

## Vargo Teaching Chair Project Description

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2012 Vargo Teaching Chair

#### Project Description

"Enhancing the learning experience of internationally mobile students."

Universities have long promoted study abroad (SA) as a transformative, even life-changing, learning experience which can foster intercultural understanding and global citizenship ([goabroad.ualberta.ca](http://goabroad.ualberta.ca)). In fact, in our own Strategic Plan For the Public Good, the University of Alberta highlights the need to "Develop global competency in our graduates through access to short- and long-term outbound international experiences" (Objective 7: Strategy 2).<sup>1</sup> As the Director of the Canadian Summer School in Germany (CSSG)<sup>2</sup> program (2003-2016) and as a SA researcher, I have worked to improve students' international learning experience through pedagogical and curricular innovations. However, I have also come to recognize that the value of a SA experience is often taken for granted as assumptions are made that the international experience alone will achieve the desired outcomes listed above. Throughout my career, my priority has been asking the question: how can I enhance the learning experience of students? I have been recognized for this commitment through a number of teaching awards, including the 3M National Teaching Fellowship. During my previous McCalla Professorship, I explored post-sojourn SA experiences of CSSG alumni from 1979-2016. My findings highlighted the deeper learning that can occur in SA, as evidenced by a participant who observed "It convinced me that what I suspected was true: it's not necessarily that you can't find the answers at home, just that you don't always ask yourself the right questions when comfortably at home". My priority for my Vargo Teaching Chair project is to build on my previous research to focus more specifically on how I can enhance the learning experience for SA students not just for in-class assignments but also out-of-class program elements. This project will enable a greater understanding of student engagement with place and culture and its role in pedagogy and program design. I consider the question: how do we move students beyond visiting a place as an academic tourist to a deeper physical, cultural, emotional and intellectual engagement with place?