

Educating in Paradise

**Fifty Years  
of Growth  
in Study Abroad  
in Italy**

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ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGE  
AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS IN ITALY

*Grazie ad Alessandro e Leonardo*

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## Presentation

The Association of American College and University Programs in Italy, AACUPI, is proud to include Pia Schneider's *Fifty Years of Growth in Study Abroad in Italy* in its series, "Educating in Paradise." Her study is the result of the association-wide survey she personally conducted in 2012-2013, and initially presented in Dublin on December 6, 2012, at the Forum on Education Abroad's First European Conference, "Reinventing the European Experience: Culture, Politics and Diversity in U.S. Education Abroad."

Students, faculty and administrators alike will find these data most interesting and, sometimes, surprising, as well as challenging. North American students have been coming to Italy for over eighty years, to study in programs designed to help them better understand what treasures Italy has to offer them, what a paradise of riches Italy has to bestow on all of us, directly and indirectly, on our return home, in creating our own national culture. AACUPI's history also clearly shows us that tomorrow will bring continued richer educational experiences as AACUPI institutions strive to open the door to ever-inspiring, new sources of knowledge and pleasure for cultural self-definition, peculiar to Italy, an Italy that grows with time and becomes distinct, unique and singular for all of our students.

Robert Shackelford, Secretary-Treasurer of AACUPI, joins me in thanking all of the representatives of member institutions for their cooperation and collaboration in the completion of this survey and in congratulating Pia Schneider on her fine research and excellent report on our study abroad realities.

Cav. Portia Prebys  
President of AACUPI

Rome, November 28, 2013



## Foreword

This article is based on a survey I did in late 2012 and on the database of AACUPI membership. A questionnaire<sup>1</sup> was sent to all AACUPI program directors addressing questions regarding the history and age of each program, the teaching models used initially and today, student housing, Italian language studies, and, finally, about the strategies of integration into the new cultural and social environment. A great number of personal interviews with the representatives of member institutions were also used to complete the survey.

Special thanks go to Portia Prebys, Jim Zarr and all AACUPI program directors and administrators who filled out the questionnaire and made this survey possible. Further, I would like to thank my College, Mark Engelbrecht who founded the Rome program and Luis Rico-Gutierrez who supports it in the best possible way.

## Introduction

Whenever I mention that our study abroad Rome program is just one out of nearly 150 North American programs which operate in Italy, my students and faculty look baffled. In fact, it was a surprise for me to discover more than twenty architecture programs, after practicing architecture in Rome for many years. I had no idea of the presence of almost fifty North American university programs in Rome alone until, that is, I was allowed to attend my first AACUPI meeting as a freshly-appointed director to the Iowa State Rome Program. The meeting I attended was hosted, as usual, in the facilities of one of the member institutions, at the time Auburn University in Ariccia, close to Rome, which is housed in a 16<sup>th</sup> century palace owned by the Chigi family.

What struck me the most at the meeting in Ariccia was the collegiality, or even close friendship, evident among members. Some have known each other for a long time, some for decades, and the twenty-three founding members for more than thirty-five years, when the association was born, in 1978.

Thus, study abroad in Italy is a long-standing reality, and a great number of American universities have committed energy and resources to building up enduring programs. Together, as an association, they have found a way to overcome the various fiscal, legal and immigration problems Italy posed.

For instance, in 1999, the Italian Parliament passed the Barile Law (Article 2 of Law N. 4 of 14 January 1999), dedicated to AACUPI, and, consequently, member institutions were able to be recognized as legal, non-profit entities in Italy. Another milestone was the Memorandum of Understanding, i.e. the *Protocollo*

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

*d’Intesa* signed in 2010 between the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs and AACUPI, significantly facilitating the process of work visa applications for foreign directors, or faculty members.

Interested in the achievements of the association, as well as in the history of each program, I started interviewing programs during the regular AACUPI meetings which take place four times a year. No survey about curricula had been done to this point, and many members expressed interest in knowing more about their peer programs. I hope, therefore, that this report will be of interest to the current members, but also be of help for future study abroad programs coming to Italy. Furthermore, the data might be useful for comparing the Italian situation to other European programs and associations of study abroad.

### **150 Windows onto Education Abroad in Italy – a Unique Case Study**

“Open Doors” data, published annually by the Institute of International Education (IIE)<sup>2</sup>, shows Italy as the second most popular country for study abroad after the UK. Italy is, thus, the first choice out of non-Anglophone countries.

Rank	Destination	2009/10	2010/11	% of Total	% Change
	<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>270,604</b>	<b>273,996</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>1</b>	United Kingdom	32,683	33,182	12.1	1.5
<b>2</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>27,940</b>	<b>30,361</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>8.7</b>

One out of 10 students who go abroad receiving credits, chooses Italy as a destination, and the trend was still growing by 8.7% in 2010-11, confirming Italy’s current position.

Italy has, no doubt, a leading worldwide position in education abroad and, if IIE lists roughly 30,000 students in 2010-11, we know that two thirds of the students receiving credits for studying abroad in Italy were enrolled with AACUPI. Hence, having access to AACUPI’s database and surveying the then 147 member institutions allows us to investigate some central questions regarding the state and aims of education abroad.

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<sup>2</sup> Institute of International Education (2012). “Top 25 Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2009/10 - 2010/11.” *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.



We seek answers to how AACUPI programs adapted their educational curricula over time and how they got successful in sustaining a high level of intellectual challenge for their students. The questionnaire gave particular attention to what strategies the programs apply in helping their students, not only in their academic achievements, but also in their personal growth, their social and cultural integration in a new environment.

## **SURVEY of AACUPI PROGRAMS 2012-13 DATA COLLECTION**

### **Respondents**

The respondents to the survey are all AACUPI member institutions awarding credit for study abroad: 96% are American institutions of higher education, 3% are Canadian and 1% are Australian institutions of higher education.

Three institutions (the American Academy in Rome, the Vergilian Society and the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies) host post-doctoral scholars or artists and represent the exception of 3%, together with one program (Philips Academy - School Year Abroad – Italy), which is a college preparatory program bringing high school students to Italy. All other respondents (97%) have either undergraduate or graduate students. Only two out of 147 programs offer a BA/BS degree on Italian territory: The American University of Rome and John Cabot University, both in Rome.

Six institutions offer an MA degree: Auburn University in Italy, Clemson University, The Johns Hopkins University, James Madison University Florence Programs, St. John's University Rome Campus and University of Iowa.

Except for the three newly-established members, all AACUPI programs took part in the survey.

### **History and Age of Programs**

The oldest institution is the American Academy in Rome founded 119 years ago. Since the time of the Grand Tour, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Academy has become a point of intellectual reference for architects, artists and scholars that linked America to the Italian peninsula. Hosting post-doctoral scholars and artists even today, the Academy is not a typical study abroad program, but the idea of a study sojourn can be considered a historical reason to choose Italy as a destination for study abroad. The Academy describes its moment of beginning “*as collaborative effort [...] when a small group [...] resolved to create a center to study art amid the classical tradition of ancient Rome.*”<sup>3</sup>

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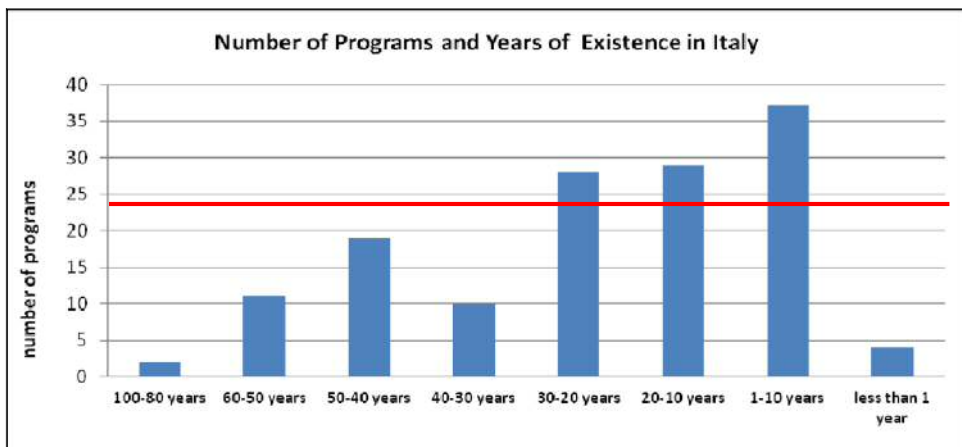
<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.aarome.org/about/place/academy>.

The second oldest program is Smith College (82 years). One of the pioneers in study abroad, Smith, already established in Paris in 1925, opened in Florence in 1931, employing the Liberal Arts teaching model<sup>4</sup> similar to the University of Delaware, which had traveled to Paris already in 1923. The Vergilian Society of America looks back over 77 years of existence, but has, like the American Academy and The Harvard University Summer School (51 years of age), a special status by hosting only post-doctoral scholars.

The Johns Hopkins University, next on the list, has been operating for 58 years, using Bologna as a European campus with a global perspective and has several other campuses around the world.

Stanford University and Syracuse University follow, both founded 54 years ago, and Middlebury College, founded a year later, also in Florence. In Rome, Rhode Island School of Design opened its doors 53 years ago, replicating the American Academy's selection of students for two-year fellowships. Loyola University Chicago's The John Felice Rome Center, Gonzaga University in Florence, University of California Immersion Programs in Bologna and Buffalo State College (SUNY College at Buffalo) in Siena are all more than 50 years old. An impressive number of 19 programs are more than 40 years old, and 10 programs are more than 30 years old.

Each AACUPI program has a unique story, its particular starting time and place; even the age factor cannot be reduced to a common denominator. We can observe, though, that half of the programs are less than 20 years old, and a third (32%) of all programs is 10 years of age or less. These relatively young programs are part of the study abroad "boom" that occurred from 2002 to 2012, when AACUPI had a steep jump in membership (see graph in next section).



<sup>4</sup> By *teaching model* we mean the ensemble of the subjects taught in a program, which constitutes its general educational focus.

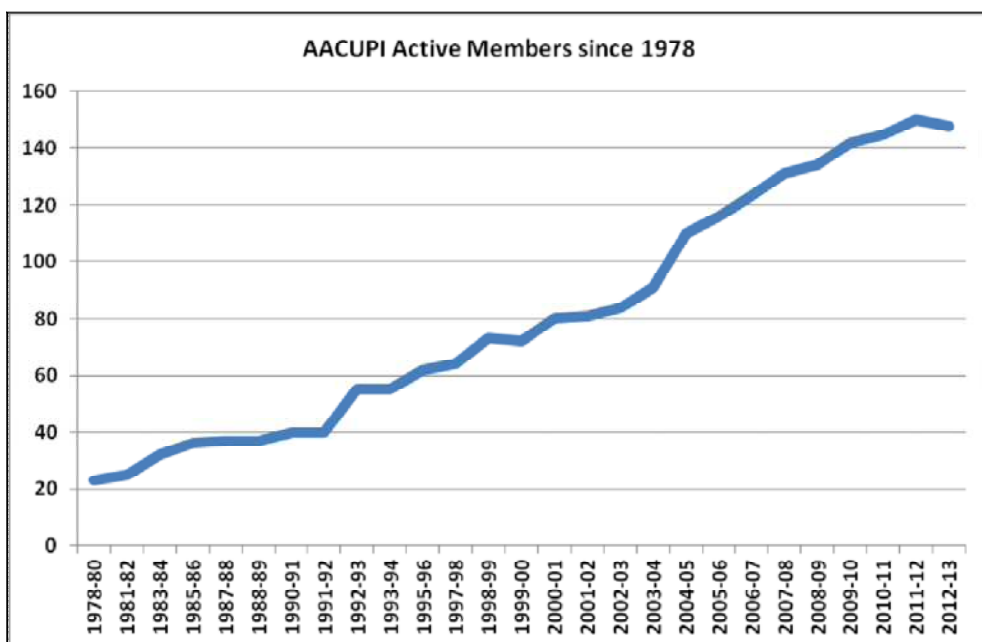
Overall, the programs look back over many years of experience and if one sums up all the years in which the various AACUPI programs have operated in Italy, the result is 3295 years. This gives an average of 24 years per program (indicated by the **red line** in the preceding graph).

## Growth

### Number of Programs

In 1978, AACUPI was founded by 23 member institutions and, despite moments of economic or political crisis (e.g. 09/11), it has experienced a constant increase in membership, reaching a maximum of 150 members in 2011-12.

In 2012-13, AACUPI had 147 institutions enrolled as members of the association, slightly less than in the previous year, but with a constant increase of students.



As the graph proves, one can observe a steep increase after the year 2002-03, when the association increased from 81 to 150 members in 2012. Portia Prebys, President of AACUPI, believes that this phenomenon of rapid increase in membership over the past ten years in Italy is related to a worldwide increase in students studying abroad. Further, the success of the Barile Law, obtained in 1999, guaranteeing tax exemptions for non-profit programs, made membership definitely

more attractive. Even the efficiency of legal and fiscal services offered by AACUPI, might have been one of the causes of such growth.

### **Student Numbers**

The 147 programs hosted, in Academic Year 2012-13, a total of 19,783 American students studying for full-time credit in Italy, as indicated by the program administrators. This figure of almost 20,000 students, though, is lower than the 30,361 students listed by the IIE Open Doors report (see above) in the year 2010-11.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we know that more than 10,000 study abroad students are enrolled with programs or institutions that may not be part of AACUPI. Some of these students, are indeed, enrolled directly with local Italian universities, international language schools or commercial providers,<sup>6</sup> but we estimate that a large part of those North American students and programs, not officially enrolled with AACUPI, are still hosted under the wings of AACUPI programs and use their facilities.

For example, the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai in Florence, hosts five programs which are part of AACUPI (University of Connecticut in Florence, Marywood University, Pennsylvania State University, Roger Williams University, the University of Virginia), but another seven institutions (Arizona State University, University of Melbourne, Roanoke College, Rutgers University - Newark, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of New Hampshire, Notre Dame of Maryland) are located there but are NOT members. Similarly, the case of the University of Arkansas in Rome, which is a longstanding AACUPI member, hosts three AACUPI member institutions (Auburn University, Philadelphia University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), but also three universities which do not hold membership (Louisiana State University, Texas Tech University, University of Tennessee at Knoxville). Another example is the Bologna Consortial Studies Program, which has a mix of fifteen consortium and associate members, of which eight have AACUPI membership while seven others do not.

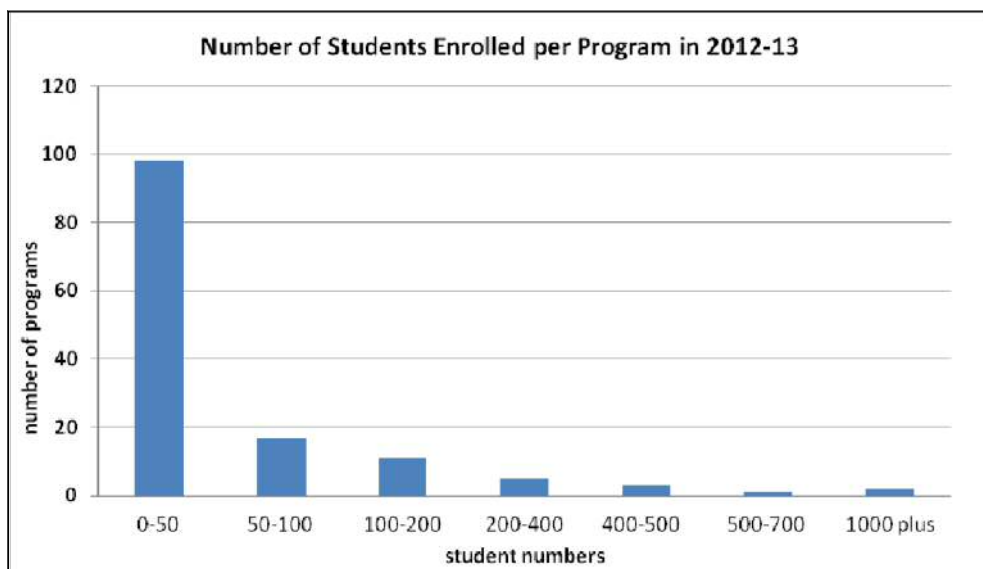
Looking at the student numbers over the past decades, the data collected in this survey show a constant and significant growth in enrollment in AACUPI programs. The number of students enrolled per program, though, varies a lot: from as few as 10 students to over 1,000 students per year. Again, each program has peculiar characteristics, and we know that the enrollment numbers oscillate every term. Nevertheless, we observe that most programs have less than 100 students per academic year and almost a third of the programs have less than 50 students. In

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad/Leading-Destinations/2009-11>.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that AACUPI members are only institutions of higher education which are headquartered in the US or Canada, validly established there, operate as non-profit entities and are duly accredited. See AACUPI's 2007 *Constitution* on <http://www.aacupi.org>.

study abroad programs, smaller groups of students may be a sign of the learning experience's high quality, considering that students get more individual attention, are more motivated to interact and to be exposed to the new culture. At the same time, low numbers are typical of young programs, which are in the process of establishing themselves on a more permanent basis in Italy. Presumably, therefore, the low numbers may be a sign of the many newer programs that have opened in Italy over the last ten years (see previous section).



Given that, in 2012-13, the collected data show a total of 19,783 students currently enrolled in AACUPI programs, we can calculate that, on average, currently each of the 147 programs hosts 135 students per year in Italy.

### **Large Size Programs**

Out of the 147 programs, seven are the largest programs (and, often, also the older ones), which have each brought between 10,000-20,000 students to Italy since they started operating on Italian soil. These universities are: The American University in Rome, John Cabot University, Loyola University Chicago's The John Felice Rome Center, Temple University Rome, Syracuse University in Florence, Bowling Green State University/SACI in Florence, and the University of Iowa in Asolo.

We count another eighteen large programs<sup>7</sup> at the top of the list, which have similarly brought to Italy more than 4,000 students each.

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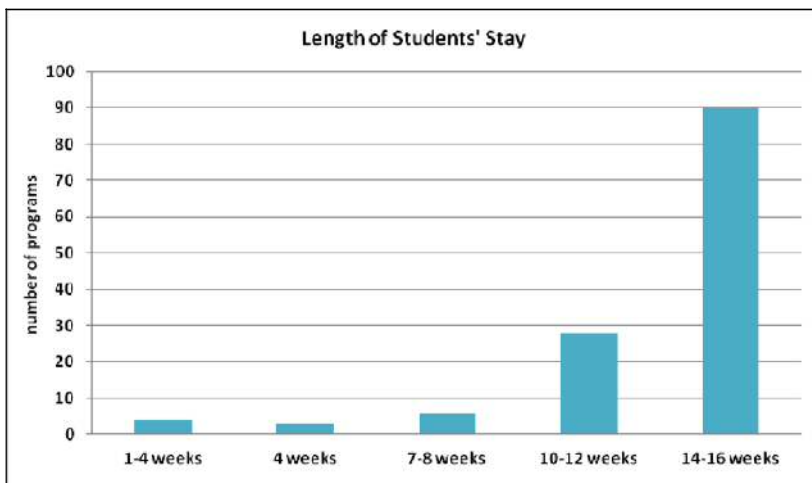
<sup>7</sup> Arcadia University's The College of Global Studies, Duke University Center, Saint Mary's College Rome Program, St. John's University Rome Campus, Trinity College

Altogether, study abroad programs have populated Italy with approximately 300,000 students since 1978 and, on average, each of the 147 programs has brought approximately 2,200 students to Italy since its individual establishment.

### Program Length

Most programs (68%) have students who come for one semester (14-20 weeks). Many others (20%) have students who come for a quarter (10-12 weeks) and, very few, for a trimester (1%). While full semesters take place either in spring or fall, all of the short-term programs (which account for 10% of the total) take place from late spring to summer: 5% of the programs last for 2 months; only 2% of all programs last for a month; and another 3% last for less than a month.

Very few programs offer students an opportunity to remain for a full academic year (1.5%), even though longer sojourns were rather common in the early days of study abroad in Italy. Portia Prebys recalls: *“In the 70s, we all had students who would stay for at least two semesters, a full academic year. Nowadays, programs cannot afford it any longer. The dollar versus the old lira was strong; now it has lost its power and short-term programs have become more and more popular.”*



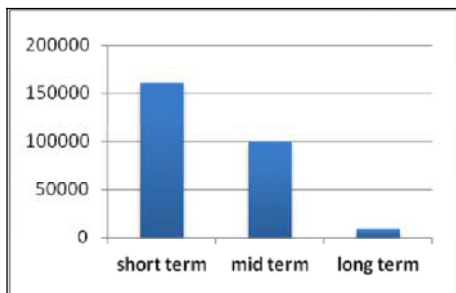
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Cesare Barbieri Center, University of Dallas, University of Washington Rome Center, California State University International Program in Florence, Fairfield University Florence Campus, Florida State University Florence Program, Gonzaga University in Florence, Marywood University, Monash University in Prato, New York University in Florence, Pepperdine University, Richmond The Florence Program of Richmond, Stanford University, University of Nevada.

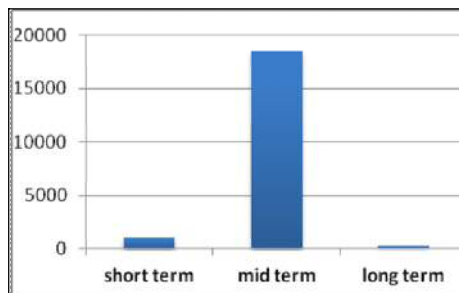
The situation in Italy whereby 93% of the students stay for a semester or a term, contrasts with the worldwide average. Most (160,000 out of roughly 270,000) US students abroad stay for a short period (summer, January term, 8 weeks or less), 100,000 students stay for a mid-length period (1-2 quarters or 1 semester) and only 10,000 for a long-term stay (an academic/calendar year).<sup>8</sup>

**Lengths of Stay in Study Abroad Programs**

**Students Worldwide (left)**

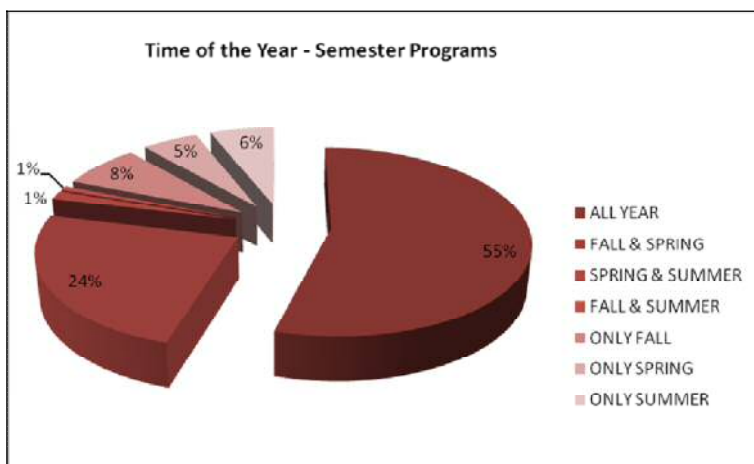


**Italy-AACUPI programs (right)**



**Length of Stay of Semester Programs**

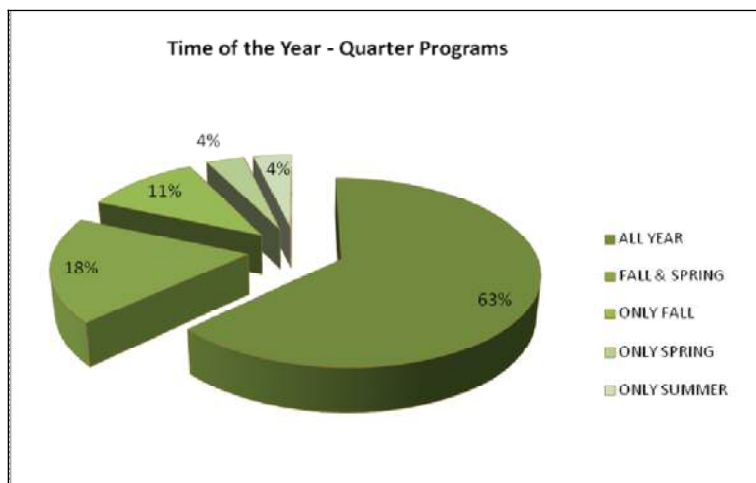
Some 55% of all semester programs offer to host students in the fall, spring and summer, 24% run only in the fall and spring, 2% for two seasons (spring and summer, or fall and summer), 8% operate only in the fall, 5% only in the summer, and 6% only in the spring.



<sup>8</sup> Full degree data and report available at [iie.org/projectatlas](http://iie.org/projectatlas).

### Length of Stay of Quarter Programs

A similar percentage applies to the programs which work on a quarterly basis: 63% operate all year round and 18% for 9 months (fall and spring).



While study abroad programs in Italy follow the academic calendar set in the US and 89% of all students stay only for one semester/quarter, many of the Italian “branches” are operating all year round, or for the full academic year, as shown in the figures above.

### Study Abroad Programs Based Permanently in Italy

We estimate 90% of the programs were established in Italy on a permanent basis, 13% of the programs own their facility and almost all others have long-term rental contracts and, therefore, try to offer at least two sessions to cover the rental costs. We know that only 2% of all AACUPI members are traveling programs and stay in hotels or B&Bs, but we have no data about the many other faculty-led programs which come to Italy every summer.

We realize, though, that short-term programs and the programs that come only for one season, often aggregate in cooperation with other programs and share facilities with permanently established AACUPI programs. For instance, the University of Connecticut in Florence shares its facilities at the Institute of Palazzo Rucellai with eleven other universities. Similarly, the University of Arkansas<sup>9</sup> and the Iowa State University College of Design Rome Program each host six guest programs in their respective facilities of the Palazzo Taverna and the Palazzo Cenci Bolognetti in Rome.

<sup>9</sup> See previous section, Growth, on p. 11.

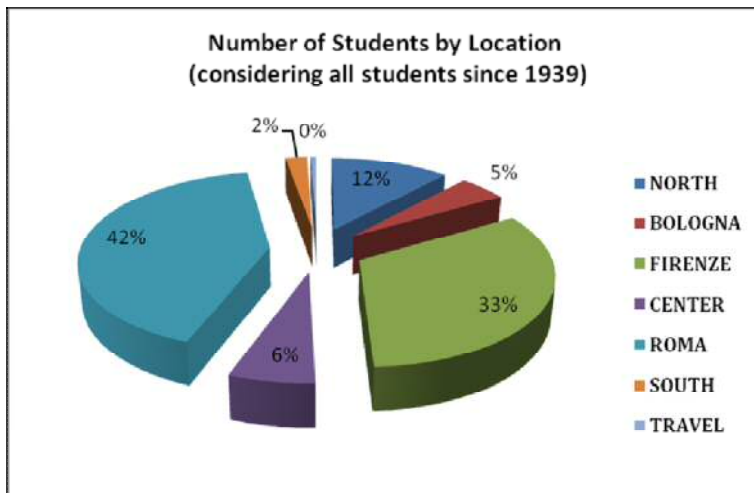


Clearly, long-term rent contracts (Italian standard rent contracts are for six years, renewable for six additional years) require stability and sufficient enrollment. The student numbers oscillate every semester and are difficult to predict, as one resident director comments: *“Our student enrollment numbers are not stable, depend on many factors, mostly out of my control, like the recruitment abilities of the staff back in the US, the effort of the individual faculty to advertise their courses, the success or failure of the prep class and the parent orientation at the home campus. One year, our numbers dropped drastically due to a change in the leadership of the College, and I never know if tomorrow a new Dean will prefer Barcelona or Berlin to Rome. Thus, we try to join forces, share facilities, staff and expenses with other programs, in order to create stability. Of course, first of all, I oblige my home campus, but I also have the responsibility to ensure job continuity for our local staff and Italian faculty.”*<sup>10</sup>

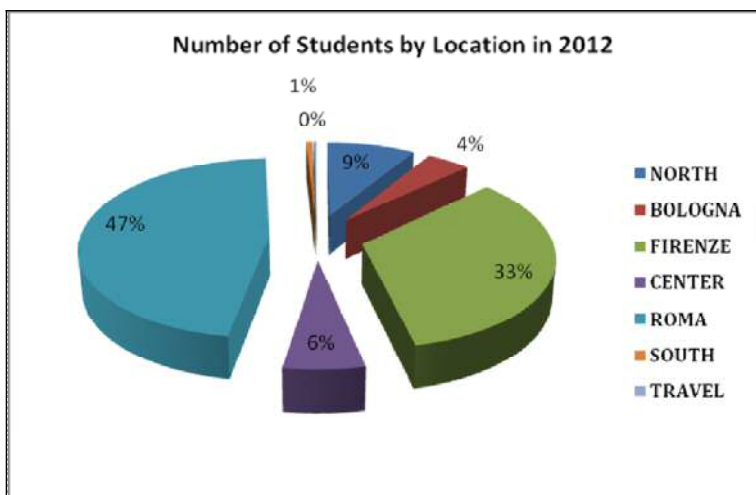
## Program Location

### Distribution of Students by Location

AACUPI programs, once established in Italy, stay mostly in the same location, but, over the years, a few institutions have closed their programs or changed their locations. The following charts compare the historical number of North American students, enrolled in AACUPI study abroad programs, with the current number of students, in relation to the location of the programs in Italy.



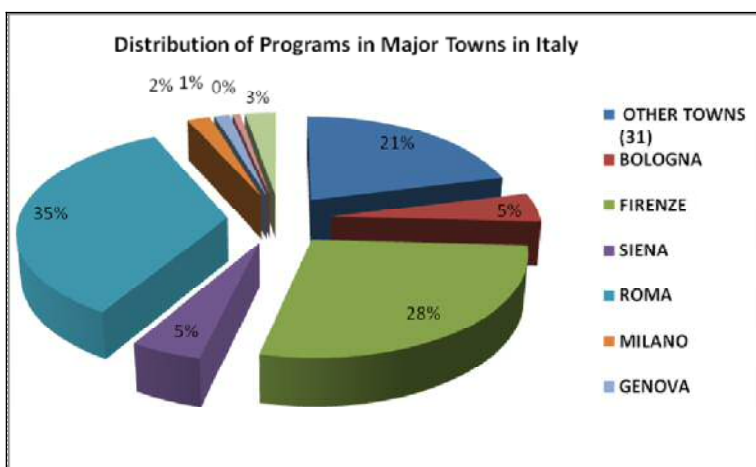
<sup>10</sup> Interview at AACUPI meeting, Oct 5, 2013, in Florence.



We note, at once, a concentration of students in the cities of Rome and Florence (80%) and, secondly, a slight increase in student numbers in the programs located in the areas of Rome (+4%), Florence (+1%) and a small decrease in the Northern area (-3%), the South (-1%), as well as in Bologna (-1%).

### Distribution of Programs Throughout the Italian Territory

AACUPI programs are distributed all over Italy, but ninety-three (63%) of all programs are located in and near Rome (35%) and in or near Florence (28%). Seven programs have chosen Bologna (5%) and seven programs have chosen Siena (5%), but the remaining thirty-one programs (16%) are spread out amongst twenty other locations over the peninsula.



All together, AACUPI programs are dispersed in 39 different towns throughout Italy:

Most programs are located in the city of Rome (47) and several in the region of Lazio, in Ariccia (1), Frattocchie (1), Castel Gandolfo (1) and Viterbo (1).

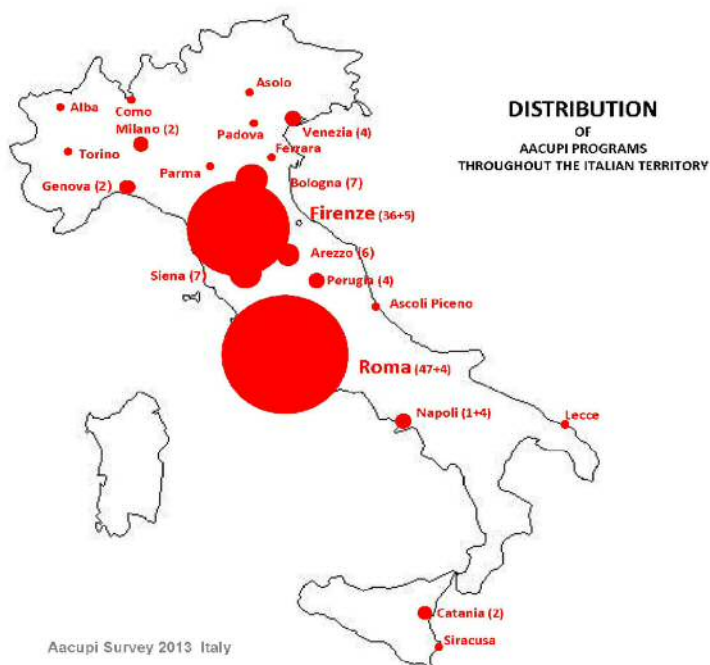
Numerous programs are located in the city of Florence (35) and in nearby Certaldo (1), Fiesole (1), Prato (1), Scandicci (1), Settignano (1) and Vicchio (1).

The city of Bologna (7) hosts seven programs while twenty-two programs are situated in smaller size towns in Central Italy such as Arezzo (4), Ascoli Piceno (1), Cortona (2), Lucca (1), Macerata (1), Orvieto (3), Perugia (3) and Siena (7).

Seventeen programs are located in the North, in Alba (1), Asolo (1), Como (1), Ferrara (1), Genoa (2), Milan (3), Parma (2), Padua (1), Turin (1), Vicenza (1) and Venice (4).

Nine programs are in the South, in Naples (1) and in nearby Bacoli (1), Castellamare di Stabia (2) and Sorrento (1); in Lecce (1), Catania (1) and Siracusa (2).

The map below shows the distribution of AACUPI programs over the peninsula. The red dots represent the location of the program and change in size according to the number of programs located in the same town. Evident is the concentration of many programs in the areas of Rome and Florence.

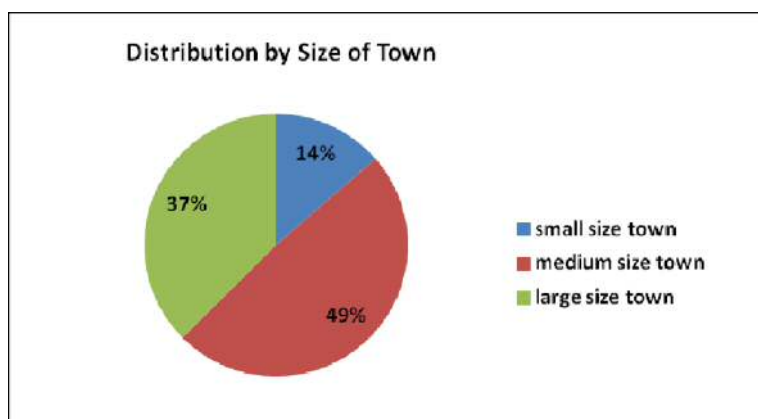


Comparing the size of the cities, we note that North American universities and colleges have chosen as follows.<sup>11</sup>

Nineteen towns of SMALL SIZE (population 10-60,000) where 20 programs are located: Alba (1), Asolo (1), Certaldo (1), Fiesole (1), Prato (1), Scandicci (1), Settignano (1), Vicchio (1), Ascoli Piceno (1), Macerata (1), Orvieto (3), Ariccia (1), Frattocchie (1), Viterbo (1), Castel Gandolfo (1), Bacoli (1), Castellamare di Stabia (2), Sorrento (1).

Fifteen towns of MEDIUM SIZE (population 60-400,000) where 73 programs are located: Venice (4), Parma (1), Padua (1), Ferrara (1), Como (1), Vicenza (1), Bologna (7), Florence (36), Siena (7), Lucca (1), Perugia (3), Arezzo (6), Lecce (1), Catania (1), Siracusa (2).

Five towns of LARGE SIZE (population 600,000 to 3 million) where 54 programs are located: Genoa (2), Turin (1), Milan (3), Rome (47), Naples (1).



### **Big City or Small Town: Pros and Cons**

Only 14% of AACUPI programs choose a small town for their location, but the advantages of this less common choice are valued, often highly, by the programs and go beyond the quietness and the beautiful sight of the countryside of Tuscany, Umbria, Piedmont or the Bay of Naples.

Emilia Caldarelli from Vanderbilt University with CET,<sup>12</sup> a language program, stated clearly her reasons for choosing a small town: “*We discussed it at length and then made a clear choice. We wanted two medium-sized towns, one in the North, Siena, and one in the South, Catania. Our aim was to connect our language students to a small town community in order for them to interact with Italian students.*”

<sup>11</sup> The two traveling programs are not included in this statistic.

<sup>12</sup> Interview at AACUPI meeting of April, 2012, in Fiesole.

### **Advantages of Small Size Towns**

(as listed by program directors)

- rents and real estate prices are often lower;
- unused public facilities are made available at low cost by the municipality;
- finding host families and exposing students to the language is facilitated;
- relationship to the community and municipality is closer;
- students participate more often in community activities and festivities;
- students integrate faster into the new cultural environment;
- environment is generally more controlled and safer, fewer problems with alcohol;
- fewer tourists, allows for more traveling off of tourist path;
- positive economic effect on a small town, bringing business to a small community.

### **Advantages of the Medium to Large Cities Like Rome, Florence and Bologna**

(as listed by program directors)

- faster connections to most national and international destinations;
- faster connections to low-cost flight destinations, allowing weekend trips within Europe;
- better health infrastructures (hospitals) and specialized physicians in case of emergencies;
- better services, including (financial, legal, fiscal) consultants to facilitate administration of programs;
- broader pool of bilingual instructors and collaborators to employ;
- better research options (libraries, archives) for faculty;
- broader choice of local institutions of higher education, universities or design schools, allowing for collaboration and workshops;
- broader offering of cultural events (concerts, performing arts, cinema) and public lectures to attend with students;
- closer collaboration with other study abroad programs, such as architecture programs in Rome that share information and a common pool of local designers and architects to invite for lectures and final reviews;
- opportunity to share facilities with other programs.

Scott Schlimgen, Director of the Cal Poly Rome Program, prefers the big cities for “*more, diverse opportunities for academic and cultural learning. The faculty has many resources, and students can explore their own independent interests in a larger city. If we consider cities as texts, big cities - Rome especially -*

*are richer and denser texts. I think bigger cities reflect the contemporary urban condition that is most relevant to American students. But not all students are accustomed to the complexity and pace of big cities like Rome. For some, who come from rural backgrounds, the city can be a little overwhelming, and the acclimation process can be a bit of a challenge, but even this can be made part of the learning experience.”*

## Curricula and Teaching Models<sup>13</sup>

Curricula for the full credit courses are set in place back home and are, generally, carried overseas with apparently minor, or no, variations. However, the implementation of the course objectives in another cultural and socio-economic environment may lead to different learning opportunities. In this study, though, the question is limited to the type of teaching model. Hence, inquiring about the various models of program design, curricula and teaching approaches applied by the North American institutions in Italy, we observe a great variety of course offerings or combinations of traditional and newly-emerging majors from which the students may choose.

As diverse as the offerings are, comparing the majors most frequently covered by the 147 AACUPI programs we could identify eleven teaching models and the current ranking:

### Teaching Models and Ranking of Programs in 2012-13

- **81**<sup>14</sup> Liberal Arts,
- **64** Languages,
- **46** Fine Arts,
- **43** Political Sciences/International Studies/Business,
- **41** Architecture/Urban/Interior Design,
- **38** Short term,
- **28** Classical Studies/Archeology,
- **17** Fashion/Industrial/Graphic Design,
- **16** Other (Human Rights, Social Justice, Comparative Law, Music),
- **12** Global Human Science/Agriculture/Food/Nutrition,
- **6** Engineering/Nursing.

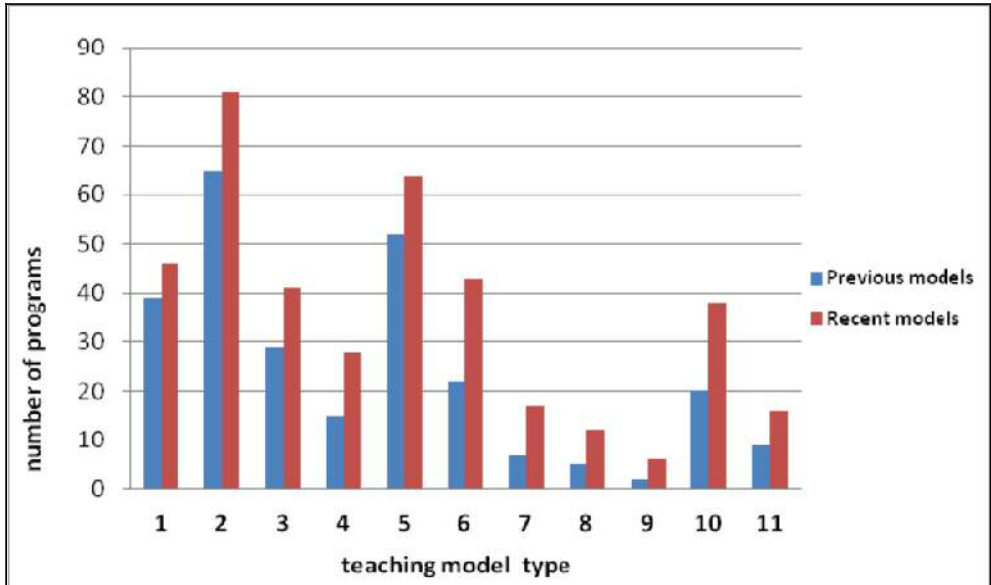
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<sup>13</sup> By *teaching model* we mean the ensemble of the subjects taught in a program, which constitutes its general educational focus.

<sup>14</sup> The figure in red (**81**) stands for the number of AACUPI programs teaching that specific model.

### Teaching Models in the Past and Today

Concerning a possible evolution of teaching methods, programs were asked to list the models taught first in Italy (numbers in blue) and the models currently taught (numbers in red). The comparative list of models are shown as applied in the PAST and TODAY:



**1. Fine Arts** programs increased from 39 to 46; **2. Liberal Arts** programs increased from 65 to 81; **3. Architecture/Interior Design** programs increased from 29 to 41; **4. Classical Studies/Archeology** programs increased from 15 to 28; **5. Language** programs increased from 52 to 64; **6. Political Sciences/International Studies/Business** programs increased from 22 to 43; **7. Fashion/Industrial/Graphic Design** programs increased from 7 to 17; **8. Global Human Science/Agriculture/Food/Nutrition** programs increased from 5 to 12; **9. Engineering/Nursing** programs increased from 2 to 6; **10. Short term** programs increased from 20 to 38; **11. Other** programs increased from 9 to 16.

We observe from this comparison that the teaching models have grown in number and, consequently, study abroad programs today offer a greater variety of subjects from which to choose. If we summarize the number of teaching models used by AACUPI institutions in the “past and today,” the programs have grown from a total of 265 initially taught disciplines to a total of 392 currently taught disciplines, which is a significant increase of 48%. In particular, we learn that the models of Political Science/Business grew by 80% and are now competing with Architecture for the fourth position. Design programs are growing fast, as well as Food/Nutrition, which have doubled in number in a very short time. Furthermore,

50% additional programs now offer short-term studies, which is not surprising considering the worldwide trend of studying abroad for shorter periods of time.

Sheryl Brandalik, Director of the University of Washington Rome Center,<sup>15</sup> explains the evolution from one model to the current eleven models taught at her Center: *“Initially, in the 70s, we started with Architecture, taught by the founding director, who back then even hosted students in her apartment in Rome or spent time on the country site, in the extraordinary hill-town of Civit  Bagnoregio. By 1985, we were already a year-round based program with programs in Italian Studies, Studio Arts, Classics and Art History, as well as Architecture. In the mid-90s we began to open up to other departments (e.g. English, Comparative History of Ideas) and today the center is open to all schools and departments. We try to attract all majors from all departments and make Rome appealing to the entire UW, ultimately, also to cover our substantial costs and expenses here in Italy, due to the less favorable exchange rate with the Euro. Our programs are generally faculty-led, and we have had courses taught in almost thirty different disciplines (Anthropology – Culture and Politics of Food, Applied Math, Architecture, Art History, Astronomy, Cinema Studies, Civil Engineering, Classics, Communication, Comparative History of Ideas, Creative Writing, Design, Education, English, European Studies, Geography, History, Honors, International Business, Italian Politics and Economy, Italian Studies, Landscape Architecture, Law, Societies & Justice, Psychology, Sociology, Studio Art, Urban Design).”*

Brandalik confirms further what our survey data outlined above: *“we can see a clear trend in the majors of Business, Social Sciences, Communication and Food Studies.”*

Monica Ginanneschi, Associate Director, who has worked for Smith College<sup>16</sup> for almost thirty years, observes similar changes: *“While in earlier years the emphasis was almost exclusively on Literature, Art History and History, more recently offerings have been expanded to meet the changing needs and interests of students. Courses offered currently at the Center include: Italian Social and Cultural History; Sustainable Food; Immigration: History of Costume. Students also take courses in Engineering, Mathematics, Biology, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Education, etc. at the University of Florence. A few students are selected each year to intern, for credit, in the model pre-schools in Pistoia. All students have the opportunity to volunteer in a wide range of venues.”*

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<sup>15</sup> Phone Interview Oct 9, 2013, Rome.

<sup>16</sup> Phone Interview Oct 8, 2013, Rome-Florence.



### **Teaching Methodology**

The “change in teaching methods” expressed by AACUPI members has a large spectrum. The list of issues collected below is organized according to the most frequently mentioned changes:

- increasing use of technology (computers, Internet, Smart Classroom, Skype, Blackboard, Adobe Connect, etc.) and multi-media (mentioned 14 times);
- changing from a strictly lecture model to an interactive teaching model: more experiential learning, more hands on, more communicative approaches (14x);<sup>17</sup>
- more on-site activities, more local trips and better field trip preparation (10x);
- improved pre/orientation, optional cultural skill class, more detailed syllabi, better-defined assignments and improved course format (10x);
- greater variety of curricular activities, more course offerings and addition of new subjects (5x);
- implementing more workshops and seminars with local universities (8x);
- increased collaboration within the local context and with local expert (8x);
- assessment of local faculty to US grading system and (midterm) tests, local instructors understand better our needs, more team-taught courses (4x);
- better coordination between courses taught in Italy and the US (4x);
- more participation of US faculty in local activities (2x);
- increased teamwork with international partner (2x);
- changing from graduate studies to an undergraduate study abroad program (1x).

As the use of technology continue to increase, we understand that, on the other hand, the teaching methods turn to experiential, hands-on learning, and a more communicative approach.

Patrick Burke from Gonzaga University in Florence reports: “*we shifted from the strictly lecture model to a Socratic and interdisciplinary teaching model.*”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 14x stands for mentioned 14 times.

<sup>18</sup> Quote from the questionnaire.

Ermelinda Campani, Spogli Family Director<sup>19</sup> of Stanford's Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence, explains how technology, Internet and social media have impacted teaching study abroad: *"Definitely, technology has entered the classroom. All our students now have laptops and smart phones and are constantly connected. It facilitates communication with the US and allows distant learning courses, but, nevertheless, our aim is to emphasize the interaction on-site in Italy and with Italians. We do place lots of relevance on the hic et nunc of the students' experience."*

*The increasing use of social media has the effect that students are much more involved with parents and friends at home. This helps when students feel homesick, but it also has the potential of keeping them disengaged from life in Italy. However, social networks do not necessarily have a negative impact on the quality of the students' experience abroad. In a way, keeping a blog or posting pictures on Instagram or on Facebook is like keeping a sort of visual journal. It can help the students record and reflect upon their experiences."*

Other directors<sup>20</sup> confirm: *"our hyper-connected, Facebook-using, YouTube-posting students seem to be communication whizzes, but, when it comes to face-to-face communication, often have difficulties, are shy and, ultimately, depend much longer on their parents. I had a student who preferred to spend his last night in Italy by Skyping his parents instead of going out and about with the group! Thus, I decided to address the problem already at orientation and advise my students to limit contacts to friends and parents to once a week, and to be present here, to be in Italy!"*

Another administrator comments: *"In the early days, students were tougher and explored more their new environment. They seem shyer now, but maybe it's the system which drives them to be less adventurous; since the Internet, you can find it all online, and services have greatly improved. We order and receive books within a day, where before we had to go through a laborious search in the local libraries which could last for days. Students need to be less enterprising, but l'arte di arrangiarsi, skills in problem-solving are no longer taught."*

### **Locations and Curriculum**

Correlating locations to the disciplines taught historically, we note that some teaching models dominate in a specific city and, thus, can understand better the choice of location. For example 72% of the Architecture programs are located in Rome; another 19% are located in Florence and 9% in other towns (Vicenza, Genoa and Orvieto).

Rome, from an urban point of view, is unique in the world and, therefore, there are reasons enough to choose it as a destination for an Architecture Study Abroad Program. Florence, the birthplace of Renaissance architecture, follows, and

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<sup>19</sup> Phone Interview Oct 8, 2013, Rome-Florence.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews at AACUPI meeting, Oct 5, 2013, in Florence.

the presence of Palladio's architectural heritage explains the choice of Vicenza. Genoa was chosen thanks to a strong connection between the program and Renzo Piano's building workshop.

The first fellows of the American Academy explained their choice with these words: "*They chose Rome as the site of the Academy because, in their words, 'with the architectural and sculptural monuments and mural paintings, its galleries filled with the chef d'oeuvres of every epoch, no other city offers such a field for study or an atmosphere so replete with precedents'.*"<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Scott Finn, Director of the International Studies Program in Rome, University of Auburn, explains more than a century later: "*When we were establishing the Rome Program in Architecture, our Deans discussed collaborating in Ariccia, but the Architecture Program decided that the urban condition of Rome was critical to the experience and development of our students in design. Rome is an opportunity to analyze a dense urban situation, with a deep history, all the while living in it; this is the sort of experience that is difficult to achieve in Alabama!*"

Liberal Arts programs, the most common of the eleven identified teaching models, are located, in equal parts, in Rome and Florence, which account, together, for 72% of the total (58/81). Only 6% of the Liberal Arts programs are taught in Siena, 6% in Arezzo and the remaining 16% are distributed over nine different towns in Italy. Rome owes part of its success as a Liberal Arts hub for foreign programs to the Vatican and the pontifical universities. In fact, 16 out of 29 such programs in Rome are offered by religiously-oriented universities.

Fine Arts programs are located 50% in Florence, 24% in Rome, and the rest in 8 different locations.

Language programs, the third most frequently taught model, prefer to settle in small to medium size towns rather than large cities. Siena is one of the preferred locations, but Bologna and Florence also attract many students due to the possibility of enrolling at the famous local *Università di Bologna* and *Università di Firenze*.

Bologna is further a preferred site for International Studies, Economics and Business, given the opportunity for enrollment and partnership with the University of Bologna, but these majors represent a growing trend to be added to other teaching models and, therefore, spread out to many other locations, including Rome and Florence.

Fashion programs have chosen mainly Florence and Milan, world famous fashion capitals and cities with a long history of textile and clothing industries,

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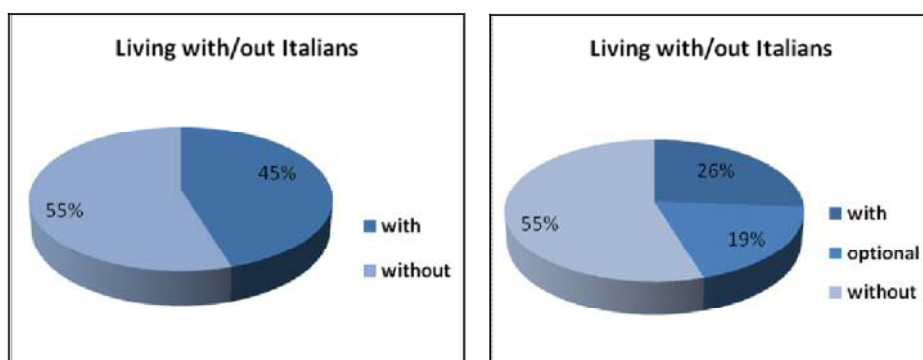
<sup>21</sup> Quote from [www.aarome.org](http://www.aarome.org).

which, further, offer the possibility of partnering with *Polimoda* (Florence) or the *Scuola di Moda del Politecnico di Milano*.

## Housing and Language

With whom do the students enrolled in the American colleges or universities live during their stay in Italy? From the survey, we learn that 55% of AACUPI students share housing with their North American peers. Surprisingly, 45% of the programs of all member institutions declare that their students stay with Italian students or live in home-stays. It seems important, though, to distinguish between the programs that simply offer the possibility of living with Italian families and the students who actually take the opportunity to do so.

In the graph on the right, we can distinguish between the percentage of programs which offer the option of home-stays and the percentage of programs which host their students in home-stays. Thus, we can estimate that between 26-45% of AACUPI students actually live with Italians.



Andrea Ricci, Resident Director of Indiana University's Bologna Consortial Studies Program, a language-oriented program, oversees a consortium of fifteen universities<sup>22</sup> which all send their students to study in Bologna, explains the importance of full immersion for his students: "*We started in 1965 with only two members and an agreement with the Università di Bologna, as you know the oldest (founded 1088) university in the world. We were eager to create a study abroad program for North American university students, able to live with Italian students and enroll directly with the local university where courses are exclusively taught in Italian.*"

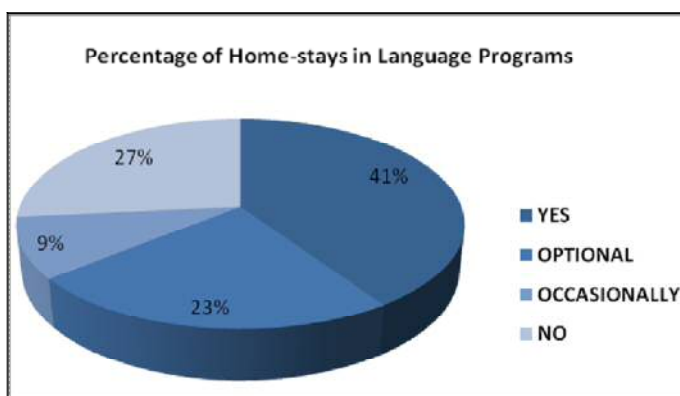
Like Ricci, many other program directors point to the fruitful combination of home-stays and attendance at a local university as one the most effective strategies of cultural integration. The universities with which AACUPI programs collaborate are the universities of Turin (Politecnico), Milan (Bocconi), Padua,

<sup>22</sup> Seven consortial members and eight associate members.

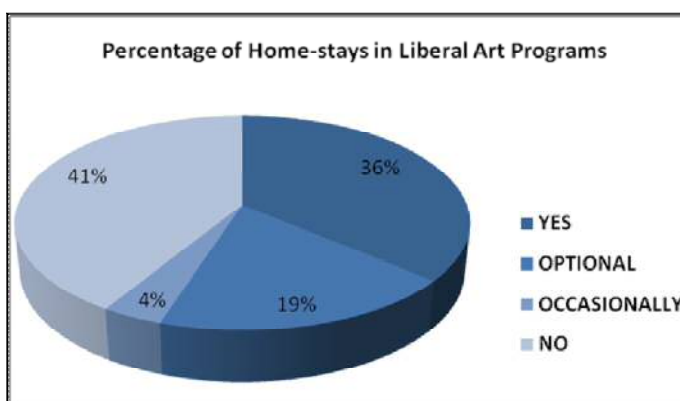
Venice, Bologna, Florence, Siena, Perugia, Macerata, Rome (La Sapienza, Roma Tre) and Naples.

### Language and Homestays

We know from the data shown above that the Language programs are the second most favorite American programs in Italy, and represent 19% of the total. Comparing, thus, the various disciplines with the housing question, it appears evident that the Language programs provide more opportunities for home-stays and living with native Italian speakers than any of the other disciplines.



Looking exclusively at the Language programs, we note that out of 64 universities which offer language courses, 26 programs indicate that their students live with Italians (41%), 15 programs say that some students live with Italians (23%), 6 programs indicate that their students have host families which they meet for occasional meals (9%), and 17 programs declare that students do not live with Italians (27%).

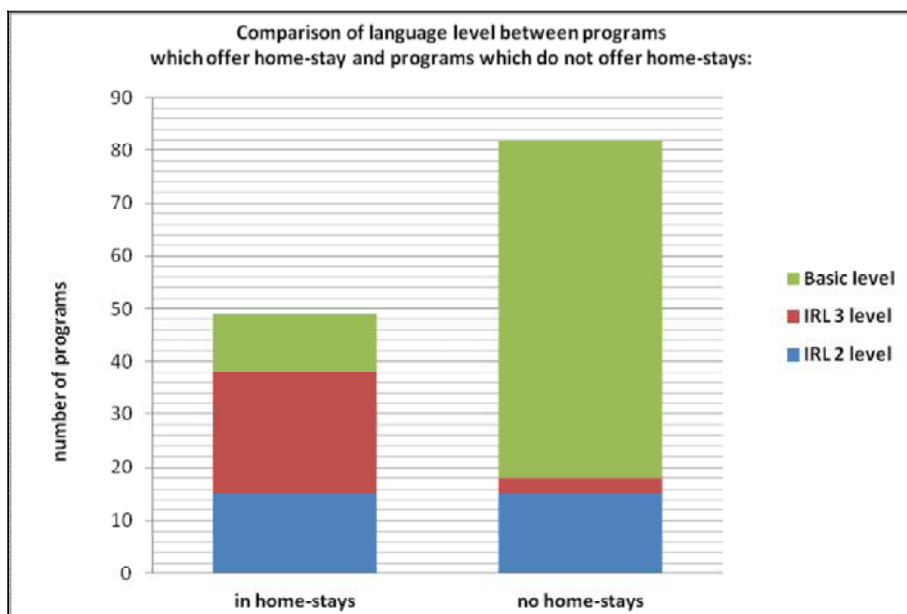


The comparison of home-stay offers with the other teaching disciplines shows that the Language programs do not make the home-stay mandatory, but we acknowledge that Language programs offer overall more home-stay options (total 64%) than any other model. Liberal Arts models offer 55% and Classical Studies offer 48% of home-stay options.

### **Language Proficiency**

Across programs and teaching models, the level of language proficiency acquired by the students at the end of their stay is, in general, rather low. In fact, 54% of the programs indicate that their students speak only a few words, or have a very elementary knowledge of the language; while 41% of the programs indicate that their students achieve an IRL 2 level<sup>23</sup> (limited working proficiency), and 21% indicate an IRL 3 level (professional working proficiency), or higher, by the end of their stay in Italy.

Confronting two different data, the level of language knowledge with the option of home-stays/living with Italians, we are not surprised to learn that, in programs that often offer home-stay, students reach a higher language level (IRL 2 and IRL 3).



<sup>23</sup> IRL stands for Interagency Language Roundtable and uses the following scale: 1 ILR Level 1 – Elementary proficiency; 2 ILR Level 2 – Limited working proficiency; 3 ILR Level 3 – Professional working proficiency; 4 ILR Level 4 – Full professional proficiency; 5 ILR Level 5 – Native or bilingual proficiency.

Elisabetta Convento, Director of Boston University in Padua and Venice, underlines the great importance of home-stays, but adds a list of other strategies used to enhance language skills.<sup>24</sup> *“We work closely with the University of Padua, enrolling our students for credits, and we implement tandem exchange with the Italian students. Further, we foster volunteering, babysitting and tutoring. We also offer an intensive language and culture class, which lasts for a month, organize numerous events with local associations and, during field trips, we promote interaction with locals and experts on site.”*

While, for Language programs, the acquisition of linguistic competency often goes along simultaneously with the acquisition of knowledge and cultural competency, other programs do not offer language courses and have a very different approach.

Bart Drakulich from The Johns Hopkins University declares:<sup>25</sup> *“Our students are International Relations students, of whom only 50% are American students. They come from 35 different nationalities, including approximately 5% of Italian students, and 50% of our instructors come from other European countries. Our interest is not only Italy, but Europe, which serves us as networking for lifelong relationships and introducing the students to important political institutions, for example, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”*

In a world where the *lingua franca* is English, the possibility to learn Italian becomes, indeed, less attractive, especially to business and other non-language programs. This is true, in particular, for the Architecture and Design programs, which offer only a few contact hours per week or limit the Italian language classes to mere “Italian survival.” Indeed, on average, the thirty-three AACUPI Architecture programs offer 45h/semester of language instruction.

Lorenzo Pignatti, Director of the University of Waterloo Rome Program, believes that design students can overcome language barriers by communicating through drawing and initiated, in 2008, the first AACUPI workshops with the Department of Architecture of the *Università degli Studi Roma Tre*. *“Our students are, generally, resistant to integrating or to learning the language, but the intense collaboration in the workshop unblocks them and they go out for pizza with their Italian peers. We foster integration, also, on another level, through the design projects. I tell my students on day one, that their aim is to design architecture that inserts itself well into the historical and cultural context of the city. The relation to the larger urban context, like Aldo Rossi’s emphasis on the city as a place of the collective memory, has always been the central theme of our Rome program. Only by the end of the semester students do seem to understand this fully and sometimes come and thank us.”*

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<sup>24</sup> Quote from the questionnaire.

<sup>25</sup> Interview at AACUPI meeting of April, 2012, in Fiesole.

## Strategies of Cultural Integration

In the questionnaire, the programs indicated various strategies to facilitate the integration of their students into the new cultural environment. Here is a list of the most frequently mentioned strategies used:

### **Orientation, Preparation & Culture Classes (mentioned 134 times)**

- orientation on-site (36x);<sup>26</sup>
- culture classes, life lessons (26x);
- extracurricular activities, cooking classes, wine tasting (19x);
- hiring Italian students as interns, ambassadors or assistants to the programs (15x);
- intense orientation, culture or language week/month (14x);
- pre-departure orientation class (11x);
- Italian film classes, film series (7x);
- neighborhood tours (4x);
- visiting the opera, concerts, performing arts (3x).

### **Contact with Local Community and/or Neighborhood (mentioned 118 times)**

- service learning and volunteering (35x);
- interact and participate at community events/service/hosting social events (29x);
- internships (15x);
- English teaching in Italian schools (12x);
- sport events/joining local sports club (11x);
- hosting or sharing cultural events (8x);
- organic gardening, picking olives, wine harvest, cheese-making, etc. (3x);
- tutoring (3x);
- babysitting (2x).

### **Partnering with Local Institutions (mentioned 81 times)**

- partnering with local universities, institutions or design schools (44x);
- organizing workshops with Italian students (23x);
- partnering with a local university and organizing student exchange (12x);
- sharing exhibitions with local artists/designers (2x).

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<sup>26</sup> 36x stands for mentioned 36 times.



### **Home-Stays (mentioned 61 times)**

- living with Italian families (28x); or Italian students (27x);
- meeting host families for Sunday lunches, or a weekly dinner (6x).

### **Learning the Language (mentioned 52 times)**

- tandem learning (28x);
- conversation exchange, language peers (14x);
- sharing classes with Italian students (6x);
- choosing towns with less tourism/no English-speaking locals (4x).

### **Traveling (mentioned 31 times)**

- organizing field trips with faculty or local experts (28x);
- planning trips off the beaten track (3x).

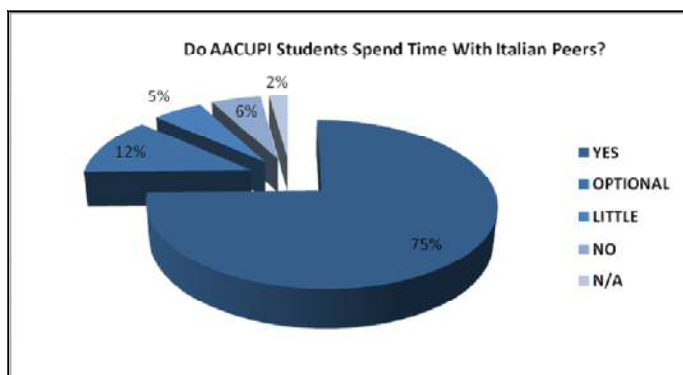
### **Local Instructors (mentioned 8 times)**

- Hiring local faculty, or experts, for teaching (8x).

It is typical for many programs to apply a combination of the above-mentioned strategies, as, for example, Lisa Cesarani, Assistant Director for Academic Support at New York University in Florence, lists in her questionnaire: *“Everything from language tandems to events and dinners with host families to community services, group gatherings with students from the University of Firenze [Florence], invitations to our guest lecture series (La Pietra Dialogues), film screenings, discussions with local community and public debates on contemporary Italian culture or other topics that are relevant to Italy in an ever-changing global society.”*

### **Student Time with Italian Peers**

Fully 81% of the North American students spend time with their Italian peers, thanks to tandem courses, living together or sharing classes and workshops. Only 7% of the students do not interact with Italians, and 12% may or may not take up the option to do so.



We learn from the survey that all programs emphasize the importance of overcoming cultural differences and training students to be culturally competent. The strategies are many and, more than ever, North American programs seek to have students work on international teams, allowing them to confront a culturally different environment.

Heather Reid, Professor of Philosophy from Morningside in Italy, connects through sport activities to a local lyceum in Sicily: *“We re-created ancient Olympic-style games that used to be held in Siracusa. Our students had to work with the Italians to re-create the music, religious ceremonies, athletic contests, and find prizes. They learned a lot about different cultural attitudes by dealing with bureaucracy, keeping to schedules, forming work groups and overcoming the language barrier. When all the local families came with their children to participate in the games, we were able to share a common cultural heritage while showing special esteem for the particular contribution of ancient Siracusa.”*

Michael Wright, Resident Director of Duquesne University Italian Campus, also partners with a Roman *Istituto Tecnico*, in order to create a close relationship between the culturally different schools: *“It starts on the first day, getting a cappuccino together, socializing at the typical round tables in the bar. Then, our students are asked to teach English classes at the Istituto and we get Italian lessons. Students can choose their ‘twin’ for the semester, and, during the term, our students are invited to Italian family dinners or go out together in Rome. We undertake a few trips to small towns, like Norcia in Umbria or the lake of Bracciano, to foster a close relationship between ‘twins.’ Often, it is the beginning of a lifelong friendship, with the result that even the Italian families visit quite frequently our campus back in Pittsburgh.”*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Interview at AACUPI meeting of April, 2012, in Fiesole.

However, the opportunities for integration are not always a priority,<sup>28</sup> and often clash with the demands of the course, as Lynn Ewanow from Kansas State University<sup>29</sup> states clearly: *“It is a challenge to meet the 14-credit class and, at the same time, make direct integration. My own work-study students, who are eager to work during the first weeks, will not be able to work more than two hours per week during the second part of the semester. This is mostly due to the pressure of the various classes.”*

### **Local Faculty Members**

Typically, a program starts by bringing a faculty member from the home campus to teach its own students, but we learn from the survey that the number of locally employed instructors outnumbers, by far, the instructors sent from the home campus. Some of the larger programs hire as many as 50 to 80 local instructors<sup>30</sup> and have very few, or none, of the home-based faculty.

Instructors, who have lived on-site, in Italy, for a significant amount of time, have a positive effect upon study abroad programs. They navigate the territory more easily, may provide important connections to local institutions (archives, libraries, universities), have often better access to local resources and can help bridging between the two cultures.

Mary Beckinsale, President of Bowling Green State University/SACI, is well known for her community engaging projects with the Fine Arts students. *“Our students restore paintings in local chapels, restore frescos in convents or hospitals; they create a close relationship with nuns or the sick or orphans at the orphanage. We even founded an Italian ONLUS to help the community, and we always hired local experts and faculty specialized in conservation, philosophy and art history. Our conservation instructor, Roberta Lapucci, was recently reported throughout the world newspapers, as she discovered that a Maltese painting she and our students were restoring was begun by Caravaggio!”*<sup>31</sup>

The results of the survey indicate that the programs hire a total of 1158 instructors locally, while 383 instructors are sent from the home institutions. Typically, an AACUPI study abroad program in Italy employs 3 faculty members from the home institutions and 9 are locally hired instructors.

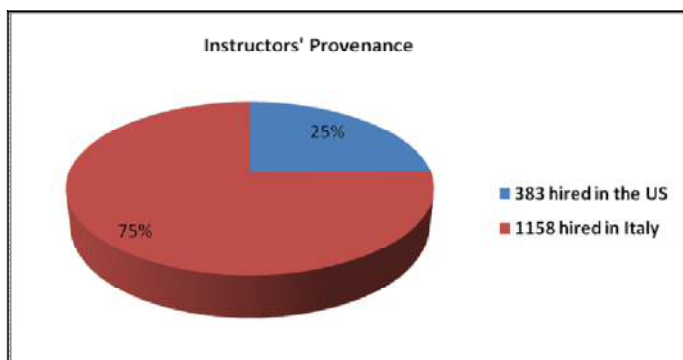
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<sup>28</sup> Susan Tintori from the Laguna College of Art and Design states in the questionnaire: *“... it is not a priority to our program.”*

<sup>29</sup> Phone Interview, October, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Please note that the greatest numbers (69/80) of locally-hired instructors belong to two universities (The American University of Rome and John Cabot University), which offer degree programs in Italy and hire exclusively local instructors.

<sup>31</sup> Interview at AACUPI meeting of April, 2012, in Fiesole.



Only 4% (5 out of 128 programs) hire significantly (7 to 16 times) more instructors from the home institutions than local instructors; 6% (8 out of 128 programs) employ 3 to 4 times as many home-based instructors; 9% (11 out of 128 programs) employ 1-2 more instructors from the home institution, but, overall, hire no more than 3 instructors total, and 6% (8 out of 128 programs) employ an equal number of local and home-based instructors.

Consequently, 90% of the programs hire more or as many local as home-based instructors. Ten percent, though, hire significantly more home-based than local instructors.

## Travel

The question of how many days students travel in Italy (with/without their academic program) and how many days students travel in Europe (on their own) has been answered, as follows:

- 99% of US students travel with their academic programs in Italy for approximately 3-8 days;
- North American students travel with or without their programs for, typically, 7-20 days (average 14 days) within Italy;
- Students travel between 20-30 days (average 20 days) within Europe.

This survey does not compare the number of days per term students traveled in the past to the current figures, but program directors and administrators widely confirm a radical change since the start of low cost flights within Europe: *“Weekends are already booked before students’ arrival and the cheap airfares seduce the students to travel almost all weekends. With the regular semester breaks, the holidays, like Easter or Thanksgiving breaks, and the two academic long field trips, one optional faculty-led trip, combined with frequent weekend traveling, create a rather disruptive semester. Consequently, students have no time*

to recollect, to concentrate and focus on the course work. Thus, the study abroad semester risks becoming a fast and superficial consumption of entertaining trips, rather than a profound learning experience” (commented an administrative director in October, 2013, in Rome).

Aaron Rose, Director<sup>32</sup> of Brigham Young University in Siena, observes: *“This generation of always moving digital natives are restless, have the urge to travel constantly and seem to fear moments of calm, silence or being by themselves. We recommend staying in Italy, trying to limit traveling with a carefully designed calendar and making it a goal to have students come back and travel in Europe later.”*

Other programs apply similar strategies by scheduling classes on Fridays, limiting the number of long weekends,<sup>33</sup> indicating “no travel” weekends on the calendar, and asking the students to write a journal, or a blog, and to explain why they chose their particular destinations. In order to maintain a high level of academic performance, faculty and program directors try to limit access to frequent trips by offering alternative trips related to the curriculum. Often, they take the students off the beaten path in “slow mode” transportation to nearby destinations.

### **Traveling and Social Responsibility**

Program directors mentioned frequently that traveling and field trips play a great role in exposing students to the new cultural environment. The academic trips may, indeed, allow for cultural exposure, and some are designed to meet Italian students or to collaborate on short workshops investigating syllabus topics on site. Choosing destinations off the beaten path is a strategy that many universities adopt, and AACUPI, for instance, has supported the initiative to promote tourism in the area of L’Aquila’s earthquake.

Tom Rankin, Professor at Cal Poly Rome Program in Architecture, states: *“For me, as an instructor, traveling is exciting when a service component is present, not just sightseeing. Small towns in Abruzzo offer the challenge of reconstructing after the earthquake. We collaborate with the local municipality and the residents. We bring a monetary contribution with our presence, but, more importantly, a sense of optimism that these places have not been forgotten and put them into a public spotlight.”*

Other programs organize urban planning workshops while traveling to socially-depressed areas, for example, urban planning student visits to the archeological site of Herculaneum, and working with the municipality of Torre del

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<sup>32</sup> Interview by phone, October, 2012, New York-Rome.

<sup>33</sup> Quote from the questionnaire completed by Elizabeth Whatley from Pepperdine University.

Greco to create a better socio-economical balance between the tourist destination and the deprived town.<sup>34</sup>

Many use the *agriturismi* for overnight stays and support small farms, teach students about the *Slow Food* movement, *Km Zero* farming, or travel in Sicily as advised by the Anti-Mafia *Terre Libere* organization. These are some of the many ways programs implement traveling in a socially-responsible way.

*“To remind students about their responsibility to do more than just study, travel and explore”* is important to Cynthia Bomben and Susanna Cavallo from the Loyola University Chicago’s The John Felice Rome Center.<sup>35</sup> *“We take the students on co-curricular study trips off the beaten roads and discover the local culture where it is better preserved allowing for more authentic experiences in small towns like Spoleto (Umbria) or Sansepolcro (Tuscany)...trying to aid students to meld cultural encounters and social justice.”*

## SUMMARY AND FINAL REMARKS

### Summary

To conclude, we know that North American students enrolled in AACUPI programs have populated Italy with approximately 300,000 students since 1939, and more than 30,000 American students studied for credit in the academic year 2012-13. Approximately 20,000 students were enrolled in the 147 AACUPI member institutions, while the other 10,000 students were hosted either under the wings of AACUPI members, or were enrolled directly with Italian universities, private language schools or commercial providers.

### **Age:**

Half of the programs were established in Italy over the last 10-20 years, but the historical age of an individual program may vary from 119 years to a few months. On average, AACUPI programs look back on 24 years of experience of study abroad and, in some cases, older programs welcome the second or third generation of students of the same family coming to Italy.

### **Length:**

Fully 81% of all AACUPI programs operate at least for 9 months or longer during the academic year, and 99% of the students stay for the entire length of a semester, or quarter term, which contrasts with the worldwide study abroad in short-term stays (summer, January term or 8 weeks, at most). If, in the 70s, North

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<sup>34</sup>Scott Schlimgen, Director of AIA, Academic Initiatives Abroad, with students from Northeastern University.

<sup>35</sup>Quote from a response to the questionnaire.

American students were enjoying a full academic year away from home, over the past decades the sojourn in Italy has shortened to the length of only one semester, and the increasing numbers of short-term programs seem to represent a trend towards an even shorter period abroad.

**Location:**

The current 147 AACUPI programs are located in 39 different sites in Italy, but 64% of all programs are located in the areas of Rome or Florence. Only 10% of the programs stay in Bologna and Siena, in equal parts, and the remaining 26%, precisely 39 programs, disperse over 20 different towns throughout the peninsula.

**Curricula:**

Looking closely at the various teaching models, we learn that the choice of the location is strongly correlated to the curricula and the teaching models applied by the various programs, as well as to the possibility of collaboration with the appropriate local higher education institution. It is interesting to observe that the number of disciplines and teaching models the programs in Italy currently offer has increased by 48% compared to the number of disciplines offered in the past. Furthermore, a greater variety of curricular activities, better communication with the home campus, and more culturally-orientated activities are mentioned as positive improvements by the program directors. Also, we identify the facts that technology is used increasingly and that a general shift to a more interactive teaching method both have changed the way of educating abroad.

**Language:**

Some 55% of the students live with their North American peers while in Italy, but 45% of the students have the opportunity to stay for at least part of their stay with Italian-speaking families or students. The Language programs offer the most opportunities (up to 63%), but 27% declare that their students do not stay in home-stays and do not live with native Italian speakers. Only 21% of all 147 programs indicate that their students reach a high level of language proficiency. We note, in general, less interest in acquiring language skills, perhaps due to the improved knowledge of English all over Italy, but perhaps, also, to the shorter sojourn of students abroad and frequent traveling to other European capitals on the weekends.

**Culture:**

The most frequently mentioned strategies for cultural integration are considered to be “orientations and culture classes,” “interacting with the local community,” “partnering with a local institution,” “living with Italian families/students,” “tandem learning” and “traveling.”

Regarding matters of integration and areas of improvement, program administrators mention, furthermore, an “increase in implementing more workshops and seminars with local universities,” “increased collaboration within the local context and with local experts,” “better coordination between courses taught in Italy and the US,” “more participation of home-based faculty in local activities” and “more team work with international partners.” In fact, programs like to employ local experts and instructors: on average, 75% of the instructors are hired locally and 25% come from the home campus.

### **Travel:**

Traveling is considered a valid strategy for cultural exposure, and we estimate that North American students travel, with or without the academic program, on average, for roughly 2 weeks in Italy and for 3 weeks within Europe. Traveling has been changed radically by low-cost flights, tempting students to take short weekend trips all over Europe: this has notably disruptive effects on the semester and on student performance.

### **Comments and Final Remarks**

From comments, questionnaires and interviews, we have learned how pre-orientation back at the home campus, as well as efficient communication with the home institution, play an important role in the success of a study abroad program. Without the administrative, financial and logistical assistance of the home institution, as well as the efforts of the faculty to advertise the program and to promote the value of studying abroad, the Italian programs would not grow.

On the other hand, we acknowledge that programs in Italy stand or fall, depending on the know-how of the local staff and faculty. Successful programs rely on sufficient staff, on the professional support of local accountants and advisors, in order to respond fully to the severe constraints of Italian legislation. A lot of experience is needed to understand the complexity of the Italian legal and fiscal laws, and AACUPI’s frequent discussions and newsletters are effective tools for informing and updating the members on this topic. Moreover, the newsletters are a crucial aid to the program in their communication with the home campus, which is not always aware of the implementation of new laws and to what extent these legal responsibilities may affect the local director.

Despite the country’s apparent reputation of *dolce vita* and an effortless, easy life style, the day-to-day reality of public services, frequent strikes, the complex labor and fiscal legislation, all make the administration of the programs a challenging task. Local directors, in fact, need to be prepared to solve all sorts of daily problems and jump in to replace staff when needed. They are, often, also faculty advisor, faculty social companion, instructor-of-record, faculty member, faculty supervisor, staff manager and local employer, housing manager or rental



agent, facility and safety manager, student affairs manager, travel adviser, coordinator for conferences/lecture series/seminars/workshops, cultural liaison between the local and home institutions and, when needed, simultaneous translator, host, parent contact, caretaker of sick students and emergency contact 24/7 all year round.

On the academic level, the survey puts in evidence the great number of locally-hired instructors, the increasing collaboration with local universities and the creative initiatives of the programs to put the North American faculty and students in contact with the local academic community. Lecture series, seminars and workshops are more frequently organized than in the past and create opportunities for international collaboration. The survey further underlines the increased use of interdisciplinary education, of flexible teaching models and curriculum innovations in study abroad programs in Italy, all tools most necessary to boosting cross-cultural communication.

Fostering a climate where ideas circulate beyond barriers of culture and language seems a *conditio sine qua non* for thriving study abroad programs. But we note how the programs still struggle to break the American bubble. “*Students stay mainly with their American peers, stay for increasingly shorter periods in Italy and do not interact culturally.*”<sup>36</sup> They learn little or no Italian, and the accompanying North American faculty is not always a role model regarding cultural integration. Local program directors wish the home-based faculty would “*participate more in local activities*” and “*be more involved in research activities on site,*” and, similarly, wish for students to “*take more advantage of the many opportunities offered to mingle with Italian students.*”<sup>37</sup> *In extremis*, the sojourn abroad may be reduced to a light-load semester living and partying with the same peers as back home, aiming to have the “*once in a lifetime experience*” of staying abroad and bringing home a great photo collection of the various trips to the European capitals.

The difficult task of getting the students out of their comfort zone rests with the local administrators and the faculty, which invent many creative strategies (listed above) to stimulate the students. AACUPI programs, indeed, try their best to engage the students in the new environment and make it their goal to bridge between the cultures. This arduous task may result especially frustrating if the dialogue between the two sides, Italy and North America, becomes too one-sided. Such a case may manifest itself if the needs and requests of the local staff and faculty, regardless of their nationality, are ignored by the home institution.

Criticism has been expressed, in particular, concerning human resources in study abroad programs. Staff and faculty hired locally by the North American universities may, indeed, suffer significant disadvantages, compared to their colleagues hired in the US: for instance, they do not have the opportunity to visit the home campus, cannot be an integral part of the North American university or

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<sup>36</sup> Quotes from responses to the questionnaire.

<sup>37</sup> Quotes from responses to the questionnaire.

campus life, have no access to research funds, have no funds to participate at conferences, have no significant career perspectives and cannot get on a tenure track position. Often, they have only short term contracts, lack job security and do not have paid vacations, while the discrepancy in salary, compared to the US faculty teaching the same courses, can be drastic.

Administrative employees might also have lower salaries than their North American colleagues, but are highly protected by the Italian labor laws in terms of their job security, sickness and maternity leaves, social contributions and benefits, as well as severance payments.

Looking at the larger picture, the Italian study abroad programs inevitably need to adapt to a competitive global market, of cheaper programs in other countries, and face the challenges of a growing study abroad industry. As much as AACUPI programs can rely on decades of experience and a strong, savvy association, continuous growth, as witnessed in the past, is not guaranteed. Study abroad is getting more expensive, US tuitions are the highest in the world, and only 1% of US students actually do study abroad.<sup>38</sup>

The Italian programs are challenged further by local labor legislation, immigration laws and the difficult economic and political climate. Italy cannot rely only on its leading position for cultural heritage<sup>39</sup> and needs to do more in terms of facilitating immigration procedures for non-European students, fostering international student exchange and increasing international academic collaboration. The survey proves that AACUPI study abroad programs have started to collaborate more than ever before with Italian and/or European universities. The road to take with the increasing pressure of globalization is, indeed, to partner internationally, network for alliances and engage in international cooperation.

We know that over four million students are on the move each year all over the world, and that number is expected to grow.<sup>40</sup> International business searches for culturally competent professionals, and the future careers of our students will be set primarily in an international context. In a shrinking world, with ever faster means of communication and transportation, study abroad seeks to prepare students for international careers and may become the most essential and efficient tool of internationalization in higher education.

AACUPI programs are aware of the underlying imperative: to focus, more than ever, on teaching cultural competence (rather than language) and to apply an increasing number of strategies aiming at that target. The use of English as the

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<sup>38</sup> See Open Doors report, published annually by the Institute of International Education.

<sup>39</sup> Italy owns the greatest number (49) of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

<sup>40</sup> "... worldwide, there were over 4.1 million international students in 2010, a 10.8% increase over the previous year." Source: OECD *Education at a Glance*, 2012.

*lingua franca*, the rise of the Internet, the increased use of social media—lamented by the instructors—and the effect of globalization all seem to blur the lines between nations. To perceive, to understand, to respect and to accept the differences between cultures must be the essential part of the cross-cultural training of AACUPI students, in order to eradicate misperceptions and, ultimately, help to create trust between citizens, regardless of nationality or religion.

## Appendix: The AACUPI Questionnaire

**Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions**

Please fill in the name of your program or institution

Your name (Optional)

### History of the Program

How long has your program been established in Italy? Since year:

How many students have studied at your program since then? Numbers:

Which model was applied initially to your program?

1. Fine Arts
2. Liberal Arts
3. Architecture/Interior Design
4. Classical Studies/Archeology
5. Language/Literature/Culture
6. Political Science/International Relations/Economics/Business
7. Design/Fashion/Industrial/Graphic
8. Global Human Science: Agriculture/Food/Nutrition
9. Engineering/Nursing
10. Short term programs, Summer, Midsemester, Travel
11. Other

### Current Program

Which of the 10 models apply today for your program?

How long does a student typically stay in your program?

What time of the year does your program run?

How many local instructors do you hire (yearly average)?

How many instructors are sent from the US home institution (yearly average)?

### Housing and language

With whom do your students live while in Italy? Describe:

How many contact hours of Italian do your students have per semester? Hours:

Do your students have the opportunity to spend time with Italian peers? How:

What is the students' Italian language knowledge level at the end of their stay?

### Program Design and European context

Has your teaching model and methodology drastically changed over the years? Yes/No.

If yes, how?

What strategies do you use to integrate the student in the new cultural environment?

How many days do students travel in Italy during their stay with the program?

How many days do students travel in Europe during their stay with the program?

How many days do students travel in Europe on their own, before, after and during the program (average)?

## About the Author

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