



Purdue University study validates the effectiveness of AFS Global Competence Certificate Program *Students achieved astonishing 13.54 gain in IDI points*

NEW YORK, NY, USA (23 July 2019) - A new [study](#) from Purdue University confirmed that students who participated in the AFS Global Competence Certificate Program to prepare for their short-term study abroad experience achieved significant gains in the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a leading cross-cultural assessment of intercultural competence that is used by thousands of individuals and organizations to build intercultural competence to achieve international and domestic diversity and inclusion goals and outcomes.

The AFS Global Competence Certificate Program (GCC) is an 18-module video-based digital learning program that develops intercultural competence, supported by facilitated reflection and discussion. Effectiveness was measured via pre- and post-program administration of the IDI.

According to the [study](#) published last week in the HUBICL, an on-line research repository for researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs in intercultural learning, pre- and post-program scores of the Intercultural Development Inventory showed that students attending a 6-week program in Florence, Italy attained an astonishing mean increase of 13.54 IDI points, moving from the "Polarization" stage (where the student group was more likely to judge differences) to the "Minimization" stage (where the group has been enabled to find common ground with people from other cultures.)

"Intercultural understanding is mission-critical for our societies," said Daniel Obst, President and CEO of AFS. "At a time when more and more people are fearful of the 'other' and turn towards nationalism, it is urgent to provide youth with a global perspective and help them engage in open and effective interactions with people from different cultures. Our Global Competence Certificate Program supports institutions in better preparing their students. "

In fact, many of these students now have the capacity to appreciate both the commonalities across cultural difference as well as different ways of thinking or behaving.

"The GCC forced my students to move beyond their comfort zones," explained Michael Bittinger, Assistant Director of the Study Abroad Office at Purdue University (USA), who designed and led the *Purdue Summer in Florence* experience. "The video in the modules made the students stop and think about what they saw and heard. As a trained GCC facilitator, I provided sessions of guided reflection, which helped them make sense of what they learned in the modules."

In his [paper](#) chronicling his experience using the GCC, *An Instructor's Experiment: Adding Intentional Global Competency into a Pre-Existing Short-Term Study Abroad Program*, Bittinger makes a compelling case for the effectiveness of the tool, as well as how it can be scaled to support larger study abroad programs. Many universities do not offer any intercultural or global competence training for students going abroad. Others offer semester long classes or one-to-one mentoring, which is logistically very difficult to scale.

"In the midst of the pre-departure process using the GCC, it became clearer what study abroad students are supposed to do so they see the challenges they will face as normal," said Bittinger. "Even introverted students were empowered to interact more deeply with people they encountered in Florence."

Katherine N. Yngve, Intercultural Outcomes Specialist at Purdue's Office of Institutional Research, Assessment & Effectiveness, believes the true strength of the GCC is that it "helps develop emotional resilience or grit" when navigating unknown cultural settings. Yngve, who provided data analysis assistance on Bittinger's paper, points out that the GCC helps "build self-awareness" about your own culture as you learn to unpack differences of other cultures. In addition, she added: "The tool also offers crucial bridging techniques to help students make connections."

"Study abroad and internationalization programs at universities are often designed on the assumption that participants learn simply through reading about culture or by coming into contact with the new and different people and situations," said Linda Stuart, Director of the AFS GCC. "Research has concluded otherwise – that global competence, the capacity to communicate, collaborate and lead effectively across differences, is developed through intentional, facilitated learning."

That's why AFS has developed the Global Competence Certificate, meeting the needs of global universities to provide both outbound and inbound students with vital cultural awareness and skills needed for today's communities and workforce. The Global Competence Certificate prepares students and faculty for a meaningful study abroad experience and reduces the fear of the unknown, as well as the multitude of challenges that occur when studying in another country.

In 2018, 2629 students, faculty, staff and program participants worldwide participated in the AFS Global Competence Certificate program. Purdue will release additional studies about the effectiveness of the GCC for specific STEM related study abroad experiences and more traditional long-term study abroad programs in the months to come.

AFS's Global Competence Certificate program is available in eight languages, and it provides blended, personalized learning experiences through 18 modules with clear educational goals. It is currently used by 65 organizations in 40+ countries. Partners include Purdue University, University of Indianapolis, Augsburg University, the University of St. Thomas, Languages Canada, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgium, as well as a number of academic institutions. AFS recently partnered with Terra Dotta to provide their university and college clients with the possibility to integrate the Global Competence Certificate seamlessly into their programming.

For more information on the Global Competence Certificate, please visit <http://www.afs.org/certificate> or contact Linda.Stuart@afs.org, Director of AFS GCC. To access the Bittinger paper, visit: <https://hubicl.org/publications/49/2>

ABOUT AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS, INC.

[AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc.](#) is a global network of 59 independent organizations. Each year, more than 12,000 young people go on AFS Programs and AFS offers more than 100 intercultural education events and social impact projects in 93 countries, supported by 50,000 AFS volunteers and thousands of host families.

ABOUT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

[Purdue University](#), a top public research institution, offers higher education at its highest proven value. Committed to affordability, the university has frozen tuition and most fees at 2012-13 levels. Committed to student success, Purdue is changing the student experience with greater focus on faculty-student interaction and creative use of technology. Committed to pursuing scientific discoveries and engineered solutions, Purdue has streamlined pathways for faculty and student innovators who have a vision for moving the world forward.