Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.

- MARK TWAIN
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Diversity & Inclusion

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About Education Abroad

Education Abroad at Texas A&M is proud to promote and facilitate transformational, diverse, and inclusive international experiences for over 5,600 Aggies each academic year—more than any other public university! With offerings ranging from one week to one year in over 100 different countries worldwide, we help Aggies from freshmen to doctoral candidates find study, intern, research, or volunteer programs to fit their academic and personal interests, career goals, and budget.

International experiences actively prepare students to be global citizens, immersing them in foreign languages and cultures to foster intercultural knowledge and competence. Participating in education abroad experiences while at Texas A&M allows students to expand their intellectual and personal horizons, better navigate different environments, and build a more impressive resume.

Education Abroad is dedicated to supporting students before, during, and after their experiences abroad. Start exploring international opportunities now and TAKE THE AGGIE SPIRIT ANYWHERE!

MISSION STATEMENT
Education Abroad promotes and facilitates student access to meaningful, diverse, and inclusive international experiences.

• We guide and support students before, during, and after their transformational credit and non-credit experiences abroad.
• We prepare students to be global citizens by fostering intercultural knowledge and competence.
• We develop and promote programming through collaboration with internal and external partners.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT
Education Abroad firmly believes that racism and discrimination in all forms are in stark contrast to our mission, and therefore, is committed to combating social injustices through the following actions:

• We will embrace diverse cultures, skills, and experiences of others;
• We will provide equitable access to diverse, meaningful international experiences;
• We will guide and support students before, during, and after their transformational credit and non-credit experiences abroad;
• We will prepare students to be global citizens by fostering respect, understanding, intercultural knowledge, and competence.
• We will develop and promote inclusive programming through collaboration with internal and external partners.
• We will cultivate a welcoming environment for all individuals, in which people feel empowered to inquire about our services regardless of their age, background, citizenship, disability, education, ethnicity, family status, gender, gender identity/expression, geographical location, language, military experience, political views, race, religion/spiritual belief, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and work experience.

“Studying abroad helped me develop a new sense of independence while I was learning to become more open-minded and learning to grow as a person.”

Busira Lassissi ’24
Education Abroad (EA) at Texas A&M University leads the nation as the #1 public university for study abroad and has done so for the past five years. This team has positioned itself as a national and regional leader through participation in and recognition by international education organizations, resulting in partnerships that contribute to the University’s overall plan towards excellence.

However, this past 18 months was undoubtedly the most challenging time in history for higher education, and EA was hit hard. As we were on our way to another record-setting year, the COVID-19 pandemic knocked us off our axis and pushed us to examine our operations and processes critically. The EA team demonstrated both integrity and excellence in spring 2020 by navigating and ensuring that every single student (and faculty) abroad on a university-led program returned to the U.S. safely during COIVD-19. We supported those students after return by identifying and securing quarantine locations when needed, arranging transportation, navigating academic issues, and refunding over $4.2 million in program fees. Despite these challenges, the EA team at Texas A&M continues to shine even brighter than before. As you will read throughout these pages, we were able to accomplish so much this past year. A few highlights include the launch of a new website, executing a new partnership with the National Student Exchange (NSE) program, developing a curriculum for an EA-specific section of Hullabaloo U to launch in fall 2021, and much more.

The national conversation was focused on race and equity movements, such as BLM, through the pandemic. EA took this opportunity to develop resources that support students from all backgrounds and address the needs of marginalized populations such as first-generation students, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities. The team has received multiple grants to engage in and promote diversity. Several team members participate in national task forces and committees that develop diversity plans and resources for equitable participation in global education. Some have received local and national awards for their contributions to students with disabilities and first-generation students.

As we begin re-opening campus for fall 2021, we know that the problems and challenges we faced in 2020 are far from over. This past year, however, we’ve been able to set a foundation that will catapult us to new heights as we fulfill our mission of promoting and facilitating student access to meaningful, diverse, and inclusive international experiences.

Dr. Holly Hudson
Executive Director
In this report, we’re recapping the impact COVID-19 had on Education Abroad and highlighting the effects still felt by the pandemic. Here’s a quick look at what happened in 2019-2020.

**By the Numbers**

### 280

Students were returned early from abroad during Spring Break 2020.

### 4,621

Students’ programs were impacted by COVID-19 due to program cancellations and withdrawals.

### 63%

Of Texas A&M’s incoming international exchange students returned home in spring 2020. In fall 2020, only 4% of confirmed incoming exchange students were able to enter the U.S.

### $4.2M

In Education Abroad program fees were refunded in FY 2020 because of program cancellations and early returns.

#### December 31, 2019

WHO China office reports pneumonia of unknown cause.

#### February 2, 2020

DOS issues Level 4: Do Not Travel advisory for China.

#### February 28, 2020

DOS issues Level 3: Reconsider Travel advisory for Italy.

#### March 2, 2020

The University suspends all TAMU-sponsored Education Abroad programs to Hong Kong, Japan, China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea, encouraging those returning from those countries to “self-isolate.”

#### March 9, 2020

The University suspends ALL future TAMU-sponsored international travel, including Education Abroad.

#### March 11, 2020

President Trump announces travel restrictions for all of Europe. The University advises students in that region to return to the U.S.

#### March 19, 2020

DOS issues global Level 4: Do Not Travel advisory.
20-21 Snapshot

AWARDS & HONORS

2021 Texas A&M University President's Meritorious Service Team Award recipient

#1 in IIE OpenDoors Education Abroad rankings for public institutions

BY THE NUMBERS

790 # of students who went abroad (or are confirmed to go abroad) or completed a virtual international experience during the 2020-2021 academic year.

86% Drop in student participation in Education Abroad programs compared to 2018-19 numbers as reported in the 2020 IIE Open Doors Report.

46 # of incoming exchange students. This is a 68% drop compared to pre-pandemic numbers in 2018-19.

GILMAN SCHOLARS

21 TAMU students were selected as recipients of the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship.

Total amount awarded to TAMU students $86.5K
We’re #1 ... Again!

For the fifth consecutive year, Texas A&M University ranks as the top U.S. public institution for the number of students pursuing credit-bearing international experiences.

The 2020 Open Doors Report by the Institute of International Education (IIE) shows that Texas A&M had 3,768 students enrolled in credit-bearing education abroad programs for 2018-19, placing it first among public institutions and No. 2 overall. The total number of Texas A&M students participating in international experiences, including non-credit-bearing experiences, was 5,648 in 2018-19.

Of the total number of students who pursued an education abroad program in 2018-19, more than 21% were first-generation students. About 43% of total participants identified as non-white, and a fifth of total participants reported being Hispanic or Latino.

Numerous funding opportunities are available for students interested in education abroad programs. Texas A&M provides about $1.5 million annually in scholarships exclusively for international programs. On average, about 30 percent of participants come from households with a family income of less than $80,000 a year.

In 2018-19, Texas A&M students traveled to 110 different countries spanning every continent. The top five destinations were Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, and France. Abroad programs can range anywhere from one week in duration to a full academic year.
Expanding Our Footprint

Over the past year, Education Abroad has worked diligently to enhance its service to students and increase the number of opportunities available. Taking a three-pronged approach to Inform, Support, and Provide, Education Abroad has made strides towards:

• Increasing participation by underrepresented student populations to better reflect our undergraduate demographics;
• Enhancing the academic experience abroad, leading to students excelling at a higher rate;
• And ensuring all of our key stakeholders are provided with a satisfactory experience.

As part of this endeavor, Education Abroad has expanded its footprint on campus and in the national professional network of international education. Here are a few examples of what was accomplished in 2020.

INFORM
Educate our campus community by widely disseminating information related to Education Abroad to students, academic departments, and administrative units on campus. This can include being present at external events, creating new events, developing outreach initiatives and materials, and engaging in new spaces and conversations.

High School Outreach
To raise awareness about Education Abroad to students before they reach Texas A&M, EA Ambassador Christina Abraham ’21 led an effort to develop a high school outreach initiative. Piquing interest in and dispelling common misconceptions about study abroad early should allow incoming students more time to research and plan for an abroad experience. Ultimately, EA’s high school outreach initiative aims to see higher participation numbers by first- and second-year students in key underrepresented demographic areas.

Kicking off this initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic proved challenging; however, EA was invited to present virtually in two College Station-area high schools and one McAllen-area high school. Next steps with this initiative include strategizing how to increase engagement with area high schools in each of Texas A&M’s locations and finding an effective way to correlate attending one of these sessions to going abroad in college.

Podcast
EA Ambassador Britany Grant ’22 saw a need for Education Abroad to provide more student voices and perspectives

“Studying abroad granted the opportunity to explore cultures that I’ve wanted to immerse myself in since my childhood, and I’ve made tons of lasting friends abroad. Additionally, the professional and academic enrichment from my trips has opened the doors for many rewarding opportunities.”

Ty Buchanan ’22
as part of its overall outreach strategy. To fill that gap, the Education Abroadcast Podcast was born. This is the first time EA at Texas A&M has used this medium, and Grant's objective was to give listeners a deeper look into those who both work in EA and those who participate in its programs. It's also a way for students to get on-the-go information about study abroad opportunities.

So far, two episodes of the podcast have been released with a total of 58 downloads. Next steps will include scheduling and creating additional episodes as well as growing the podcast's audience.

**New Website**

After more than a year of planning and content development, the new Education Abroad website launched on Jan. 22, 2021. The new format is more user-friendly and easier to navigate for EA's key stakeholders.

Since its launch, the site has logged nearly 24,000 users participating in almost 42,000 sessions. Some of the most visited pages on the site include “Start Here,” “Funding,” “Meet with an Advisor,” “Steps to go Abroad,” and “COVID-19 Updates.”

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SUPPORT
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Develop resources for our office, campus partners, and students to better assist in navigating, engaging with, and accessing Education Abroad. This can include creating best practices, processes, guides, and FAQs, identifying and developing financial resources, and identifying and developing partnerships and support networks.

**Donor newsletter**

Education Abroad launched its first bi-annual newsletter that was initially distributed to donors of the Campbell Scholarship fund and the Federation of Texas A&M University Mothers’ Clubs (Aggie Moms). The newsletter is intended to provide timely updates to supporters of EA, sharing its successes as well as future needs.

**Gift a Passport Campaign**

As part of Texas A&M's “Spirit of Giving” crowdfunding initiative, Education Abroad campaigned to raise $5,000 to help reimburse low-income and underrepresented students for the cost of a Passport. The Gift a Passport campaign organically raised 119% of its goal, reaching $5,936.40. A separate donation was given in the amount of $1,840, which was designated to help provide passports specifically to former fosters.

Beginning fall 2021, EA will open an application process and award passport reimbursements for the first time.

“Going abroad my freshman year made me confident in my major and gave me direction for the rest of my college years and for my career. I never would have known I have a passion for International dealings without getting up and traveling internationally.”

*Samantha Shaw '21*
**Ambassador program**

Education Abroad expanded its student Ambassador program, growing its membership by more than 360%. These Ambassadors serve as peer mentors to enhance outreach efforts and increase participation of underrepresented academic and student groups. For the first time, the Ambassador program experiences 100% fall to spring retention for 2020-21 and 88% fall to fall retention of those eligible to return.

The 2020-2021 Education Abroad Ambassador cohort completed 11 capstone projects that further assist EA in meeting its primary goals. Projects included in-country guides, the launch of a new podcast, the launch of a high school outreach initiative, parent resources, and a comprehensive transfer credit equivalency guide.

**Incoming Exchange Students**

Education Abroad provides various levels of support to enhance the Texas A&M University experience for incoming exchange students. This includes cultural excursions, social programming, and limited housing assistance. This past year, efforts have included:

**International Buddy Program**

Education Abroad re-established and revamped the buddy program after a hiatus due to COVID. Incoming exchange students were paired with current Texas A&M students based on major, common interests, time available, etc. About 64% of incoming exchange students participated in Spring 2021, which was a significant increase compared to pre-pandemic semesters.

**Cultural Experiences**

Incoming exchange students were connected to local events and activities through a designated Facebook Group. Education Abroad also hosted several events throughout the year that included a campus scavenger hunt and monthly meetups at local restaurants. The year was capped off with an event at C&J Barbecue, where incoming exchange students got to tour the restaurant and learn about the history of Texas Barbecue.

**Housing Assistance**

Education Abroad established strong relationships with the management of three local apartment complexes to understand better the nuances of J-1 exchange students and their accommodation needs – especially the ability to obtain short-term leases. These “partnerships” have better equipped the complexes to offer better services and options to incoming exchange students. Education Abroad also started a program that loans out various household items often needed by international students. These include bedding, kitchen items, small appliances, etc.

“Going abroad to China for my internship was a life-changing experience that allowed me to learn more about global business dynamics and gain exposure to a different culture. I made amazing memories and friendships while abroad and cannot wait until my next adventure!”

*Morgan Garner ‘22*
PROVIDE
Identify and develop new, creative, and engaging ways to promote and provide transformational opportunities to students. This can include developing or revising resources that expanding our reach and push the boundaries of Education Abroad.

FYEX/Hullabaloo U
Education Abroad staff worked this past year to develop and propose two new EA-specific sections of Hullabaloo U. The new sections, Diversity & Global Learning, will launch in fall 2021. The Diversity and Global Learning section aims to create awareness of diversity, culture, and global engagement at Texas A&M, in the United States, and beyond. This course provides opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection, research, and critical thinking to better understand our global community.

EA staff also developed off-the-shelf content to be used by other Hullabaloo U instructors to promote global learning and raise awareness of study abroad programs.

Pre-Departure Orientation
The COVID-19 pandemic pushed Education Abroad to assess and re-think how mandatory orientations and sessions are disseminated. While initially forced to move all resources to a virtual format, it became obvious the need to ensure this information remains open and accessible as we push forward into a post-COVID world. From this perspective, EA staff reviewed and revised its Pre-Departure Orientation curriculum and are moving into a permanent online course module format. This will allow students to complete this requirement at their own pace and in their own space.

Expanded Opportunities
National Student Exchange
An agreement with the National Student Exchange (NSE) was finalized this year. This program will assist students looking to participate in a study away experience in the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, and the Virgin Islands. This partnership is beneficial for students who may not be ready to go abroad and/or who may not have international opportunities available within their major field of study. This is the first time since spring 2010 that Texas A&M University has been a part of the NSE.

Universidad de Cordoba All-Major Exchange & Technische Universität Dortman All-Major Exchange
Education Abroad entered into new agreements with Universidad de Cordoba in Spain and Technische Universität (TU) Dortman in Germany to provide more exchange opportunities that are open to all majors. This is Texas A&M University’s first all-major exchange program located in Spain and its second all-major exchange program located in Germany.

“I studied abroad in Ireland for a semester exchange through Mays. It was in Limerick, Ireland, and it was absolutely beautiful and my favorite part of college.”

Britany Grant ’22
Contributions to the Field

NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS
is the world’s largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange. NAFSA serves more than 10,000 members and international educators worldwide at 3,500 institutions, in over 150 countries.

Holly Hudson, Ed.D
- Invited to serve as a member of the NAFSA International Education Professional Competencies Working Group.
- Volunteered to serve as a member of the NAFSA EARP Financial Aid Subcommittee.

Irene Scott
- Appointed to serve as the Leadership Cultivation Content Coordinator and Co-Chair of the Education Abroad Knowledge Community Team (EAKC) - EA Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee.

Martin Rosales
- Selected to serve in NAFSA’s elite Trainer Corps program.
- Volunteered to serve as a member of the NAFSA Technology Member Interest Group

Caleb Chapman
- Volunteered to serve as a member of the NAFSA Marketing and Communications Member Interest Group

FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD
is a non-profit, membership association recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad.

Holly Hudson, Ed.D

Pascale Parker
- Selected to serve as a member of The Forum on Education Abroad Awards Review Committee for the Wollitzer Advocacy Award.

Amaris Vázquez Vargas
- Volunteered to serve as a member of The Forum on Education Abroad Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Around the World Working Group.

DIVERSITY ABROAD
is the leading membership organization that inspires and supports educators, policy makers, industry professionals and other stakeholders in leveraging global educational programs to support students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

Irene Scott
- Selected to serve as a member of the Education Abroad - Marketing, Outreach, & Recruitment Task Force.

Corinne Beverly
- Selected to serve as a member of the Education Abroad - Student Support & Advising Task Force
Education Abroad will achieve its mission and strategic objectives by striving to INFORM, SUPPORT, and PROVIDE for all of our stakeholders.

INFORM
Educate our campus community by widely disseminating information related to Education Abroad to students, academic departments, and administrative units on campus. This can include being present at external events, creating new events, developing outreach initiatives and materials, and engaging in new spaces and conversations. This will be accomplished by:

- Increasing internal communication to internal campus stakeholders.
- Developing a comprehensive outreach and marketing strategic plan.

SUPPORT
Develop resources for our office, campus partners, and students to better assist in navigating, engaging with, and accessing Education Abroad. This can include creating best practices, processes, guides, and FAQs; identifying and developing financial resources, and identifying and developing partnerships and support networks. This will be accomplished by:

- Enhancing communication and resources for Texas A&M’s academic advisors. Currently underway include projects to create an academic advisor handbook and launch an Education Abroad-specific advisory board for academic advisors.
- Implement a Professional Development plan for Education Abroad staff.
- Launch and advise student networks and organizations that provide better peer-to-peer support for both Aggie students abroad and incoming international students on exchange.

PROVIDE
Identify and develop new, creative, and engaging ways to promote and provide transformational opportunities to students. This can include developing or revising resources that expanding our reach and push the boundaries of Education Abroad.

- Develop intentional, high-impact programming for new students with the creation of a new Education Abroad-themed Living Learning Community set to launch Fall 2022.
Diversity and inclusion are always at the forefront of Education Abroad’s work. Access to the benefits and experiences afforded by a global education is nothing less than educational equity. Through that lens, Education Abroad continuously strives to advance student success and career readiness for ALL students. This commitment can be seen through the work this past year that includes:

• The completion of an eight-part email series, Abroad for All, focused on various identities and their impacts on the education abroad experience. For this campaign, Education Abroad targeted students who identify as multicultural, LGBTQIA+, first-generation, or disabled. Additional topics included spirituality and religion, gender, and being an ally while abroad.

• Revamping the Identity Abroad section of the Education Abroad website. Changes included making the information more accessible and user-friendly.

• Working to develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Digital Badge to increase awareness of identities in relation to going abroad. Education Abroad staff are currently in the process of creating curriculum for this initiative as well as incorporating Diversity Abroad’s Abroad 360 programming into current practices.

• Increased funding opportunities to help make Education Abroad experiences more affordable. After a successful fundraising campaign, about 40 students will be awarded with a free passport through an application-based reimbursement process. This award will benefit low-income, first-generation, racial or ethnic minority, veteran, LGBTQ+, former foster care, and/or disabled students.

• Enhanced targeted outreach efforts to underrepresented students and student groups. One effort already underway is developing a high school outreach initiative aimed at connecting with prospective students.
The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

- Marcel Proust
Senior Architecture major Kyle Fort attempts to improve the look of the Leaning Tower of Pisa by placing his Aggie Ring on a replica of the iconic landmark. Kyle was part of Texas A&M’s CARC-USAR Italy program. In partnership with Florida State University, this program allows students to pursue general requirements and elective courses while using Florence and Italy as their textbook.