

Dear Colleague:

My name is Michael Ogden, I am a Professor at Central Washington University, a Return Peace Corps Volunteer, and a faculty leader of student study abroad experiences. Students in the Pacific Northwest are very interested in studying abroad, but also mirror “insular” trends of Millennials nationwide in that, only 1.5% of almost 20 million American students enrolled in U.S. higher education actually engaged in study abroad. For some, it’s the cost. For others, it’s not wanting to be away from home for a semester or longer.

Student study abroad experiences are said to contribute to personal growth, increase intercultural sensitivity and understanding as well as foster a lifetime of professional and academic benefits. Underscoring the importance of study abroad, the White House hosted a summit in December 2014 to discuss government initiatives and strategies to encourage American students to study abroad ([www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/12/15/white-house-hosts-travel-blogger-summit-study-abroad-and-global-citizenship](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/12/15/white-house-hosts-travel-blogger-summit-study-abroad-and-global-citizenship)). It is perhaps evident that, today, international experience is fast becoming an important component of a 21st Century resume!

This latter issue was the case with the majority of my students. This is when I connected with the ARAMFO Foundation ([www.aramfo.org](http://www.aramfo.org)). Through ARAMFO, we designed a 2-week study tour of Morocco in support of two courses (intercultural communication & visual anthropology). Students participated in a 3-day conference hosted by the University Hassan II in Casablanca and were able to interact with their peers from Morocco in stimulating and engaging panel sessions. We then embarked on a cross-country tour of the “royal cities” (Meknés, Marrakesh, Fés and Rabat), Tangier and several rural locales while also visiting the various kasbas, palaces, museums, souks and Roman ruins along the way.

While in country for two weeks, we managed to see an incredible amount of environmental geography and cultural diversity in this short amount of time. Throughout, the ARAMFO staff were friendly, accommodating, professional and treated everyone on the study tour as if they were all family... which, in a way, we all became as a result of our shared adventures and experiences.

Students blogged about their experiences ([www.cwumorocco.wordpress.com](http://www.cwumorocco.wordpress.com)) and all came away with a very positive, world-view altering experience they said they would never forget! Because this experience was such a positive one, we are planning another study tour — this time, to Thailand in 2016 — through ARAMFO. If you have ever considered leading a study abroad experience for your students, but didn’t have the time to plan, organize and execute the logistics of such a feat, I would encourage you to consider partnering with ARAMFO.

Please do not hesitate to contact me by email ([ogden@cwu.edu](mailto:ogden@cwu.edu)) or phone (509.963.1067) if you have any questions or, if you wish, feel free to reach out to ARAMFO directly by contacting Ms. Sarah Williams ([swilliams@aramfo.org](mailto:swilliams@aramfo.org)). I firmly believe that student study abroad experiences represent a critical component to deepening and broadening their understanding of cultures and life-ways different than their own and fostering greater tolerance and understanding.

Won’t you join me in this quest?

In a good way,

—michael

Michael R. Ogden, PhD

Professor & Director, Film & Video Studies Program

Dept. of Communication  
Central Washington University  
400 E. University Way, MS 7438  
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7438

Phone: [\(509\) 963-1067](tel:(509)963-1067)  
Fax: [\(509\) 963-1060](tel:(509)963-1060)  
Email: [ogden@cwu.edu](mailto:ogden@cwu.edu)  
[www.cwu.edu/film-video/](http://www.cwu.edu/film-video/)