

**Brazilian Studies through Research, Instruction, and Outreach:  
A Model for Undergraduate Student Engagement**  
External Evaluation Summary

**DRAFT**

Prepared by:  
Allison L. Titcomb, Ph.D.

Prepared for:  
Marcela Vásquez-León, PhD.  
Center for Latin American Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of Annual/Final Reporting Requirements

Submitted September 2019



Support provided by USDOE UISFL Grant and University of Arizona

## Evaluation Summary for Brazilian Studies UISFL Grant

Perspectives and suggestions for improvement on the Brazil Study Abroad and Internship program were gathered using focus groups and interview methods with five (5) students, one (1) staff/student and two (2) faculty.<sup>1</sup> The summary of results described below mainly focus on grant Objective 3--increasing international opportunities for undergraduates, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaborative problem solving through the expansion of study abroad and internship opportunities. Insights and results related to other objectives (e.g., Objective 2- enhancing Portuguese training and Objective 4—promoting greater understanding of Brazilian culture and language) are also included at the end.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Student Perspective***

#### ***What was most exciting or your favorite part of the summer in Brazil?***

Students valued the opportunity to **apply their learning** and have **direct experiences** with Brazilian culture. Learning about and **making connections** with the **people** and the **place** (both in Brazil and at the University of Arizona(UA)) were noted by all as particular highlights and values. Students mentioned some specific “best” aspects such as the following:

- The **six weeks of studying the language prior to the internship** was very helpful. Going from school, language, writing and reading and then applying it felt ideal: “Had to use what I’d just learned.” Several called it a **“balanced” experience**.
- The internship was especially valuable as it relates to “stuff you can’t learn in class.” Being able to **apply the learning** to very tangible projects and products was much appreciated.
- “Amazing people”- being able to talk to the kids and **connect with the people** of the Cuca provided “insights into Brazil” and “grassroots” connections and learning.
- “Best experience was on the last day”—the trip to a local high school and having “open floor discussions.” “Would love to have done more of that.”
- “I was proud of the project I got to bring back.”
- The on-campus Brazil-related events helps “Brazilian students on campus feel represented.” (e.g., Carnaval on the mall, music, food, capoeira).

#### ***What were some of the challenges you experienced?***

Students noted different kinds of challenges and hastened to note that none of them greatly impacted their positive experience. Their reflections included the following:

- This can be **“very challenging if you’re at a beginning level [of Portuguese].”** “Lots of time gets eaten up if you’re having to clarify on the language.”
- While having both the study abroad and internship experience immediately following, the short time and high expectations makes it **“hard to juggle a social research project and giving back.”** It was a challenge to balance and juggle both. “We didn’t want to take away to do our own” project.

---

<sup>1</sup> Antonio José Bacelar da Silva, Ana Maria Carvahlo, Mia Carvalho Guimaraes, Litzeth Flores, Shaun Moreland, Jorge Mata Ochoa, Alex Gonzalez, and Mely Bolman.

<sup>2</sup> **Note:** This report does not replace regular project annual reporting nor is it intended to be a comprehensive program evaluation nor an academic treatise on the project’s content. This is a brief snapshot of the progress related to key evaluation questions. For more detailed documentation and description of the project’s activities and outcomes, please refer to specific Brazilian Studies UISFL project reports, documents, articles and other products.

- If a student only participated in the internship, it could feel as though “you’re left to your own devices.”
- Students would have liked to have had more support around **media content**. “Not everyone can bring fancy equipment” and “it might be difficult to have it there anyway” because of safety concerns about taking photos and using equipment “on the street.” “A media workshop on how to take photos before we left” and identifying other local resources might be helpful.
- Perhaps more use of “apps” (e.g., Slack) for **project management** and “pulling together pieces of the projects.”
- Lack of organization and communication regarding **roles and purpose**. Staff in Brazil didn’t always know “why we were there” or possible projects weren’t identified ahead of time. Perhaps contacting the Cuca ahead of time “to find out what they really need” in order to “**create a research project around a need they say they have** vs. an independent and separate ‘give back to the community’ idea we create.”
- Students expressed an interest in “sharing more” once they return to campus. Some would be willing to “give a presentation to more classes.” “I could talk about it for 2 hours!” Perhaps including testimonies from past students on D2L—students could share more on “diplomatic discourse and social conversation.”

### ***What are some of the benefits/changes you experienced?***

Students reported **increased confidence**, not only in their **Portuguese language communication skills** (e.g., “the power to be able to communicate”) but also it **changed their minds** about Brazil and travel. Specific comments in response to this question about benefits/changes include:

- Language development and confidence in speaking Portuguese.
- Better understanding and appreciate of Brazilian culture.
- “Breaking stereotypes of us and them.” “Saddest poverty and smartest people.”
- The experience “opened eyes.” “My eyes were widened.” Students noted a heightened awareness of economic disparities.
- “It changed my point of view.” They were about to see “reality and not just theory.” A “better idea and more perceptive of the day-to-day challenges” Brazilians experience.
- More insights into the political system and government and social impacts. “We saw disparities first hand.”
- Seeing “how journalism practices differ.”

### ***Faculty/Staff Perspective***

Faculty and staff expressed their enthusiasm for the results from the study abroad/internship program as well as other changes that have been made that will sustain beyond the grant period as their **favorite/most exciting parts** of the project. Specifically, they mentioned the following:

- This grant “allowed me to offer an introduction to Portuguese online for Spanish-speaking students. We’re now offering it for the 4<sup>th</sup> time!”
- An increase in the bank of online activities for face-to-face interactions as well.
- Bringing Brazilian culture and language to the center (Latin American Studies) and building a strong presence on campus.
- Now have a course dedicated to Brazil (vs. “just modules”), more cross-listed courses.
- Graduate students are beginning to apply.
- Seeing more Spanish-speaking students enrolling in summer courses.

**Challenges** noted by faculty and staff include:

- “Hard to organize from here.”
- “Little time to organize the service learning.”
- This is “lots of work.”
- Challenges with enrollment and “red tape” at the institutional level. For example, the moratorium on certificates “was very disappointing.” The proposal was completed and submitted, but has not yet been approved.
- Fundraising—undergraduate and graduate students depend on funding to support their work.

Faculty see additional **changes and benefits** derived from the UIISFL grant:

- Additional classes are now part of the curriculum. More cross-listed classes.
- “It’s here to stay.” “The network will continue.” Communication with other faculty in the Brazil Studies Network, possible publications, knowledge for classes, and new opportunities will be carried forward.
- Conjunction of internship with study abroad “was a great idea.” “Wish internships were longer.” (Maybe add two weeks?)
- Brazilian scholars.
- The addition of Business Portuguese.
- A needs assessment and survey (with help from the Dean of Social & Behavioral Sciences). “Got some very good responses.”
- This has influenced “how we do business online.” More with LinkedIn and other social media.
- The cover of the *Economist*” resulted in “students from Eller [UA College of Management] flocked” to the opportunities. Mainstream media influencing trends (e.g., images on twitter and Instagram).
- Second group of interns “were great—completely energized—ambassadors for UA.”
- All faculty enthusiastically responded “Yes!!” they would continue to participate as MARC Mentor when asked if they wanted to continue to participate in the MARC Program. One faculty member noted willingness but that the lab would closing next year and said yes and it would be about the time and resources.
- “Amazing collaboration between CLAS [Center for Latin American Studies] and the department of Spanish and Portuguese.”
- Doing the program abroad in the same place.
- Changed perspectives and understanding. “It’s clear the students learned” from their experience.

### ***Overall Perspective***

#### ***What might be ideas to keep in mind/suggestions for future study abroad/internships in Brazil?***

Based on the responses in the focus groups/interviews, a few key ideas to keep in mind may be helpful for the planning:

- Continue to offer the combined experience of study abroad with an internship immediately following. Consider increasing the length of the internship beyond two weeks.
- Connect more explicitly with the places and people involved with hosting the interns about purpose and roles.
- Perhaps conduct a needs assessment or more informal way to find out what the Cuca’s needs may be in order to help the student focus on useful and locally relevant projects.
- Share student testimonies (short videos?) on D2L with new interns prior to their travel and work in Brazil.
- Identify possible opportunities and offer students who have complete projects additional venues for sharing their work once they return to campus.

- Continue to monitor the university administration’s plans related to certificate programs. The complete and submitted proposal could be re-submitted once a moratorium has been lifted.
- Continue to offer campus events (such as those noted below).
- Continue strong collaborations and connections with both on-campus partners and units as well as the Brazil Studies Network.

The following table highlights examples of the progress on the objectives of the grant. Additional details and more examples will be included in the projects final report. From the previous summary and the examples below it is clear that the overall goal, to build institutional capacity for scholarship and pedagogy of Brazil Studies and Portuguese language at the undergraduate level and to disseminate scholarship and generate local public interest in Brazil Studies and Portuguese, has been achieved and many of the program elements are likely to be sustained.

Objective	Status/Examples
1. Undergraduate certificate including pathways agreements with Pima Community College; new courses in place.	Partially completed. Certificate proposal was submitted but is in hiatus due to moratorium for all certificate proposals by university administration.
2. Enhance Portuguese training and increase student enrollment in Portuguese classes.	Completed. A new online course has been added, more courses have been cross-listed, additional modules have been added and revised with enhanced and expanded content.
3. Increase international opportunities for undergraduates, promote cross-cultural understanding & collaborative problem-solving; expand study abroad and internship opportunities in Brazil.	Completed. Two summers of students have participated in internships in Brazil. Successful collaboration with Study Abroad and businesses/agencies in Brazil have been established.
4. Promote greater understanding of Brazilian Culture and Language through a Brazil Studies Network and campus and community outreach.	<p>Completed. Connections among Brazil scholars has increased and will be continued. Campus events have been successful. For example, these are just two of the on-campus events (more are listed and described in the final grant report):</p> <p><b>Brazilian Black Consciousness Day</b> (Monday, November 20, 2017) “Join the Center for Latin American Studies to celebrate Brazilian Black Consciousness Day. There will be Afro-Brazilian dance, Brazilian snacks and a panel discussion about race and anti-racism with UA faculty and students.”</p> <p><b>Carnaval on the Mall (see poster)</b></p> 