

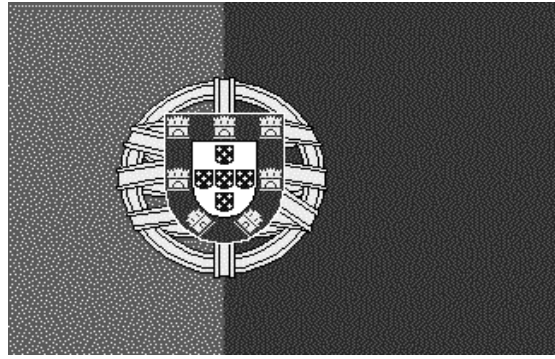
Proceedings
Enhancement of the Global Perspective for
Engineering Students by Providing an
International Experience

Engineering Conferences International

Year 2003

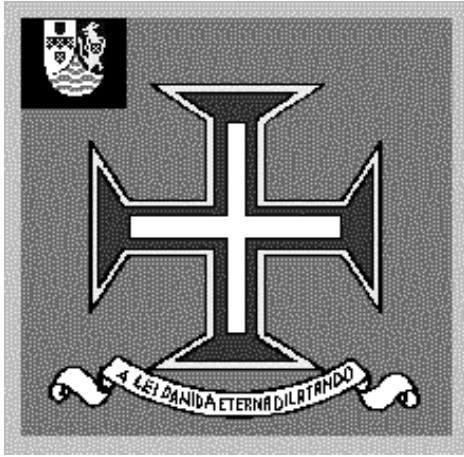
Assessing the Value of the International
Experience

Bethany S. Oberst
James Madison University



Assessing the Value of the International Experience

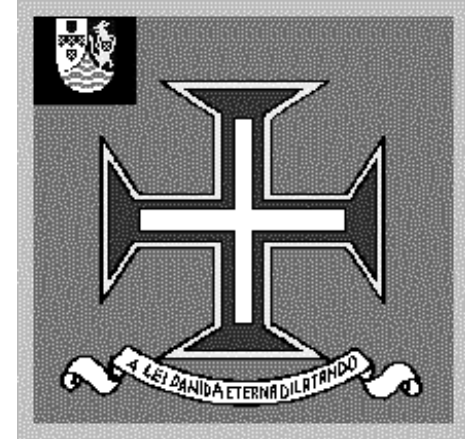
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**Assessing (by what means?) the
value (to whom?) of (whose?)
international experience**

Outline

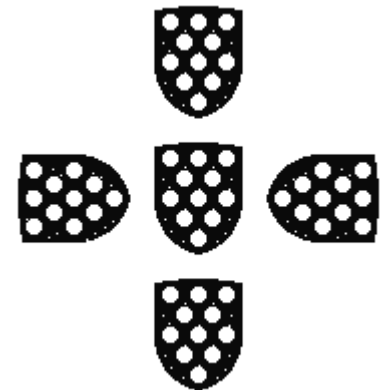
- **Assessment?**
- **Student surveys: our students' voices**
- **Data analysis: international experience for faculty**
- **A blended approach: assessment of international engineering programs in the US**
- **Afterthoughts**



To assess, assessment, etc.

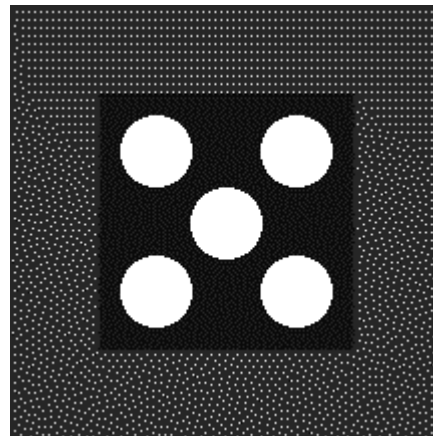
"...assessment is defined as the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students."

Erwin, T. Dary



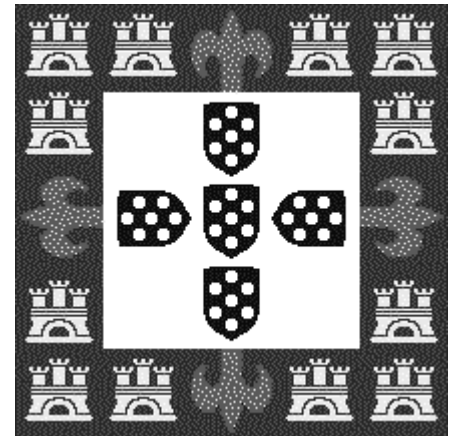
Self-reporting: Our students' voices

- **Anecdotal evidence or systematic inquiry?**
- **Structured or open-ended questions?**
- **Pre- and/or post- reporting?**
- **Results from approximately 1300 student evaluations of their studies abroad experience, 1996- 2003.**

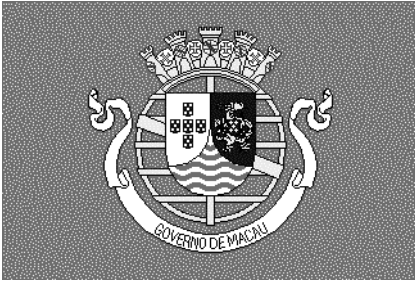


Our students' voices: the world

- **“I feel like my eyes have been opened to the world. I am curious about things. I want to know what is happening in the world.”**
- **“Understand that you are foreigners and that you should abide by their customs.”**
- **“I learned so much about...national identity and what it means to be colonized.”**
- **“Be prepared to stick out. You definitely don't blend in here!”**
- **“Don't be arrogant and let people see American stereotypes.”**



Our students' voices: lessons on being human



- **“Realize that you will be a minority for a change and that is ok.”**
- **“Take nothing personally.”**
- **“I learned that negative experiences have good effects on a person.”**
- **You realize “...how strong (or weak) a person you are.”**
- **“Don’t talk so d**m much! Absorbing is much more important.”**

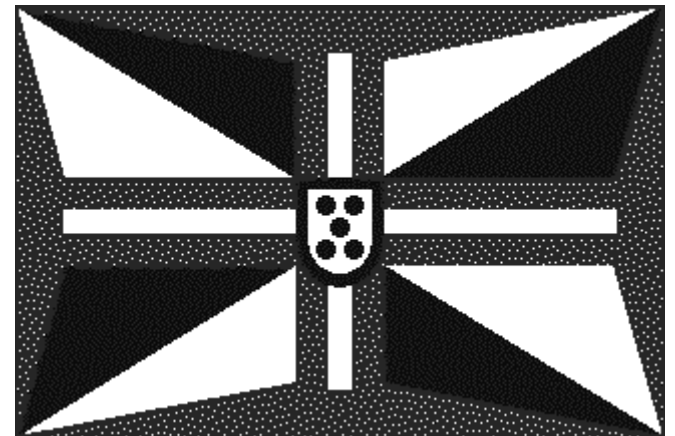
Our students' voices: on working in another culture

- **“We operated in an American fast paced lifestyle in a European slow lifestyle.”**
- **“The work was more intensive because you had to learn to complete it in a completely opposite environment.”**
- **“Find the strength to ask questions... Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings.”**



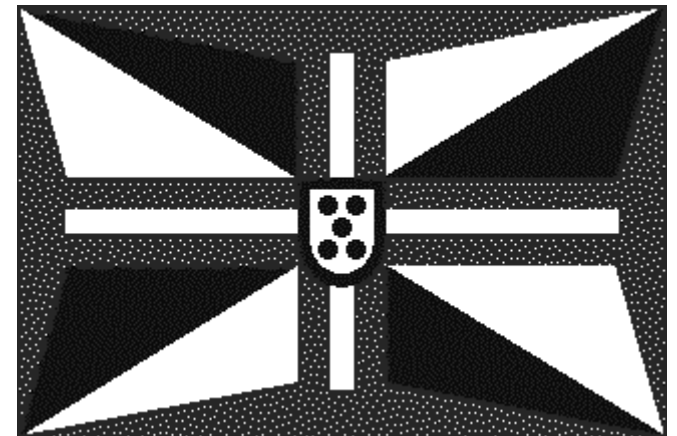
Our students' (funny) voices

- **On unfamiliar customs:
“Socks and shoes have to
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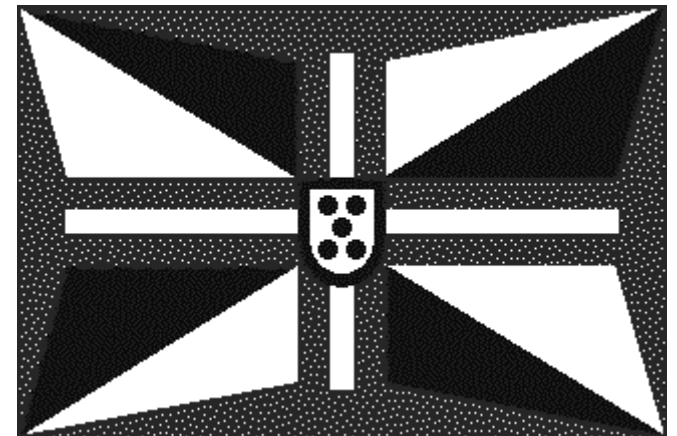
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- **“Florence is the birthplace of modern man – well, except Greece.”**



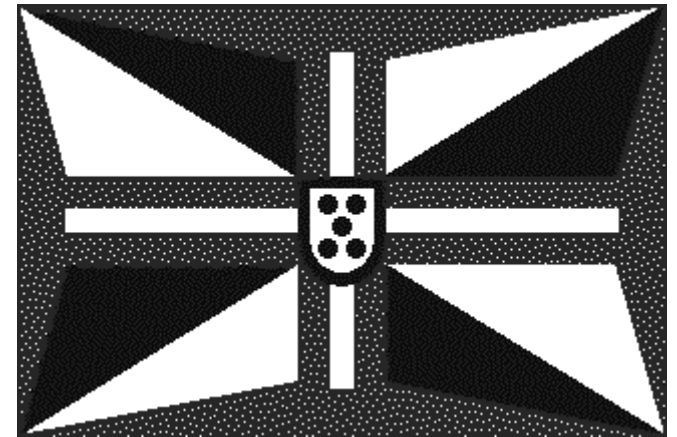
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- **“If I see another fresco I’m going to scream!”**



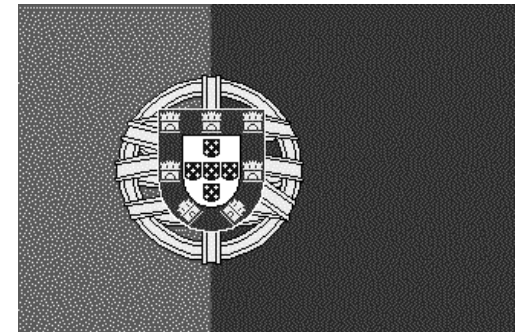
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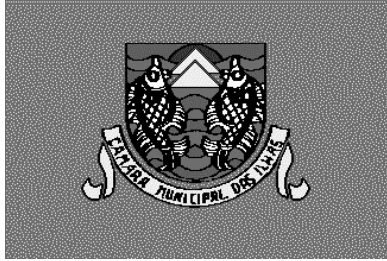
- **On unfamiliar customs:**
“Socks and shoes have to be worn at the dinner table.”
- “Florence is the birthplace of modern man – well, except Greece.”
- “If I see another fresco I’m going to scream!”
- “Our 4 am curfew [in Spain] was just too restrictive!”



Pros of open-ended student evaluations

- **Disclose unexpected aspects of the international experience (ex. impact of absence of family)**
- **Can reveal “out of class learning,” good and bad**
- **Provide insights into time management issues**
- **Makes clear the youth of our students!**



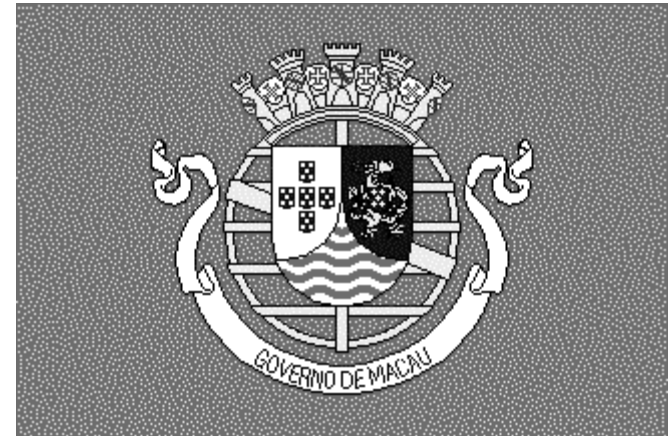


Cons of open-ended student evaluations

- **Give no reliable insight into effect of specific experiences, courses, etc.**
- **Grammar and spelling can be off-putting for the reader**
- **Some students gloss over the whole chore**
- **Can be an opportunity for a last-minute whine**

International experience for faculty

- Bethany Obers, “A Decade of Experience: Data from the Council on International Educational Exchange’s International Faculty Development Seminars,” *Journal of Studies in International Education*, http://www.ciee.org/IFDS_Current_research_eval.cfm?subnav=IFDC



The research

- **1000 questionnaires reviewed (about 60% return rate)**
- **A decade of data**
- **Anonymous reports**
- **Many quantifiable results**
- **Valuable background data on respondents**



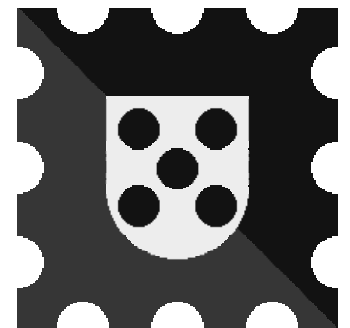
Findings

- **Development experiences have more impact on creation of new courses than on initiation of new research projects.**
- **Development experiences have the most impact on the revision of existing courses to make them international.**
- **Faculty are willing to pay part of the expenses.**

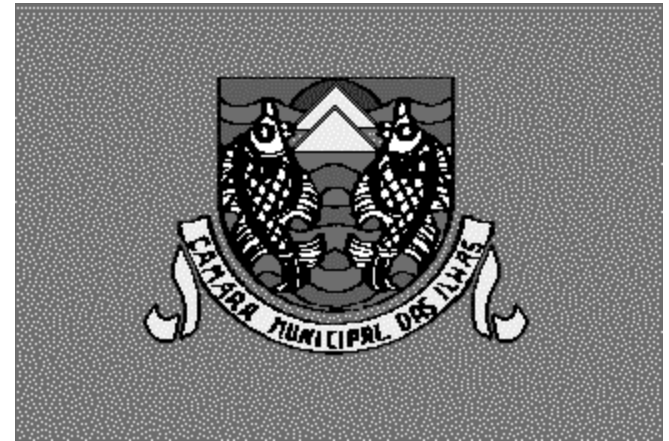


More findings

- **85%+ said that the experience had a great impact on their total professional life.**
- **Majority of participants were from the social sciences (esp. history, political science)**
- **No engineers participated despite topics such as environmental preservation in New Zealand, and an over-view of modern-day Turkey offered by the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara.**

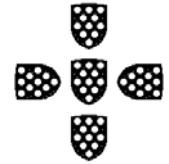


Conclusions from assessment



- **International experience for engineering faculty would be a good investment and would predictably bring about a beneficial internationalization of the curriculum.**
- **Resources are available for group experiences if an engineering college wanted to focus on a particular part of the world.**

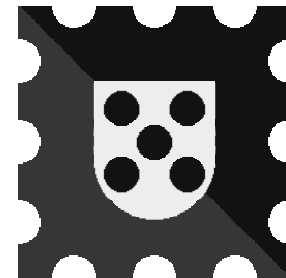
More conclusions



- **It will take some effort to persuade some engineering faculty to be “internationally developed.”**
- **If the expected outcome of a development experience were explicitly in the area of teaching, rather than research, that would have benefits for the students and encourage more teaching oriented faculty to participate and to change.**
- **Data analysis of questionnaires gives actionable results.**

Assessment in engineering

- **Sufficient data exist now to permit good information to be gathered on what engineering students learn in an international experience.**
- **Field may be moving too rapidly for some to capture essential information.**
- **International experiences delivered through electronic means present particular problems for assessment.**



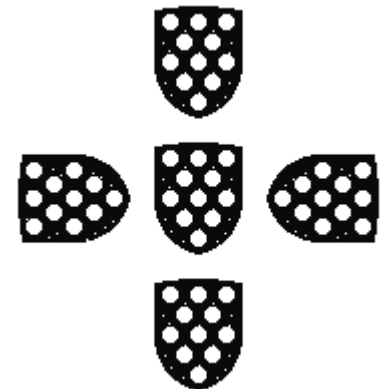


University of Rhode Island Assessments

- High-level review of project reports
- Tracking of job placements
- Feedback from graduates
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Enrollment figures
- National and international awards
- <http://www.uri.edu/iep/index.html>

Afterthoughts

- **It's time to collect assessment information from across universities**
- **It's also time to look for comparable data from engineering schools around the world**
- **There may be some interesting data from other professional fields**
- **The public's demand for assessment data doesn't seem to want to go away.**



For more information

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