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## Introduction to the Special Issue on “Interdisciplinarity in Geography Educational Experiences Abroad”

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Interdisciplinarity is inherent to the field of geography, as is studying abroad. Together they have the potential to internationalize the curriculum and prepare students for grand challenges in a rapidly changing world. The purpose of this special issue is to highlight geography’s undergraduate educational experiences abroad and demonstrate the interdisciplinarity of these programs. This issue also serves as a “call to action” by outlining how geography study abroad can be augmented and improved, and remain nimble in an era of growing global uncertainties.

This special issue contains fourteen manuscripts including a survey article, research articles, and lesson plans. Geographically, half of the contributions highlight study abroad experiences on the European continent; three focus on the greater Asian realm; and Latin America, Oceania, and Sub-Saharan Africa are represented by one contribution each. Grouped by knowledge area, eight of the contributions reflect geography partnered with disciplines from the humanities/social sciences, four partnered with STEM/health science disciplines, and one partnered with business. The survey article comes first, followed by the research articles, which we organized based on the knowledge area of the partnering disciplines, and we conclude with the lesson plans. The partnering disciplines and countries represented in this issue are listed in [Table 1](#).

In addition to highlighting the opportunities for and value of interdisciplinarity in geography study abroad programs, this collection of articles highlights a range of other lessons. For example, the success of study abroad experiences can be maximized by partnering with established in-country organizations or having local experts give lectures and guide field activities. Although not necessary for study abroad to be successful, partnerships with local on-the-ground institutions, organizations, businesses, and experts mitigate the risk of study abroad being an exercise in outside neocolonial observation, while highlighting local knowledge and maximizing place-based learning. Moreover, although all faculty members who lead study abroad programs should have the skill set necessary to ensure that the international experience is more than a vacation (Perry, Stoner, and Tarrant 2012), drawing on local expertise may facilitate study abroad for faculty who have limited experience in the destination country, thereby broadening the opportunity for all faculty to participate in and contribute to successful study abroad experiences for both students and instructors.

Another important lesson came to light due to the dramatic challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has

transformed the nature of education across the globe and stimulated the broad use of virtual teaching technologies. Although the full effect of the pandemic on study abroad opportunities has yet to be seen, it is likely that study abroad in the post-pandemic era will be challenged by travel restrictions, limited budgets, and concerns from students, their parents, and instructors. In a post-COVID world, virtual technologies could facilitate innovative international programs and even create opportunities for internationalizing the curriculum while offering an alternative to traveling abroad. Evolving virtual technologies offer a plethora of teaching tools that can result in undisrupted global learning in a world that is fraught with uncertainty.

There is tremendous competition among study abroad programs to recruit enough students for a program to be viable. The factors that influence a student’s decision on where to study abroad are multifaceted and often beyond the instructor’s control, but creating study abroad programs that give students a competitive advantage may increase student interest. Merging undergraduate study abroad with undergraduate research abroad, for example, allows students to engage in more extended learning activities following the in-country experience, such as data analysis and publication of results. The integration of study abroad and research abroad has the potential to provide students with increased knowledge and skill sets that could make them more competitive for and successful in graduate studies and employment.

As we consider interdisciplinarity in geography educational experiences abroad, it is important to consider the calls to action made clear in this collection of articles. As discussed above, study abroad should increase the incorporation of in-country partnerships, virtual technologies, and research experiences to provide opportunities for deep place-based learning, to make these opportunities more accessible to faculty and students, and to make students more competitive after graduation. Additionally, some destination countries and partnering disciplines tend to be over-represented, so effort should be made to develop successful programs in locations that are less commonly visited and with disciplines with which geography does not have a comfortable history. Finally, study abroad programs should reach beyond students and offer opportunities for non-geography primary and secondary school teachers to learn how to incorporate geographic knowledge into their curricula. Doing so furthers the reach of geography, highlights its interdisciplinarity, and has potential to create a more geographically literate society.

**Table 1.** Author, principle partnering discipline, and country of study for the articles in this special issue.

Author(s)	Principle partnering discipline	Country
Whitesides et al.	Survey	Survey
<b>Humanities/Social Sciences</b>		
Myles and Baltzly	Philosophy	Italy
Moorman et al.	History	Iceland
Hungerford and Enz	Global Studies	Senegal
Bergeron and Green	Religious Studies	Japan
Whalen and Cagalanan	History	France
Walsh-Dilley and Vaquero-Vasquez	Spanish	Ecuador
Dugas and Morgan	Communication	Ireland
<b>STEM/Health Science</b>		
Constantinou and Morrison-Breedy	Nursing	Cyprus
Cagalanan and Whitesides	Forest Ecology	Philippines
Page et al.	Environmental Science	China
<b>Business</b>		
Alberts and Niendorf	Business	Germany
<b>Lesson Plans</b>		
Bourque and Hamerlinck	Environmental Studies	Australia
Cervený et al.	History	Iceland

## Note

- All papers in this special issue underwent double-blind peer-review, were subject to standard review policies of *The Geography Teacher*, and followed best practices outlined by the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#). COPE states, “While you should not be denied the ability to publish in your own journal, you must take extra precautions not to exploit your position or to create an impression of impropriety. Your journal must have a procedure for handling submissions from editors or members of the editorial board that will ensure that the peer review is handled independently of the author/editor. We also recommend that you describe the process in a commentary or similar note once the paper is published” (COPE Council 2019). In line with that recommendation, none of the guest co-editors

handled editorial responsibilities for papers on which they are listed as authors. Neidel performed editorial functions when both Cagalanan and Whitesides were authors, and Whitesides performed editorial duties when Cagalanan partnered with authors who were not guest co-editors.

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## Notes on Contributors

**Dominique Cagalanan** is the Executive Director of the EcoHealth Network, prior to which she was an Assistant Professor of Geography at Coastal Carolina University. She is a human-environment geographer specializing in tropical forest conservation and restoration, agriculture, and rural livelihoods, particularly in Southeast Asia.

**Clayton J. Whitesides** is an Associate Professor of Geography in the Department of Anthropology and Geography at Coastal Carolina University. He is a broadly trained physical geographer with particular interests in biogeography, geomorphology, and mountain environments.

**J. David Neidel** works for the World Agroforestry Centre through which he serves as the Asia Program Advisor for Yale University’s Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative. He has spent 18 years in Southeast Asia, the majority of which has been focused on working with local partners to develop capacity in forest restoration and degraded land rehabilitation. David has a master’s in Geography and Ph.D. in Anthropology and Forestry & Environmental Studies.

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