

## 45th Biennial Convention (16-20 November 2019)

### Promoting International Collaboration Through a Study Abroad Program

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“Sigma's mission is advancing world health and celebrating nursing excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service.” One way to achieve this mission is through partnerships with healthcare organizations in other countries. These partnerships can expand understanding of health needs and perspectives on healthcare, nursing practice and nursing education in both countries. But how can nursing faculty initiate and sustain a partnership, especially when resources are limited?

In this presentation, we will describe how a fruitful partnership developed between our school of nursing, at a small, private liberal arts university, and a large regional pediatric teaching hospital in Florence, Italy. Our school of nursing has been providing short-term study abroad experiences for nursing students for many years, and trips to Italy are among the offerings. Our collaboration began eight years ago when one of the faculty co-teaching the Italy study abroad course emailed the Italian author of an article in *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* to express interest in his research. This communication led to an invitation for our students to visit the regional pediatric hospital in Florence, which is affiliated with a large university. After this successful visit, collaborators on both sides committed to growing and sustaining the partnership. With each successive group of study abroad students, new features have been added. By the third trip, in 2015, students were allowed to shadow a staff nurse and learn first-hand how pediatric inpatient care is provided in Italy. Our collaboration has resulted in presentations by our students and faculty to Italian students and healthcare professionals and likewise, presentations by the Italian professionals to our students and faculty. In September 2018, three healthcare professionals from the hospital in Italy visited our campus for several days to observe U.S. nursing education practices such as simulation, and to present to our faculty and students on the strengths and challenges of healthcare in Italy.

We will describe strategies that have been successful in establishing this mutually beneficial partnership: take a chance and reach out; determine leadership on both sides of the collaboration; set specific goals for international collaborative activities; stay committed; focus on sustainability of the partnership; and formalize the relationship. We will also discuss the importance of institutional support and ways that the institution can foster the collaboration.

Our international collaboration has yielded several mutual benefits, not only in terms of the educational opportunities for students, but also in the scholarship opportunities for faculty and healthcare professionals. Of great importance is the way the collaboration has fostered active learning for our students and helped to expose them to nursing in a global context. International partnerships are possible even for small schools of nursing!

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

International collaboration, Leadership and Study Abroad

**References:**

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**Abstract Summary:**

How can nursing faculty initiate an international partnership, especially when resources are limited? We will describe how a fruitful partnership developed between our school of nursing and a large regional pediatric teaching hospital in Florence, Italy. We will describe strategies that have been successful in establishing this mutually beneficial partnership.

**Content Outline:**

- Background
  - Overview and mission of our School of Nursing and Sigma chapter
  - Study Abroad program development
  - Relationship to Sigma's mission
- Getting started
  - Outreach to Italian nurse colleagues
  - Initial visit
  - Enlarging the partnership:
    - Students observe nurses on the unit
    - Faculty present to hospital staff
- Leadership in formalizing the partnership: written agreement
- Reciprocity: Italians visit U.S.
- Outcomes

- Quantitative
  - Number of students who have visited
  - Number of presentations by faculty
  - Number of healthcare professionals in attendance
- Qualitative
  - Impact on healthcare agency partners
  - Impact on students
  - Impact on faculty
- Future Plans
- Research on outcomes of study abroad for U.S. students
- Publication

First Author

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**Author Summary:** Professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Nursing, Saint Xavier University, received a Fulbright Scholar Grant to teach and perform research at Bethlehem University in Palestine. Introduced concept mapping teaching and learning methodology, taught pediatric nursing and nursing research. Visited Jordan and spent weeks in two major universities in Jordan doing workshops on nursing pedagogy. Recognized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education with a Nurse Educator Fellowship and Nursing Research Award from Sigma Theta Tau.

Second Primary Presenting Author

***Primary Presenting Author***

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**Author Summary:** Dr. Poradzisz is a Professor of Nursing at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. She is an active board member of the Alpha Omicron Chapter, and has participated in planning and providing chapter events.