



**Association of International Education Administrators**  
*Leaders in International Higher Education*

**Funding Conundrum**

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Question: As a new member to AIEA I hope you will forgive me if I ask a question which you have either answered long since or long given up on! We are a public, comprehensive regional university. Our students are over 50% commuters, average age of undergrads is 24. Virtually all of our students have to work to put themselves through school. In other words, we are up to the gills with "under-served" students. In your collective wisdom, how have similarly positioned institutions overcome the financial challenges inherent in trying to dramatically increase study abroad participation? I am familiar with the dozens of small-scale scholarships available. What I am looking for is something systematic, like a special category of general student fee put toward institutional study abroad scholarships. What else has worked?

1. I imagine that you, as a part of a state system, will face the first thing we did here -- an upper administrator's question about whether anyone else in the system (i.e. yours in Michigan) has accomplished this and, if so, under what set of rules, procedures, etc. System denizens love to see precedents among their own peers before acting.
2. At Winston-Salem State University also we have a \$5 per semester fee for full time students. However, we are considerably smaller in size than Illinois and Utah, so we generate about \$50,000 per year. Student scholarships range from \$500 to \$2,000 for the most part depending on the program and the number of students. So far, WSSU has provided a scholarship to all students, however small. While this is very helpful in encouraging students to participate in study abroad, the tightening of financial aid in general, particularly Pell grants for the summer, makes it very challenging to encourage more students to apply. We continue to look for other sources, including endowments.
3. About three years ago the University of Utah, at the initiative of the student government and in coordination with the President's Office, instituted a \$3 "Student Fee Study Abroad Scholarship Fee", which all students pay with their tuition each

term. The fee goes into an account managed by my office, the funds from which we disperse, through a committee composed of students and faculty, three times a year to students on a random selection basis. This has provided approximately \$200,000 per year in study abroad scholarship funds, which we disburse roughly as follows (we attempt to disburse as close to 100% of fund intake throughout the year as possible):

Fall semester: \$40,000 (20% of total)

Spring semester: \$40,000 (20% of total)

Summer term: \$120,000 (60% of total)

As a rule, we do not consider other non-study abroad specific financial aid students may be receiving, and the only qualification for the scholarship is acceptance into a legitimate study abroad program. Our goal is to cover for scholarship recipients about a third of their total program cost. Accordingly, the amount a student receives varies with length of program:

Less than 10 days: \$500

10 days – 3 weeks: \$1,000

Short-term program greater than 3 weeks: \$1500

Semester-long program: \$2,500

Academic year-long program: \$3500

At our current study abroad rates (about 700 students/year), the odds of getting one of the scholarships are about 1 in 4. With other merit-based scholarships (funded by donations & endowments) that students can apply for in the Study Abroad Office, the overall odds of receiving a scholarship are about 1 in 3.

As an incentive to students to set up this program, the University agreed to match student-contributed funds and a 1/3 rate. Accordingly, our central administration deposits \$65,000/year into a “quasi-endowment” (it can also accept private donation). The University will continue to do this until the endowment is self-sustaining in providing the promised 1/3 matching funds.

We also conduct special scholarship “drawings” at our fall and spring study abroad fairs. Students who participate can also apply at the normal scholarship deadlines, thus slightly increasing their odds by attending the fair and entering the drawing. This has proved to be a beneficial marketing tool in getting the word out about the fairs and getting more students there.

We’re not the first school to use this method of providing a scholarship fund, and hopefully, you’ll get several other variations and ideas on this theme. In any case, these are the basics of our program, and I’d be happy to answer any further questions.

4. You will most likely receive many insightful emails on various funding models from our colleagues in the field. From the Provider side, as you probably know most Providers offer scholarships which are available for students to apply for. We would welcome your students to apply.
5. The least expensive and most sustainable approach is to build partnerships with institutions overseas and work out reciprocal agreements about housing, tuition, ground trans, etc.  
Try to reduce student costs to just travel.

6. At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, we have had a lot of success with a \$5 per semester fee to generate study abroad scholarships. The Illinois for Illinois or I4I program generates in excess of \$200,000 a year, all of which is disbursed in the form of scholarships for study abroad. I am quite familiar with our I4I program as I oversaw its implementation on our campus. I would be happy to discuss the I4I program with anyone who is interested at the upcoming conference.
7. every TTU student pays a \$4 fee every semester which goes towards study abroad scholarships. The students themselves voted this in several years back and we've increased it (marginally) several times. Makes for a nice scholarship pot.
8. You sound as though you are describing us...with the exception of the commuting students. Fundraising for the purposes of expanding the education abroad opportunities for students has been minimal...however, I am beginning the long process of developing dragon boat races as a fund raising technique...the one in Superior WI raises about 100,000 annually, had 80 crews last summer and has been going strong for over 10 years. It may even succeed in this, the year of the dragon!
9. Just a couple of thoughts that might be helpful:
  1. Setting up reciprocal exchanges (which are administratively complex) can help your students to 'lock in' their local cost advantage of instate tuition.
  2. Some study abroad providers (like USAC) are cheaper than some others (like CIEE and IES). Focus on the cheaper ones.
  3. The study abroad destinations that needy students want are the same ones that wealthy students choose. Instead, encourage needy students to choose 'developing world' destinations that can be cheaper. India is loads cheaper than England. You might have to start a campaign for quality and challenge to encourage needy students to better appreciate these programs.
  4. Finally, not all study abroad need be study abroad...how about travel abroad instead, or work abroad after college, or internships. I sometimes tell students about my 'half price sale' in which I say you can do everything you want to do, you just cannot get credit for it. After all, tuition might be half the cost of many study programs. Instead, travel abroad instead, or do a 'mission' trip. After all, we are looking for 'international experience' in the broadest sense, not just more time sitting at a desk, abroad.
10. Good questions. You have only two options: find money, and/or cut costs. Finding money means either talking someone into giving it to you, in which case you need to enlist your "development" people and get international education on the hot list of things they ask wealthy donors for. Failing that, you probably won't get much joy here. We got some endowed funds for study abroad, and that is a possibility almost everywhere, but your development people need to buy the idea, and often, it just isn't one of their priorities. Cutting costs is your other option. I don't know about your programs, but if you are paying for things you shouldn't be, then stop. That might include fees to third-party providers, salaries to your own faculty, and fees of various kinds to overseas organizations or universities. I understand that some of this is sacrosanct, but these are your flexibilities for costs, not hotels, buses or airfares over which you have little or no control. The systemic solution is to set up exchanges with other universities which are also

tuition swaps. That way, all the student pays for is travel and lodging, and they would pay for lodging in any case. Combined with outside money for small "travel grants" this can make study abroad possible for many students.

Of course, someone has to go to the trouble of finding and making partnerships, ensuring credit transfer, etc, but this can work if done right.

Good luck. It's a long term process.