

Assessment Cycle 2018 – 2019

International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad

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Northwestern State University Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

University Affairs Mission. University Affairs is a diverse group of innovative and talented professionals who provide quality facilities, maintenance and management services in support of education and research at Northwestern State University. University Affairs is committed to being fully responsive to the needs of faculty, students, staff and the public, as provided by the Physical Plant, Capital Outlay Office, Grounds and Custodial Services, Environmental Health and Safety, University Police, ADA Compliance and International Student Services.

International Student Resource Center Mission: The International Student Resource Center is dedicated to assisting international students in their transition from their home countries to becoming a student at NSU. We advise future international students and promote a welcoming atmosphere through intercultural social interactions. The ISRC also promotes opportunities for NSU students to participate in long or short-term study-abroad programs.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the director;
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

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Service Outcomes:

Service Outcome 1: Increase the scope of international students who are aware of options for employment, on and off campus, before and after graduation, and the application process.

Measure 1.1

Have an increase from semester to semester in CPT and OPT applications, informed inquiries from students (specific questions about CPT and OPT and on campus employment options), and a general increase in students' inquiries about CPT and OPT. 90-100% of international students will be informed about their on-campus and off-campus employment options, regulations, and procedures.

Findings: Target met

OPT Applications

Fall 2018	7 application
Spring 2019	6 application

CPT Applications

Fall 2018	9 application
Spring 2019	9 applications
Summer 2018	5 applications

Analysis: In 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based on informal interviews with students we found that most of the students were aware that their visa allowed them to work off-campus while studying, but they did not know the procedure to have it approved. The International Student Resource Center received 8 applications for CPT (off campus employment while studying) during the academic year 2017-2018. During 2017-2018 the ISRC assisted with 10 applications for OPT (off campus employment after graduation). All students graduating received detailed information on how and when to apply for OPT in case they decided to stay in the country after graduation and work for 1 year.

Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, the international Student Resource Center decided to intensify the communication with student who potentially could apply for CPT. We targeted students in specific academic departments, and communicated with the leaders in those departments to share information about CPT mainly, and communicated intensely directly with students graduating to inform them about the options available to them after graduation, including OPT. We conducted group and individual OPT informational sessions. As a result, in 2018-2019 we received 18 CPT applications and 13 OPT applications. Our goal is not for every eligible students' to apply to CPT or OPT, but to make them aware of the options available to them and to communicate institutional policies and protocols to apply.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the results from 2018-2019, in 2019-2020 the ISRC & Study Abroad will continue to provide informational CPT and OPT orientations. However, we will introduce some changes as to when and who is targeted with information. For OPT orientations, we will identify the students graduating and will

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conduct a mandatory OPT training the semester prior to their graduation, so that they will be informed with ample time and ready to apply for OPT the semester when they graduate if they decide to stay in the country and apply for OPT after graduation. We will continue to provide general CPT informational sessions and also department specific, so that all eligible students are informed aware of the CPT option. We will also continue with one on one information sessions when students drop by to inquire about CPT. We will create a detailed document with CPT regulations, but also with the institutional policies and protocols to apply. We will distribute this document with students during the arrival orientation for new international freshman, but also with department heads of specific departments.

We are also working on improving the arrival orientation session for new international freshman. We will include, among other relevant information, a summary of off-campus employment authorizations. We will distribute handouts about CPT and OPT, so that students are informed about opportunities and regulations to work off-campus.

Service Outcome 2: Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities available for NSU students that wish to participate in an exchange program through a NSU bilateral agreement with an institution of Higher Education abroad.

Measure 2.1 Direct

ISRC will have at least three students studying abroad per academic year through a NSU bilateral agreement.

Findings: Target met

Study Abroad through NSU Bilateral Agreements

Fall 2018	2
Spring 2019	5 students
Summer programs 2018	1

Analysis: In 2017-2018 the target was met, more than three students participated in study abroad opportunities through NSU international bilateral agreements. However, to continue to meet the target and improve it, based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results in 2018-2019 the ISRC implemented the first Study Abroad Open House and started collaborating with other departments to reach students during their first year at NSU and informed them early about Study Abroad opportunities. The ISRC and Study Abroad attended all face to face sections of a mandatory class for all freshman. During Demons Days we continued to set up Study Abroad informational sessions in areas of high foot student traffic.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the results from 2018-2019, in 2019-2020 we will continue to carry out information sessions outside locations of heavy student traffic, during Demons Days and throughout the semester. The office assistant will train the student workers to communicate this information to students. We will also conduct the

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second Study Abroad Open House, but we will change the location and the day of the week for the event to increase visibility and attendance. We will also create informational material using Influencers as a source of information. The ISRC will hire a student worker, a former Study Abroad participant, to collect information from previous Study Abroad participants and create informational material from a student perspective. We will attend, for the second semester, the mandatory class for all freshman. We will also reach out to other offices on campus to reach out students through them. We will reach out to Campus Housing, First Year Experience, and First-Generation offices. We will use the videos and promotional material created from the student perspective. We will also enhance the Study Abroad section on the website to provide more information about the Study Abroad process before, during, and after the semester abroad. With the information gathered from previous participants we will create a FAQ section, include the blogs created from previous participants, and include the stories written by the student worker from the information gathered from previous participants.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.

The actions taken to improve the awareness of off-campus employment regulations and possibilities amongst international students were:

- Implemented information sessions about off-campus employment regulations for international students in one of the rooms assigned for the ISRC office. Created new sessions for students in specific academic departments.
- Informed new international students during the Welcome Orientation about the possibility to work off-campus and briefly mention the regulations.
- Improved and intensified communication with eligible students for CPT and OPT.

This academic year we observed an increase in CPT (Curricular Practical Training) applications and OPT (Optional Practical Training) applications.

OPT Applications

Fall 2018	7 application
Spring 2019	6 applications

STEM-OPT Applications

Fall 2018	1 application
Spring 2019	1 application

CPT Applications

Fall 2017	9 applications
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Spring 2018	9 applications
Summer 2018	5 applications

Regarding efforts to increase Study Abroad Awareness amongst NSU students, we continued with the approach of meeting the students where they are, instead of asking them to come to a previously arranged informational session. We continued then to bring the information to the students.

- Distributed posters in every building on campus promoting Study Abroad with contact information.
- Distributed flyers in different departments on campus.
- Announced Study Abroad opportunities on Student Messenger.
- Set up an information table outside the cafeteria.
- Attended campus-wide activities for newcomers, such as Freshman Connection and N-Side View.
- Visited the mandatory class for all NSU freshman.
- Carried out the first Study Abroad Open House.

This approach has been efficient because we could inform a larger number of students about Study Abroad opportunities. They had the option of talking to us if they had time, or just grabbing information and contacting us later. We also were able to inform interested parents about the Study Abroad opportunities NSU offers.

Plan of action moving forward.

In summary, in 2018-2019 the ISRC informed most eligible international students about off-campus employment options and recruited enough NSU students to study abroad to meet the target. However, we plan to enhance our efforts to inform students about off-campus employment options, and Study Abroad opportunities to increase the numbers of students applying for CPT and OPT, and Study Abroad through an NSU bilateral agreement.

- We will continue to offer information sessions about off-campus employment regulations for international students. However, we target specific student groups to meet with them and inform them about CPT and OPT. Regarding CPT we will

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communicate more with department heads to make them aware of the importance of following regulations and protocols for students to work off campus.

- We will meet with graduating seniors the semester before they graduate to inform them about the OPT option with ample time.
- We will create a succinct handout about CPT and OPT information to be distributed during the orientation session for new international students.
- We will continue attend the University Experience class, and meeting students where they are.
- We will conduct the second Study Abroad Open House and will change the venue and day of the week to increase visibility and attendance.
- We will create more Study Abroad materials using information from previous participants, we will create videos to promote study abroad opportunities with influencers.