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COLLEGE ATHLETES AND ATHLETIC ADVISORS CALL FOR INCREASED ACCESS TO STUDY ABROAD TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Panel explored the intersection of college athletics, study abroad, career readiness, and DEI

Washington, D.C., Oct. 31, 2022—During a discussion hosted by the [The Fund for Education Abroad](#) (FEA), a panel of current and former student athletes, including university advisors and a sports agent, called for increased access to international education opportunities to level the playing field for college athletes. [Eurostepping the Status Quo: Supporting International Opportunities for College Athletes](#) identified how higher education falls short of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals by denying college athletes adequate programming, support, and funding needed to study abroad. Sponsored by [Salve Regina University's Center for Global Education and Fellowships](#), this event was part of the [FEAtured Perspectives](#) series.

DEI statements of international education or sports education organizations lack references to college athletics, reported panel leader [Timothy Bryson](#), director of Athlete Education and Compliance at [MOGL](#), and president and CEO of [Walk With TFB](#). Bryson could find no academic research or institutional practices on study abroad specifically related to college athletes.

“College sport refuses to acknowledge international education as a core value of their enterprise,” said Bryson, a former Division 1 athlete and former program director of Student-Athlete Career Development at the University of Maryland, College Park. “We have athletic competition abroad and service abroad, but not education abroad for college athletes.”

Canadian native [Ashley Germain](#), a track and field athlete in her junior year at UMD College Park who serves as president of [World Wide Terps](#), described challenges experienced by international student athletes and commented: “I would like educators...to help create access to and create additional resources.”

Cultural understanding, personal identity and inclusion are critical, according to [Ancia Ifill, Ph.D.](#), associate director of Academic Services and athletic academic counselor for [Men's Soccer, University of Louisville](#). “Race plays a big factor...I see myself as being Black, but not being African American. A lot of student athletes identify that way...Most of our Black international student athletes just want to be included as well, but also having [their] own identity.”

Cross-cultural education benefits American and international students alike, according to [Ashley Tarran Jones](#), vice president, [Lighting Environments](#), and a native of Manchester, U.K., who previously worked with the English Lacrosse Association. He proposed encouraging engagement across the broader university community: “People related to the university, like alumni, can foster international athletes.”

“International athletes are not a monolith,” explained [Tay Hawker](#), CEO, [Hawker Family Sports and Entertainment](#). The former college and professional rugby player also explained that immigration laws have not kept up with the 2021 NCAA Name, Image and Likeness rule change: “We're looking at over 20,000 student athletes who cannot benefit from NIL.”

Bryson suggested assessing policies and practices by asking: Which policies and practices maintain college athletes as a forgotten community in global education; how can international educators best advocate from their platform, their privilege, and their power; how are you contributing to an environment that promotes

and supports education abroad for all college athletes; and how can you create environments that mirror the diversity of your college athlete and international student population?

Recommendations for increasing support for student athletes include: designation of an international college athlete (ICA) liaison in both college athletics and international education; international athlete orientation and education; dedicated fundraising for education abroad experiences; alumni engagement for fundraising and mentoring; a guest coach program and focus on international educators; education abroad programs designed specifically for college athletes; focus on career readiness including development of global and intercultural fluency skills; offering virtual exchange programs; and donations to organizations like FEA to fund scholarships for students to study abroad.

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About the Fund for Education Abroad

[The Fund for Education Abroad](#) (FEA) supports U.S. students with financial need who are traditionally underrepresented in study abroad. Focused on first-generation college, community college, and minoritized students, FEA has awarded more than \$2.5 million in FEA scholarships to 867 scholars since its founding in 2010. The only national non-profit (501(c)(3)) scholarship provider funded exclusively through philanthropy, FEA supports students before, during, and after their study abroad experience with scholarships and programming. FEA is a [Guidestar Gold](#) participant and was awarded the 2020 [Innovation in Diversity Award](#) by [GoAbroad.com](#), the 2019 [Scholarship Provider of the Year Award](#) by the [National Scholarship Providers Association](#), the 2015 [Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion in International Education \(EDIIE\)](#) Award by [Diversity Abroad](#), and the 2015 [Innovation in Philanthropy Award](#) by GoAbroad.com. Follow [FEA](#) online and on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Tumblr](#), and [Twitter](#).