals that most of the support received was not from structures put in place by Marlboro as part of the study abroad experience but from "other students who have been or are in similar situations", "my professors", "friends and family", and even acquaintances such as professors or staff at other institutions. Participant E's story is a particularly telling example:

From an institutional perspective [reentry] was really hard. Marlboro made it exceedingly difficult for me to get my credits transferred. [...] I ended up threatening to leave and go to UMass, because they were going to respect the credits, and at that Marlboro did take them on. So, that was...I had the feeling that bringing in all those credits was going to make me a Junior 2, instead of a Junior 1, they had now missed out on 3 semesters worth of tuition, I don't know if that was the reason but it definitely felt like the reason at the time. [...] So I think my number one support person was my faculty advisor [...] And I also...before the semester started, I met with the economics professor, because through my experience abroad I decided I wanted to do a little bit of economics too, and so he was very supportive of, in true Marlboro fashion, integrating me quickly into his curriculum, and kind of be willing to take on an economics student that he'd never met before and work with my interests.

Survey respondents also expressed the need for better logistical support, suggesting options ranging from an "optional course for students" to a "psychologist or person who is open and ready to talk to

the students”. These findings speak to the issues of enrollment and retention, and the necessity for better reintegration experiences on the psychological, academic and logistic levels.

Another fundamental part of the reintegration process is to be able to analyze and articulate one’s own learning. Students recognized that the college could be doing more to help them, but they were unsure exactly how. One of the survey participants, when reflecting on whether Marlboro helped him articulate his experience, admitted: “I don’t know that Marlboro has helped me articulate...well, I guess it must be helping, but I see that as the [...] natural process of growing up and maturing in this space”, effectively describing a lack of clear structure to guide students in the process of analyzing and reflecting on their own learning.

However, all of the 14 respondents to the survey suggested that one-on-one or group discussions are a valuable tool that they either found useful or wished was available to them to reflect on their experience. One student wrote: “There are so many lessons I could engage with if I sifted through my memories of the trip”. Another said “what helps me is journaling and poetry”. 65% of students also mentioned either journaling or conversations with others as a helpful strategy both during and after their experience to reflect on, and process their learning. Many mentioned “talking to other students”, “verbally processing”, “swapping stories” and “sitting down with someone who understands international travel and who is willing to create a good listening space”.

The need for additional structure that students brought up was confirmed by comments from faculty and staff, who described having a role only in informal reentry processes, consisting mostly of spontaneous conversations with returnee students. Participant B explained:

Students from across the campus are having all kinds of experiential learning experiences, and I don't think that that is all collected and is not all processed and so what I do find is when I do have one on one meetings with students who have requested help with resume then I prod and ask certain questions, things come out, but wouldn't it be more valuable if they were able to do that in a timely way after an experience so that it's fresh for them and they can really make some meaning around what they did experience?

Participant B's concerns also speak to a need for increased support and implementation of experiential learning principles on campus. Even after the creation of the Center for Experiential Learning and Global Engagement, in fact, the pedagogical tenets of the model are not yet widely subscribed to. To her previous point, she added:

I also think that structured reflection, taking time to think about the experience but then also asking the question of "so what?", like yes I have this experience, what am I gonna do now, and that's that application component that is really missing around here, in lots of areas, so I would love to see that being integrated in a more holistic way.

Increased awareness around the importance of reentry and its relationship with effective experiential learning are part of a larger advocacy effort from the part of experts and authors such as LaBrack (1994), Martin (1994), Storti (2001) and Montrose (2002). These authors, and many others, call for a more intentional approach to study abroad reentry, providing resources and support for students upon their return.

The college's involvement in the reentry process was strongly advocated by participants in the research as well. Participant C, for example, reminded me that "we are a learning environment and an educational institution, so we have a role in facilitating learning". Despite their support, none of the faculty or staff members could remember precisely whether there has ever been any formal reentry programming at the college other than student presentations, which are up to individual advisors to request. However, a quick research in an old filing cabinet did turn up a few folders containing some reentry programming: a couple of information packets, a study abroad evaluation form, and an old flyer inviting students to a reentry workshop. What this indicates is that whatever effort has been made in the past, not only it didn't stick in the institutional memory, but it was carried out without great involvement from other departments or from faculty members, even those close to the global engagement activities.

What this underlines is a need for improved communication, and cooperation, among college departments. Better reentry programming has the potential to not only improve student

experience, but also to provide opportunities for staff and faculty to get involved and work together, with positive effects on employee retention as well. Participant C recounted his experiences with study abroad as quite pleasant:

I haven't traveled with students now for a few years but there was a time when it was the most enjoyable part of my job. I have been fortunate as a staff member to be able to travel, I hope other staff get to do it more and work more closely with faculty, that's really valuable for our community, the constituents doing activities together.

Participant A agreed:

That's an international office director's dream that everyone would be fully integrated in the conversations and pre-departure and whatever. At Marlboro, I think that's one of the only ways that we would find full success in getting students to think about their learning before, during and after [study abroad].

Looking towards the future, students also agreed with staff and faculty in their support for an increased degree of involvement of the college and of different departments in the reentry phase.

When asked about activities or resources they would like to have available, one respondent said “one-on-one discussions with someone in charge of study abroad”, while others suggested “a one-credit tutorial on reflecting on going abroad”, “a psychologist”. One expressed the need for

“logistical support, like allowing students who [...] have just returned to stay on campus even if it's closed for a break. It's extremely annoying to have to find a place to stay for awkward amounts of time or having to go all the way to your family's house only to drive back to school a few days later”.

Whether it's the International services, faculty, the Total Health Center or student life, then, collaboration among departments is clearly required for a better student experience.

Goals and Objectives

In order to respond to the needs outlined above, “Back On The Hill” will be structured as a multi-layer effort, whose benefits will extend not only to students, but to the entire college community. As such, the program goals and objectives will be geared towards involvement of as many departments on campus as possible, to spearhead a greater degree of collaboration and understanding among departments. Student goals will be set with a holistic perspective on education in mind: Back On The Hill falls in line with Marlboro’s mission of educating students not only from the academic, but also from the personal, professional, social and civil side.

Program goals and objectives:

- Contributing to the implementation of best practice reentry learning tools and theories in the field
 - Creating and implementing a program on the Marlboro College campus
 - Documenting and evaluating the program for future reference and as a model for other small liberal arts institutions
- Responding to the internationalization goals stated in Marlboro’s mission statement and in the President’s current operating plan
 - Raise awareness among college departments of the importance of study abroad for the student’s education and formation
 - Contributing to improving student retention rates by improving the perceived value of students’ education at Marlboro
 - Improve collaboration and network among departments on campus to improve staff retention

Student goals and objectives:

- Becoming aware of the learning that happened abroad to be able to understand it and meaningfully apply it

- Analyzing and processing newly acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes at the academic, professional and personal levels
- Assessing and evaluating learning tools and styles according to individual preference
- Reflecting on the psychological implications of being back home (for example, reverse culture shock) and developing coping mechanisms to positively process those implications
- Gaining relevant knowledge about the meanings and potential outcomes of an experience abroad
 - Being able to apply abilities and knowledge acquired abroad to a variety of contexts, and doing so critically
 - Learning about professional, academic and other opportunities to further and deepen the learning already acquired
 - Being able to understand the experiential learning cycle and other theories about learning and development, and their applications outside of the study abroad field.

Program Description

The goals and objectives described above can be most effectively fulfilled with a program that will last a semester. Created specifically for Marlboro students, this program will be designed as an interactive, experiential, multidisciplinary semester-long and credit-bearing course open to all students who have studied abroad or have otherwise significant international experiences. To ensure that every Marlboro student can take advantage of the offerings of Back On The Hill, the course will be run during the school year, in a structure that reflects that of the regular courses students will be taking as part of their curriculum. The program will also bear two credits.

Given the limited number of students going abroad every year (and thus of the students returning), it wouldn't make sense to run the course every semester. The best option for the purposes of the program is to have the course in the fall semester, as it represents an ideal time for students who went abroad during the spring semester or during spring and summer breaks. Students

enrolled in the World Studies program (Marlboro's internationally focused degree track) will also be favored by the timing of a Fall semester course, as for their required international internship many choose a timeline that starts in January and ends at the end of the summer.

Back On The Hill is thus aimed at benefitting all Marlboro students who have studied abroad, with any program they might have chosen. Because of a number of requirements students need to fulfill before they can be eligible for going abroad through the college, the students in the course will likely be mainly juniors and seniors, sometimes sophomores. This will mean that a wide range of ages will be represented in the course. Many Marlboro students are non-traditional students and older students, and a good number of them have a clear idea of their during-and post-college plans upon enrollment, which often means that they are more likely to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the college, such as study abroad. Student diversity in the program will reflect the college's, meaning that a number of queer and LGBT+ students, students of color and other minorities will potentially participate in the program's activities.

It's important to mention that diversity within the reentry program means diversity within the student population that studies, researches, works or lives abroad through the college. This goal is one that is shared and important regardless of the reentry programming, for reasons of representation and advancement of underrepresented minorities in study abroad.

Finally, another factor of heterogeneity within the group will be tied to experience. Students will come to the program having participated in a wide variety of study abroad programs, from semester-long exchanges to six-month-long internships, from two-week faculty-led trips to independent programs through third-party providers.

Curriculum

Theoretical foundations

The program curriculum will not only be based on the theoretical foundations and best practices regarding study abroad, but it will also take into consideration principles and frameworks modeling pedagogical approaches and topic-related learning. First of all, the student and identity

development models proposed by Magolda (2017) and by Sue & Sue (2012) are fundamental in the understanding of how students develop not only through their experience abroad, but through their years of young adulthood, and how the two processes interact. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity (1994) will be utilized as a "litmus test" to assess student learning and intercultural competence; as the author points out, intercultural sensitivity development and ethnic identity development progress in stages that often overlap, bringing the relationship between the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects to the forefront of the learning.

Sessions and activities will be modeled after Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle, both considering the study abroad experience as the "concrete experience" part and engaging students in other activities that can fulfill the same purpose. Reflection, creation of theories and application of the conclusions drawn from the process are the following three steps of the cycle, which will be applied both at the overarching program level and at the single session or activity level. Kolb's theorization of different learning styles will also be taken into consideration when designing program sessions, with the goals of acknowledging and respecting learning diversity.

Finally, content and activities during the program will be chosen with an eye towards Marlboro's learning philosophies and most popular learning structures. The choice of asking students to journal throughout their experience abroad is consistent with the writing-focused approach at the college. As mentioned above, the number of students going abroad every year is small, which will allow a horizontal, discussion and activity-based classroom model. Finally, the projects assigned will have few guidelines, in order to encourage the self-designed, interdisciplinary style that characterizes Marlboro students' academic life.

Prerequisite work

The success of students' reflection in this program relies on a few preconditions. First of all, before going abroad students will have participated in a pre-departure orientation session, where reentry was mentioned and briefly discussed. World Studies students will have completed the

“Finding An Internship” class, a one-credit preparatory course to facilitate their independent research internship.

Students will also have kept a journal at least once a week throughout their experience abroad, an exercise required for the purposes of this reentry program, but also aimed at facilitating the integration of their field notes with academic work, helping them track any issues or situations through time and, in case they received funding from the school, facilitating the drafting of their final grant report.

Finally, in order to be able to receive credit for their experience, students will need to complete a “return absentia” form. While an absentia form is a pre-departure document that attests that the student checked in with the necessary departments about their trip, the “return absentia” form will be a similar form that makes sure that the student touched base with a number of key departments once more, upon return. These departments include the Total Health Center, Academic advising, the International services office and so on. Conversations triggered by these routine check-ins are not only indispensable to make sure that the student is back on track and to spot any issues before they escalate, but they can inform more meaningful reflections during program sessions.

Orientation/intro class

Before the beginning of the program, an introductory session will be held, outlining the structure and learning objectives of the course as well as the expectations from students. This meeting fits into a structure that Marlboro students are familiar with: at the beginning of every semester, the 10 days before the add/drop deadline are dedicated to 20-minute intro classes, which serve as “samples” of the course for students to attend. These classes serve both as a sample for the course for interested students who are undecided about enrollment, and as orientation for the students already enrolled. During this session, the main content points of the course as well as a few key activities such as resume writing, journal analysis and creation of personal projects for

International Education Week will be described. Students will also have a chance to get to know fellow classmates and set norms and expectations for their class time.

Back On The Hill – the program

The group will meet once a week for two hours for 14 weeks, during the standard fall semester. While the meeting structure will be similar to a class (with a predetermined room and time), the activities, assignments and several sessions outside of the classroom will make it much more than a class.

Throughout the course, the focus will be on three aspects of the learning: personal, academic and professional. These aspects will not necessarily be focused on one at a time, but whenever a particular skill set is examined, students will be encouraged to frame it within one or more of these “boxes”. For example, reflections on personal development, psychological phenomena and individual life goals will be seen as personal learning; analyses of learning styles, different school systems and observations on educational goals will be seen as academic learning, and so on. Students will also be encouraged to keep their journaling going throughout the semester, as the material they gather will be important for their own final self-assessment and for future reference.

During the first few sessions, students will be able to look back onto their experience with the help of their journals, and work on self-awareness in the fields mentioned above. They will learn about reentry as a process and its possible psychological implications; they will analyze their own learning and practice presenting it concisely and effectively in different contexts. This first portion of the program will also have students focus on practical uses of their experience such as updating their resume and practicing writing about their time abroad in cover letters, or talking about it in interviews.

The middle part of the course consists in an extended reflection on different aspects of the study abroad experience. If the study abroad time and the first part of the program represented the experience and observation parts of the experiential learning cycle, this section will be the reflection and generalization part. Students will examine their attitudes towards their experience and learn

about ways to keep it relevant and integrate it into their everyday lives. They will be presented with theories and frameworks around intercultural work and identity development and will have the chance to articulate their own thoughts on the matter. They will also start developing their projects for International Education Week, another way to apply their new skills in a way that benefits the entire community.

During the final sessions, students will start thinking about ways to apply their learning not only within their college timeframe, but beyond graduation. Starting with integrating their learning into Plan of Concentration, their final thesis project, and continuing with the exploration of options to keep their careers internationally focused, students will be exposed to and reflect on experiential learning theories as they apply to lifelong learning, in an effort to contextualize their study abroad experience and participation in Back On The Hill within their broader life picture.

A detailed outline of the content of the single sessions can be found in appendix D.

Staffing Plan

In order to ensure accessibility and feasibility of this program, the implementation of every aspect of the program will be assigned to regular Marlboro staff as part of their job duties. It is not unusual at Marlboro for staff members to teach a class, or for alumni or retired faculty to still be engaged in academic life: this kind of flexibility will be extremely helpful to the success of this program, as it doesn't require additional budget for the hiring of external staff.

The direction of the program, and the facilitation of most of the sessions, will be assigned to Marlboro's international services coordinator, one of the two staff members the International services office consists of. Her duties include selecting and inviting guest speakers, conducting initial planning and outreach and final wrapping up and evaluations, and communicating with any other person or department involved with the program.

Selected staff or faculty members will be invited as guest speakers or facilitators in sessions dedicated to career development, community engagement and international opportunities. Alumni and other external guest speakers will also be invited to panel sessions and other relevant activities;

as they are not part of the Marlboro community, they will be compensated according to the time dedicated.

Key roles for the logistical aspects of the program, such as housing, meals and transportation, are going to be covered by college staff, who will be required no extra work for the program to be possible. Health, safety and any crisis management will similarly be under the responsibility of the campus Total Health Center, the academic advising staff and the student life staff. For more details, see sections on logistics, health and safety, and crisis management.

Program Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions

Back On The Hill will be marketed and promoted like a regular addition to the Marlboro curriculum. At the end of the spring semester, the program will be included in the regular course offering list for students, so anyone interested will be able to register for it. However, the course will be mostly marketed to, and enrollment will be encouraged with students who are about to study abroad or are currently abroad. During pre-departure orientation, the program will be mentioned among the resources available upon reentry. Students will be reminded of this possibility through an email sent out one week before they come back from studying abroad, which will also contain a few recommendations and logistical reminders to help students wrap up the experience in preparation for reentry and the program itself (for an outline of this email, see appendix E).

During the first week of the Fall semester, other, in-person ways will also be utilized to inform students of this opportunity: flyers will be posted around campus (see appendix F), posts will be shared about it on the students' Facebook page, an article will be published in the Stall Street Journal, a one-page publication whose strategic location is self-explanatory, and announcements will be made during Town Meetings (every Wednesday before the beginning of the course).

A short introduction to Back On The Hill will also be modeled after an intro class to give students a preview of what they will be learning in the course. During this short time, students will be presented with the key learning objectives and with a general contextualization of the course

within the larger picture of their college degree, community life and post-graduation plans, with the goal of explaining the usefulness of the program.

On the admissions side, the only prerequisites Back On The Hill has for students is to be enrolled at Marlboro and to have had some degree of experience abroad, which is necessary in order to contribute to the student-led, experience based reflections.

Logistics

The location of this program, implemented on the Marlboro College campus, makes logistics convenient for participating students and program coordinators. Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from campus at the beginning and end of the semester, although a shuttle service is available from the closest airports upon reservation. Once on campus, they will be able to take advantage of public transportation in the form of the town bus system, complemented by private vans rented by the school, which come at no cost for students.

Lodging is available in various arrangements. In dorms, students can share rooms or ask to have their private room. Alternatively, additional student housing is available a short walk from campus for married or independent students. Apartments and shared living spaces in downtown Brattleboro are also an option, although in this case students will likely need independent transportation to make sure their participation in program activities is timely.

Program sessions will happen within regular semester dates in order not to disrupt class attendance and students' academic schedule outside of the program. Any multi-day activities (such as participation in the Nafsa conference) will be endorsed by the program director with the consent of the faculty members whose classes students would skip that day or week.

Students will also have a variety of choices when it comes to meals. The campus dining hall serves three meals a day on weekdays and two on weekends, which the students can access through purchase of meals plans for 7, 14 or 19 meals a week. Dining hall meals accommodate every dietary restriction and preference. In addition to the cafeteria, Marlboro College's Student Center also serves snacks and quick meals during afternoons and evenings, and the campus store offers a range

of foods alongside with other school supplies and materials. Independent housing will be furnished with kitchens for program participants to make their own meals, but choosing this housing arrangement does not preclude them from signing up for a dining hall meal plan.

Health and Safety Plan

Marlboro College's website states that it "recognizes that physical and emotional health significantly influence one's ability to participate fully in the college experience and in the world" (Total Health Center webpage, 2018, par. 1). Back On The Hill is no exception: appropriate health and safety measures will be in place throughout the program to ensure the best student experience. This will be possible thanks to the tools and procedures already in place at Marlboro College, which make sure that all enrolled students benefit from common safety measures.

Medical health on campus is managed and made possible by the Total Health Center (THC). Before students arrive to campus, the THC checks that they are aware of the vaccinations and health measures necessary to make sure that diseases don't spread in the high risk situation created by the many shared spaces on a college campus. Students are required to provide proof of vaccination against MMR, rubella, hepatitis B, tetanus-diphtheria, meningococcal, and varicella. A medical history form and a physical exam are also required from all enrolled students. Finally, enrollment in a health insurance plan is required; if students are not enrolled or covered by a parent's or guardian's plan, they can purchase an insurance plan through the college.

Upon return to campus after studying abroad, students will be required to visit the THC to complete the dedicated part of the "return absentia" form. This will make sure that no physical or mental health issues related to travelling go unnoticed.

Safety while on campus is administered by the Director of community safety, a staff member in charge of both prevention and reporting of any issues or student concerns. With the collaboration of the Outdoor Programs staff, the director of community safety also coordinates announcements and safety measures dictated by the college's rural setting. Orange vests for people and pets can be checked out by students during hunting season, headlights and flashlights are

available for those who might be walking on the edge of the street at dusk or at night, and safety measures to deal with any wildlife encounter are included in the college's safety protocols and orientation trainings.

Crisis Management Plan

The Marlboro College campus has detailed emergency response plans for numerous kinds of emergencies, from natural disasters to active shooters. These procedures are detailed on the college webpage. Life-threatening emergencies require first responders to first dial 911, then alert campus authorities dialing either 611 (during office hours) or the RA on duty (after hours). RAs will contact the student life Coordinators, who will then proceed to contact the dean of students, the director of community safety and the director of housing and residential life. Finally, these three roles will coordinate to notify the Senior Team, a group of higher administration staff who handles media communication, legal counsel and any family communications if necessary. In case of an emergency, residential life staff act as immediate frontline support; once student life Coordinators arrive, RAs switch to a crowd control and resource referral role. Once the fire, rescue or police officers dispatched by 911 arrive, Coordinators also switch to supporting the RAs in making sure everyone is receiving the help and support they need. This role continues after the immediate emergency is over, with RAs and Coordinators sharing responsibility for pointing students or community members towards the appropriate resource as needed.

In case of non-life threatening emergencies, any community members will simply skip the 911 call and dial 611, or the RA on duty, instead. For medical emergencies, the Total Health Center is able to respond effectively and act as an emergency room, as all of its nurses have MD training and are able to provide first aid and prescribe any necessary medications.

For any activities off campus (for example, Nafsa conference attendance), the Back On The Hill program director (the international services coordinator) will be on duty throughout the duration of the students' permanence off campus. In case of an issue or emergency, students will

call the program director, who will provide the necessary guidance and notify the Senior Team directly.

Budget Notes

Back On The Hill has been created with the least possible financial burden on students in mind, so as to increase its accessibility. The budget for the program will be drawn from the annual Christian Johnson Endeavor Foundation grant, a yearly donation aimed at international efforts in liberal arts schools. The only contribution students will be requested to make will be for their conference participation fee in case they decide to attend one day of the regional Nafsa conference. Contributions will still be on a sliding scale based on students' financial status, with students paying 25 to 75 percent of the cost and the program budget covering the remainder.

Fixed costs for the program include materials and books to be utilized during sessions and activities, a compensation fee for two guest speakers, and pay for student drivers for any off-campus events (Nafsa conference and/or others). Materials in particular include any supplies necessary for activities, printouts and movie fees for movies shown in class or as a community activity. Any books purchased will then be donated to the Marlboro library.

Variable costs include conference attendance fees and any materials students will need for their International Education Week projects.

A detailed outline of costs and revenue sources can be found in appendix G.

Evaluation Plan

To make sure that the needs are met and the student and program goals and objectives satisfied, both formative (in-program) and summative evaluations are planned for this program. Throughout the semester, short, end-of-session feedback slips are going to be collected. Ideally, this will happen every other session, to ensure ongoing monitoring of program quality and student perception of it. These feedback slips will take the form of simple helping/hindering bullet points, an important means to assess the program as it unfolds and make any necessary changes.

Halfway through the program (during session seven or eight), a self-evaluation will be filled out by students to pinpoint their learning and progress and for them to use as a “litmus test” of the learning benefits of the program. Speakers and guests will also be asked to complete a quick evaluation of their experience participating in program sessions.

At the end of the program, students will again compile a self-evaluation, with the help of both their mid-term self-evaluation and their ongoing journal entries. This will be shared with the program director for both evaluation and student grading purposes. Students will also fill out a comprehensive, anonymous satisfaction survey, evaluating every aspect of the program from logistics to content.

This final set of evaluations will collect important feedback on both the student and program level. Questions about students’ satisfaction towards the program and the college will help assess the level of contribution the program is giving to institutional goals such as internationalization and student retention. Questions about learning and personal growth will reveal to what extent student goals have been met.

While the first year of Back On The Hill will likely yield quite circumscribed answers, it is likely that by the third year of the program running, statistics around student retention and staff feedback about their level of satisfaction and understanding of how study abroad works and their role in it will contribute to an even deeper understanding of the best way to manage the program for the benefit of all.

Limitations

Although it is the result of efforts conducted on a variety of levels, like every programming proposal Back On The Hill is not immune to limitations. First of all, as mentioned earlier in the paper, the small number of respondents to survey and interviews (small even relatively to Marlboro’s student population) doesn’t guarantee that all student ideas and experiences were represented. This might lead to shortcomings of the program, or needs that go unaddressed.

Hopefully, this can be remedied by integrating the results of the formative and summative evaluations with the original needs assessment.

A second limitation is that the choice of running the program only during one semester inevitably means that any students returning to Marlboro for the spring semester will have to face reentry without the resources and the support that fellow program participants represent. An upside of this is that these students, if they decide to enroll, will bring their personal perspective of what it means to do some of the processing by themselves, and contribute to the conversation with the conclusions that time has allowed them to reach. Nevertheless, this issue can be addressed by creating materials that these students can access individually, such as a reentry manual, whenever they come home from abroad.

Conclusions and Implications

While limitations are inevitable and adjustments expected, Back On The Hill will nevertheless make a contribution to fill a double gap. At Marlboro, it will contribute to establishing reentry as a component of study abroad that isn't just an interesting addition, but an integral, and most importantly expected, part of the learning experience. In the context of higher education in the United States, it will represent support for a trend that has been advocated for by many researchers and practitioners, but that still lacks widespread implementation.

While more and more US students choose to study abroad, they still represent less than two percent of the total of the students enrolled in higher education institutions. Reentry programming has the potential to contribute to popularizing study abroad by empowering students to not only talk about their experiences as something different and fun, but also in terms of concrete learning achievements. This is especially important for minority students, whose reduced representation in study abroad is not only a disadvantage for their country, but also a missed opportunity for them to engage with other cultures, and for those cultures to engage with a more diverse American population.

REENTRY PROGRAMMING IN A SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

The hoped for outcome for this program is that it will contribute to making study abroad an even more meaningful and successful experience, one that students and their home institutions work together to make possible.

Appendices

A- Student survey

For purposes of this survey, “reentry” can indicate both the time after coming home from travelling abroad and the psychological and logistical process of returning and readapting to home.

1. Are you a...
 - Current Marlboro student
 - Marlboro alum
2. Please describe the type of program you went abroad with:
 - Marlboro exchange program
 - Faculty-led trip
 - External program (third-party provider)
 - Self-designed experience
 - Other (please specify)
3. Please select trip duration:
 - 2 weeks or less
 - 2 to 4 weeks
 - 4 to 8 weeks
 - 2 to 6 months
 - 6 to 12 months
 - Over 12 months
4. Please describe your trip shortly: destination, year, purpose (coursework? Internship? Research?) and any other significant feature.
5. Did you receive any kind of information or advice about reentry *before your departure?* (Examples are explanations of psychological processes that happen when going abroad for some time, and how they might affect you.)
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
6. Did you receive any kind of information or advice about reentry *before your reentry, while still abroad?* (Examples are a breakdown of what it is like to come back home, tips to deal with emotions related to leaving the host country, etc).
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
7. Did you receive any kind of information or advice about reentry *once back home?* (Examples are a meeting or activity with fellow returnee students, an advising session with the International Services staff, or a requirement such as a presentation or report).
 - Yes
 - No

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- Not sure
8. Of the three cases above, which activities or information did you find most useful if any?
 9. Please select your level of agreement with the following statements: (Scale of 1 to 5, 1 – Completely disagree, 5- Completely agree, plus n/a)
 - I learnt a lot while abroad.
 - I feel confident describing what exactly I learnt abroad.
 - I feel confident pinpointing *how* I learnt what I learnt.
 - Going abroad changed my perspective about my academic goals.
 - Going abroad changed my perspective about my career/professional goals.
 - Going abroad changed my perspective about my life goals.
 - I feel confident describing my personal growth while abroad.
 - I feel confident describing the academic knowledge I gained while abroad.
 - I feel confident describing the professional skills I gained while abroad.
 10. Please feel free to use this space to expand or provide examples for the statements above.
 11. How did you experience the return back home after studying abroad? This can be related to your personal, academic or professional experiences and it can include feelings, ideas, anecdotes, challenges, achievements, events and so on.
 12. If you feel confident describing your learning (for example, on a resume or a grant application), do you feel that Marlboro helped you find the language to articulate your experiences? If not, what helped?
 13. “The challenge now is to take both your new knowledge and your exploration skills and integrating them permanently into your life ahead” (Citron, 2005). Do you agree with this statement? If yes, what does that look like to you? Do you feel like you have the tools to do so?
 14. “Students need to take time to reflect upon their experiences in order to make the most of them, both during and after their time abroad” (Young, 2014). Do you agree with this statement? If yes, what does that look like to you? Do you feel like you have the tools to do so?
 15. In your opinion, what are some activities that should be provided to Marlboro students to help them to go through a smooth and effective reentry process?
 16. Please feel free to add any additional thoughts, comments or suggestions.

B- Student survey questions:

For purposes of this interview, “reentry” can indicate both the time after coming home from travelling abroad and the psychological and logistical process of returning and readapting to home.

1. Talk about your experience abroad briefly: where did you go? How long? What for (study, internship, language immersion...)? How long ago?
2. Did you receive any kind of advice or preparation about reentry either before leaving, while abroad or before coming back?
3. How was the reentry process? Did you find it difficult to come back home and to reintegrate into your daily routine?
4. What helped you with the reentry process? (Family, friends, activities or events, college faculty or staff...)
5. Did you receive any guidance from Marlboro about your post-study abroad time? (for example workshops, meetings, requirements etc)
6. Did going abroad change your perspective about your studies, career or life goals? If yes, would you be able to pinpoint how and/or give examples?
7. Have you thought about incorporating your study abroad experience into your resume, or have you already done so? If not yet, would you feel confident doing so in an articulate, effective, convincing way? If yes, did you gain these skills at Marlboro?
8. In your opinion, what could be an activity in particular that is useful for Marlboro students after they come back from abroad to reflect back on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they learnt?
9. Is there any other thought or comment about this topic that you would like to share?

C- Faculty/Staff interview questions

For purposes of this interview, “reentry” can indicate both the time after coming home from travelling abroad and the psychological and logistical process of returning and readapting to home.

1. In your opinion, what is the most important thing (or things) students can learn from study abroad? (This can be in general or Marlboro-specific)
2. When do you think this learning takes place?
3. Do you think faculty or staff members should help facilitate student learning and personal development when students go abroad? (This can be before, during or after the sojourn, in any capacity).
4. Have you ever worked with students on reentry in any capacity (through individual counseling, programming, academic curriculum and so on)? If yes, why did you choose the activities you did? Do you think they were successful? What do you think was the students’ biggest takeaway?

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5. Do you know of any activities of this kind implemented by the college in the past? Do you think they were effective?
6. In your opinion, should the college take charge of a student’s reentry process? If yes, how? Who should implement the experiences you suggest?

D- Daily session outline:

Session 0	Intro session: outlining structure and learning objectives of the course; presenting a few key content points and key activities such as resume writing, journal analysis and creation of personal projects for International Education Week. Classroom norms and expectations are drafted.
Session 1	Welcome, introductions if necessary, go over ground rules again. What is reentry? Presentation of theories and sharing of experiences through activities such as “draw your mood while abroad.” Look back to pre-departure orientation, Finding an internship and other classes; write your own personal, academic or professional manifesto (or commitment or learning plan).
Session 2	“So, how was study abroad?” Students work on synthesizing their experience to talk about it effectively, create their “elevator pitch”. Students who are required to do a presentation about their experience can use this time to prep and get peer feedback. Students enrolled in the program are required to go to at least one of their classmates’ presentation and provide them with meaningful feedback.
Session 3	Professional skills session: practicing elevator pitch, resume building, cover letter creation, and so on. Guest facilitator: Director of Experiential Learning & Career Development.
Session 4	How to keep it going? Fundraising & community involvement session. Presentation of Ashoka’s values (potentially by a guest speaker) and what “making the individual communal” means for study abroad. Introduction of International Education week, students start developing projects or events for the week, forming groups if necessary, brainstorming ideas. Students will be encouraged to plan an event or facilitate an activity that helps them develop leadership skills.
Session 5	Reflections on “giving back”: avoiding the “white savior” complex – watching the documentary Poverty Inc as a campus activity open to all. Important for students who do service learning to keep a decolonized approach. Reflection that study abroad is not for everyone – discussion on meaningful ambassadorship and acknowledgment of privilege.
Session 6	Barnaga game (experiential learning card game where unspoken playing rules are a metaphor for cultural norms) & reflection on intercultural communication. Presentation of Bennett’s intercultural sensitivity model and how it applies to language learning and cultural immersion.
Session 7	International community members panel (assignment for this session: critical incident & interview an international person about their experience in the US).
Session 8	Identity development session: diversity and identities there and back home. Reflection on race, sex, gender and other identities and how they interact with cultural norms at home and abroad. Potential guest speaker.
Session 9	Experiences abroad & Plan of Concentration: how to effectively fold students’ experience into their academic work at Marlboro
Session 10	Session on experiential learning. Students will practice identifying its phases within the experience abroad and learn how to apply it in their future life. Plan of Concentration, the Nafsa conference and the course itself will be looked at as examples.

Session 11	Participation in Nafsa conference (optional).
Session 12	IE week: projects and events.
Session 13	IE debrief and alumni panel about international careers, their experiences and possible outcomes for students in the program based on their individual experiences.
Session 14	Wrap-up session: looking back to journals, to manifesto (and edit if needed), program evaluations and final self-assessments.

E- Pre-reentry email template

Dear Student,

We hope this email finds you well! As you're getting ready to wrap up your experience, we would like to give you our professional (and personal!) two cents, to make sure than not only your stay, but also your return home are as meaningful as possible.

Our first tip is to get ready for your reentry. We understand that home is probably not at all what you want to think about now, but we promise you this will make a difference.

First of all, even if you're planning on coming back to your host country, make sure that you say your goodbyes: to people but also to places, foods, pets – anything that's meaningful for you. Plan it out so you're not rushed during your last few days. Take a look at the reentry sheet in your pre-departure folder: now is when it becomes really relevant. Finally, don't forget to journal about the end of the experience: how does it make you feel? What are some things that you want to remember, and some that you are looking forward to?

Journaling will be especially helpful if you decide to enroll in the Back On The Hill program, Marlboro's dedicated reentry program. This program will help you not only find like minded students and have dedicated time to share your experiences, process together and learn from each other, but also to explore ways to utilize the skills and knowledge you acquired while abroad...and to convince you that you learnt even more than you think right now.

If you decide to be a part of the program, there are three questions we would like you to reflect on in particular.

1. In what ways have you changed?
2. What are the most important lessons you learned?
3. Re-entry shock is sometimes even more challenging than culture shock. What are some things that you can do to ease your transition back into your home culture?

Regardless of whether you register for the program, there are a few logistical reminders we'd like to give you. First of all, remember to check your credit transfer procedure if your experience abroad involved credits. To be awarded those credits, you will have to fill out a return absentia form (attached here), checking in with all the listed departments and then bringing the form to the registrar. Make sure that housing and meal plan matters are all set for next semester, and that you arranged transportation from the airport to your home or next destination. Also make sure that you are clear on check-in procedures if you are flying back, and on any airport taxes you might be requested at the gate.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the international services coordinator, the WSP director or your faculty advisor. We are here to support you.

Enjoy your last week in Country, and have a safe trip back!

F- Marketing flyer



G- Budget

Program costs				
Fixed costs	Item	Number	Cost	Total Cost
	Materials	Flat rate	\$150	\$150
	Speakers	2	\$350	\$700
	Books/manuals	Flat rate	\$100	\$100
	Drivers for off-campus events	2	\$50	\$100
Variable costs	Admission/fee for conferences	6	\$145	\$870
	IE presentation materials	6	\$50	\$300
Total costs				\$2,220
Revenue	Student contribution	6	\$72.50	\$435
Total to be covered by CJEF grant				\$1,785

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