UGA holds 12th spot on Open Doors 2012 study abroad list

Athens, Ga. – University of Georgia students are gaining the experiences they need to thrive in today’s global society thanks to a vibrant study abroad program. During the 2010-2011 school year, 2,079 students learned in environments beyond the U.S. border. This number represents 25 percent of the graduating class. Their global experiences earned UGA a 12th-place ranking, up from 15 in 2011, among all U.S. institutions on the Open Doors 2012 list released annually by the Institute of International Education.

UGA also ranked fifth in the nation in the number of students who participate in summer and other short-term programs (1,621), while at the same time, 521 UGA students chose to spend a full semester or academic year abroad in 2011. An additional 150-200 students from other universities enroll through UGA study abroad programs each year.

The Open Doors report is released annually during International Education Week, Nov. 12-16. The U.S. Departments of State and Education sponsor the report.

“Study abroad is a very important part of UGA’s internationalization efforts, and I am delighted to see this reflected in our Open Doors ranking,” said Kavita Pandit, associate provost for international education. “Our success reflects the efforts of faculty directors, study abroad instructors, academic advisers, support staff around the campus and the education abroad professionals at the Office of International Education.”

Students at UGA study abroad in a variety of ways. Most enroll in one of UGA’s 100 or so faculty-led programs offered in 65-70 different countries each year. These programs range from 10 days to a full semester and include programs at UGA-owned residential centers in Oxford, England; Cortona, Italy; and in the Monteverde region of Costa Rica. Other students participate in external programs or in semester- or year-round exchanges with one of UGA’s 50 exchange partners abroad. In addition to the traditional classroom format, study abroad experiences include service learning, tutorials, fieldwork, internships and laboratory experiences.

“UGA has been a leader in study abroad for a long time,” said Kasee Clifton Laster, study abroad director. “We support it as a global campus, through financial aid, and our administration is very supportive.”

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For the past three years, Western Europe and Latin America have been the most popular destinations for UGA students. The fastest growing areas, however, are Asia and Australia, according to Laster.

“Studying abroad enhances our students’ careers,” Laster said. “It also gives them a global perspective on their discipline.”

Each of UGA’s 17 colleges and schools sends students abroad. The majority of them travel while pursuing degrees from the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, but the Terry College of Business, the School of Public and International Affairs and the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication also send more than 200 students abroad annually. Professional students from the College of Veterinary Medicine and the School of Law have increased participation lately, and professional and graduate students account for more than 10 percent of all UGA study abroad participants.

“Students in graduate and professional programs are studying in increasing numbers, including many each year through MBA and law programs, or they are pursuing original dissertation or thesis research abroad,” Laster said.

UGA also continues to see a significant increase in the number of freshmen studying abroad, due largely to programs such as UGA Costa Rica’s fall and spring semesters, which offer full schedules of core classes that students may apply toward any degree program on campus.

The Office of International Education also holds an annual Study Abroad Open House for first-year students and their families, and a major study abroad fair for all students each fall.

For more information on study abroad opportunities at UGA, see http://international.uga.edu/education_abroad/.