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## Sole-Source Justification for StudioAbroad

StudioAbroad is the only commercially available product on the market specifically designed to manage the administration of a study abroad office. The alternative to StudioAbroad is a custom developed application by a university's information technology group or customizing the university's application processing system (this generally doesn't address the study abroad office's specific business processes and needs).

StudioAbroad's features and capabilities are designed and built based on the needs of its clients. Over the last 7 years the combined ideas of StudioAbroad's clients have made StudioAbroad more robust, more flexible and more complete than any single office could have designed themselves.

- In 1998, the founders of Terra Dotta were graduate students at UNC-Chapel Hill and were asked to develop a custom application for their study abroad office. A team of programmers, database experts and graphic artists worked for over 2 years to implement this custom application. This turned out to be the starting point for StudioAbroad. Today, to build the features available in StudioAbroad as a custom application, an institution should expect to invest over \$500,000 and take 2-3 years to develop.
- One university spent \$80,000 to develop an application internally. But it wasn't finished! They are now a StudioAbroad client. It would have cost more to complete their internal development effort than to license StudioAbroad – and the internal application would have had less functionality.
- One large university contracted with their IT group three years ago to develop a custom application for their study abroad office. The project is far over budget (they did not share by how much) and behind schedule. After a demo of StudioAbroad at NAFSA the assistant director of the study abroad office commented, "This software was perfect. It addressed all of our needs and many of our wants. We were shocked, but unfortunately we were too far along with our in-house project to consider it. The software most likely would have saved us a great deal in the long-run." She went on to say that it was highly likely that the in-house system, when finished, would not be as dynamic or efficient as StudioAbroad.

Once developed, internal applications carry high maintenance costs. Continued investment, usually at significant cost, will be needed to add critical or desired features. Fixing problems requires the availability of skilled programmers with knowledge about the application and an understanding of your operations. Programming staff turnover can cause a significant risk to a study abroad office.

- One university employs a full-time person, with salary and benefits costing \$60,000 annually, who is dedicated to modifying and supporting their custom application.
- Another university has an Access database to track all student applications. "We hired a graduate student to develop our database. Now it's broken and he is no longer at the university. Nobody else knows anything about the application."
- Another is in a similar situation. "We have a homegrown Oracle/FileMaker application. The developer left and it's now a mess!"

Investing in StudioAbroad allows an educational institution to better manage the operating expenses of its study abroad program. The largest expenses of any study abroad office are those related to staffing – salaries, benefits, training, computers, etc. StudioAbroad makes it possible to offer more programs and serve increasing numbers of students without increasing staff. It relieves workload problems in overworked, understaffed offices.

StudioAbroad allows professional staff to focus their time on improving the quality of programs and the quality of students' experiences. By managing a study abroad office's activities using StudioAbroad, many low value administrative tasks are eliminated. It eliminates staff time in finding and distributing program brochures and other forms and materials that students need. It eliminates emails and phone calls from students asking "What do I need to do?" "When do I need to do it?" "Have you received my *[application, deposit, professor's recommendation, etc., etc.]?*" The result is the study abroad office has more time to focus on important aspects of their program – improving program offerings, expanding participation, and preparing participants for their experience.

Custom developed applications will cost more to build, cost more to support, take longer to implement and have less functionality than StudioAbroad.

StudioAbroad is more than just software – it is also a community of users, a collaborative environment to recommend improvements to the software, the user experience, and to share process improvement ideas across an expanding community of study abroad offices.

A partial list of StudioAbroad clients includes:

- Dartmouth College
- Georgetown University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Washington State University
- University of Colorado at Boulder
- University of Connecticut
- University of Florida
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Kentucky
- University of Virginia
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Richmond
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech)
- Wake Forest University

Dartmouth and the University of Connecticut considered other options before deciding to implement StudioAbroad. Both have been using it for several years. Contact information is:

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