

FOREWORD

The expansion of access to international education is an important and timely endeavor. In our more globally integrated world in which trans-border phenomena affect daily lives, developing a greater understanding of conditions in other countries can provide students with cultural enrichment and academic expertise as well as help people to become more informed citizens, more empathetic neighbors, and more competent workers. The students themselves benefit from studying in another country, and their campuses, home countries, and future employers gain from the knowledge that they acquire. Yet, in the United States, too few students take advantage of these opportunities. This volume helps us learn why.

Currently, in the United States, less than 2% of higher education students participate in education abroad programs. Among that group, most of the participants are White and female (Institute of International Education, 2016). While honoring the commitment of those who have long cherished international education, we should also seek to widen the circle. Understanding the barriers that impede greater participation in education abroad is a prerequisite for addressing the problem of access. In this book, editors Heather Barclay Hamir and Nick Gozik provide university administrators, scholars, and the public with a crisp analysis of why different groups are underrepresented and offer ways to increase the diversity of students engaged in international education.

This book gathers together new research on a topic that has received more attention in recent decades as educators have recognized the need for greater diversity among U.S. students studying abroad. The editors acknowledge that many organizations, including NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the Institute of International Education, and the Council on International Educational Exchange, have been working toward increasing diversity in education abroad since the early 1990s. However, despite progress, the four Fs identified in 1991—faculty, finances, family, and fears—are still relevant today (Cole, 1991; p. 27, this volume). This book identifies and examines these and other barriers most salient to various underrepresented groups in the United States. While the editors frame the larger issue, contributors analyze different

underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities; men; first-generation college students; students majoring in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields; students at community colleges; students covered by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); and students with disabilities. This book contributes to the field by examining the distinctive mix of barriers that may affect each group. NAFSA has been a leading voice in articulating the need for higher education institutions to address the institutional barriers that keep these underrepresented students from studying abroad and has long advocated for the creation of the federal Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program to encourage higher education institutions to prioritize this work. This important volume provides institutional policymakers with analyses that can contribute to institutional data-driven decision-making processes.

The rich array of examples provided in the chapters of this book highlight the insights of scholar-practitioners working in the field. These experts have valuable data at their fingertips to follow trends and pursue institutional change work. In international education, research can inform practice and practice can inform research. The book embeds education abroad in the context of the larger educational mission of colleges and universities. The advancement of international education requires collaboration among international education practitioners, faculty, and administrators.

This volume is timely. Changing demographics in the United States make the drive for greater diversity and inclusion even more imperative. Barclay Hamir and Gozik note that the United States will be a “majority minority” country within 30 years (Colby & Ortman, 2014; p. 4, this volume). They stress the importance of amplifying equal opportunity to education, using education abroad to deepen student learning, and including many different types of people in the mix of students studying abroad in order to enrich the experience for all students.

If international education enriches students’ knowledge, then as educators we should endeavor to ensure that all students enrolled at our institutions have access to the programs we provide. If international education is beneficial to societies, then we as a polity must work to increase the number and types of students participating in this activity so that returned students can carry their gained knowledge to more parts of the country and different types of workplaces. Moreover, the United States needs to ensure that more people are gaining access to experiences that will allow the nation to remain economically successful.

The editors and contributors not only analyze the barriers preventing students’ participation but also discuss steps to overcome them. Contributors underscore the value of developing the future research agenda and the power of organizations and other groups to convene.¹ NAFSA’s Diversity and Inclusion

in Education Abroad Subcommittee is one such group that provides educators with the tools and resources to support diverse populations. For more than three decades, through sessions at our annual and regional conferences, numerous publications, and advocacy with policymakers, NAFSA has supported the mission of finding ways to expand access to international education for each of the underrepresented populations identified in this book. This book makes an important contribution to that effort.

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Note

1. Visit NAFSA's website at www.nafsa.org for more information.

References

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