

Project Title: “GLOSSARI: The Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative”

The University System of Georgia requests \$597,633 in funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s International Research and Studies program over the next three years to support a systematic initiative to document learning outcomes accruing from U.S. student participation in study abroad. The **G**eorgia **L**earning **O**utcomes of **S**tudents **S**tudying **A**broad **R**esearch **I**nitiative (GLOSSARI) will develop significant new knowledge about international education programs that will contribute to the purposes of Title VI, Part A, of the Higher Education Act.

Proficiency in foreign languages, enhanced understanding of host cultures, more authentic area studies knowledge, and improved international expertise are among the learning outcomes that we associate with academic programs abroad. Yet we have limited empirical evidence about the impact of the study abroad experience on the learning process. The GLOSSARI project is intended to address concerns of multiple constituencies through a series of structured investigations that pose basic questions about the academic consequences of studies abroad.

Because of the broad range of experiments, research instruments, and techniques that we will employ, our research methods are replicable in many different settings. We expect our findings to be tested rigorously by colleagues in the field. A substantial part of our evaluation plan envisions a coordinated, independent replication of research results to determine their validity across varied populations.

The GLOSSARI project is perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive attempt to measure the impact of study abroad ever designed. The University System of Georgia is comprised of thirty-five public institutions and currently enrolls 253,000 students. Campuses range from small, rural two-year colleges to large, cosmopolitan doctoral research-intensive universities. They offer more than 325 study abroad programs. The Board of Regents strategic plan calls for a major increase in study abroad participation—to 25% of undergraduate degrees awarded by 2007 (approximately 6,200 students). As part of its documentation for annual reports to the Regents, since 2002 the System Office of International Education has collected detailed information about each student (by name and identification number) and their study abroad experience (country of study, duration, etc.). This extensive data collection effort, now numbering nearly 5,000 individual records per year, provides a rich, self-standing resource for analysis of study abroad patterns and characteristics. It can also be linked to other System databases to extract additional data about study abroad participants. In addition to supporting analysis of student demographic data, an important function of this design is its ability to access pre- and post-participation academic performance measures and behaviors.