

## Colleges Impose Restrictions On Study-Abroad Programs To Offset Financial Hit From Jump in Participation, Schools Raise Fees, Set Caps

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**C**olleges and universities have aggressively promoted study-abroad opportunities in recent years as part of their campaign to recruit top students. But now, some schools—worried about losing out on tuition as a rapidly increasing number of students go overseas—are beginning to pull back.

In order to limit damage to their budgets, schools are capping the number of participants in study-abroad programs and imposing new fees and requirements. Among the tactics: requiring students to pay full tuition even if the programs cost less; setting caps on the number of students or the amount of financial aid sent abroad each year; and limiting how many students can go overseas at popular times, such as spring semester. Some schools are quietly setting earlier deadlines for study-abroad applications, perhaps hoping that students will be too disorganized to get their act together to apply.

This school year, Smith College set a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for students going on programs not run by the school, and the University of Rochester started charging at-home tuition and room fees to students in affiliated study-abroad programs. Next fall, Boston University will start charging students who go on outside programs a \$500 administrative fee.

The moves have disrupted some students' plans. For years, college junior Ashley Lambert looked forward to studying abroad, even choosing to attend Macalester College, in St. Paul, Minn., because it stresses the importance of overseas study. Last fall, she met with her adviser to work on her application and wrote an essay explaining how much she expected to benefit from studying for a semester in France. But when students were picked to study abroad this spring, Ms. Lambert received bad news.

Despite meeting all the academic requirements and being accepted independently by the program she applied to—which is run by another university—Macalester refused to let Ms. Lambert go abroad. In a letter, the school said it had received an increased number of applications this year. "I burst into tears," says Ms. Lambert, a 20-year-old from Fort Wayne, Ind.

The schools most affected by the overseas migration tend to be smaller, like Macalester, and ones that send many students abroad on programs run by outside institutions. One of them, Georgetown University, instituted a "Home School Tuition" model this year, charging students going abroad for a whole year its full \$31,656 tuition, regardless of where they study. Previously, the school charged students the actual cost of sending them abroad, which was

sometimes significantly cheaper than the cost of staying at home, plus an administrative fee.

"It provides the university with more revenue for scholarships, faculty or other needs," says Lori Citti, associate director of the Office of International Programs at Georgetown.

Some schools say that limiting the financial toll isn't their only motivation. Boston University says its fee is largely to provide better services for students studying abroad. Brandeis University says it wants to have enough financial aid to send as many students as possible overseas. And Smith says it wants to raise academic standards. "We felt we should have the same academic qualifications for students going on other programs as our own," says Adrian Beaulieu, Smith's associate dean of international study.

For decades, study-abroad programs were aimed at language or literature majors. But educators say that everything from the Internet to greater global awareness to a wider array of options has made even engineer majors and pre-med students more interested in study-abroad programs.

Between the 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 school years (the most recent data available), the number of American college kids studying overseas jumped 151%, according to the Institute of International Education. A number of private schools—such as Dartmouth College, Georgetown and Pepperdine University—now send about 60% of their students abroad at some point in their college careers.

In an effort to increase the number of participants, schools have been pushing shorter programs for a number of years. In 2003-2004, 6% of the students who studied overseas did so for a full academic year, down from 14% a decade earlier. In the same time period, the number of students who went abroad for eight weeks or less grew to 9% from 2%.

Meanwhile, other schools are instituting—or increasing—administrative fees for study-abroad programs. At Cornell University, students pay the cost of their program, plus a \$4,250 fee—a 4% increase over last year. The fees are meant to cover the costs of studying abroad, including the study-abroad staff, financial aid and, in some cases, on-site support, according to Kristen Grace, the associate director of Cornell Abroad, the undergraduate study-abroad office.

This year, Macalester administrators were caught off guard when 197 students applied to go abroad for the spring semester—58 more than they had budgeted to send. To help narrow the list, the college decided to cut off all students without a minimum 3.0 grade point average, and told some students they couldn't go abroad because their application didn't make the case that the program would be helpful to their "overall educational trajectory." (Ms. Lambert says

## Colleges Impose Restrictions On Study-Abroad Programs

she was told that studying in France was not necessary because she is an English major.) In the end, the school told 44 students they couldn't go abroad this semester; it eventually reversed its decision on 28.

"Here's the overall challenge: How do you increase access while at the same time controlling costs and maintaining program quality?" says Diane Michelfelder, provost and dean of the faculty at Macalester. In an effort to encourage more students to go abroad during the less-popular fall semester, Macalester is instituting a per-semester cap on the number of students allowed to go abroad that will be higher than its current full-year cap.

Such policies can be effective for schools trying to cut back on overseas-study expenses. A few years ago, Butler University in Indianapolis was losing about \$1 million a year on study-abroad programs, as almost all of its students went on programs run by other institutions while Butler paid their financial aid. In 2001, the school started charging students going abroad full tuition and began limiting the financial aid it gives to students who go on programs run by other institutions. The school has since broken even on study abroad each year. "They've stemmed what some people described as a hemorrhaging of money," says C. Montgomery Broaded, director of International Programs at Butler.

But the new efforts can be infuriating to students, who often believe that a study-abroad experience boosts a graduate-school or job application. Three years ago, Brandeis rejected the study-abroad applications of more than 30 students—the first time the school declined a sizable number—saying that the majority of students didn't give compelling enough academic reasons to study abroad. Immediately, several dozen professors signed a letter to support the applications, while a group of students met with a dean and threatened to transfer to other universities. Brandeis eventually reversed its decision and let all of the students go abroad.

This year, Brandeis is sending 35% of its junior class abroad, up from 19% in 1999. In fall 2004, Brandeis began charging students who go on approved study-abroad programs its full tuition, as well as offering financial aid. "Our rationale is if you are going to earn Brandeis credit toward your Brandeis degree, you should pay Brandeis tuition," says J. Scott Van Der Meid, director of study abroad.