All across the United States, universities and colleges are taking the time this month to pause and celebrate the virtues and value of international education -- study abroad, language learning, the study of international affairs, and hosting international students at American universities. This year’s theme, *International Education: Fostering Global Citizenship and Respect*, recognizes the importance of teaching students to be responsible, respectful world citizens. As Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has said:

“.....an important part of education is teaching students to be active and informed international citizens. By studying the history, culture, and languages of other countries, students gain invaluable insights into how others live and learn important lessons about respecting their fellow citizens of the world.

More than ever, being prepared to contribute to a better world is about what you know, not where you live.”

So, let’s talk a little about “study abroad” and its relationship to “global citizenship.”

I. “Study Abroad, the Must Have”

I am pleased to see so much interest in study abroad among the current student body at FAU, since studying abroad while you are an undergraduate will be one of the smartest things you ever do at FAU. Your overseas study experience, whether it is for a semester, a full year, or even a shorter summer program, will give you a life changing experience and build personal capacity you will use for the rest of your studies, and beyond graduation in life.

Multiple studies show the benefits of an overseas study experience, which include:

1 Adapted from remarks prepared for and given at the Freshman Forum at the FAU Honors College on November 9, 2007 to kick off International Education Week November 12-16, 2007.
- exposure to different cultures and traditions
- mastering the challenge of a new learning experience, often in another language
- self reliance and coping skills
- language acquisition – students who take serious language study abroad increase proficiency by nearly 75%
- study skills are honed that frequently lead to better grades the rest of your college career

In a nut shell, study abroad increases your **global competency** quotient which most people tout at the best way to get a great job upon graduation or get into the graduate school of your choice.

Indeed, the *New York Times* last week called study abroad the “must have” for students in the 21st century. A different source, a survey by Indiana University, recently cited study abroad as one of four educational activities that offer “deep learning” and have a high impact on the success of students’ capacity to learn. The survey specifically noted how study abroad builds reflective learning skills and self confidence.

But surprisingly, even today, nationwide relatively few students participate in study abroad:

- only 200,000 each year nationally (compared to many more exchanged all across Europe and over 565,000 international students in the US each year)
- students at private schools go more often than students from public institutions
- more women study abroad than men
- fewer part time students study abroad since it’s harder to get away
- first generation students go abroad less often, perhaps since it seems hard enough just to be in college
- certain majors find it hard to study abroad
A corollary to these statistics is an Association of American Colleges and Universities poll that showed 60% of employers said recent graduates lacked the skills needed to succeed in a global economy.

Factors making it difficult to go abroad include the extra costs, the fear that going abroad will not count toward graduation or make the degree take longer, concern for student safety, and lack of integration into the coursework you are taking at the home campus.

This is why universities like FAU are doing all it can to improve the program options we have for you, and why we are trying to keep costs down and raise scholarship dollars for you.

Now at FAU you can study abroad in one of several ways:

- FAU faculty led short term programs
- FAU exchanges at universities we have agreements with
- programs offered by other FLA schools
- programs offered by affiliates and third party providers

Using an FAU approved program allows you (in most cases) to access any available FAU financial aids, and to use the services of the study abroad advising team. We are eager to meet your needs and that is why our study abroad advisor comes up to Jupiter to meet with HC students on a regular basis. We try to confirm the transfer and applicability of courses you plan to take abroad in advance, before you go abroad, to the extent possible. Experience has shown that the earlier you plan to build a study abroad experience into your 4 year degree and the earlier you contact OIP for help, the better off things will be.

FAU is also taking steps to insure student safety at our various locations. We require travel health and evacuation insurance for all students, and provide in-depth pre-departure orientations, so that all students are as prepared as possible when they leave for a program. Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of all involved – faculty and students – lead to well defined and realistic expectations. The best plans cannot foresee all the events and challenges that might take place, and we wouldn’t want it to be; surprise and serendipity are
part of the excitement of international study. But at the same time we believe proper planning and solid preparation can eliminate the “glitch” factors no one needs in their time abroad.

II. Global citizenship

I want to turn now to the concept of “global citizenship” and its relationship to study abroad. You will recall that the sub-title of this year’s International Education Week is *Fostering Global Citizenship and Respect*. Secretary Spellings uses the term to mean “active and informed international citizens”.

One can trace the broad concept of global citizenship back to ancient Greece and Rome, where at least one famous philosopher (Diogenes) proclaimed that he was “….a citizen of the world.” Early American writer Thomas Paine similarly wrote “My country is the whole world. My countrymen are mankind.” A more modern commentator the historian Thomas Bender wrote in his book *A Nation Among Nations* that we need to reframe our understanding of US history – and ourselves – so that we accept our “…..condition of being one among many in an interdependent world.”

These are all ways to attempt a definition of the emerging phenomenon of people who have a global outlook, a global capacity, and a sense of responsibility that spans national borders. Most uses of the term global citizenship imply an obligation to act ethically and to try to help alleviate local and global inequalities. In so doing, some commentators assume that national identity becomes less vital or important as global concerns and affiliations dominate, and that you have to abandon your local and national ties in order to act globally.

I don’t think you need to abandon local ties and connections to be considered a global citizen. G. Pascal Zachary, author of the book *The Global Me* calls global citizens another name – “mongrels.” Instead of the usual negative overtones to the use of this word, as in mutts, Zachary claims that mongrels are quality hybrids, people who have cross-cultural experience by birth, life or work, and who happily relish their global and cross-cultural nature as a strength. Mongrels are comfortable straddling boundaries and borders.
Zachary believes people who can practice this state of “the global me” (hence the title of the book) gain the competitive edge and are happier as well. The values each “mongrel” or global citizen believes in can and obviously will vary, but the principle of boundary crossings and openness remains at the core.

So why should we care about global citizenship? Why aspire to be a mongrel? Earlier I had stated that study abroad increases your global competency quotient which most people tout at the best way to get a great job upon graduation or get into the graduate school of your choice. As a complement to this more economic argument that justifies and explains the value of study abroad, I would argue that study abroad and the skills it gives you simultaneously prepares you for a life as a global citizen. Not only will it help you earn a living and build a top career, it will allow you to contribute on the social and human side of life as an actor and contributor to global civil society.

The 21st century has many challenges. Problems abound in the world – the litany of issues range from poverty, disease, environmental disasters, authoritarian regimes, human rights abuse, genocide, and immigration and assimilation crises. Much work needs to be done to address them, by nations, governments, NGOs, companies, and global citizens acting with the latter groups or on their own.

The good news is that the many global and other features of our world today offer tools we can use, as global citizens, to work on these issues, if we choose to. Tom Friedman’s “flat world” means what we do in Florida or elsewhere in the USA matters in Ghana and Brazil or India, and vice versa. And the “24/7 time frame” of a flat world means we have connections and opportunities to collaborate and act in ways never possible before. Technology means more individuals can use the web and the internet to advocate for their causes, issues, or themselves. The feared dominance of English around the world, from the early days of globalization, has lessened as multiple language usage continues and is sought after in all walks of life. English is very useful and yet at the same time we need to learn and use language skills to make a difference elsewhere and here in South Florida.
In the end it comes down to this -- the core activity that helps one become globally competent and perhaps eventually a global citizen is an **international experience** that leads to cultural understanding. Study abroad is the **best** way to obtain this experience while in college since it links the international experience with content learning, and triggers reflective learning. This in turn builds life long skills in thinking, critical assessment, and decision making. Whatever your life values, or wherever your career may take you, you will through study abroad gain the tangible and intangible skills needed to become a global citizen. International experience and expertise built in other situations after the initial learning process gained in study abroad will then help you build greater capacity to act as a global citizen.

I share Zachary’s belief that individuals with the skills and attitudes and capacities to navigate diversity and hybridity will have a competitive advantage, will succeed, and will have the opportunity to influence in how the world evolves. So in closing, I really encourage you in the weeks and months to come to explore the world of study abroad and to contemplate the global citizen – “the confident mongrel of the 21st century” – you have the potential to become.