Foreword

There are numerous myths that exist around international higher education. Here is a sample of just a few, followed by a brief explanation:

**Myth:** *International higher education is synonymous with study abroad.* International educators know that while study abroad and mobility are an important part of international education, that there are so many other facets that comprise comprehensive internationalization including an internationalized curricula, cross-border partnerships, and strategic leadership.

**Myth:** *Send students abroad and they’ll come back interculturally competent.* As chapters in this book reveal, there’s much more to study abroad than simply putting students on airplanes and sending them to other countries. The preparation, learning interventions (before, during, and after), contexts, and parameters of a program are crucial in achieving stated learning outcomes of study abroad programs.

**Myth:** *Study abroad research means giving a pre/post survey to students.* After reading this volume, readers will understand that research in study abroad involves a more exacting process of inquiry beyond solely utilizing a pre/post instrument. As an additional note, another related myth is that a *pre/post survey is sufficient for assessment in study abroad.* This is indeed a myth given that quality assessment in study abroad needs to involve a multi-measure approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Deardorff, 2015).

Traditionally a practitioner-based field, study abroad has benefited from an increasing number of research studies in recent years. Despite the plethora of research studies though, many have been based on small sample sizes, without control groups or robust research methodologies. Moreover, deeper questions arise such as: *How do study abroad opportunities engage learners in truly meaningful experiences? How can such experiences guide students in their social, emotional, cultural, and intercultural development? What exactly does it mean for study abroad to be a transformative experience? What constitutes a successful study abroad experience for the learner? What do students specifically gain from studying abroad? How can educators re-think the study abroad experience to enhance deeper learning? What are effective pedagogies and frameworks that can be used in supporting the complexities of the learning experiences abroad? How can study abroad experiences be extended and integrated into existing curricula? What difference does study abroad make in building a better world? And, what are some lessons that can be learned from concrete examples in diverse study abroad contexts?*

There has emerged, then, a need for more rigorous research from around the globe that can help inform current practice. This volume amply meets this need by exploring many of the questions and myths mentioned here. Featuring case studies and examples from around the world, the reader can gain
insights into both research and practice within the rich and varied study abroad context. As the editor asserts, successful study abroad ‘offers an invaluable chance to discover a diverse culture through a personal, professional, and educationally enriching experience’ (p. xxi). The mix of conceptual and practical chapters ‘explores the intricate and multiple determinations of changes in participants, both staff and students, as well as program delivery and praxis’ (p. xxii) in a thorough and insightful manner.

In the end, study abroad is about the learner, who should unequivocally be at the center of international education efforts. For those who are strongly committed to enhancing the learner experience and who care deeply about the learners, then understanding and applying the continual synergies between practice and research are vital. This volume makes an important contribution in the emerging trend to bridge practice and research, and in so doing, expands readers’ understanding of how to address the complexities of cross-border learning in the 21st Century.

Darla K. Deardorff
Duke University, USA

Darla K Deardorff is Executive Director of the Association of International Education Administrators, an international leadership organization, based at Duke University in the United States, where she is also a research scholar. She is a widely published author, speaker, and consultant who is well-known for her work on intercultural competence development and assessment. She regularly gives invited talks and workshops around the world and holds academic appointments at numerous universities including in the US, China (Shanghai International Studies University), Japan (Meiji University), and South Africa (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University). Her books include: The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence (2009), The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education (2012), Building Cultural Competence (2012), Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators (2015), and Intercultural Competence in International Higher Education (forthcoming). Her full bio is available at http://sites.duke.edu/darladeardorff/.

REFERENCE