

Virtual Exchanges as Study Abroad Opportunities

Dr. Sherie Klee

Professor, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, USA

Abstract

Creating globally competent adults who are actively aware and contribute to the world as a whole, is embedded within the concept of higher education. Study abroad is a means of helping to create globally competent students. Many universities and colleges offer a plethora of study abroad opportunities for students in all major areas. The year 2020 took its toll not only on how education is delivered, but also the opportunities for students to participate in study abroad experiences. To compensate for the lack of mobility created by the COVID-19 pandemic, some institutions are developing cultural exchanges and opportunities through a virtual lens. This type of collaboration can offer insight into the cultural nuances and global mindset that comes when immersing oneself in a culture other than your own.

This paper uses the basic tenants of the COIL (Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning) Model to develop a virtual study abroad exchange template that will allow universities the flexibility of offering a cultural experience without the expense and time commitment of an in-person experience. A general guide for creating and executing a virtual study abroad experience will be described. Insights and experiences from current virtual study abroad programs will also be shared.

