

## Assessment Cycle 2019 - 2020

### International Student Resource Center & Study Abroad

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**Date:** 06/10/2020

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**Date:** 06/18/20

**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:

**SO 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 Direct

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 was met.

#### OPT Applications

Fall 2019	9
Spring 2020	6

#### CPT Applications

Fall 2019	6
Spring 2020	7
Summer 2019	6

**Analysis:** In 2018-2019 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the results from 2018-2019, in 2019-2020 the ISRC & Study Abroad provided informational CPT and OPT orientations. We introduced some changes as to when and who was targeted with information. For OPT orientations, we identified the students graduating and conducted a mandatory OPT training the semester prior to their graduation, so that they were informed with ample time and ready to apply for OPT the semester when they graduate if they decided to stay in the country and apply for OPT after graduation. We continued to provide general CPT informational sessions and also department specific, so that all eligible students were aware of the CPT option. We also continued with one-on-one information sessions when students dropped by to inquire about CPT. We created a detailed document with CPT regulations, but also with the institutional policies and protocols to apply. We distributed this document with students during the arrival orientation for new international freshman, but also with department heads of specific departments.

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

Based on the changes, in 2019-2020 the target was met. More students were aware of the CPT option to work off-campus, and all the international students eligible for OPT were made aware on a timely manner when and how to apply for OPT.

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**Decision, action or recommendation.** Based on the analysis of the results from 2019-2020 results, in 2020-2021 the following changes will be implemented to drive continuous improvement. With this changes we want to create a more systematic and accessible way for student to be exposed to information. The ISRC & Study Abroad will continue to target different groups of the international student body population at different times during the semester with the relevant off-campus employment information according to their eligibility. We will create a calendar of workshops for the semester on off-campus employment regulations and advertise them to students according to their eligibility for off-campus employment and to music students, who are the majority of the international student population. We will publish the calendar for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 on our website, FB official page for the Center, and e-mails. For instance, freshman student will receive this orientation at the end of their first semester at NSU, while sophomores, juniors and seniors will receive this information at the beginning of the semester, and at the end. We will offer specific workshops for music students as well.

We will reduce the information shared with the students about off-campus employment during the arrival orientation, as there was excess of information and students showed that they had not retained this information. During the orientation we will announce the option of off-campus employment, basic regulations, and that a workshop will be offered for them later in the semester about this topic.

Thus, we will continue to offer workshops for students even before they are eligible for off-campus employment. Our goal is that students are aware not only of the opportunity, but how to abide by the regulations and maintain their legal status in the country.

Due to Covid-19, we will offer live online workshops and will record them to share them on-demand for the students who cannot attend. We will revise our materials to make sure that they can also be delivered virtually and shared after the workshop. We will use different on-line platforms such as WebEx, Zoom, and have the information ready on software such as Power Point with voice so that the students can access this information later.

We will also revise our documents posted on the website to update them as necessary to make the information less burdensome and easier to understand and follow. We will also create short handouts with the main information on eligibility and how to apply, and we will have it available outside our offices for students to get it even after hours.

We will continue to foster on-campus relationships with different academic departments, especially the ones that host the majority of the international students, to inform them about the regulations for off-campus employment.

We will also change how the measure is assessed. We will no longer measure the success of our goal by the number of OPT and CPT applications that students actually complete. We will measure the target by the number of students who attend the workshops, and/or review the information distributed virtually, live or on-demand. We will keep a record of the number of international students who attend the workshops and are

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informed of the option of off-campus employment and the regulations, and calculate the percentage of the international student population that attend and review the information. Our goal is not that every student applies for CPT or OPT work authorization, but rather that they are informed of their options for lawful employment. We will create a measurement tool to make sure students understand the information.

We will also add another series of informational workshops. The new workshop will be on Health Insurance. Students are automatically enrolled in a health insurance plan and most of them do not understand what their benefits are or how to use it. So far, the only method of communication with the students about their insurance has been a short presentation during the Arrival Orientation for newcomers, through e-mails, and drop-ins after the students get a bill and try to understand it. With this series of workshops about their health insurance plan we will also make sure that they activate their account, update their information, and identify a family doctor they can visit.

To make sure all international students have received and understood the information about CPT/OPT and their health insurance, we will evaluate the option to have done the workshops as a prerequisite to receive another service from the office.

Due to Covid-19 we were unable to deliver all the workshops we had planned for Spring 2020, and we did not have ready the on-demand workshops to be offered and distributed virtually. We served the students on an individual basis as they wanted to apply for CPT or OPT. We communicated with each graduating senior through e-mail to make sure they were aware of all their options after graduation, regarding their F-1 status, including applying for OPT.

**SO 2: Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities available for NSU students that wish to participate in an exchange program through an 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 was met.

### Study Abroad through NSU Bilateral Agreements

Fall 2019	2
Spring 2020	3
Summer programs 2019	2

**Analysis:** In AY 2018-2019, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the results IN 2019-2020 we continued to carry out information sessions outside locations of heavy student traffic, during Demons Days and throughout the semester. The office assistant trained the student workers to communicate this information to students. We also

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conducted the second Study Abroad Open House, but we changed the location and the day of the week for the event to increase visibility and attendance. We also created informational material using Influencers as a source of information. The ISRC hired 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 attended, for the second semester, the mandatory class for all freshman. We also reached out to other offices on campus to reach out students through them. We reached out to Campus Housing, First Year Experience, and First-Generation offices. We used promotional material created from the student perspective. We used stories written by the student worker, based on interviews with exchange students as promotional material.

**Decision, Action or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the results from 2019-2020 results, in 2020-2021 the ISRC & Study Abroad will continue collaborating with other departments on campus to increase awareness of Study Abroad Opportunities.

However, given the new social distancing regulations, we will provide on-campus, face-to-face information on Study Abroad as the new circumstances permit. For the coming 2020-2021 academic cycle, as the feasibility of international travel is uncertain, we will conduct research and look for training and professional development opportunities available for the office staff on creating options for virtual study abroad experiences and how to best carry them out for students, so that they have a meaningful and relevant experience.

We will change how we measure the success of our goal. We will no longer measure if we have met the target based on the students who travel and study abroad, as the decision to participate in Study Abroad is based on many factors that we cannot control.

One of the main factors that stop students from applying to Study Abroad is funding. We will advocate internally to establish scholarships for Study Abroad, and we will look for Government funded scholarships to Study Abroad.

Due to Covid-19 the group of domestic students planning on studying abroad in Fall 2020 decided to stop their application process.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of results.

SO	Measure	Key Evidence
1	1.1	Targeted students at different times throughout the semester, and specific locations where they were available.
1	1.1	Created different workshops to deliver the information separately.
1	1.1	Continued to provide general CPT informational sessions and also made information available to specific department heads

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1	1.1	Continued with one-on-one information sessions when students dropped by to inquire about CPT.
1	1.1	Created a detailed document with CPT regulations, but also with the institutional policies and protocols to apply.
1	1.1	Distributed this document with students during the arrival orientation for new international freshman, but also with department heads of specific departments.
1	1.1	Worked on improving the arrival orientation session for new international freshman. Included among other relevant information, a summary of off-campus employment authorizations.
2	2.1	Continued to carry out information sessions about Study Abroad outside locations of heavy student traffic, during Demons Days.
2	2.1	Conducted the second Study Abroad Open House, collaborated with different academic departments to participate as well, and changed the location and the day of the week for the event to increase visibility and attendance.
2	2.1	Delivered Study Abroad information in all sessions of University Experience class. Reached out to other offices on campus to reach out students through them.

### Plan of action moving forward.

In summary, in 2019-2020 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 revising our materials to be able to deliver them virtually. And due to COVID-19 and unsure on when the university will allow international travel, we will research on the best options to expose students to international experiences and become globally minded.

SO	Measure	Plan
1	1.1	Change the way the success of our goals is measured, making sure they reflect the exposure of students to the information, and not the actual applications for off-campus employment and the number of students studying abroad.
1	1.1	Continue to target different groups of the international student body population at different times during the semester with the relevant off-campus employment information according to their eligibility.
1	1.1	Create a calendar of workshops for the semester on off-campus employment eligibility and regulations.

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1	1.1	Modify the Arrival orientation and reduce the information on off-campus employment at this time to make the information relevant to the students when it is delivered.
1	1.1	Change the delivery format of the workshops accordingly to Covid-19 regulations and have them accessible and deliverable virtually for groups of students and not just individual advising.
1	1.1	Revise documents posted on the website to make the information easier to understand and follow.
2	2.1	Continue to foster on-campus relationships with different academic and student service departments.
2	2.1	Add a new orientation session on the Health Insurance Plan students have. We will request materials to Wellfleet, the insurance company.
2	2.1	Research possibilities for virtual "study abroad" experiences that are meaningful to the students and collaborate with academic departments to inquire about their interest.
2	2.1	Advocate on campus with administration officials for study abroad scholarships. Research on available government funded study abroad scholarships.
2	2.1	Continue to disseminate information on campus, collaborating with different departments and offices, on Study Abroad opportunities.