

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

Jeff Murphy

Assistant Director

University Relations-Media Relations

660-543-4640

jmurphy@ucmo.edu

UCM on Target to Meet Study Abroad Goals by 2019

WARRENSBURG, MO (May 14, 2015) – With a desire to create a more worldly perspective for students, in one year the University of Central Missouri has reached the half-way mark toward its goal to increase to 20 percent the total number of UCM students who have study abroad experiences.

The university plans to have at least 500 students taking part in study abroad programs by 2019. This is not only an institutional target but consistent with a commitment UCM made nationally after joining the Institute of International Education (IIE) Generation Study Abroad Initiative. The purpose of this 2014 effort is to double the number of American students who study abroad by the end of the decade.

Sarah Pattison, UCM study abroad exchange coordinator, said the university continues to make rapid progress in achieving its international study goal. UCM had 230 applicants for the 2015-2016 academic year, and is on track for 280 study abroad participants next year.

“Last year, 49 students participated in study abroad,” said Pattison, “This is a 560 percent increase in one year.” She added that faculty-led programs currently account for about 60 percent of the student participants, and about 20 percent of the student participants are involved in summer programs.

“For a university committed to cultivating a worldly perspective among all its students, study abroad must be a high priority,” said Joseph Lewandowski, a two-time Fulbright Scholar who serves as dean of the UCM Honors College and International Affairs. “Engaging in living and learning contexts abroad not only enhances students' cultural literacy and awareness of other ways of life, it also provides them with the knowledge, applied skills, and hands-on experiences crucial to competing successfully in a global market.”

Leading up to IIE's centennial celebration in 2019, Generation Study Abroad is engaging educators at all levels and stakeholders in the public and private sectors to drive meaningful innovative action to increase the number of U.S. students who have the opportunity to gain international experience through academic study abroad programs,

--more--

as well as internships, service learning and non-credit educational experiences. UCM is one of the lead partners who have committed to specific, measureable actions that will help achieve this goal. IIE is making a limited number of grants available each year to institutions that are making outstanding progress.

Lewandowski commended the work of dedicated faculty members and the new leadership of Pattison and Elizabeth Arentsen, study abroad program assistant, who are helping to grow student participation.

“Our recent and remarkable success is the result of several key factors, including increased scholarships, alignment of study abroad programming with high-demand majors, and an expansion of compact and faculty-led study abroad offerings,” Lewandowski said.

Pattison added that grant funding and marketing that focuses on shifting the paradigm of student abroad at UCM are helping to change uninformed perceptions that such opportunities are expensive and elitist. They are, instead, “essential, affordable and convenient,” she said.

UCM has initiated programs to help reduce the cost of international study. A \$1,000 International Studies Grant is provided to each UCM student who studies through a sponsored program for the fall or spring semester. Summer semester grants also are also available, but are pro-rated dependent upon available funding and hours completed while abroad.

Additionally, the university has received \$7,500 through the Generation Study Abroad Scholarship Program, which is being matched by \$7,500 from the Study Abroad Office for a total of \$15,000. These funds will be awarded in the next academic year in the form of six \$2,500 grants to students who meet criteria similar to those required to participate in national TRIO programs. To be considered, a recipient must be a low-income, first-generation college student, or underrepresented in higher education.

“This is one of the major obstacles for groups that are underrepresented in American study abroad demographics,” Pattison said. “They do not ever imagine the possibility for themselves.”

Other factors contributing to increased student participation include informational programs such as Study Abroad 101, which meets three times a week. The university has a dedicated study abroad advisor for each student, and a commitment to providing and supporting faculty-led study abroad programs and summer study abroad opportunities.

To help communicate such opportunities with students, the university is developing a new study abroad website that will be activated June 3 with resources available for students, parents, UCM staff and exchange partners. Other initiatives include the evaluation of 35 exchange partnerships worldwide with the intention of providing a “Preferred Partner List” of 15 institutions that offer high-quality, UCM program aligned academics, quality services and facilities.

“It is truly a new era in study abroad at UCM, and we look forward to much continued success in placing our students in high-quality and affordable study abroad programs,” Lewandowski said.

To learn more about study abroad opportunities at UCM, please visit ucmo.edu/international/studyabroad/.

###