



THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD
STATE OF THE FIELD SURVEY 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

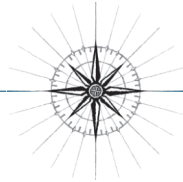
The Forum on Education Abroad would like to recognize the work of Charlotte Blessing and Stephen Hall in preparing the survey.

In particular we thank Kim Kreutzer for analyzing the survey results and preparing this summary.

The Forum also thanks members of the Forum Council Data Committee for their contributions to the project, and members of the Forum Council Committees for contributing questions and analysis related to their project areas.

The Forum is grateful to its members for their participation in this project.

THE FORUM STATE OF THE FIELD SURVEY 2011



March 2012

THE
FORUM
ON EDUCATION
ABROAD

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Introduction

In the summer of 2011, the Forum on Education Abroad conducted its fourth State of the Field Survey. This survey is an annual or biannual assessment of the very latest trends and issues in the field of education abroad. As in the past, questions on new topics have been combined with questions that have been asked on previous State of the Field Surveys. The Forum uses the responses from the State of the Field Surveys to report out important data that is useful to the field at-large, and to shape the Forum's agenda, and in particular the projects of its various committees and working groups.

Previous State of the Field Surveys were conducted in 2006, 2008, and 2009. Results of the earlier Surveys are available on the Forum website.

Methodology

The 2011 survey was developed and implemented by the Forum Data Committee with input from the Forum Council and various Forum committees and working groups. A survey invitation was sent by email on May 20, 2011 to each institutional member of the Forum. As in previous years, a survey invitation was sent to the institutional representatives only in order to ensure that each institution would submit only one completed survey.

Members who received the email invitation were directed to a link to the online survey, which was open through August 3, 2011. 497 members received the invitation to participate and 237 members completed the survey, a 48% response rate.

Each year the survey focuses on different topical areas, depending on what the Forum has identified as the current key topics or issues. This year the survey had a particular emphasis on:

- Questions relevant to the work of the Forum's committees and working groups,
- Questions on the topic of crisis management and questions related to the natural and political crises of the last academic year.

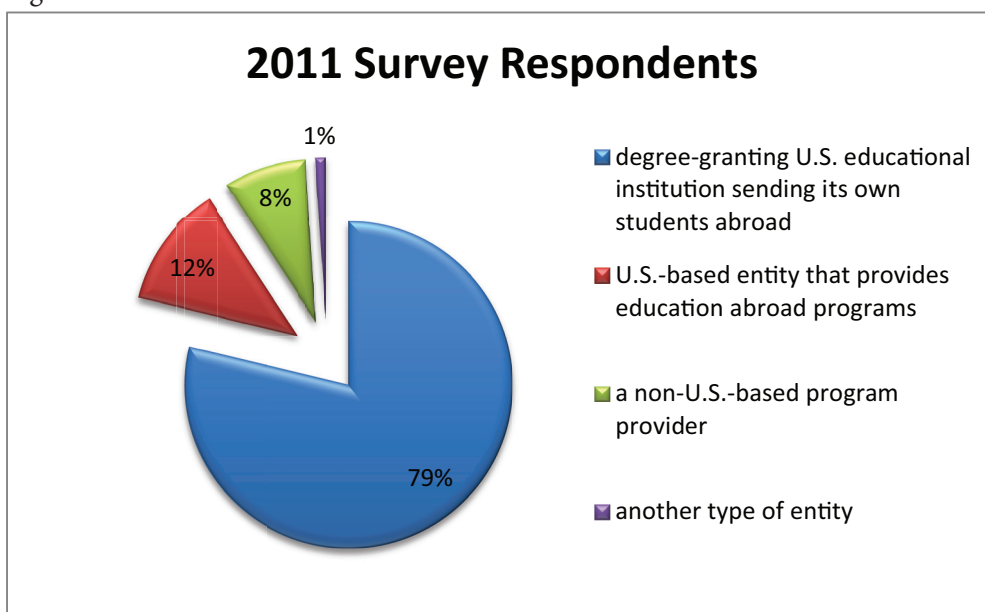
This report discusses some of the key findings of the 2011 State of the Field Survey. The complete summary of all questions and responses are available to Forum members as data tables on the Forum web site.



Who Completed the Survey?

Of the 237 survey respondents, 79% represent degree-granting U.S. institutions. 12% represent a U.S.-based entity that provides education abroad programs for students not earning a degree through their organization (i.e. what the field commonly calls "program providers"). Institutions or organizations based outside of the U.S. represent 8% of respondents, with 1% representing entities that did not fall into any of the other categories. (Figure 1)

Figure 1



Top Concerns in Education Abroad

Each State of the Field survey to date has asked respondents about their top overall concerns in education abroad. Table 1 shows the top 10 concerns for 2011 and how each of those concerns ranked in the previous survey years. Figure 2 illustrates all of the concerns evaluated in the 2011 survey and shows the relative importance of the responses.

Table 1

Top concerns	2011 ranking	2009 ranking	2008 ranking	2006 ranking
Cultural integration of students**	1	-	-	-
Adequate preparation of students	2	5 (tie)	5	4
Helping students maximize their experience	3	7	4	9
Program costs and rising costs	4	1 (tie)	1	3
Need for better funding	5	1 (tie)	3	6
Health and safety*	6	3	*	*
Academic quality	7	5 (tie)	2	1
Need for institutional funding for international education**	8	-	-	-
Assessment of learning outcomes**	9	4	-	-
Curriculum integration	10	-	6	2

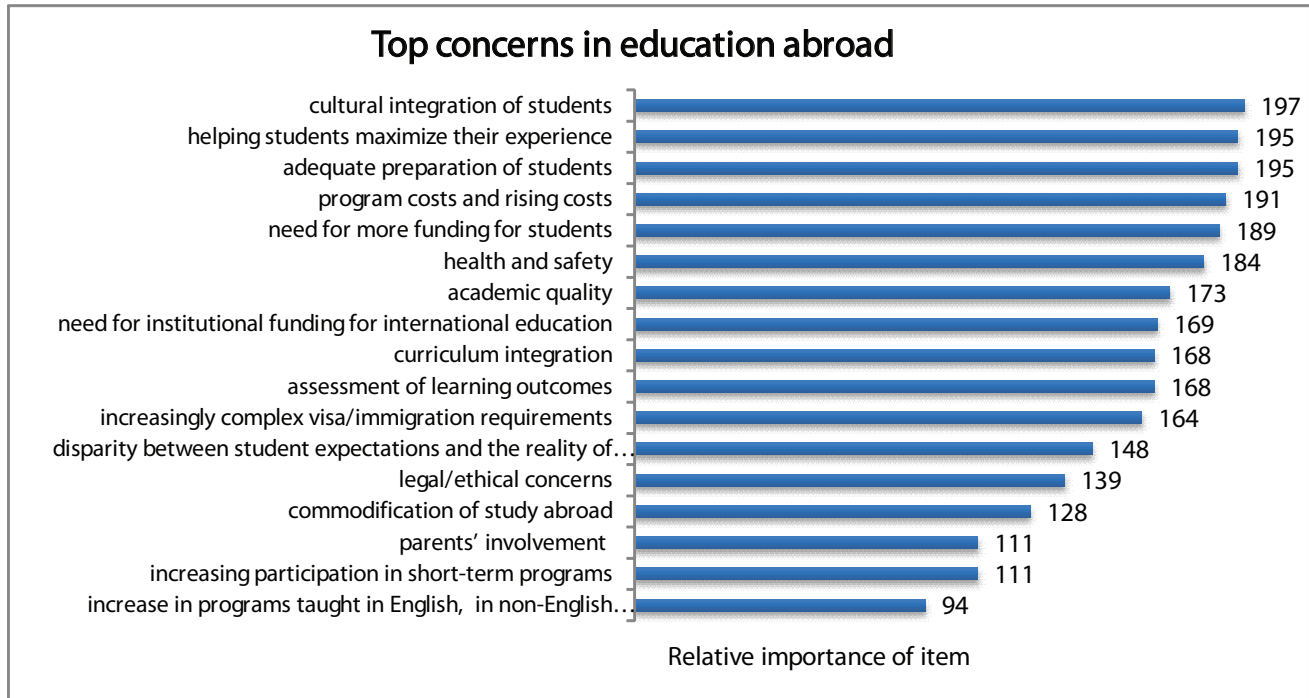
* There was a separate question asking about health and safety concerns in 2006 and 2008.

**These items were added to the 2011 survey; they did not appear in earlier surveys.



This ranking of items provides much food for thought. The top three concerns identified in the 2011 survey all focus on the student experience and preparation for the education abroad experience. These items were ranked as being of more concern than ‘program costs and rising costs’, which was the top item in both 2008 and 2009. The responses raise the questions: What caused this shift in identified concerns? Has the student experience changed significantly, or have concerns about program cost diminished?

Figure 2



Education Abroad on Campus: Oversight, credit evaluation, graduate-level education abroad

Of the respondents who identified as U.S. degree-granting institutions, 35% identified as being from public institutions and 65% identified as being from private institutions. They further identified the type of institution they represented:

Table 2

Type of institution	Percent
a community college	3%
an institution that offers bachelor’s degrees only	22%
an institution that offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees	25%
an institution that offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees	50%
an institution that offers graduate degrees only	0%

These institutions were asked a series of questions about education abroad program oversight, education abroad credit evaluation, and graduate education abroad opportunities.



Education abroad program oversight

Respondents were asked what kind of faculty committee oversight or support for education abroad exists on their campuses, and were able to select as many of the answers that applied to their situations. There was quite a range of responses (see Table 3). The most common structure, represented by 36% of respondents, was a committee that served in an advisory function to the education abroad office. Interestingly, 23% of the respondents indicated that there was no faculty committee with a significant education abroad function on their campus.

Table 3

Question: On your campus, what kind of faculty committee oversight or support exists for education abroad? (select all that apply)	
Responses	Percent
a committee primarily serving in an advisory function to the education abroad office	36%
a single committee with both an advisory and policy function	29%
there is no faculty committee with a significant education abroad function	23%
a committee primarily concerned with setting education abroad policy	9%
Other	14%

Education abroad credit evaluation

The replies to the survey questions regarding credit evaluation indicate that practice varies quite a bit. In regard to accepting credit from education abroad program provider organizations, 82% of institutions accept transcripts from accredited host institutions, 66% from accredited schools of record, and 36% from program providers themselves (see Table 4). In practice, it is likely that institutions distinguish among program providers and host institutions.

Table 4

Question: In order to accept credit from an education abroad provider, what kind of transcript or record of courses does your institution accept? (select all that apply)	
Responses	Percent
an official transcript from an accredited host institution	82%
an official transcript from a U.S school of record	66%
a record of courses from the program provider	36%
a jointly issued transcript from the host institution and program provider	30%
Other	4%

The responsibility on campus for assigning study abroad credit varies by institution, often with a mix of offices involved (see Table 5). The key players appear to be registrars (at 53% of institutions) and education abroad officers (at 49% of institutions).

In September 2011, the Forum Standards Committee working group on Schools of Record, working in conjunction with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) issued guidelines for best practices for Schools of Record. A ‘School of Record’ is defined as a U.S. accredited institution of higher education that officially documents and and awards credits for independent education abroad programs

or institutions that are not accredited in the U.S., verifying all elements necessary for this official documentation.) With further development, these guidelines could be expanded to provide guidance regarding transcript evaluation. Additional considerations might include:

- In what ways are education abroad officers working together with registrars in this area, and how could cooperation be improved?
- What are the standards by which credit evaluation decisions are being made?
- How do institutions evaluate credit from different educational systems?

**Table 5**

Question: Who conducts the formal evaluation for credit of the education abroad transcript at your institution? (select all that apply)	
Responses	Percent
registrar's office	53%
education abroad office	49%
admissions office	9%
Other office	21%
Note: academic units (such as academic departments, Dean's offices, and academic advising offices) were the most common other offices noted by respondents	

Graduate-level education abroad

In 2010, the Forum Council recommended that the Standards Committee look into guidelines for graduate programs abroad. The committee posed a few questions on this State of the Field Survey to provide a preliminary view with respect to graduate students. The survey confirmed the existence of a large number of programs involving graduate students.

Overall, 66% of respondents allowed graduate students to participate in their education abroad programs while 8% did not. For 26% of respondents, the question was not applicable. Short-term programs are most common, but many institutions also report running quarter and semester programs (see Table 6). Programs range across the curriculum, with the largest numbers in business and in the arts and science (51% and 43% respectively). However, there is also significant participation in professional fields (30% in health-related areas, 26% in law) (see Table 7). The fact that 45% of the respondents report that graduate programs are handled by the international education office (see Table 8) argues for further study of graduate programs.

Table 6

Types of graduate-level programs available at Forum institutions	Percent offering these
short-term	58%
research, field experiences, etc.	47%
semester or full year	34%
exchanges	33%
clinical experiences, preceptorships, rotations, etc.	28%
quarter	4%

Table 7

Graduate-level programs are offered in these areas	Percent offering these
Business	51%
Arts and Sciences	43%
Medicine/Nursing/Health Sciences	30%
Law	26%
Engineering	18%
Education	7%

Table 8

Question: Who coordinates graduate education abroad at your institution? (select all that apply)	
N/A	32%
individual departments	43%
university education abroad office	45%
professional graduate faculties	20%
graduate school	12%



Questions on Crisis Management

The academic year 2010-11 witnessed many significant upheavals across the world. A major earthquake hit New Zealand; Northern Japan was devastated by a tsunami and its aftereffects. Regime change and political unrest swept through North Africa and the Middle East. These natural and political events had a direct impact on students studying abroad in those countries, and tested the resources, emergency preparedness and the crisis response systems of institutions and organizations. The 2011 Survey asked questions about these topics to get a measure the scope of the impact of these event on the field of education abroad.

Response to natural disasters in New Zealand and Japan

Most respondents (61%) were affected in some way by the earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan. Only 15% of respondents did not have any programs, students, or services in the area, while 24% did not have any programs, students, or services that were affected.

Table 9

Question: Were your programs, students, or services you provide to programs or students affected by the natural disasters in New Zealand or Japan?	
yes, both our programs and our students were affected	37%
yes, our programs only were affected	2%
yes, our students only were affected	22%
none of our programs, students or services were affected	24%
N/A – we have no programs, students or services offered in the area	15%

Tables 10 and 11 below show the ways in which operations were affected and the respondents’ opinions about how well prepared they were to respond to these natural disasters. In most cases, respondents felt they were well prepared in terms of having available resources and an adequate infrastructure for dealing with such disasters. Nonetheless, 41% of respondents took the opportunity to make changes to their policies, procedures, or operations as a result of these incidents. 59% did not make any changes.

Table 10

Question: If your students, programs or operations were affected by the natural disasters in New Zealand or Japan, how were they affected? (select all that apply)	
N/A	37%
programs they were attending in New Zealand were cancelled	6%
programs they were attending in Japan were cancelled	32%
students were on site in areas affected by the earthquake in New Zealand	24%
students were on site in areas affected by the disasters in Japan	30%
we accommodated displaced students from New Zealand and Japan on our programs or campus located outside the U.S.	8%
Other	17%



Table 11

Question: We're interested in knowing about your response to these natural disasters. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.						
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	N/A
We had sufficient emergency evacuation insurance coverage.	4%	5%	5%	17%	27%	42%
We had sufficient business interruption insurance coverage.	4%	7%	8%	3%	7%	72%
We had sufficient emergency assistance coverage through a service provider.	5%	4%	6%	13%	27%	46%
We had sufficient staff time to adequately respond.	2%	5%	8%	32%	22%	30%
We had a well-functioning emergency response team at our institution/ organization.	3%	4%	14%	23%	26%	31%
We had enough emergency financing to cover any expenses incurred.	5%	3%	8%	16%	24%	44%
We had a sufficient emergency communication structure for response.	2%	3%	9%	31%	24%	30%

Response to political crises in North Africa and the Middle East

Compared with the number of respondents who were affected by the earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan, fewer (44%) were affected by the political crises in North Africa and the Middle East (Table 12).

Table 12

Question: Were your programs, students, or services you provide to programs or students affected this year by the political crises in North Africa and the Middle East?	
yes, our programs and students were affected	18%
yes, our programs only were affected	3%
yes, our students only were affected	17%
yes, we accommodated displaced students on our programs or campus outside the U.S.	6%
none of our programs, students or services were affected	29%
N/A, we don't have programs, students or services in this area	28%

As can be seen in Table 13, most respondents felt they were quite well prepared in terms of having available resources and an adequate infrastructure for dealing with such political crises. 29% of respondents took the opportunity to make changes to their policies, procedures, or operations as a result of these incidents; 71% did not make any changes.



Table 13

Question: If your programs, students, or services were affected by the political crises in North Africa and the Middle East, how well equipped were you to respond to these disasters?						
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	N/A
We had sufficient emergency evacuation insurance coverage.	3%	3%	4%	7%	19%	63%
We had sufficient business interruption insurance coverage.	3%	4%	2%	2%	6%	82%
We had sufficient emergency assistance coverage through a service provider.	2%	4%	2%	4%	20%	67%
We had sufficient staff time to adequately respond.	1%	3%	7%	18%	18%	53%
We had a well-functioning emergency response team at our institution/organization.	1%	3%	5%	15%	19%	56%
We had enough emergency financing to cover any expenses incurred.	4%	2%	3%	6%	18%	65%
We had a sufficient emergency communication structure for response.	0%	4%	3%	16%	19%	56%

Questions on Technology Use in Education Abroad Offices

In response to the growing technological challenges and solutions relevant to education abroad administration, the Forum Standards Committee and Data Committee established a joint working group on Education Abroad Office, Data, Information and Student Management Technology. The intent of this working group was to review current usage of technology in the administration of education abroad and to make recommendations on best practices in this area. The working group looked, in particular, at the use of technology and data management to enhance capacity building and accountability in the administration of education abroad.

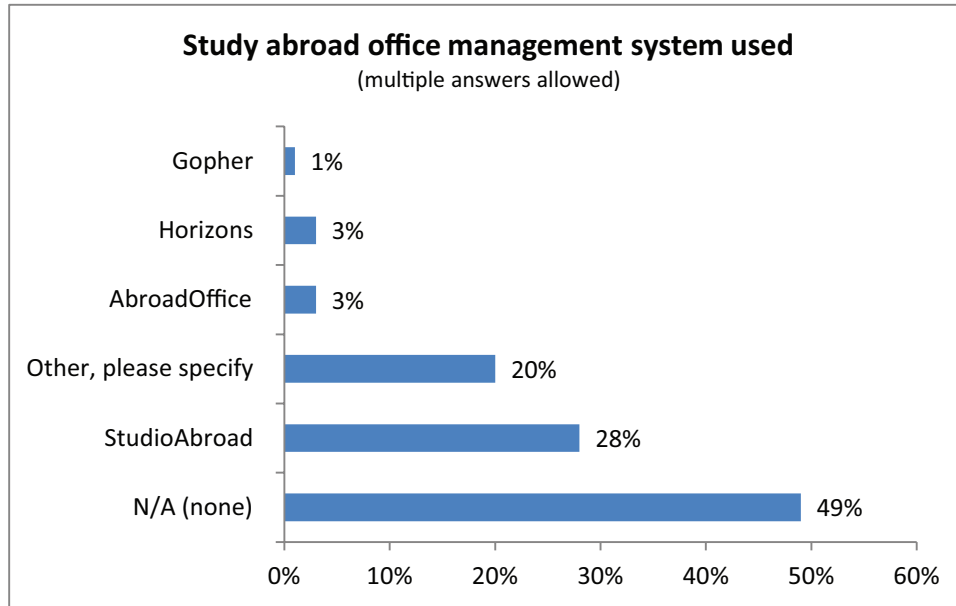
Although much of higher education has lagged behind the business sector in implementing integrated technology solutions, the past two decades have shown a dramatic increase in the adoption of technology systems in higher education that assist in capturing, reviewing and analyzing student data. However, the ability to integrate meaningful education abroad data into these student information systems seems to be a challenge for many.

To gain an objective perspective on the use of technology in education abroad management, the Survey included ten questions related to areas such as office management systems, social networking tools, assessment tools and analytical tools, and obstacles to technology implementation.



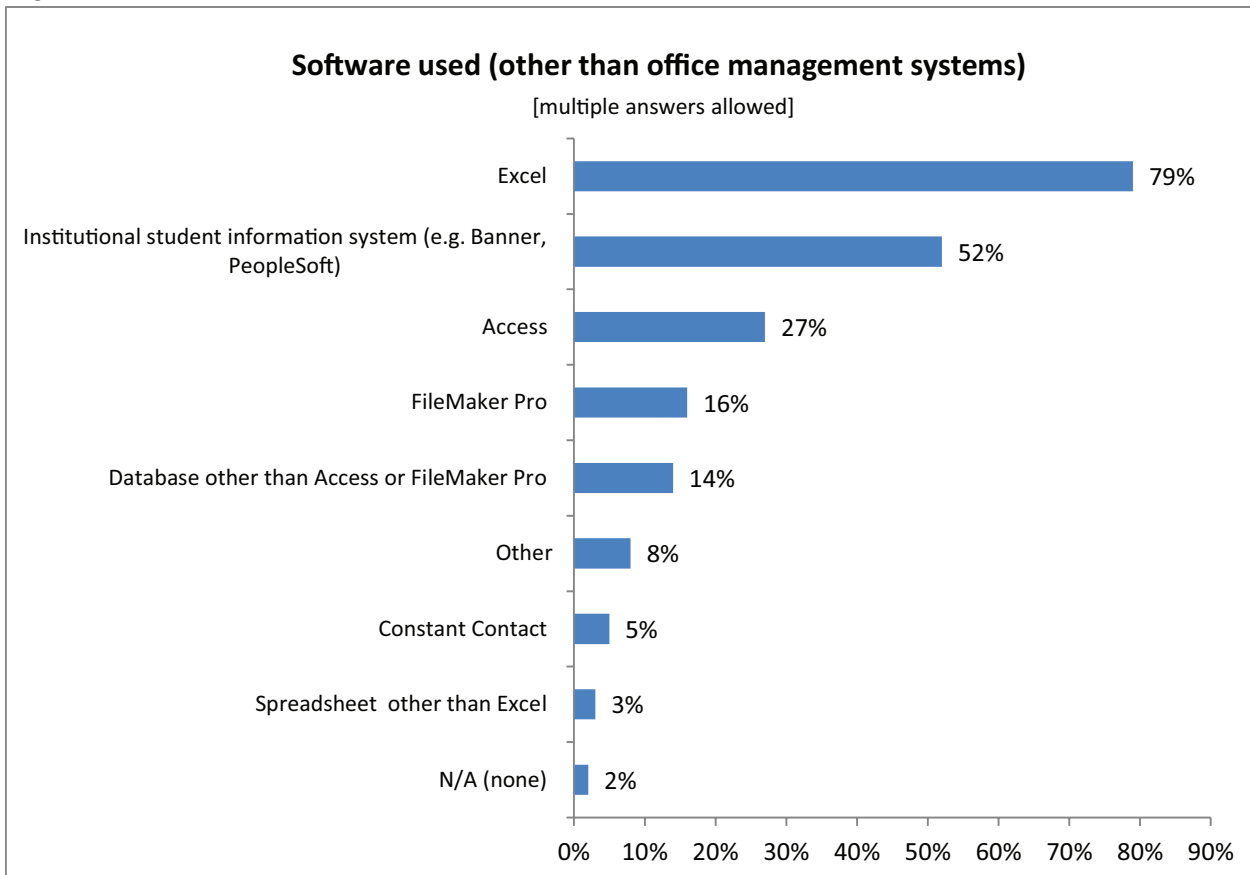
Survey responses show that almost half of the respondents do not currently utilize office management technology designed specifically for education abroad (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



“Other” responses included: in-house modifications to a campus student information system, and several campuses with customized systems. Some of the “Other” responses listed various online tools that were not considered integrated office management systems. Most education abroad offices/organizations utilize commonly available software (see Figure 4).

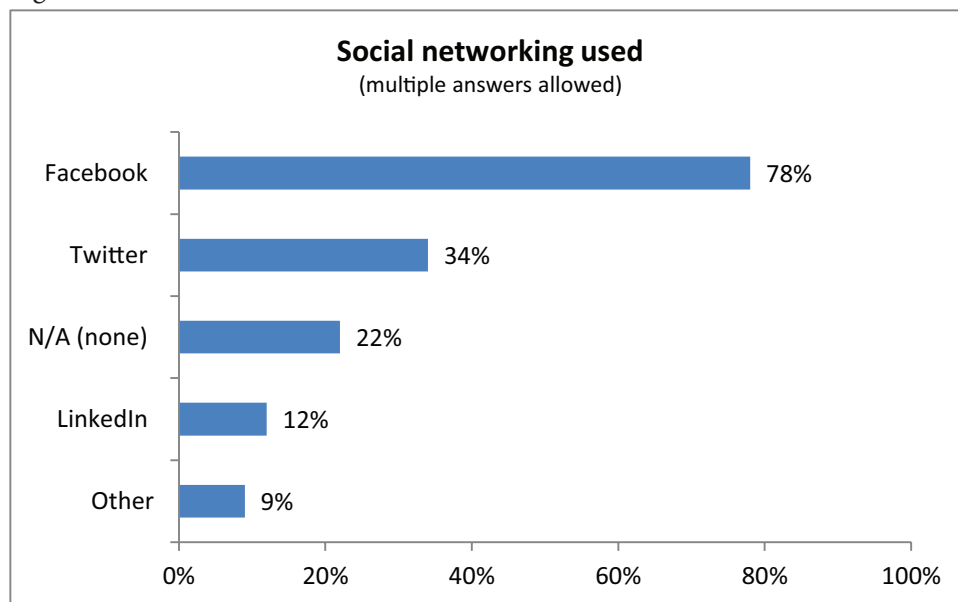
Figure 4





Responses indicate that many education abroad offices are using social networking for program administration and/or communication with students (see Figure 5). Most respondents (78%) used Facebook™ in their work and show an emerging interest in utilizing other social networking tools. For example, 34% have used Twitter and 47% employed YouTube in some way.

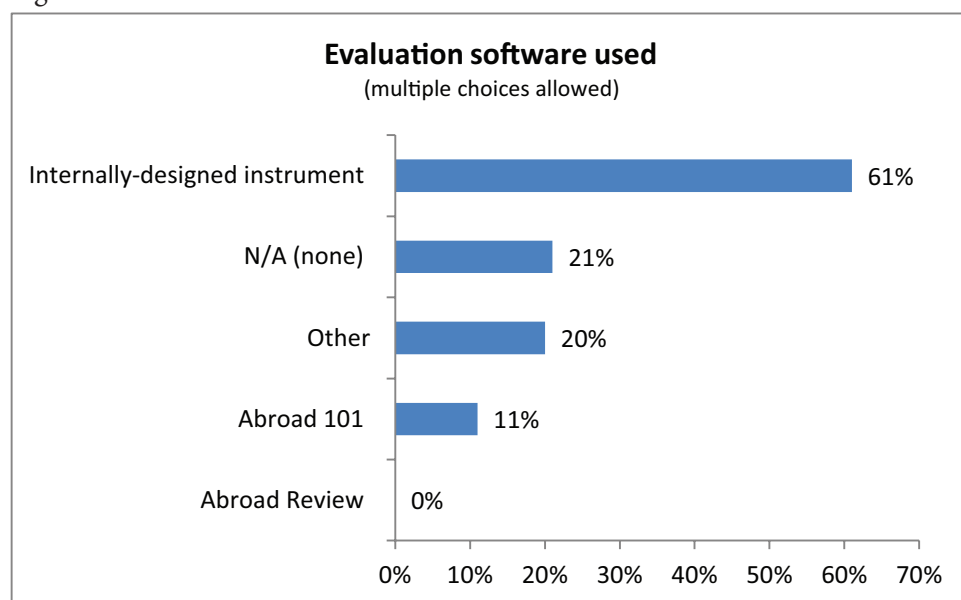
Figure 5



For evaluation software, most respondents (61%) use internally-designed instruments (see Figure 6). However, this rate is closer to 80% if ‘other’ responses are included. The Forum’s Outcomes Assessment and Research Committee suggests further investigating the following aspects of evaluation software usage:

- Does the field of education abroad generally find currently available pre-designed tools insufficient for wider adoption, and what are the reasons, such as cost, awareness, and expertise, that contribute to this dynamic?
- To what degree and under what circumstances are institutions better served in using internally-designed rather than commercially-available instruments?

Figure 6

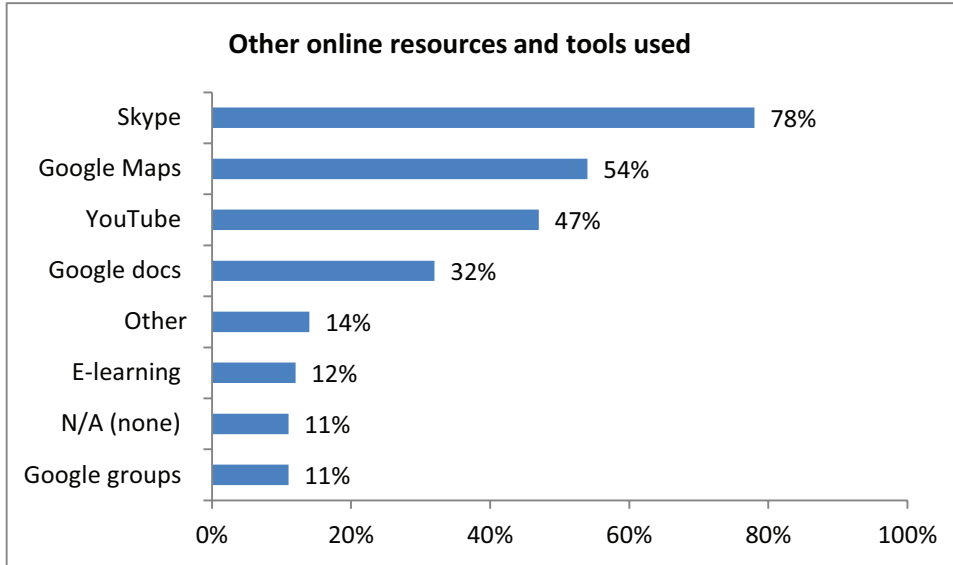


“Other” responses included: Survey Monkey (20 responses), Qualtrics (5 responses), Student Voice (4 responses), StudioAbroad (3 responses), Zoomerang (3 responses), Global Perspectives Inventory (2 responses), Axio, CoursEval, RateYourStudyAbroad.com, Wufoo, in-house designed.



Figure 7 illustrates the usage of some commonly available resources and tools.

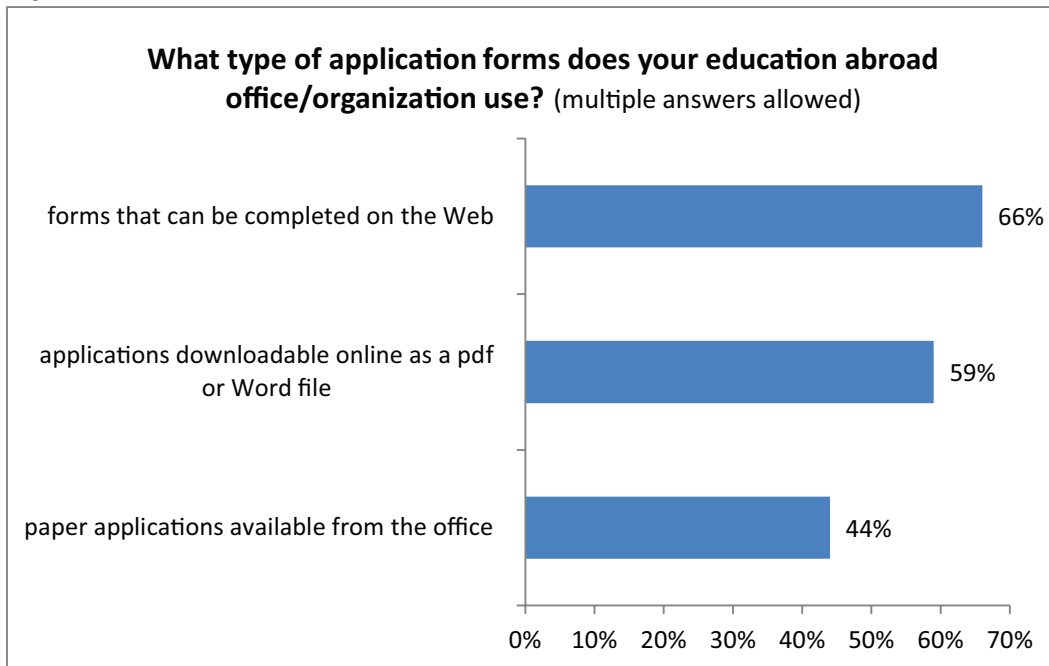
Figure 7



“Other” responses included: Blackboard (4 responses), GoToMeeting (3 responses), Adobe Connect (2 responses), Moodle (2 responses), D-2-L, digital publishing, Elluminate, Flickr, HootSuite, Google Alerts, Google Analytics, Google Calendar, Google Earth, OSAC, Sales Force, Slideshare, weLogger, Yahoo Maps, Yammer

Respondents were asked what type of application forms their offices used (online forms, downloadable forms, or paper forms). While two-thirds of the respondents have students complete education abroad applications online, many institutions and organizations utilize a combination of paper and online access for the application process (see Figure 8).

Figure 8





The survey asked about what types of analyses of student data the respondents conduct (see Table 14). Most respondents focus data analysis on participation numbers and demographic information, leaving student learning and development outcomes less documented; 72% of respondents assess student satisfaction while 42% assess student learning.

As a follow-up, we might ask:

- What are the reasons for this imbalance in assessment?
- Should the assessments of particular student learning outcomes be made a higher priority?
- If assessments of learning outcomes should have a higher priority, how can this be achieved?

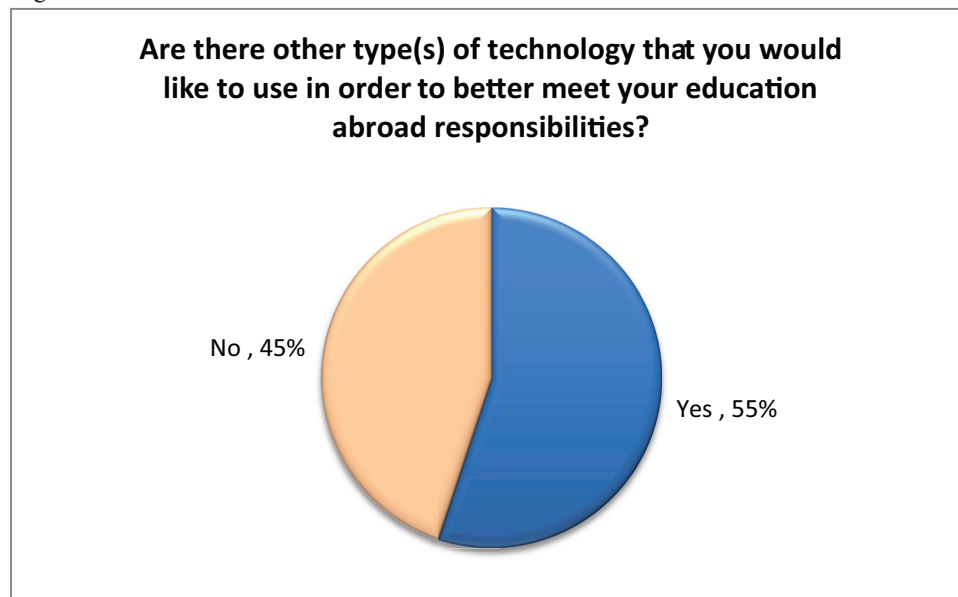
The good news is that, with relatively little extra work, institutions that are already in the habit of collecting data and surveying students for other purposes could readily focus on learning outcomes, particularly as organizations like the Forum are able to provide some best practices in this regard. For example, student satisfaction questions can be retooled to map against learning goals instead, thereby giving institutions a better sense of how to manage their study abroad activities.

Table 14

Question: What types of analyses of student data does your office conduct?	
Type of data	Percent
Number of students abroad	94%
Study Abroad destinations	89%
Student demographics	73%
Assessment of student satisfaction	72%
Assessment of student learning	42%
GPA	30%
Gains in language acquisition	22%
Relationship between learning outcomes and study abroad program type	20%
Impact on the major	8%
We do NOT conduct data analysis	2%
Other	8%

Respondents expressed interest in increasing the types of technology that they use in order to better meet their education abroad responsibilities (Figure 9).

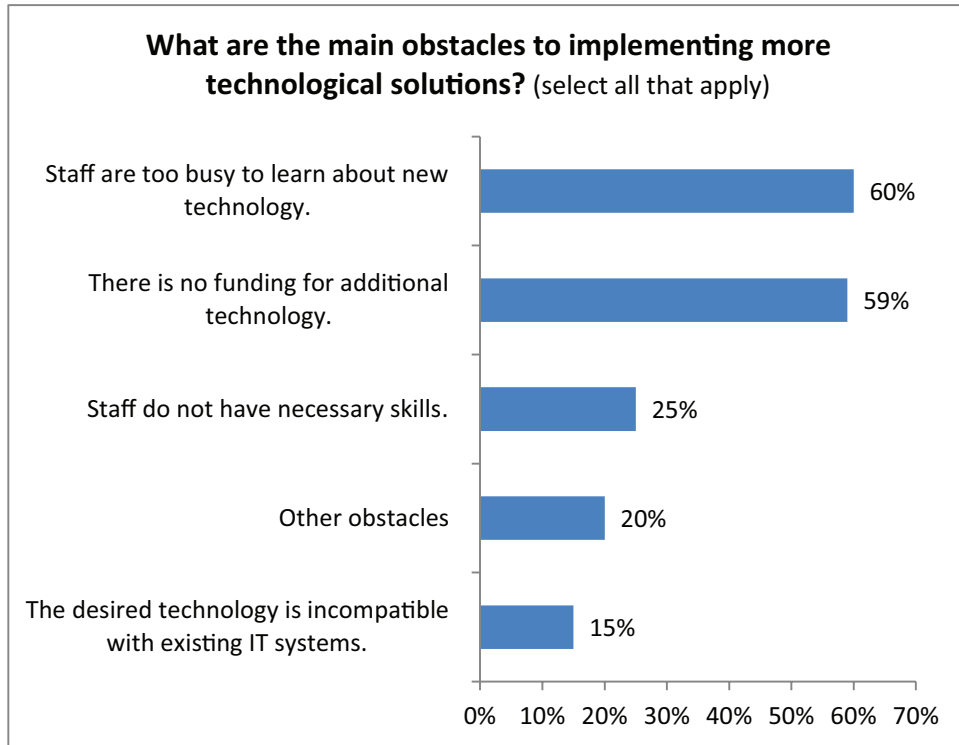
Figure 9





While the majority of respondents would like to expand their use of technological tools, they indicate that cost and time are limiting factors (see Figure 10).

Figure 10



“Other obstacles” identified included:

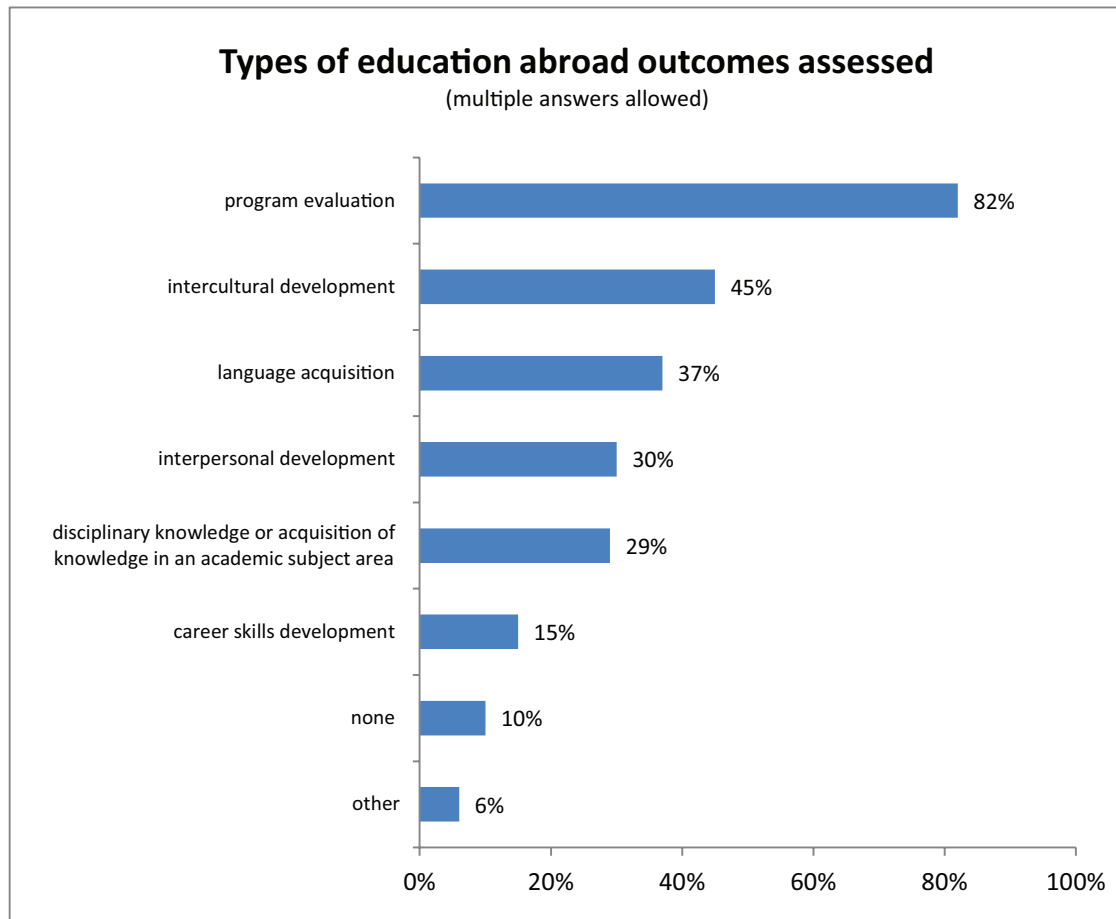
- Staff are too busy to manage/implement technology (10 responses);
- Institutional culture/priorities (7 responses);
- Lack of sufficient IT support (7 responses)



Education Abroad Assessment Practices

The Forum's Outcomes Assessment and Research Committee proposed a number of questions for this year's survey to collect data on current practices related to assessment and research. The first question in this area asked what types of education abroad outcomes the respondents' institutions or organizations assessed (see Figure 11). The data indicate that program evaluation is currently emphasized over student learning outcomes, and that student development outcomes are more often assessed than the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills useful for careers.

Figure 11



The Survey asked respondents to identify the principle challenges to assessing education abroad outcomes. The challenges identified (see Figure 12) revolve primarily around resources – financial, time and human – but also around a lack of confidence (28% of respondents) and knowledge about assessment (43%).



Figure 12

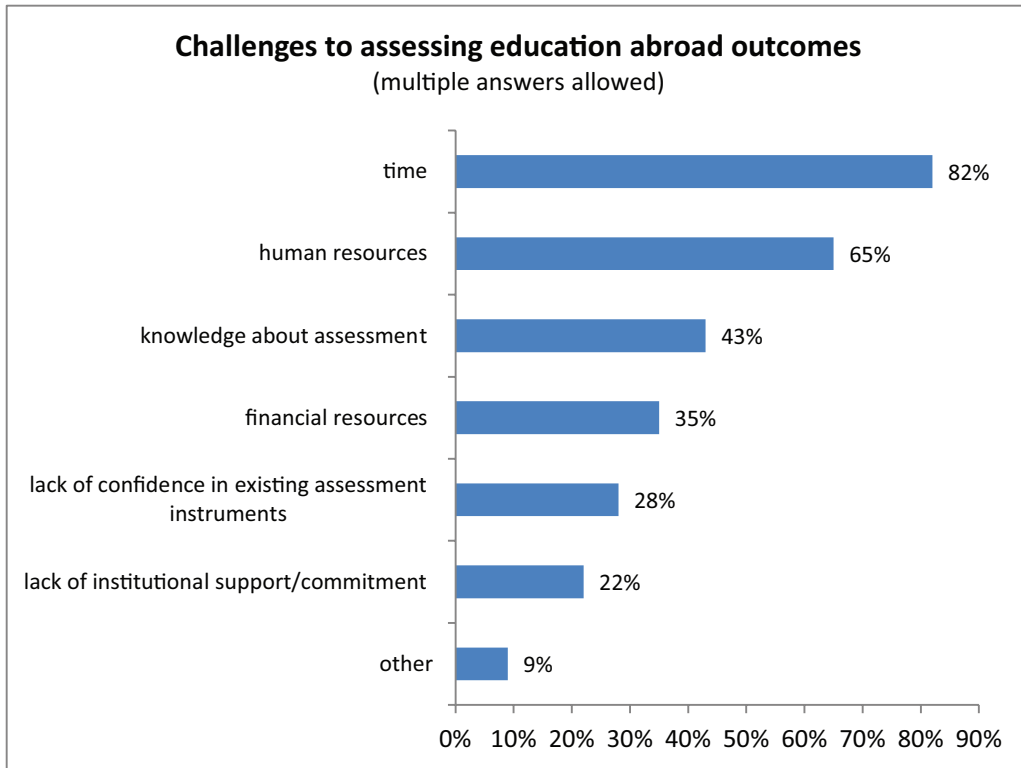
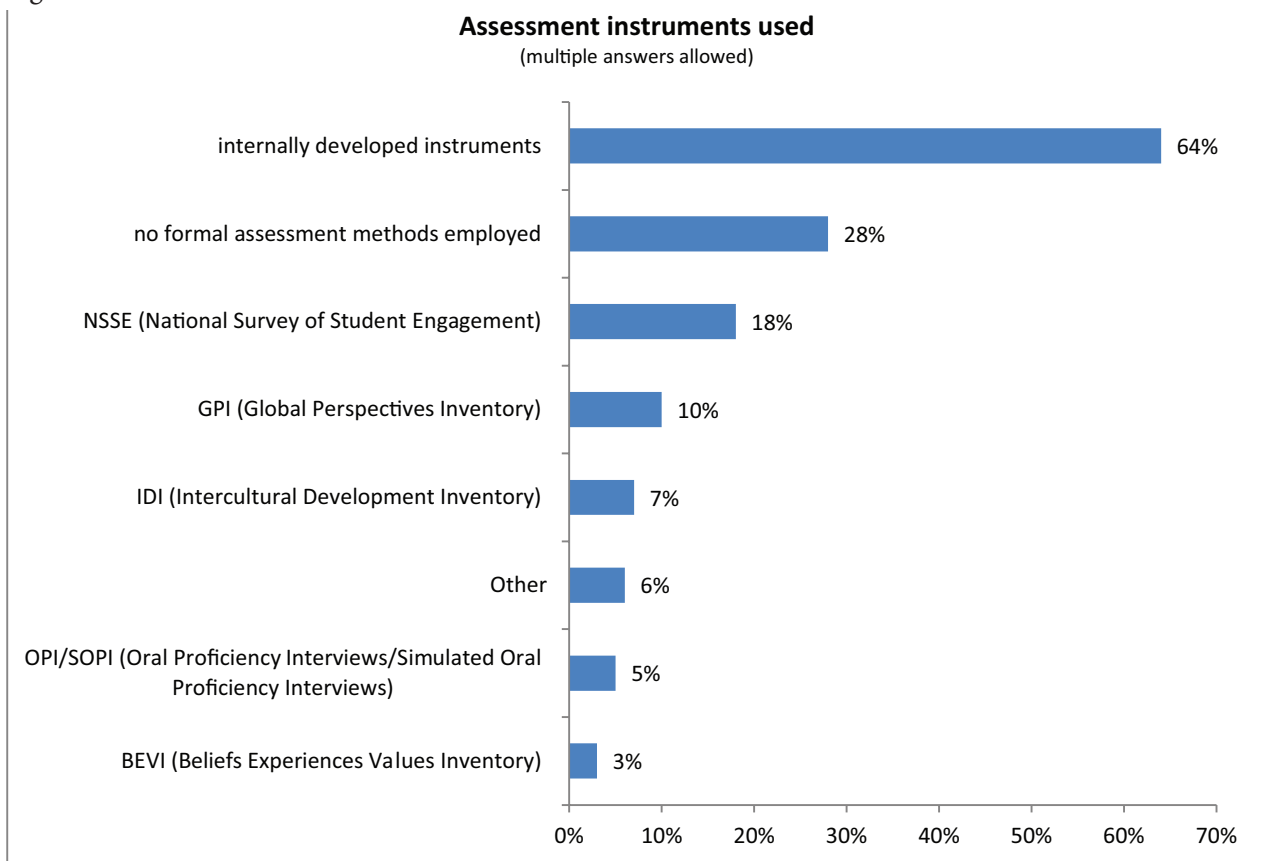


Figure 13 shows that internally-developed instruments eclipse the use of standardized tools. This trend indicates that assessment of education abroad is not yet embedded in many institution-wide assessment practices, and when assessment does take place, it often occurs within a highly-localized context.

Figure 13





Next, the Survey asked who was significantly involved in assessing education abroad outcomes at the respondents' institutions and organizations, and who has the primary responsibility for assessing outcomes. 77% of education abroad offices were engaged in this work (see Figure 14). Other significant people who have a hand in the work are individual faculty (30%), institutional research offices (27%), on-site staff (27%), program provider offices (23%), and the academic dean's office (17%).

By far, education abroad offices have the primary responsibility for assessment work (see Figure 15). Sixty three percent of these offices play the primary role. The next closest identified entity is the program provider category at 8%.

Unclear from this data are the degree to which these offices and individuals are evaluating similar criteria, the extent to which they share an understanding of assessment, and whether they are developing together institution-wide goals. Taken collectively, it appears that a wide variety and volume of data are being gathered, but how the data are shared and acted upon across the institution is not clear – giving us yet another area for further investigation.

There also seems to be a possible disconnect with faculty involvement in the assessment process. Individual faculty were identified as being involved in assessment at a rate of 30%. But when the question turns to who has primary responsibility for assessment, that rate drops to 2%. Since one of the most reported challenges regarding assessment that education abroad offices face is the lack of knowledge and resources, might faculty be approached and asked to become more active partners in the assessment process? Perhaps qualified and interested faculty could more often serve in the role of taking on the primary responsibility of education abroad assessment to assist institutions in meeting their assessment goals.

Figure 14

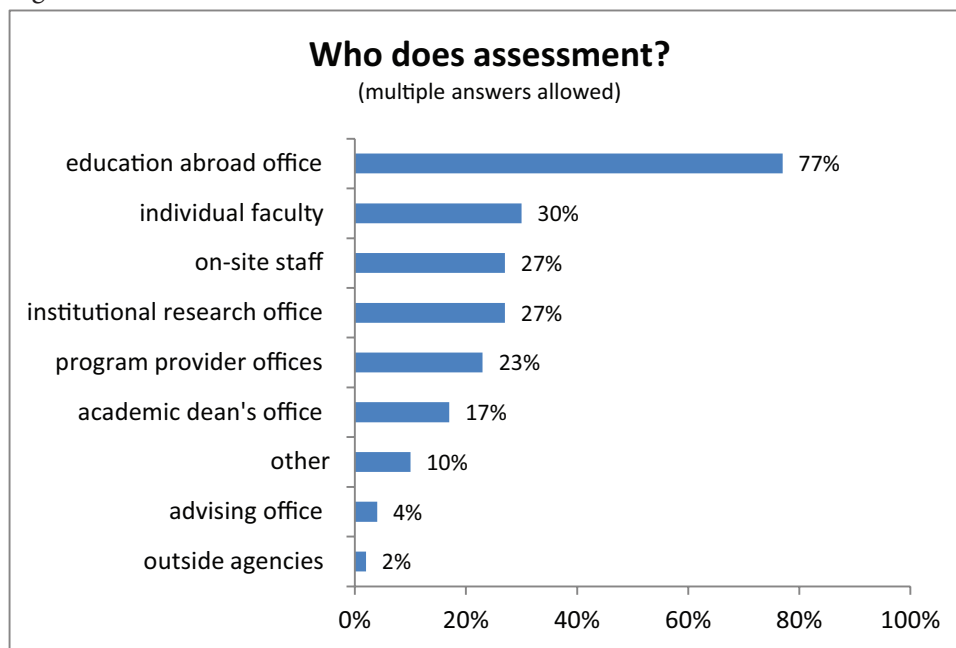




Figure 15

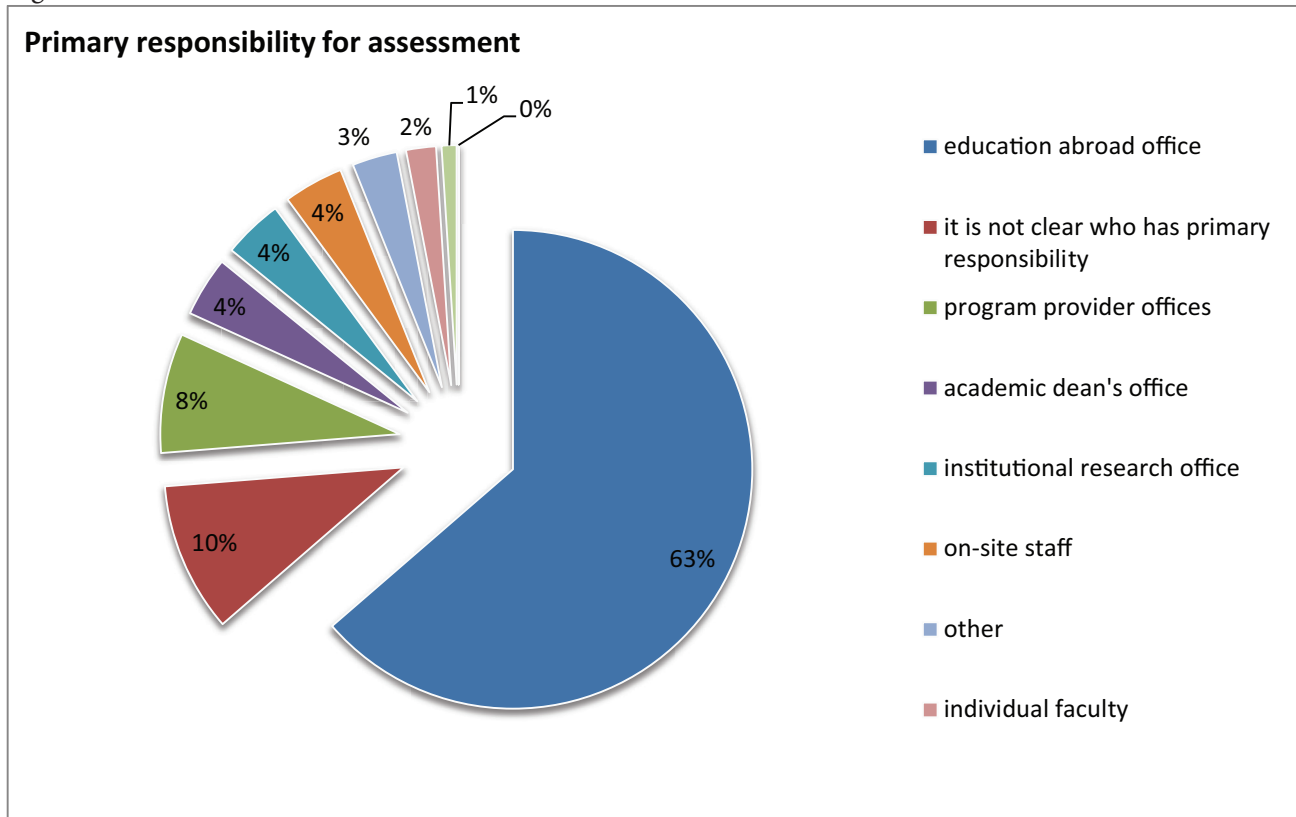
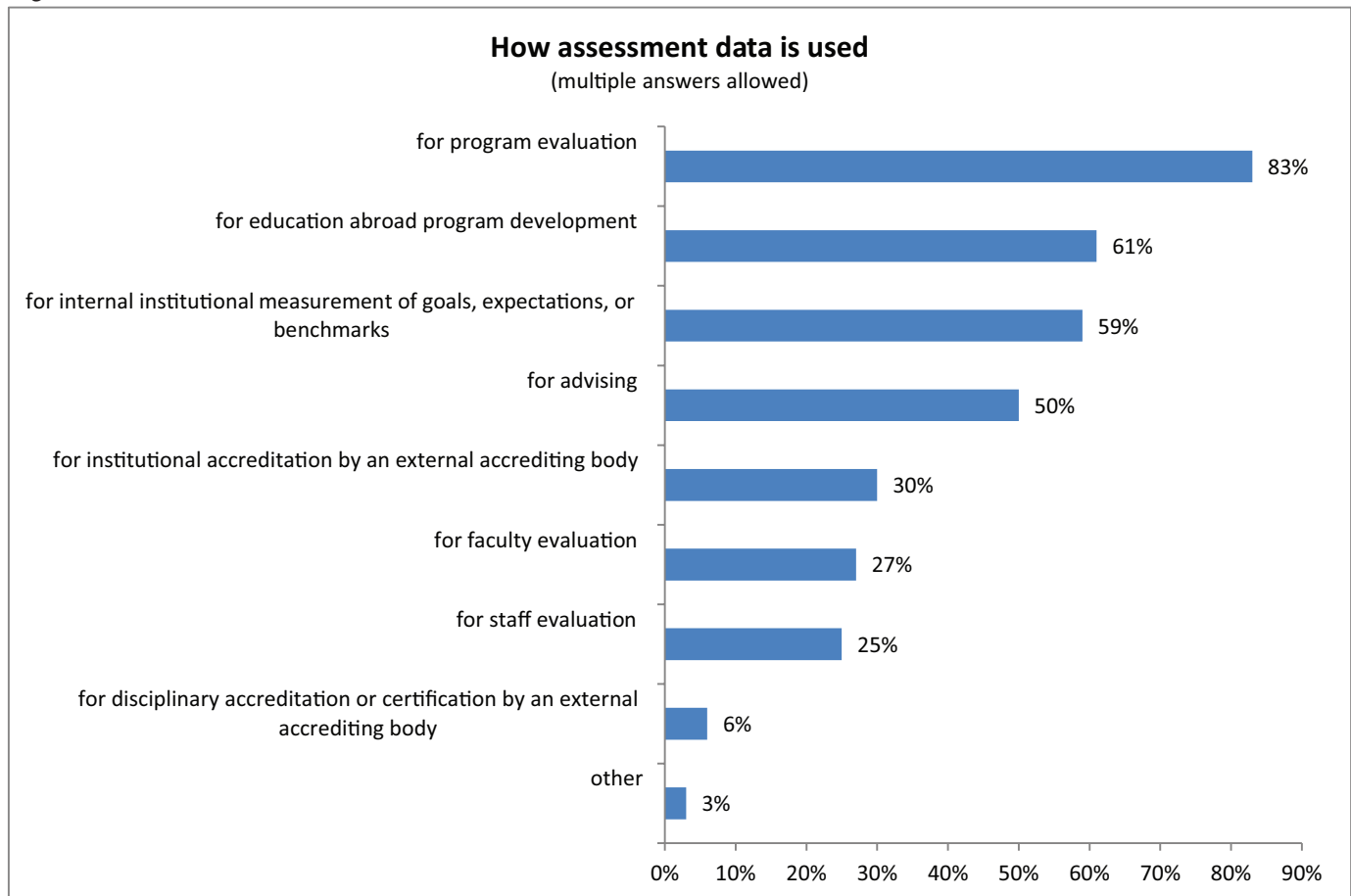


Figure 16

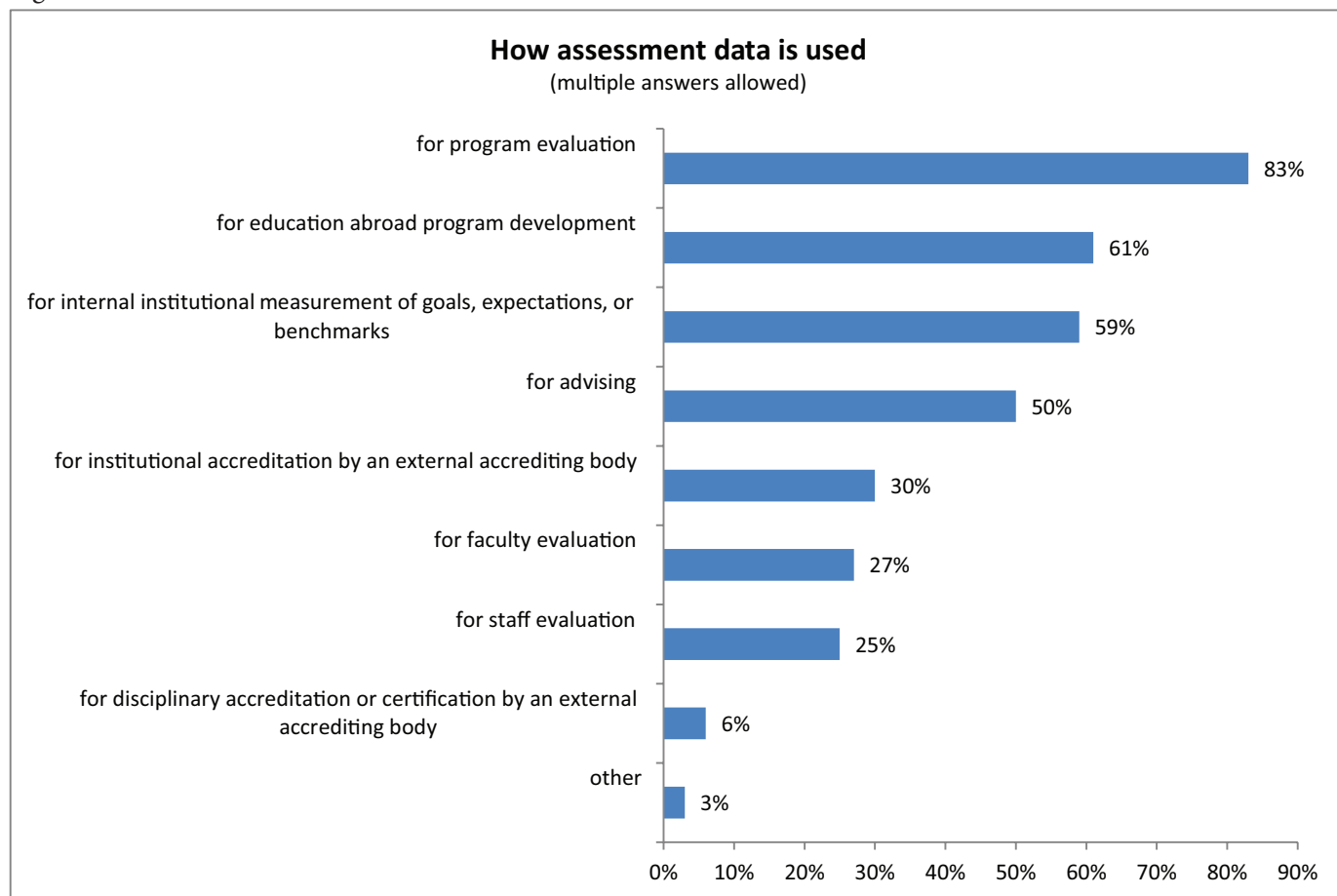


83% of respondents use their data for program evaluation; 61% for program development; 59% for internal institutional measurement of goals, expectations, or benchmarks; 50% for advising; 30% for accreditation;



27% for faculty evaluation; and 25% for staff evaluation (see Figure 17). Clearly, program evaluation and development are the primary focus of assessment efforts. However, it is significant that 50% of respondents are using assessment to improve advising. A future area of research might focus on the degree to which assessment is being used to increase student learning, whether through advising or program design and implementation.

Figure 17

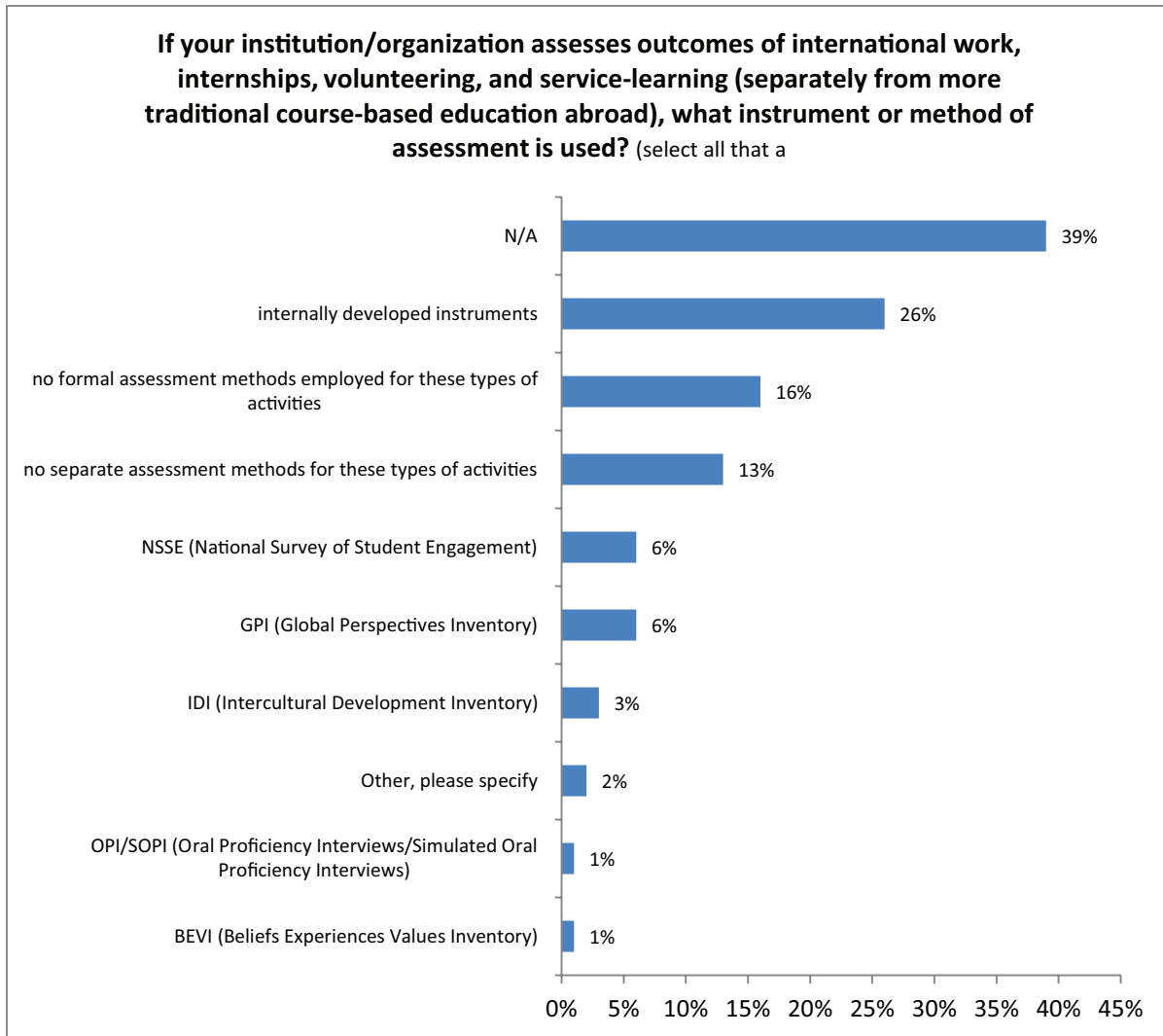


The Survey also asked about efforts to assess the outcomes of experiential learning activities taking place outside of education abroad programs (see Figure 18). Such assessment occurs less frequently or is not considered applicable to many of the offices asked to complete this survey (39% of respondents said this question did not apply to their institutions/organizations).

Of respondents who did assess outcomes of international work, internships, volunteering, and service-learning (separately from more traditional course-based education abroad), 56% did program evaluation, 47% assessed intercultural development, 34% assessed interpersonal development, 29% assessed career skills development, 26% assessed academic learning, and 17% assessed language acquisition. Where career skills development is included in 15% of respondents' general study abroad outcomes assessments; when experiential education is assessed specifically, that percentage nearly doubles to 29%.



Figure 18



A final question in this category focused on policies about student research abroad (see Table 15). Only 34% of respondents report that they have guidelines for research abroad, only 29% orient students on ethics of research prior to departure and 13% instruct students on participant observation. 62% do not require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for students working on animal and human subject research.

Table 15

Question: What policies do you follow with respect to student research abroad? (select all that apply)	
students working on human or animal subjects are expected to file a proposal with our Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the earliest opportunity	38%
we have formal guidelines for students who plan to conduct research abroad	34%
our overseas partners or universities handle IRB approvals, instruction in participant observation, and ethical training	32%
students are oriented on the ethics of field research abroad prior to departure if they are planning research or writing related to field work	29%
other	22%
students planning field research are instructed in participant observation	13%

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John Wells, *Arcadia University*

ABOUT THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

The Forum on Education Abroad is the only organization whose exclusive purpose is to serve the field of education abroad. Incorporated in 2001, the Forum holds 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization status and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for education abroad.

Forum members include U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, and education abroad provider organizations. The Forum membership includes more than 500 institutions and organizations that together account for approximately 90 percent of U.S. students studying abroad.

The Forum develops and implements standards of good practice, promotes and supports research initiatives, and offers educational programs and resources to its members. The Forum's members, represented by the Forum Council and its goals committees, determine the scope and direction of these initiatives. The Forum's annual conference is known for its distinctive format that fosters thought-provoking dialogue, and promotes collegiality and the vibrant exchange of ideas.

THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Forum on Education Abroad is to promote high quality and effective education abroad programs on behalf of students at U.S. colleges and universities through providing opportunities for global discourse and information sharing among the educational institutions, faculty and staff, consortia, agencies and organizations that are its members.

By providing opportunities for discourse and information sharing, the Forum promotes high quality and effective programming through:

- Advocating standards of good practice,
- Promoting excellence in curricular development and academic design,
- Encouraging outcomes assessment and other research,
- Facilitating data collection, and
- Advocating education abroad at all levels.

NOTES

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