SAO Strategic Plan (2011-2016)
Rev: January 4, 2012

Mission
The mission of the Study Abroad Office is to serve all North Carolina State University students by providing academically well-matched, immersive experiences abroad, with a commitment to safety and accessibility.

University Context
The mission of the Study Abroad Office strongly supports NC State’s 2011-2020 strategic plan, “The Pathway to the Future,” particularly Goals 1, 4, and 5.

Goal 1 impels us to “enhance the success of our students through educational innovation.” The plan states: “while balancing access with quality, NC State must ensure that our students make timely progress toward an NC State degree, and along the way, must provide educational opportunities that inspire them to lead, to serve, to challenge, to take responsibility, to build problem-solving skills, and to engage with complex problems.” A major strategy identified in the plan is to “provide high-impact educational experiences for undergraduates,” with study abroad as a prime example.

Goal 4 strongly encourages the university community to “enhance organizational excellence by creating a culture of constant improvement.” This includes “encourag[ing] diversity and inclusion,” as well as ensuring the wise use of resources.

Goal 5 urges that we “enhance local and global engagement through focused strategic partnerships.” Two major strategies are to “support and provide opportunities for increasing students’ civic and global knowledge, experience, and perspectives,” as well as to “enhance active and sustainable partnerships, locally, regionally, and globally.”

The Study Abroad Office (SAO) has refined its strategic plan to clearly demonstrate how its role within the Office of International Affairs and the university overall will help NC State achieve these important goals.

Introduction
To successfully navigate their way in the world, students need to have a solid understanding that all major issues facing the world today are global issues. Developments in health, technology, the environment, the economy, communication, security, and political structures around the world affect our individual daily lives. Conversely, our individual actions can have a global impact.

Higher education has the potential to help students experience this interrelatedness as an exciting opportunity rather than a cause for concern. Students who are given the knowledge and skills for critical discernment can have the confidence to be globally engaged, and have the potential to become respectful, compassionate, and effective problem solvers.

Global competence is crucially important in both the personal and professional lives of our graduates. Employers are searching for applicants whose intercultural skills will help their companies be productive, both through effective teamwork with diverse coworkers and through direct contact with overseas collaborators and competitors.
Study abroad is uniquely able to provide a transformative understanding of other cultures and their systems by immersing students in an unfamiliar context. Participants learn that they can successfully take the risk of leaving their comfort zone, be resourceful in gathering information, and take effective action without fully resolving the ambiguity of a highly complex situation. In short, an academically based international experience can provide students with the knowledge and skills to be active, informed, and interculturally competent citizens in the global community.

Goals

The primary goals of the Study Abroad Office are to:
1. Develop and administer programs which enhance intercultural learning outcomes for students.
2. Partner with academic units to support programs that develop discipline-specific global competencies.
3. Ensure a high standard of safety and accessibility for all study abroad programs.
4. Increase participation in credit-bearing programs outside of the U.S.

Strategies

1. Intercultural learning
   a. Require every study abroad program led by NCSU faculty to document how learning objectives for the Global Knowledge co-requisite of the General Education Program are being met.
   b. Offer a diverse portfolio of program models to address a variety of learning styles and needs. Draw on research findings from the field of international education to help identify the most effective models.
   c. Enhance engagement with host communities abroad by incorporating service-learning, research, internship, or volunteer opportunities into study abroad programs.
   d. Work with the ACE “At Home in the World” team to identify learning outcomes which are shared with diversity/multicultural education units. Collaboratively select/develop and implement relevant assessment tools. A deeper understanding of US diversity could help study abroad participants recognize additional layers of complexity in their international experience, and a direct experience abroad could give students engaged in diversity issues a broader context as they seek to understand US pluralism.
   e. Begin the development phase of an on-line course designed to guide intercultural learning for study abroad participants.
   f. Encourage more students to pursue the Global Perspectives Certificate, so that they can benefit from articulating their global learning in the final capstone project.
   g. Support other units’ on-campus initiatives that increase cultural and intercultural competence, such as co-curricular activities that integrate US and international students.
   h. If global competence becomes part of the Quality Enhancement Plan for NCSU’s reaffirmation of accreditation beginning in 2014, additional resources will be directed to the assessment of intercultural learning outcomes.
2. **Partnering; discipline-specific global competencies**
   a. Expand the **Curriculum Integration** program. Add professional staff positions in the SAO who will partner directly with academic units to identify discipline-specific global competencies, create and regularly update a short list of well-matched study abroad programs, and develop customized resources and advising tools.
   b. Improve the **course pre-approval and credit transfer** process. Collaborate with academic advisers, Undergraduate Admissions, and Registration & Records to expand and improve the functionality of the current transfer course equivalency database, to make it a more useful tool for study abroad participants and their advisers. (*also supports Goal 3, accessibility of study abroad*)
   c. Advocate for establishing **advising liaisons** in each department of the university who will have defined, ongoing responsibilities supporting the integration of study abroad into the curriculum.
   d. Partner with **faculty** to help them be strong advocates for study abroad. Assist faculty in articulating specific student benefits, understand available program options, and actively encourage student participation.
   e. Support faculty research with industry leaders and other **potential employers** to help identify desired global competencies.
   f. Use findings regarding desired discipline-specific global competencies to inform new study abroad **program development**, and to evaluate and improve existing programs.

3. **Safety and accessibility**
   a. Require a **safety assessment** and emergency contact information from every credit-bearing international program, including field experiences embedded in on-campus courses.
   b. Continue assessing the **administrative effectiveness** of faculty-led programs, and of the SAO.
   c. Improve the **financial accessibility** of study abroad by collaborating with University Development and the Alumni Office to increase scholarship support.
   d. Maintain high quality **student advising and support** by ensuring that work load does not exceed SAO staff **capacity**. Use current resources wisely, and work to increase capacity to serve growing enrollments.
      i. Encourage higher enrollments on existing programs with unfilled capacity.
      ii. Set guidelines for minimum enrollments on faculty-led group programs.
      iii. Support the university’s goal of “creating a culture of constant improvement” by developing new administrative processes to enhance efficiency (e.g. peer advising to reduce the workload of professional advisors, further integrating scholarship and billing processes with OSFA and Student Accounts, exploring self-registration by students.)

4. **Increased participation**
   a. Produce annual reports detailing **enrollment trends**, and apply these findings (high demand destinations, program models, preferred time frames, curricular choices) in the program development process.
   b. Develop **criteria to establish programs** which are most likely to meet SAO goals for serving students effectively, as well as criteria to reject or decline support for programs unlikely to meet those goals.
   c. Support university “hubs” or **strategic partnerships** if they are well suited to study abroad. (Some hubs may have a greater emphasis on faculty research or other collaboration.)
   d. Collaborate with partner institutions and/or program providers to create more **customized programs** with pre-approved courses, particularly **semester-length programs**.
e. Expand **marketing** efforts by helping past participants tell their stories through additional media and venues.

f. Collaborate with ACE “**At Home in the World**” team members to encourage more participation by students in underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

g. Develop **new program models** that facilitate participation, such as mixing summer and semester exchanges.

**Current primary measures**
(Rev. January 4, 2012)

1. **Intercultural learning**
   a. By 2014 every study abroad program led by NCSU faculty will have documentation that learning objectives for the Global Knowledge co-requisite of the General Education Program have been met. All new programs proposed in June 2012 will include this documentation.
   b. At least one training opportunity per year will be offered to faculty, to assist in enhancing intercultural learning on study abroad programs.
   c. In the StudioAbroad database, programs where service-learning, research, internship, or volunteer opportunities are available will be highlighted and updated on an annual basis to make better use of the advanced search function.

2. **Partnering: discipline-specific global competencies**
   a. The Curriculum Integration program will have 2 dedicated professional staff positions beginning in 2012.
   b. Initial improvements to the international component of the course equivalency database will be made by 2013. Feedback from students and advisers will demonstrate that they are using the database, and find it to be a useful resource.
   c. Curriculum Integration advising brochures will be completed for at least 3 new departments each year.
   d. An evaluation cycle will be established in 2012 to ensure that existing CI brochures are updated on a regular and ongoing basis.

3. **Safety and accessibility**
   a. Every credit-bearing international activity will provide a safety assessment and emergency contact information to the SAO. A PRR will be established in 2012 to support this requirement.
   b. A document fully articulating the benefits of study abroad will be integrated into the SAO website for easy access by students, faculty, and staff.
   c. Study Abroad Scholarship Endowment goals will be established in 2012, in partnership with University Development.
   d. A London Experience reunion program will be held in summer 2013, to better engage alumni and to develop relationships which could lead to additional scholarship support.

4. **Increased participation**
   a. The undergraduate participation rate will reach 25% by 2016 and 30% by 2021 (currently 20%).
   b. Overall participation (outgoing) will increase by an average of 6% per year; specifically, 1500 students by 2016 (increase of 25% in 5 years), and 2000 students by 2020.
   c. The number of racial/ethnic minority students participating in study abroad programs will increase by 25% by the conclusion of the ACE At Home in the World project in 2013.