
U.S. STUDY ABROAD IN THAILAND: HOST COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES AND GUIDELINES FOR PARTNERS

AN IIE BRIEFING PAPER
AUGUST 2010

INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (IIE)

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Institute of
International Education
809 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
www.iie.org
policyresearch@iie.org

For press inquiries, contact:
Sharon Witherell, Director of
Public Affairs
switherell@iie.org
212-983-5380

Institute of International Education, in cooperation with
**The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in
Thailand**, and **Mahidol University International College**

Report prepared by:

Chalintorn Burian, PhD, International Division Director IIE/SEA
with **Michael Michalec**, Adjunct Lecturer, Thammasat University
Tatpicha Nunta, PhD Candidate, Khon Kaen University, and
Chiranath Tejasen, Program Officer, IIE/SEA

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This white paper emerges from a workshop, “Expanding U.S. Study Abroad in Thailand: Assessment Guidelines for Partners,” that was conducted February 24–26, 2010, in Bangkok, Thailand. This high-level gathering of administrators of higher education institutions, NGOs, and governmental agencies came together with the following **objectives**:

- To identify factors that influence the decision to study abroad in Thailand;
- To clarify measures to attract more U.S. students to more diverse institutions; and
- To encourage additional roles for EducationUSA advisers in promoting U.S. study in Thailand.

Key findings from the workshop are summarized in this report and highlight the current landscape and opportunities for expanding U.S. study abroad in Thailand.

Thailand’s Share of the U.S. Study Abroad Market

- Despite the growth of Asian economies and the increasing cultural influence of Asian countries, only 11 percent, or roughly 30,000 of the more than a quarter million U.S. students who study abroad for academic credit do so in Asia. China and Japan receive most U.S. students (over 18,000), while Thailand receives only 1,500 (or 5 percent) of the U.S. students who study in Asia.
- While the number of U.S. students studying in Thailand annually has increased more than threefold in the last decade, there is still much untapped potential to send more students. Large Thai-American populations in the upper Midwest and California are increasingly showing interest in heritage-based study programs along with Americans of other backgrounds. But many prominent U.S. institutions that offer Southeast Asian studies programs have yet to pursue coordinated strategies to encourage their students to study in Thailand.

Best Practices Identified at the IIE Southeast Asia Workshop

- Factors that are crucial to the development of study abroad programs in Thailand include the ability to transfer academic credit towards a degree at the home institution, offer a wide selection of relevant courses, provide adequate student support, and facilitate cultural immersion opportunities.
- Thailand and the U.S. operate on different academic calendars, but several Thai international programs have adjusted their calendars to accommodate U.S. schedules. Proper alignment of schedules can maximize progress toward graduation and minimize financial aid problems associated with calendar deadlines.
- Proper management of the growth of study abroad programs in Thailand must include constant monitoring and evaluation of program activities, student engagement and

feedback, and impact on institution. Timely and informative orientation sessions, adequate support, and regular assistance are vital to continued student success.

- Language acquisition should be tailored to the diverse skill levels of incoming students. It is also important to pursue strategies that enhance the capacity of the host faculty and staff to deliver course content in English.

Action Steps Initiated at the IIE Southeast Asia Workshop

- With the assistance of IIE's Southeast Asia office in Bangkok, several Thai higher education institutions have created a consortium to address the imbalance in student exchange between Thailand and the United States and develop specific strategies to increase U.S. interest in Thailand as a study abroad destination. A first step is to publish an up-to-date list of Thai institutions that offer study abroad programs.
- Marketing efforts to promote study abroad in Thailand would also benefit from the development of a common website and directory that promotes and highlights information for all Thai international colleges.
- A unified presence at study abroad and international education forums such as AIEA: Association of International Education Administrators, the Forum on Education Abroad and NAFSA: Association of International Educators annual conferences would demonstrate both financial and organizational cooperation and help more Thai institutions gain a marketing presence overseas.

II. INTRODUCTION

A recent workshop held in Bangkok focused on exploring ways to encourage more U.S. Americans to study in Thailand, and was an important first step. It brought together a diverse group of Thai and American participants from around Thailand who are dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and enriching the educational experience for both Thai and American students. The participants' enthusiasm for this initiative showed that they were the right people to begin our enhanced efforts to attract U.S. students to Thailand, and their creativity makes me feel optimistic that we will succeed in our efforts.

The challenges, however, are great. There is no central clearinghouse for study abroad in the United States. Prospective study abroad students who have already completed their studies and are no longer a part of a university community face particularly high hurdles, since they do not have the same access to the academic services available at most universities. Although there is information available about studying in Thailand, how do we get the information into the hands of those students thinking about studying abroad? While these issues are difficult to address, I believe that with many dedicated people working together, we can create avenues for information sharing that will increase the number of American students wishing to study in Thailand.

—Kenneth L. Foster, Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy in Thailand

With growth in higher education enrollment rates around the world, students are becoming increasingly mobile in pursuing their education. These individuals are gaining first-hand international knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and global perspectives that will help them succeed and prosper in a global economy.

According to UNESCO, in 2007 over three million students around the globe travelled to other countries for higher education, while IIE's *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange* reported that 671,616 international students studied in the United States in academic year 2008/09, an all-time high. Americans who studied abroad totaled less than half that amount; 262,416 students who earned academic credit back home for their study abroad in 2007/08, the most recent year for which data are available.

The Institute of International Education is working to increase the number and diversity of American students who go abroad and to encourage study in places of growing strategic importance to the United States. In support of this mission, IIE's Southeast Asia Office in Bangkok aims to develop activities that will increase the number and diversity of American students in Thailand.

According to the *Open Doors*, a total of 9,004 Thai students studied in the U.S. in 2008/09, while only 1,555 American students studied abroad for academic credit in Thailand in 2007/08. Although Thailand has 112 multidisciplinary universities and 19 community colleges, American students in Thailand study at only a limited number of higher education institutions. To increase the number of U.S. students who study abroad in Thailand, more Thai higher education institutions need to explore opportunities for establishing new study abroad programs, expanding existing ones, and identifying measures to attract and accommodate more U.S. students.

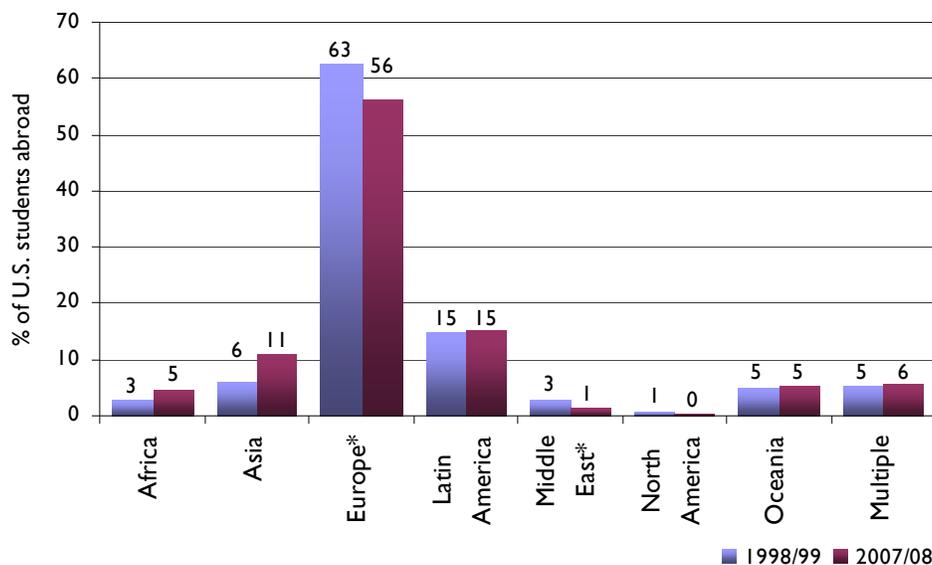
With these goals in mind, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Thailand, Mahidol University International College, and IIE's Southeast Asia Office convened a workshop, "Expanding U.S. Study Abroad in Thailand: Assessment Guidelines for Partners," conducted February 24-26, 2010. The workshop, which took place in Bangkok, was supported by a grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and the Public Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy in Thailand.

Building on the workshop, this white paper addresses educators interested in expanding study abroad in Thailand. After a review of study abroad trends from *Open Doors*, the paper examines topics including assessment guidelines; concepts, models, and approaches related to study abroad; challenges to expanding study abroad in Thailand; and recommendations for further action.

III. A SNAPSHOT OF U.S. STUDY ABROAD WORLDWIDE AND IN THAILAND

According to IIE’s *Open Doors* report, 262,416 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2007/08, an increase of 8.5 percent over the previous year. Despite this gain, the U.S. still lags behind other countries in sending students abroad to study, with one of the lowest outbound mobility ratios reported by UNESCO. U.S. campuses have responded to calls to send more students abroad by increasing their offerings through short-term programs in diverse fields of study, taking into account the needs of students whose personal obligations or majors restrict their ability to participate in traditional semester or academic-year programs.

Figure 1: U.S. Study Abroad by World Region, 1998/99 and 2007/08¹



Note: Turkey and Cyprus were grouped in the Middle East region until 2004/05, when they were moved to the Europe region. Without this change, Europe would show steeper declines.

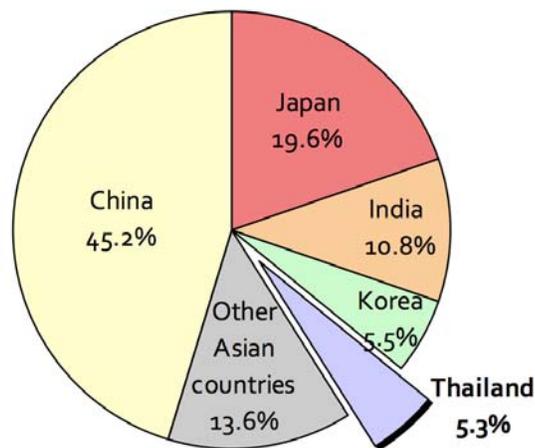
Over the last decade, students have shown more interest in studying abroad in “nontraditional” destinations—defined here as places outside Europe and Oceania. Figure 1 compares the destinations of U.S. study abroad students by world region at these two points in time: in 2007/08, 38 percent of all students studied in non-traditional regions, compared to 32 percent in 1998/99.

Although the decline in Europe’s percentage share indicates a growing interest in nontraditional destinations, the majority of U.S. study abroad students still choose to go to Europe. For example, the United Kingdom alone receives slightly more than 30,000 U.S. students annually.

¹ Data for all figures and tables is from Bhandari, R., & Chow, P. (2009). *Open Doors 2009: Report on International Educational Exchange*. New York, NY: Institute of International Education.

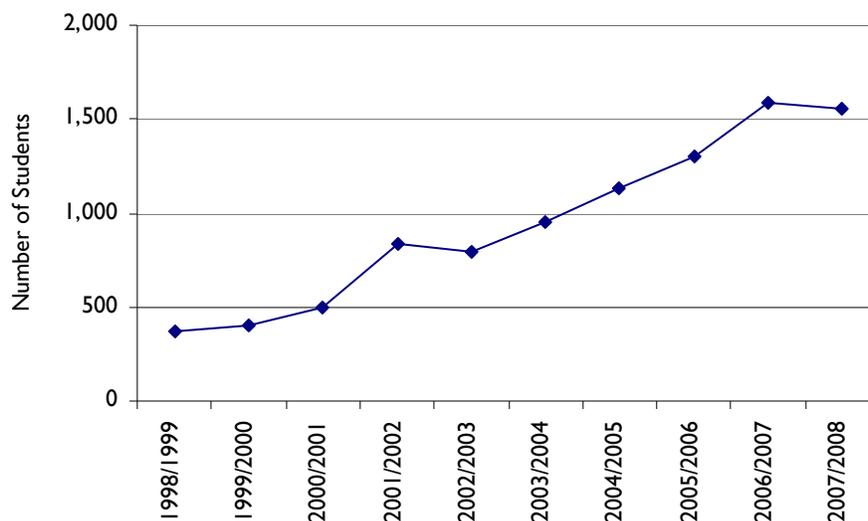
Although overall numbers have increased over the last decade, Europe has hosted a steadily declining share of all U.S. study abroad students, from 81,502 students (63 percent) in 1998/99 to 147,676 students (56 percent) in 2007/08. No world region has seen as much growth in such a short time as Asia, which hosted a total of 7,781 students (6 percent) in 1998/99, compared to 29,125 students (11 percent) in 2007/08.

Figure 2: U.S. Student Study Abroad Destinations in Asia, 2007/08



In 2007/08, China was by far the most popular destination for U.S. students who studied abroad in Asia (Figure 2). Thailand was the fifth most popular destination in the region, after China, Japan, India, and South Korea. Thailand hosted 1,555 U.S. study abroad students, approximately 5.3 percent of the total number of U.S. students who studied in Asia.

Figure 3: U.S. Students Participating in Study Abroad Programs in Thailand, 1998/99 to 2007/08



U.S. study abroad in Thailand has more than tripled over the past decade, from less than 500 U.S. students in 1998/99 to more than 1,500 in 2007/08 (Figure 3). While the number of U.S. students in Thailand remained relatively flat between 2007 and 2008, the clear overall upward trend over the past decade suggests that the number of U.S. study abroad students in Thailand will likely continue to grow in the coming years despite the likely drop in numbers in 2009/10 due to political demonstrations and the subsequent U.S. State Department travel warnings, now lifted. The increasing interest among U.S. higher education institutions, the U.S. Embassy and organizations represented at the workshop further signals the potential for future growth in study abroad in partnership with Thai higher education institutions wishing to enhance their capacity to facilitate study abroad for U.S. students.

Table I lists the ten U.S. institutions that sent the most students abroad to Thailand in 2007/08. Webster University sent the most students abroad, followed by a number of institutions distributed throughout the country. While the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, the University of Washington, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison represent institutions that also send large numbers of students abroad globally, a number of smaller senders also appear on this list.

Table I: U.S. Universities Sending Students to Thailand, 2007/08

Rank	Institution	State
1	Webster University	MO
2	Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo	CA
3	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	MN
4	University of Washington	WA
5	Ohio University - Main Campus	OH
6	University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill	NC
7	Worcester Polytechnic Institute	MA
8	Whitworth College	WA
9	Niagara University	NY
10	University of Wisconsin - Madison	WI

In the case of Webster University, a private institution based in St. Louis, Missouri, with a total enrollment of 19,038, the high number of U.S. study abroad students in Thailand reflects the existence of Webster University Thailand, a 40-acre campus between the coastal towns of Chaam and Hua Hin, where more than 400 students from over 60 countries have come to pursue degree study. An additional Webster University campus in Bangkok provides graduate programs.

Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo, a public institution with an enrollment of 17,582, takes a different approach, offering an 8-week faculty-led program to Thailand. The program offers students the opportunity to “study at Chiang Mai University in Northern Thailand, visit the hill tribe region, travel to the ancient sites of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, and finish the program in the cosmopolitan city of Bangkok at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, located in the heart of the city.”

The University of Minnesota, a much larger public institution with an enrollment of 50,954, offers a short-term faculty-led course in Thailand and Laos, “Understanding Southeast Asia.” Reflecting its engagement with the large southeast Asian population in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area, the university currently offers a special USD\$1,000 scholarship to University of Minnesota students who enroll in a Hmong language course, USD\$500 of which goes toward funding participations in the study abroad program.

These diverse approaches suggest that individual institutions use a variety of strategies to send high numbers of students to nontraditional destinations like Thailand, based on factors including particular faculty strengths, community assets, academic services provided to overseas students, and partnerships with Thai host institutions.

IV. WORKSHOP ON EXPANDING U.S. STUDY ABROAD IN THAILAND

With representation from Thai higher education, government, and nonprofit organizations, along with U.S. institutional administrators and program providers, the workshop, “Expanding U.S. Study Abroad in Thailand: Assessment Guidelines for Partners,” focused on a wide cross-section of the “host country” perspective on the topic.

The Workshop Planning Committee met for the first time in October 2009 to decide on the objectives, participants and themes to be addressed at the workshop. The committee included representatives from the Public Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy in Thailand; IIE Southeast Asia Office in Bangkok; Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, Commission on Higher Education; Mahidol University International College; Thailand-U.S. Educational Foundation (Fulbright); Chulalongkorn University; Kasetsart University; and Khon Kaen University.

In addition to the assistance of the Workshop Planning Committee, the workshop received support from the Commission on Higher Education, Thailand Ministry of Education, and Silpakorn University International College.

The workshop’s objectives were to:

- Identify factors that influence the decision to study abroad in Thailand;
- Clarify measures to attract more U.S. students to more diverse institutions; and
- Encourage additional roles of EducationUSA advisers in promoting U.S. study in Thailand.

The workshop participants included representatives of the following groups:

- Royal Thai Government agencies concerned with study abroad policy and programs;
- Thai higher education institutions interested in establishing or expanding study abroad programs;
- U.S. higher education institutions with an interest in seeking collaboration with Thai higher education study abroad programs; and
- EducationUSA advising centers in Thailand and Vietnam.

In selecting participating Thai universities, the committee invited a diverse group of institutions: those with well-established study abroad programs, those that had recently started new programs, and those that were considering and preparing to implement new programs.

Resource persons and speakers at the workshop included representatives of Thai university study abroad programs; experienced U.S. study abroad experts from U.S. universities, community colleges, and associations; U.S. students currently studying abroad at Thai universities; and an expert in global study abroad statistics and trends. (A full list of workshop participants and speakers is available in Appendix A.)

Building on the workshop, the following sections of this report summarize the host country perspective and findings that emerged from a series of roundtable and panel discussions.

V. OVERVIEW OF STUDY ABROAD: CONCEPT, MODELS, AND APPROACHES

Most of the Thai workshop participants indicated at the outset that they lacked adequate knowledge of study abroad concepts. Both Thai and U.S. partners agreed that an initial mutual understanding of study abroad concepts, approaches, and models would be beneficial for future discussion and collaboration. The workshop therefore started with an introduction to study abroad concepts and differences in perceptions of study abroad in the U.S. and Thailand, which hopefully can be used as a baseline for future discussions between U.S. and Thai institutional partners.

The U.S. Concept of Study Abroad

Participants from the U.S. described study abroad as education occurring outside the participant's home country that results in progress toward an academic degree at the student's home institution. General objectives for U.S. study abroad are:

- To provide academic content relevant to students' degree programs;
- To provide programmatic content;
- To provide opportunities for cultural immersion;
- To provide foreign language acquisition (optional);
- To provide additional opportunities for faculty and institutional cooperation (optional); and
- To do all of the above in a cost-effective manner.

Study Abroad Program Models

Four basic models can be used to describe study abroad:

Direct Enrollment Model

In this model, American students enroll directly in a university in another country, typically an English-speaking country, where they join regular classes. Universities that offer a wide range of courses in English for both local and international students and do not require coursework in a

foreign language can offer programs and degrees for international and local students. This program model must follow the academic calendar of the university, which may not match the home campus calendar.

Custom Designed Model

The custom designed model is a specialized program of courses and related activities designed for groups of students from the U.S. or other foreign countries. Also known as “island programs,” these typically accommodate a small number of U.S. students. The model has a holistic approach to education and offers courses and program activities designed specifically for U.S. students studying abroad. These programs are usually managed by a director, faculty member, and/or staff member whose duties include arranging visa processing, housing, and excursions. These programs sometimes work with a foreign host institution, and sometimes exist as freestanding programs organized as part of a U.S. university.

Hybrid Model

The hybrid program model is a mix of direct enrollments and custom designed courses and activities. This model offers a flexible structure for the program to accommodate the constraints and requirements of the students, such as language requirements and proficiency. The hybrid program model also fosters greater flexibility for program organization and administration. For example, if a student has limited language proficiency, he or she may not be capable of completing an entire program in the language of the host country, so a mixture of direct enrollment and custom designed courses may best accommodate the student’s needs. Because of its capacity to provide more customized experiences for study abroad students, the hybrid program model has become increasingly popular. As with the direct enrollment model, this model requires coordination with the host institution’s academic calendar.

Faculty-led Model

In this model, a U.S. faculty member accompanies a group of students to a foreign country. The faculty member may teach one or more courses depending on length of the program. Local faculty members may also be hired to teach or assist with courses. Supporting a U.S. faculty member abroad is a very significant expense, making this the least cost-effective of all models (in those cases where the host institution supports the faculty). Salary, benefits, and stipend costs can be up to US\$50,000 or more to send one individual faculty member abroad for a semester, which results in an increase in program cost.

All four models have been implemented in Thailand, and the direct enrollment model is popular with several Thai universities because of its cost-effectiveness.

Study Abroad Program Duration

Study abroad programs take place over the course of an academic year, a semester, a summer or winter break, or another short-term break. Spending an entire academic year abroad is often considered the most ideal pedagogically, but in practice such an experience is difficult to realize for many American students. Curricular constraints at the home institution often do not permit students to leave for an entire year (less than a tenth of a percent of all students who studied abroad in 2007/08 spent a full academic year abroad). Semester programs generally last four months, while programs that take place over summer and winter breaks are typically three to

eight weeks in duration. Other short-term breaks are scattered at various times throughout the year and last from one to three weeks.

Elements of Study Abroad

Participants in the workshop said that study abroad must contain specific elements that distinguish it from regular travel or tourism. Academic content at the host institution must be aligned with that of the home institution to ensure that credits transfer properly, allowing the student to more efficiently allocate time and money. It is essential that program activities like field trips and guest speakers integrate local cultural content. It is also beneficial to include cultural immersion opportunities, even though true immersion may be difficult to achieve on short-term programs, especially when students lack fluency in the language of the host country. Study abroad programs should facilitate cultural immersion by arranging language and study partners for students, helping students become involved in community service, and facilitating homestays. Host institutions should consider offering opportunities for language acquisition at various levels; however, language acquisition should be considered optional for some programs, as not all students are interested in learning the Thai language.

Study abroad programs are unique opportunities to create networks of faculties and institutions and facilitate collaboration. When organizing activities related to study abroad, it is important to consider costs and to specify which institutions will be responsible for organization and funding. Therefore, study abroad planning should take into consideration the existing capacities of the cooperating institutions.

Higher education institutions in Thailand would benefit from a better understanding of how cooperating U.S. institutions organize study abroad. The initial phase of study abroad program development typically involves in-depth research of the foreign institution, including an evaluation of support structure, faculty, and the courses offered. A formal committee then formulates a study abroad proposal that must be approved by the institution's provost and the faculty senate. A faculty member, usually the department head, then authorizes the transfer of credits for individual students.

Program Design

Discussions at the workshop identified the following factors that should be considered by Thai universities, U.S. universities, and third-party providers wishing to develop or expand study abroad programs in Thailand.

Language of Instruction at the Host University

U.S. students generally require at least five semesters of instruction in a foreign language to be able to complete a course taught in the language. Since few U.S. students have received this amount of training prior to coming to Thailand, international programs in the country often offer courses in English, providing greater academic opportunity for English-speaking students with lower levels of Thai language proficiency.

Course Selection and Content

A careful selection of courses that are relevant to common fields of study will enhance transferability and encourage enrollment. Students also value course content that highlights the culture and history of the host country.

Academic Calendar

The cooperating academic institutions should consider whether their academic calendars need to be synchronized. Proper alignment of dates will ensure that students do not lose time in completing their degrees, and will also minimize problems associated with financial aid timeframes.

Student Support System

The host institution should have sufficient capacity to assist students with registration, academic concerns, and personal matters, as well as the physical infrastructure to host and house them. The existence of an international student office that supplies these services at the host institution is crucial, since it helps the home institution to minimize costs.

Student Enrollment

The number of students expected to participate in the program will determine program type, fees, duration, and staffing requirements.

Cost Considerations

U.S. and Thai higher education institutions must consider the financial aspects of study abroad programs for budget and planning purposes. When establishing an initial budget, it is recommended that the cost of the program be completely included within the students' fees, since home institutions seldom allocate funds for such programs. As a result of limited institutional funding, study abroad programs are often self-supporting. However, the funding of study abroad programs is complex and institutions (both sending and receiving) follow different models.

Thai and U.S. institutions that deal with direct student exchanges in the form of "tuition swaps" should allow flexibility in the yearly balance of students exchanged between institutions. This will help to alleviate cost differentials between the two programs. Agreements concerning the duration of program exchanges—for example, swapping summer programs for semester programs—can also help to minimize cost differences.

Study abroad programs vary considerably in cost, and students are therefore free to choose a program in their price range, though many also base their decision on whether credit will be accepted by their home institution. According to the workshop panelists, in some cases the total cost of study abroad in Thailand may not far exceed the cost of a semester at a U.S. institution, and many students are likely unaware of the relative costs of study at home and in Thailand.

VI. EXPANDING U.S. STUDY ABROAD IN THAILAND: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Clarifying Misunderstandings

In general, the students, faculty, and staff of U.S. higher education institutions hold several common misconceptions about Thailand. Likewise, several false assumptions about U.S. higher education institutions that originate in Thailand should be examined.

The most common false assumptions about Thailand appear to stem from a lack of political and economic knowledge about the region. Many U.S. residents who are unfamiliar with Southeast Asia perceive Thailand as an unstable, developing country that presents serious risks to health and safety. Contributing to this view, U.S. media coverage of Thailand often focuses on negative events like the 2004 tsunami, the seizure of Suvarnabhumi international airport, and ongoing political tensions, the most recent being the large-scale protests in Bangkok in Spring, 2010. (For a discussion on the topic of safety and communication, see the Afterword.)

Discussions at the workshop identified several common false assumptions about the needs of U.S. institutions and students that are held by Thai higher education faculty and staff. Thai institutions often believe that many U.S. students and faculty have expressed a strong interest in study abroad or collaborative research, but more objective assessments of gauging interest in these areas need to take place. Thai faculty and staff also perceive a strong interest in developing exchanges, partnerships, and linkages with U.S. higher education institutions, but they may not be aware of the logistical and management challenges that such partnerships entail.

Developing Strategies to Promote Thailand as a Study Abroad Destination

While these common misunderstandings should be dispelled, educators should also develop strategies to attract more U.S. students to choose Thailand as a study abroad destination. Stephen Dobosh, a student from Penn State University who chose to study abroad in Thailand, described his decision process as follows:

When I first started researching destinations to study abroad, Thailand was one of many. Having completed my degree requirements in atmospheric physics and my minor in global business strategies, I wanted an experience that could effectively balance both scholarship and unique cultural immersion. My initial list of anywhere in the world was shortened to somewhere in Asia. The process of picking a destination was very difficult, and took many weeks. Ultimately, given my academic standing and limited financial backing, I decided on two factors in picking a destination: (1) price and (2) uniqueness. As I narrowed my list down according to price, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Thailand remained; however, after considering my second factor of uniqueness, I chose no other than Thailand [...] Looking back, I am completely satisfied with my decision.

For the student, Thailand's primary strengths as a destination appear to be *price* and *uniqueness*. The cost of living in Thailand and tuition fees at both public and private institutions are relatively low. Students may have many reasons for considering Thailand to be unique, and these reasons can be further explored as ways to attract more U.S. study abroad students to Thailand.

In addition to being cost-effective, Thai universities also offer a diverse selection of study abroad programs, particularly in the areas of science, applied science, agriculture, hospitality management, and social sciences, and can therefore be ideal study abroad destinations for students in fields of study that are underrepresented in study abroad, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Most universities in Thailand have modern facilities and attractive campuses, while the top universities are recognized in the international academic and research communities.

Finding a Niche

Thailand is strategically located in a region that can facilitate unique opportunities for study in fields such as tourism management, ecotourism, medical tourism, tropical medicine, and religious studies, as well as the arts of Thai cuisine, traditional massage therapy, music, and architecture. Thailand offers diverse cultural and physical landscapes, and students can study in both urban and rural locations. Thailand is situated in the heart of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), and is often considered a gateway to Asia. Students in Thailand can easily travel by bus or air to Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Because it is often considered a hub for the region, Thailand attracts strategic investments from many large multinational companies, especially in the automotive and mechanical manufacturing industries. Opportunities for internships and research at private-sector organizations are widely available.

Several cooperative strategies, if implemented, would serve to attract more study abroad students to Thailand. A strong web presence to dispel false assumptions about Thailand and highlight the country's strengths would be beneficial. For example, web-based niche-marketing campaigns could be developed to target specific student populations, such as Thai-American heritage seekers. Marketing campaigns could also be targeted at specific regions. The upper Midwest, specifically Minnesota and Wisconsin, is home to many Thai Americans who may be interested in learning more about their heritage in an academic environment. More than half of the U.S. Thai population currently lives in Southern California, another key market to explore.

Another way to reach interested students could be to target higher education institutions with strong Southeast Asian studies programs, including the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute; the University of Michigan; the University of Wisconsin; the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of Washington; Cornell University; Northern Illinois University; the University of Hawaii; the University of Ohio; Arizona State University; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Illinois; Yale University; and others.

Measures and Strategies to Attract More U.S. Students

Participants at the workshop, including the six U.S. study abroad students and other presenters, brainstormed strategies for Thai and U.S. higher education institutions to encourage more U.S. students to study in Thailand.

What Higher Education Institutions Can Do

Thai institutions can work with the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to secure support in developing and enhancing study abroad in Thailand. Currently, the CHE's policy for internationalization of Thai higher education institutions includes:

- Encouraging Thai higher education institutions to study other countries' history, politics, society, economy, and culture;
- Advocating Thai studies for international cooperation;
- Promoting international education in Thailand by inviting foreign students to come to study in Thailand;
- Encouraging international cooperation to develop collaborative study programs, joint research, and international exchange opportunities;
- Supporting Thai academics to provide academic services overseas, providing scholarship to foreign participants, and hosting international academic conferences;
- Improving the capacity of Thai faculty and staff to deliver enhanced service for foreigners and international organizations; and
- Developing the physical infrastructure within Thai higher education institutions to provide service to foreign students.

The development of strategic partnerships that go beyond student exchanges would be beneficial. These could include joint research projects, exchange of faculty and administrators, establishment of dual degree programs, and jointly hosted conferences and symposia based on common interests. Institutions should seek partners that offer similar programs of study and complimentary courses, which will allow them to expand curricula without creating new departments or faculties. However, this strategy requires support from high-level management at both Thai and U.S. universities.

Fields of study: Thai institutions should identify the strengths and niches of each Thai study abroad program and then actively seek U.S. partners with similar interests and strengths. For example, fields of study that could appeal to U.S. undergraduate students in Thailand could incorporate environmental studies, and issues related to climate change, global warming, sustainable development, peace and confrontation, human right issues, human development, and international development. Partnerships could also be promoted by engaging faculty and staff from U.S. higher education institutions with research interests in these fields.

Organized study tours: Other activities that both Thai and U.S. institutions could be involved in are organized Thai study tours allowing Thai university representatives to visit U.S. universities and colleges. This would provide direct outreach opportunities to potential study abroad students and promote faculty interest. Additionally, using alumni of study abroad programs in Thailand as ambassadors on U.S. campuses would be a cost-effective strategy. Thai institutions should also seek to establish a network of other Thai specialists in the U.S. who can promote Thailand on U.S. campuses to Thai student organizations and Southeast Asian studies groups.

Fellowship and scholarship programs: Scholarship programs for U.S. students would also encourage students with limited financial resources to study at Thai institutions. Currently, only

a select few Thai institutions offer funding for U.S. students to study in Thailand, and the joint-funding capacity of Thai and U.S. universities could be improved. Additional program funding from donors, especially local Thai and international businesses, could increase program capacity and internship opportunities. Thai institutions should provide administrative support for obtaining work permits, since obtaining a work permit in Thailand can be difficult and time-consuming. It was suggested that the CHE provide leadership to develop guidelines for obtaining visas for work, volunteering, or internships.

Partnering with the private sector: U.S. institutions could help by working with the U.S. private sector and local businesses to partner with academia to send students abroad as part of their human resource development strategies. Research or work-based internships, which are components of many U.S. academic degree programs, could be offered in Thailand to attract more students. U.S. institutions might also consider administrative and faculty exchanges which would help initiate study abroad programs and foster longer-term institutional partnerships.

Developing a higher education network: The formation of a joint Thai higher education network that works together with the common interest of increasing the number U.S. students studying abroad in Thailand would help participating institutions save time and money. The network could facilitate cooperative participation in international forums and conferences, which would encourage more interest from U.S. universities. Several Thai universities currently cooperate by sharing booths and organizing events at the annual NAFSA conference, but such cooperation needs to be expanded to include additional venues. Within the Bangkok area, the network could group similar colleges and university programs together to offer greater course selection for foreign students.

The network could develop a common website for study abroad in Thailand, preferably sponsored by the CHE. The website could include links to each Thai institution that offers study abroad programs and categorize the institutions by region, as well as type and length of programs offered. Currently, the website www.StudyinThailand.com is administered by Ramkhamhaeng University, but a common website that allows access to all Thai institutions offering study abroad would be beneficial. Enhancing existing websites and using social media to reach out to students in their native language should be emphasized. Websites promoting study abroad should meet very high standards, with images that accurately depict campus and student life and corresponding text in correct English. Students need functional websites to research potential programs and share information with their parents and each other. Essential web information should include a list of international programs for study abroad students with an emphasis on the quality of the programs, academic accreditation information, cultural opportunities, business environments, cost-benefit analyses, and possibilities for scholarships and internships.

Involving alumni: Study abroad program alumni should also be encouraged to write and/or blog about their positive experiences in Thailand.

Thai institutions should develop a strategy to accept students from U.S. community colleges, as there is a keen interest from U.S. community college students to participate in study abroad programs. Thai universities should develop strategies and short-term programs that will attract this target group.

Thai higher education institutions should also work together on a ranking system. Although it is known that rankings can often fail to represent the complexity of institutional strengths and weaknesses, Thai universities admit that some form of classifications/rankings are important and useful for students looking for a basic idea about the universities they are considering.

An understanding of the academic and personal needs of U.S. students can help educators design successful programs. Thai institutions should develop strong academic programs that live up to students' expectations, as quality remains a key priority both to the student and sending institution. The arrangement of homestays and Thai-U.S. student partnership opportunities for students who want to learn the Thai language will increase opportunities for U.S. students to interact and spend time with Thai citizens, thereby minimizing the isolation of study abroad students from the local population.

Thai institutions should seek to cooperate with third-party providers. In some cases, other third-party providers may be involved in providing some study abroad services, such as housing or instruction. There are several third-party organizations involved in study abroad, some of which can work with Thai universities to promote study abroad programs. In fact, many community colleges work exclusively with third-party providers.

Experienced marketing professionals should be consulted to develop a strategy to evaluate successful competitor destinations in Asia, such as Japan and China, to determine why they are popular with U.S. students. These countries often provide work and internship opportunities at a higher professional level than in the U.S., where many recent graduates must begin their careers at a lower level.

Program Management of Study Abroad in Thailand

Education professionals with experience developing and conducting study abroad programs in Thailand identified the following areas that are in constant need of monitoring and evaluation.

Academic Issues

Academic issues are considered the most important aspect of study abroad. When U.S. students are in Thailand, they should not miss the opportunity to experience the Thai educational system, a unique aspect of Thai culture. For U.S. students, part of this experience is being able to adapt to another way of learning and interacting in the classroom. Thai institutions should ensure the availability of high-quality courses taught in English and actively develop the capacity of Thai lecturers and staff to teach and communicate in English. They should also attempt to offer a wide range of courses that are matched to student majors and interests, to the extent possible given the size and capacity of universities.

Orientation and Student Services

The following is a list of key student services that should be developed by study abroad program staff.

Orientation

Prior to arrival in the host country, students should be sent appropriate pre-arrival information that includes airport pick-up instructions, temporary accommodation locations, and contact numbers. Orientation should then be conducted as soon as possible after the student arrives. It should include an adequate health and safety briefing and information on dealing with possible emergencies. Information regarding personal banking, local transportation, local customs, and expectations is essential. Students are often concerned with establishing Internet access immediately upon arrival to contact family, begin course registration, and access course information websites. A brief introductory Thai language lesson is a helpful ice-breaking activity that can facilitate the students' adjustment to Thai society. Students will also need extra assistance with obtaining a school identification card.

Support and Assistance

U.S. students should attempt to interact and integrate with Thai students as soon as possible after arrival. Several schools have developed a "buddy system"; however, activities with Thai students that are embedded within the orientation are also helpful. Students will be in need of legal and visa help, as they often find it difficult to navigate through this process in Thailand. The International Student Office (ISO) and other program administration should confirm that students' visas are in order. The ISO should also provide information regarding internships, excursions, and community service projects. Proactive ISO staff should remind students of important dates and issues and check regularly with study abroad students to make sure their needs are being met.

Cultural and Language Learning

Thai institutions should identify the different language needs of the study abroad students, which may include survival, grammar, or communicative competence at the beginning or intermediate level. Ideally, the language level of the student should be assessed prior to arrival in Thailand. Upon arrival, students benefit from an introduction to strategies for learning the Thai language and culture. Cross-cultural competency of Thai staff and lecturers should also be fostered. Careful consideration of the Thai lecturers' ability to teach in English and incorporate topics dealing with both Thai and U.S. culture should be discussed.

Providing Additional Learning Opportunities for Students

Once the students are in Thailand, Thai universities are encouraged to provide value-added activities that will enhance their educational experience. Attention should be paid to providing a balance between academic and social/cultural activities. The ISO should provide engagement and internship opportunities, help students to establish professional business networking opportunities, and generally serve as a one-on-one access point. Activities and meetings that help students reflect on cultural differences will also help them appreciate and gain value from the Thai education system.

Managing Growth

Thai universities should respond to all aspects of program growth by making sure that program staff, administration, and management possess the capacity to respond to students' personal and academic needs. Thai universities should develop benchmarks that they can use to compare and gauge growth. Frequent use of various evaluation tools, feedback surveys and other forms of collecting data and information from students will help improve future programs.

Documentation of all aspects associated with growth is essential, not only as a record of the program, but also as a tool for program managers to assess the program.

The Role of EducationUSA Advising Centers

The U.S. Department of State-supported EducationUSA Advising Centers serve as a valuable resource both for Thai and U.S. students and their institutions. These overseas centers are staffed by professional Advisers, who provide comprehensive and impartial information on all accredited higher education institutions in the United States. There are eight EducationUSA Advising Centers located throughout Thailand, in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen.

EducationUSA Advisers in Thailand are experts on the Thai education system and many have relationships with local universities and high schools. Advisers' familiarity with the Thai secondary and higher education community can be a great resource to U.S. institutions exploring opportunities to expand study abroad programs for U.S. students. By exploring study abroad consortium models and liaising with exchange offices at Thai universities to arrange for university partnerships, Advisers are uniquely positioned to help U.S. institutions develop student exchange and study abroad programs in Thailand.

The following services outline the recently expanded role of EducationUSA Advisers in Thailand for enhancing U.S. study abroad:

- Develop and maintain a database of U.S. students enrolled in Thai universities;
- Provide U.S. and Thai study abroad students with information on academics, visas, immigration, and orientation briefings; and
- Provide transfer guidelines, market research data, and accurate and updated contact information for public and private Thai higher education institutions to establish and maintain U.S.-Thai linkages.

The complete list of centers in Thailand and study abroad services available to U.S. colleges and universities is accessible on the EducationUSA website at www.educationusa.info/Thailand.

VII. CONCLUSION

One of the primary outcomes of the workshop was the creation of a new consortium of Thai higher education institutions that share a common goal of enhancing study abroad capacity in Thailand. One task that the consortium agreed to take up is the establishment of an up-to-date list of Thai higher education institutions that offer study abroad programs. Institutions can also list their programs for free on www.iiepassport.org, a search engine for study abroad programs.

Marketing efforts to promote study abroad in Thailand would also benefit from the development of a common website and directory that promotes and highlights information for all Thai international colleges. A unified presence at the annual NAFSA conference that shows both financial and organizational cooperation would help more Thai institutions gain a marketing presence overseas.

Thai institutions offering study abroad would also benefit from organizing a student conference for U.S. students currently studying in Thailand, which would provide appropriate and relevant feedback for their programs. Finally, a listserv was immediately developed for all workshop participants to share information and foster partnerships, studyabroadThailand@googlegroups.com.

The creation of the consortium is only the first step toward achieving the goal of increasing the number of U.S. students studying abroad in Thailand. In the coming years, we hope to see stronger links develop between U.S. and Thai institutions that will allow for immersive and meaningful cross-cultural experiences for as many interested students as possible.

VIII. AFTERWORD

“Ensuring Safety for Students: An Institutional Perspective and Strategy”

By Brian J. Phillips, Assistant Dean, International Affairs, Mahidol University International College

The horrific Asian tsunami on December 26, 2004, was one of Mahidol University International College’s (MUIC) defining moments for the International Affairs office. Almost all of our exchange and visiting students were in the affected area, and after two days, we were able to contact all students and assure that everyone was safe and unharmed.

After this event, our institution put in place a strong security protocol that has kept our inbound study abroad students protected and out of harm’s way. We continue to refine this protocol each term, to better support our visiting and exchange students, as well as their home institution.

With the May protests in Bangkok this year, we also made significant efforts to ensure that the 43 international students who were currently studying at MUIC were safe, staying in constant contact with the students and their home institution. As a result, there were no major disruptions that affected our students or their safety, and all students chose to continue to stay on through the end of their program in late July.

The key to anticipating and responding to such crises depends on a clear communication strategy and action plan that will ensure safety and security for all students. In an emergency situation, our institution is able to give clear directions to visiting students, while students are able to immediately contact us if they have an emergency. At the beginning of the term, we tested this communication system to ensure we could contact students.

We continuously fine-tune and update our strategy to adjust for new communication formats—for the upcoming September 2010/11 term, we will require all study abroad students studying at MUIC to have a cell phone with a local number. With this, the home institution, as well as the student’s friends and family, have immediate access and can communicate with the student at any time. If MUIC needs to send out official emergency instructions, we can do so quickly through an SMS text message via cell phones, and can resend these messages through e-mail and Facebook as well.

We also distribute the contact cell phone numbers for all of our international relations staff, and remind students often that they should contact us immediately in any emergency situation. During orientation, we also give all our international students a complete listing of emergency numbers, including those for the local hospital located next to campus and the tourist police.

In the past, we would recommend to our study abroad students that they travel in pairs, especially outside of Bangkok. We now recommend that they also stay and travel together within Bangkok, as incidences are much less likely to occur when students are in groups. When these students do travel, we require that they e-mail office staff beforehand and inform us of

their complete travel plans on where they will be going, how they will be traveling, where they will be staying, and most importantly, when they will return to campus.

Although the headline news is what causes the most concern among the parents and friends of our international students, the biggest risk comes from the mundane, routine activities of normal life, activities like crossing a busy highway and not using the walkover, or taking a motorcycle taxi on a congested road. In each orientation, we make sure to stress the importance of being vigilant in any setting, and having the students look out for each other in all situations.

As many universities in Thailand have started to emulate MUIIC's international college model, we are happy to share our inbound study abroad security protocol as well. It is in the best interest of all universities and institutions in Thailand to ensure the safety of all students of our partner universities while studying in Thailand.

With current world events, the message that most study abroad staff are well aware of is that there is a level of risk of the unexpected happening in any country. We in Thai universities have taken steps to ensure the safety and well-being of our inbound students. We want to assure all those considering sending students to our institutions, that we have taken these extra measures not only to ensure safety, but to provide a rewarding educational and cultural experience.

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APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

* Indicates those who served on the Workshop Planning Committee

** Workshop presenters and resource persons

Thai Universities and Organizations

Dr. Kriengkrai Boonlert-U-Thai,* Director of BBA International Program, Chulalongkorn University

Dr. Kamoltip Brown,* Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Khon Kaen University

Dr. Vilasinee Bunyasrie, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Bangkok University International College

Asst. Prof. Sakit Chantanotok,* Vice President for International Affairs, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi

Dr. Rassmidara Hoonsawat,** Dean, Mahidol University International College

Dr. Poonpipope Kasemsap,* Director of the International Studies Center, Kasetsart University

Dr. Mano Mettanando Laohavanich, Lecturer, Pridi Banomyong International College, Thammasat University

Mr. Ekaphong Lauhathiansind,** Director of Strategy for International Cooperation Networking and Development Group, Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, Commission on Higher Education

Mr. Chalit Limpanavech, Dean of International College, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Robert McKenzie, Business Development Manager, Silpakorn University (International College)

Mr. Brian J. Phillips,* Assistant Dean of International Relations, Mahidol University

Captain Adul Pinsuvana,** Director, American University Alumni Language Center (AUA)

Dr. Ratanasuda Punnahitanond, Director of International Affairs Office, Bangkok University

Dr. John Keith Syers, Vice-President for International Relations, Narasuan University

Dr. Kultida Tuamsuk,** Vice President for Academic and International Affairs, Khon Kaen University

Mr. Chatchai Ugsornsilp,** Senior Program Assistant, Thailand–United States Educational Foundation

Asst. Prof. Dr. Visit Vao-Soongnern,** Assistant Rector for Academic Affairs, Suranaree University of Technology

Mr. Chatchai Ugsornsilp, Senior Program Assistant, Thailand–United States Educational Foundation

Mr. Paul Wedel,** President, Kenan Institute Asia

U.S. Universities and Organizations

Ms. Patricia Chow,** Senior Program Officer, Institute of International Education

Dr. Donald Culton,** Director, International Education Associates

Mr. Brady Currit, Program Coordinator and Facilitator, Brigham Young University and Jembatan International

Dr. Sara Dumont,** Director, AU Abroad - Abroad at AU, American University

Dr. Gerald Fry,** Professor, University of Minnesota

Dr. David Streckfuss,** Resident Director, CIEE-Thailand, Khon Kaen University

EducationUSA Advisors

Ms. Pasawee Kariwat, Program Officer, Institute of International Education, Bangkok

Ms. Daranee Limpa-Amara, Advisor, Chief of Educational Advisory Service, Bangkok Bank Public Co., Ltd

Mr. Sutthichok Linprasert, Director, Institutional Relations and Counselor, Ace! The Academy for EducationUSA

Mrs. Siriporn Mahatharodol, Executive Director, Knowledge Plus

Mr. Supapong Nilket, Supervisor Educational Services, Ace! The Academy for EducationUSA

Ms. Ngoc Quach, Associate Director, Institute of International Education (IIE) Vietnam

Ms. Natrudee Tanthawan, Educational Advisor, AUA Language Center

Key Staff

Dr. Chalintorn N. Burian,* Regional Director, Southeast Asia, Institute of International Education

Mr. Eakapol Chansatitporn, Program Assistant, Institute of International Education, Bangkok

Ms. Laddawan Jianvittayakit, International Network Development Officer, Mahidol University International College

Ms. Chiranath Tejasen,* Program Coordinator, Institute of International Education, Bangkok

Additional Planning Committee Members

Ms. Porntip Kanjananiyot, Executive Director, Thailand–United States Educational Foundation

Ms. Aporn Kanvong, Director, Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, Commission on Higher Education

Ms. Preeyawan Sakornyen, Cultural Affairs Specialist, Embassy of United States of America

Workshop Volunteers

Mr. Mike Michalec, Adjunct Lecturer, Thammasat University

Ms. Tatpicha Nunda, PhD Candidate, Khon Kaen University

Student Presenters

Mr. Jason Pierce Castillo, Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship grantee
U.S. University: Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, CA
Thai University: Thammasat University

Mr. Stephen Dobosh
U.S. University: Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Thai University: Thammasat University

Mr. Andrew David Masters
U.S. University: Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL
Thai University: Mahidol University International College

Mr. Andrew Tyler Myers
U.S. University: University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, NC
Thai University: Mahidol University International College

Ms. Laura Patricia Stadolnik
U.S. University: University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK
Thai University: Mahidol University International College

Ms. Valerie Webb Suwanseree
U.S. University: University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
Thai University: Kasetsart University

APPENDIX B: INVENTORY OF PARTICIPATING THAI INSTITUTIONS

Bangkok University International College

Bangkok University International College (BUIC) was established initially as an international program to prepare students for success in this highly demanding, competitive world. BUIC offers international programs taught by highly qualified faculty. Academic affiliations and exchange programs have been established with worldwide leading universities. Credits from overseas colleges and universities are transferable.

To apply directly to the BUIC, contact:

Dr. Hataitip Jirathun, Head, Student Services and International Exchange
Bangkok University International College

City Campus, Building 7, 4th Floor
119 Sukhumvit 40 Rd. Klong-toey, Bangkok 10110
Tel: (66)-2-350-3500 ext. 1639, 1609, 1610
Fax: (66)-2-350-3679
Email: Hataitip.j@bu.ac.th or buic@bu.ac.th
Website: http://admission2.bu.ac.th/buic_home.php

Bangkok University is affiliated with many highly regarded American universities that have given their full support in terms of exchanging ideas regarding educational format and development, curriculum, and teaching methods, including relevant materials as well as research work. U.S. students should see their study abroad advisor for more information.

Chulalongkorn University The Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) International Program

The first international undergraduate study program at Chulalongkorn University, the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) International Program offers outstanding students an opportunity to take every class in English, to interact with world-class faculty members, to select internships with local and multinational firms, and to go abroad as exchange students at our renowned university partners around the world. To meet the challenges of global business, the BBA program is dedicated to excellence in business education by providing the highest quality instruction and a real-world accounting and business curriculum.

To apply directly to the BBA program, please visit:

<http://bba.acc.chula.ac.th>

Download and send your application to
Bachelor of Business Administration International Program
Room 407, 4th Floor, Building 8
Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy
Chulalongkorn University
Phayathai Road, Bangkok 10330

For more information about other international programs, please visit the university website:

www.chula.ac.th

Kasetsart University International Studies Center

Kasetsart University is known internationally for its academic excellence and work of world standard. It is a prime mover in mustering intellectual resources to help the nation achieve sustainable development and negotiating power in the world community. International course management at Kasetsart University aims at providing students with qualified knowledge and skills. Students will graduate with the potential to make outstanding international achievements.

For more information about the international program at Kasetsart University, please download the international guidebook from:

www.intaff.ku.ac.th/pdf/ku_inter_program/interprog.pdf

International Affairs Division

50 Phahol Yothin Road,
Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900
Thailand
Tel: (66)-2-942-8171, (66)-2-942-8173, (66)-2942-8858

International Studies Center

Tel: (66)-2-562-0985, (66) 0-2942-8655 // Internal line: 1190, 1191
Fax: (66)-2-562-0985

Khon Kaen University International College

International College, Khon Kaen University (KKUIC), recently established in accordance with the university's strategic plan, aims at being the leading international education center for the country, especially the northeastern region and for the broader Asia region. It is focused on the well-balanced integration of theories and hands-on experience. Students from Thailand, China, Korea, Taiwan, and countries around the Mekong Subregion will have the opportunity to enrich their learning through different methods of teaching and learning, while appreciating cultural diversity through classroom interaction, extracurricular activities, exposure trips, and internships within and outside of the country.

To apply directly to the university's international program, please visit the KKUIC website at:

www.ic.kku.ac.th

Submit your application to:

Suthai Katima
Student Services, Khon Kaen University International College
Information Center Building 8th floor
Khon Kaen University,
Khon Kaen 40002
Thailand
Tel: (66)-43-202-173, (66)-43-202-424
Fax: (66)-43-202-173
Email: kkuic@kku.ac.th

Mahidol University International College

Mahidol University International College (MUIC) was founded in March of 1986, when the Mahidol Council and Ministry of University Affairs formally endorsed the creation of a new academic enterprise, the International Student Degree Program (ISDP). The goal was to provide an international-style education in English leading to a bachelor's degree in science and the arts. Ten years later, the name was changed to Mahidol University International College (MUIC), giving the program the full weight and status of a faculty.

To apply directly to MUIC, please visit:

www.muic.mahidol.ac.th

999 Phutthamonthon 4 Road,
Salaya, Nakhonpathom 73170
Thailand
Tel: (66)-2-441-5090
Fax: (66)-2-441-9745
Admissions Inquiries: icdad@mahidol.ac.th
Office of Academic Services: icdas@mahidol.ac.th

Naresuan University International College

Naresuan University International College (NUIC) was established by the Council of Naresuan University at its 94th meeting, on January 13, 2001, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness and reputation of Naresuan University as an international center for learning.

The establishment of NUIC was in response to the need of Naresuan University to better position itself internationally. As a young, dynamic, and vibrant tertiary education institution, Naresuan University has set as its goals the provision of high-quality education to its clients and the move toward prominence and innovation in its educational endeavor.

To apply directly to NUIC, please visit:

<http://lms.nuic.nu.ac.th/index.php>

Naresuan University, International College
Tumbol Thapo, Amphor Muang,
Phitsanulok 65000
Thailand
Tel: (66)-55-968-558
Fax: (66)-55-968-558
Email: webmaster-nuic@nu.ac.th

Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi International BBA

The BBA International Program at RMUTT was created to provide international students from around the world with an affordable, unique learning experience. International students enrolled in the BBA International Program will gain proficiency in the English language from native English-speaking instructors while studying with Thai

students, preparing them for working in the international business environment. The language of instruction for all subjects in the BBA International Program is English. Additionally, students can take courses taught by native English speakers.

To apply directly to the International BBA program, contact:

Faculty of Business Administration (Klong 6)
Rajamagala University of Technology Thanyaburi
Rungsit-Nakornnayok Road, Klong 6
Tanyaburi, Pathumtani 12110
Thailand
Tel: (66)-2-549-3249
Fax: (66)-2-549-3243, (66)-2-577-439
Email: natepanna@hotmail.com
Website: <http://www.bus.rmutt.ac.th>

Silpakorn University International College

Silpakorn University International College (SUIC) was officially opened in October 2003 as a part of Silpakorn University, one of the top five universities in Thailand, to create efficient international programs in a truly international environment for our students through exposure to foreign knowledge, while keeping Thai culture in mind. We have continually expanded academic collaboration with worldwide proficient partners in offering international bachelor's and master's degrees in our fields of expertise, emphasizing the arts and humanities.

To apply directly to SUIC, contact:

Mr. Robert McKenzie, Business Development Director
Silpakorn University International College

22 Borommarachachonani Rd.
Talingchan, Bangkok 10170
Thailand
Tel: (66)-2-880-8684, (66)-2-880-8361-3
Fax : (66)-2-880-9937
Email: robert.m@suic.org or suic@suic.org.
Website: www.suic.org

Suranaree University of Technology

Suranaree University of Technology offers four international undergraduate programs—chemical engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and food technology—in cooperation with four Canadian technological universities. English is the language of instruction for the international programs. Admission is open to students of any nationality, with 60 students per program. Students have the opportunity to continue their education from their second year in a Canadian university with their diploma granted from SUT or the Canadian university. SUT also offers international graduate programs for both Thai and international students.

For more information about international program at Suranaree University of Technology, visit our website:

http://web.sut.ac.th/sutnew/sut_en/

University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce

International programs at University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC) are one of the most important academic growth areas that extend the high-quality UTCC tradition in the education field to the world. Under UTCC international programs, students from all over the world can participate in coursework and at the same time experience the lifestyle of the Thai community.

For more information about international programs at University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, visit our website:

<http://utcc2.utcc.ac.th/localuser/interoffice/>

Thammasat University – Pridi Banomyong International College

The Pridi Banomyong International College (TIC) has been established to introduce unique interdisciplinary programs taught in English for both international and Thai students. TIC offers the multidisciplinary Thai Studies Program. The program utilizes and integrates the expertise of Thammasat University's scholars in various fields, including social sciences, arts and culture, and public health.

To apply directly to TIC, contact:

Ms. Jarunee Suwanrassamee, Public Relation Officer
Pridi Banomyong International College

8th Floor, Anekprasongl Building2,
Prachan Rd, Pranakon,
Bangkok 10200
Thailand

Tel: (66)-2-613-3701-3

Fax: (66)-2-623-5167

Email: jarunees@hotmail.com or pr@tic-tu.com

Website: <http://www.tic-tu.com/index.php>

APPENDIX C: HIGHER EDUCATION IN THAILAND

The Commission on Higher Education (CHE), Thailand, is responsible for Thailand's higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The CHE is directed by a Board, according to the Article 16 of the Ministry of Education Regulatory Act, which has the authority to formulate higher education development policies and plans corresponding to the National Economic and Social Development Plan and National Education Plan. Its remit is to set standards, provide resources, carry out follow-up activities, and inspect and evaluate higher education management on the basis of academic freedom and excellence of each individual degree-granting institution. Moreover, the Board has to consider issuing regulations, criteria, and official orders as deemed necessary.

The CHE has the mandate and authority to manage and to promote higher education with respect to the degree-granting institutions' academic freedom and excellence. Currently, there are 78 public universities (classified as 63 limited admission universities, 2 open admission universities, and 13 autonomous universities including 2 Buddhist universities); 69 private higher education institutions; and 19 community colleges.

Higher Education Policies

Thailand's Higher Education Development Plan has been formulated and integrated into the successive Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan, interfacing educational activities to the economic, social, and cultural goals of national development. The CHE has developed Thailand's Long-Range Plan for Higher Education Development (2000–2014), in which internationalization of Thai higher education is one of the main emphases.

In order for Thailand to play a more active and dynamic role in Asia, the Pacific region, and the world community, the CHE has given prime importance and continuous support to the heightening of quality of instructors and programs. The CHE has invested intensively in staff development and upgrading facilities and laboratories in Thai higher education institutions.

Thai higher education institutions have worked in close collaboration with many leading institutions in countries around the world, from the United States and the United Kingdom to Japan, Germany, and Australia.

Generally, the Thai academic year consists of two 16-week semesters and a summer session.

First Semester:	June–October
Second Semester:	November–March
Summer Session:	April–May

However, for international programs at some universities, the academic year consists of two semesters from September–December and January–May. Some universities also adopt a trimester schedule (Commission on Higher Education, 2008).

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