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MU To Increase Study Abroad Participation

Short-term programs popular as MU aims for 30 percent of students studying abroad.



Assistant Professor of Magazine Journalism Andrea Heiss (far right) led a short-term study-abroad program in Florence, Italy, in Summer 2012. Photo courtesy of Chelsea Vaccaro.

Story by Erik Potter

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Whether it's because they can more easily fit into a busy schedule than semester-long study-abroad programs,

cost less out of pocket or don't involve transferring credits, the rising popularity of short-term, faculty-led study-abroad programs is a national trend. The multiweek courses now make up the majority of study-abroad trips at MU.

Mizzou offers more than 150 short-term options, from studying the genocide in Rwanda to working with nongovernmental organizations in Ghana, from doing geological fieldwork in Chile to protecting sea turtles in Costa Rica.

“They're wonderful opportunities,” says Jim Scott, MS '87, PhD '93, director of the International Center, which coordinates many of Mizzou's study-abroad programs. Scott says semesterlong and yearlong programs continue to be an important part of MU's offerings as well, and the center is trying to make all programs more affordable.

In MU's most recent MU Strategic Operating Plan, the university committed to increasing the percentage of its undergraduates studying abroad from 23 percent to 30 percent by 2018. The national average is 2 percent.

“We're doing well, but we want to do better,” Scott says. “To get 30 percent of our students studying abroad, we definitely have to make it affordable and accessible to students and find ways to tie the programs more closely to their degree programs so

they not only get credit for a course but also get credit toward their major.”

Scott is hopeful MU can fund more scholarships for study-abroad programs of all types.

The study-abroad experience is important as students enter a global economy, Scott says. “We need students who are prepared to work across cultures.”

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