

Challenges and Solutions for U.S. Study Abroad in the Czech Republic

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Editors: Jakub Tesar, Dallas Negaard

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Why Czech Republic

Kai Armstrong, Fairfield University

According to a 2013 article produced by The Institute of International Education, “despite a weak economy and post 9/11 concerns, American students continue to regard study abroad as a critical component of their higher education experience.” This is shown through the rising statistic that over 42,000 foreign students are choosing to study abroad in the Czech Republic today. While there is yet to be conclusive data on the surge of popularity of the Czech Republic, there are several aspects of the country that are very appealing to students, especially while on a budget. In this paper, I am going to discuss the primary and prevalent reasons that students choose the Czech Republic as a place to study abroad, as well as the pros and cons of their experiences thus far. To obtain these results I will conduct a survey that I will ask my three interviewees to take, as well as other members of my program and those students participating in the video Fulbright is organizing.

Study abroad is one of the most influential experiences in the journey that is ones’ education. The location they choose is one of the most important decisions they can make. In the last few years, Prague has proven to be an increasingly popular destination that according to the EU statistics, was the 11th most popular destination for Erasmus+ higher education students in 2014-2015. For the following year, the number of American students studying in the Czech Republic increased by 14.6 percent to 4,093 students in 2015-2016. This number increased by 3,572 from the previous academic year, according to a report released by Open Doors. These statistics place the Czech Republic as the fourteenth most popular global study abroad destination, below India and above Denmark. In Europe, it is the seventh most popular location, with many students choosing it over countries nearby such as Austria and Hungary. Many American students who come to the Czech Republic to study typically stay for at least a semester through a program linked to their home institution. Some of the popular programs are CEA, which partners with the Anglo-American University, and CIEE, which partners with Charles University. Although this is most common, there are also students who come without a program or come on a bilateral exchange. I am going to address the pros and cons of each option as I have found through the interviews I have conducted with three different students.

The first person I interviewed is a student from the United States who did not come to Prague with a program, and because of this she essentially had to figure everything out for herself. Sara Boe is a student who attends McGill University in Canada and because of this, her school did not send her with any sort of program. The reason for this is because McGill does not have partnerships with study abroad programs like schools in the U.S. due to the fact that the school has a high number of students who attend who are considered “foreign.” Therefore, their number of students who study abroad is much lower than that of Universities in the United States. After interviewing her I learned she originally wanted to study abroad in Barcelona, Spain but was unable to because her school did not have a relationship with the universities there. After this was established, she realized she would like to be in a program and at a school where she could speak English. After looking into studying in Prague, Copenhagen and Denmark she ultimately chose Prague because she liked how accessible other countries would be to travel to. Additionally, she did not know a lot about Prague before coming here and felt that immersing herself in the culture would be the best way to learn.

Since her arrival in Prague, she has been mostly pleasantly surprised. That being said, she also made some comments regarding the hardships of not coming with a program which I am going to address now. For starters, she felt that it was extremely hard to figure out her visa and accommodation while staying in Prague. These are two things that programs will take care of for students when they sign up with a program. Although the visa application is hard regardless of whether or not you come with a program, Sara was forced to get hers translated into Czech which was a step further than those who apply with a program face. Another aspect that was harder for her was the social aspect. Those of us who come with a program are housed and have classes with others in our program which makes it very easy to find a group of people to eat, travel, and go out with. Because the social aspect is such a crucial part of one’s study abroad experience, without it, study abroad becomes a completely different experience. Unlike those of us in a program, Sara had to make friends with people in other ways. Additionally, many of the people she has met have been international students due to the fact most Americans come with a program. She noted that because many of these people are international they aren’t as interested in traveling on weekends which is one of the reasons she chose to study in Prague in the first place. This is not to say that they don’t travel at all but because traveling throughout Europe has been more accessible to them, they don’t make it a priority.

My next interviewee is Jessica O'Donnell. Jess is from San Bernardino California and attends Howard University in Washington D.C. Jess majors in broadcast journalism and has a minor in Political Science. Jess was also originally interested in Spain but ultimately chose to come to Prague after researching the best programs for journalism overseas. Upon discovering CIEE's Communications, New Media and Journalism (CNMJ) program at the top of almost every list, she decided Prague would be the best fit for her semester abroad. Jess does note that she would not have chosen to study in Prague if it weren't for the programs popularity. CIEE's CNMJ program is unique in that while students are studying, they are also required to have internships. Not only does this look excellent on a resume, but it allows students an experience that they will likely never have the opportunity for again. Jess also noted how the convenience of travel is another perk of studying in Prague, as well as the affordability of both the program and living in Prague.

Jess and I discussed the programs benefits and we both felt that it was extremely helpful for the both of us to have our housing accommodation taken care of before we arrived in Prague. We both felt the class registration system was a little difficult (course book was not available until November making it hard to get classes approved at home universities as soon as they would have liked.) Ultimately, she feels Prague has been one of the best experiences for her and the experience is different than Spain would have been in a positive way.

My last interviewee is Josie Lekkas from Brooklyn New York. Josie is a student from Fairfield University majoring in international business with a minor in Spanish. Josie is here with CIEE's Central European studies program. Josie chose to study in Prague because she felt that it would be nice to study somewhere that she didn't know anyone upon arrival. There are two Fairfield programs that many students choose and she felt it would be hard to branch out if she chose either of these programs. Ultimately, she also felt that this would be good practice for her to be out of her comfort zone by forcing her to make new friends and navigate Prague on her own. Josie and I discussed the programs housing as well one thing that my previous interviewee did not, the location of our housing. She felt that "the pamphlet that CIEE gave us did not do a great job of making the housing options very clear and I was confused between the differences of the 'residences' and 'apartments', had I known what each was I think I may have selected my housing a bit differently." Despite this, we both agreed that the housing was very suitable.

As for my survey results, of the 9 people who took the survey, for the most part their answers coincided with the same things as my interviewees. My survey was 5 questions: Was Prague/The Czech Republic your first choice?, If no, how did you end up in Prague?, Were you considering other countries to study in?, What about Prague/Czech Republic was appealing to you?, and Would you recommend Prague/Czech Republic to a friend for study abroad?. Through these results, I found the most common reason for choosing to study in The Czech Republic was due to the programs provided. The majority of my survey takers are part of an engineering program and many of their schools have partnerships that make it easier for their credits to transfer. Similar to Jessica and myself, their programs are what drew them to the Czech Republic over other factors. From the research I have gathered, a common theme I have noticed is the importance of credits transferring easily which transfers back to the programs people choose. I found that students are much more likely to pick a study abroad location if they can eliminate the headache that is organizing logistics. Programs not only cater to specific needs but also make it so students have little to no trouble organizing their transfer credits with their home university. The second most common theme for why they found the Czech Republic appealing was due to financial reasons tied with it's accessibility to other countries. Lastly, every single person said they would recommend studying in the Czech Republic to other prospective students. This response highlights the positivity of the study abroad experience in the Czech Republic, as well as legitimizing the statistic that lists the Czech Republic as the 14th most popular study abroad location.

After conducting my interviews and surveys, as well as doing independent research, I am able to conclude that students choose Prague mostly because of the strength of the programs offered, as well as the affordability and proximity to other countries. This can be summed up in a quote from one of my interviewees; "Prague is way more affordable than London or Italy, the two other places I was looking at. My college, Kansas State University, has a popular exchange program to Czech Technical University, which made it easier to figure out all the small details of studying abroad."

Building Capacity for Studying Abroad in the Czech Republic for U.S. Students in STEM Fields

Samantha Kaplan, Bucknell University

From April 18-20th 2016, Fulbright Commission and EducationUSA in Prague, Czech Republic hosted a Capacity Building Workshop for the promotion of STEM education. President Obama once said, “That’s why we love science. It’s more than a school subject, or the periodic table, or the properties of waves. It is an approach to the world, a critical way to understand and explore and engage with the world, and then have the capacity to change that world, and to share this accumulated knowledge,” which emphasizes the importance of STEM education. The United States and the Czech Republic hope to establish a better relationship and further the collaboration of a STEM study abroad program between the two countries. Through this workshop, representatives from universities in the United States and the Czech Republic came together to discuss the challenges and possible solutions to increase the number of STEM Czech and American students studying abroad in the foreign country.

The workshop began with the discussion of the differences in higher education between the Czech Republic and the United States. Chris Moore, a Fulbright Scholar at Charles University in the Czech Republic and a professor at Coastal Carolina University in the United States, was the U.S. representative in this discussion. Pavel Tvrđík, the Czech representative, is the Dean at Czech Technical University. The goal of this discussion was to encourage cooperation between Czech and United States universities.

In 2008, a total of 262,416 U.S. students studied outside of the country, and 140,000 out of those 262,416 studied in Europe. The Czech Republic has 64 universities: 24 are public and 40 are private. There are over 170 higher vocational schools, specified for a specific skill, however courses cannot be acknowledged at a university from those schools. In the United States there are 4,726 colleges and universities. Roughly 15% are research based, 25% are comprehensive, 20% are liberal arts, and 40% are community colleges.

The accreditations are different between the Czech Republic and the United States. In the Czech Republic, there is one country-wide non-profit based public accreditation system for higher education. Whereas in the United States, most colleges and universities are provided for by a non-governmental organization. Universities have total control of their goals and expectations for their university, and they are not influenced by the U.S. government. Private universities are much less common in the Czech Republic than in the United States. In the Czech Republic, private institutions are a recent phenomenon and there are 40 in the country. Roughly 12% of students are enrolled in a private university. These institutions are relatively smaller when compared to a public institution and have a lower quality of education. No research or doctoral programs are available at a private institutions and almost none have a strong STEM field. In the United States, there is a very small distinction between private and public institutions. Roughly 20% of the college population are enrolled in a private institution. There are excellent private STEM universities in the United States as well as for profit institutions that do not have a STEM field, but instead have online instruction.

A significant difference between Czech and U.S. higher education is the financing. In the Czech Republic, there is no tuition fee for public education. The government's funding is structured so that 75% is calculated on a per-student basis and 25% is a per-performance basis. Students at public universities that are enrolled in English programs and are not Czech citizens are self-funding students and are required to pay tuition, however there are state-funded scholarships they can receive to have the tuition waived. Conversely in the United States, all students, regardless if they are enrolled in a public or private institution, must pay tuition. There are private and government subsidized student loans available, which many students take advantage of. In the Czech Republic there is only one form of government funding structure, however in the United States there is over 50 different systems due to the 50 different states.

The structure of the academic year is different in the two countries, which creates a challenge for students who wish to study abroad. In the Czech Republic, there are two semesters, where one is 13-14 weeks of academic learning and 5-6 weeks of exams. The first semester begins in September or October and finishes at the end of June. There is an 8-week summer holiday, which is mandated by law. In the United States, the structure varies on the institution and there are semes-

ters, trimesters, and quarters. Summer is considered a term and is a popular time for study abroad, especially for STEM students who have a difficult time traveling abroad during the academic year.

In addition to the challenges in the alignment of academic terms, there are other challenges that make it difficult for cooperation between the two countries. Tuition is a huge barrier because of the extreme costs of higher education in the United States. Even with scholarships and financial aid, it is very expensive for foreign students to study in the U.S. Additionally, U.S. STEM students have a very specific set track of courses they need to take in order to graduate on time. The specific curriculum makes it difficult to take classes away from their home university and in a different country because of the risk of falling behind.

With all of this in mind, the workshop had a panel with U.S. university representatives to discuss the challenges of their students studying abroad. More than 3,500 U.S. students come to the Czech Republic every year, but almost none come to the Czech Republic in the STEM field or to Czech Universities.

Here is a summary of the most important issues raised during panel discussion.

- 1) When looking at potential partners for study abroad, the most important factor for U.S. universities is if the curriculum matches the one at the U.S. university and is offered in English. If the syllabi for the Czech courses are readily available online, it will help see if they will be equivalent to the courses at the home university. For STEM students, it is also necessary that they will be guaranteed entrance into the necessary courses while abroad because they are on a set, specific track. In addition to the curriculum, having a financially neutral program is important, so the U.S. student does not pay a higher tuition fee while abroad than they would in the United States. Rewarding research opportunities with the Czech Republic's best faculty is also very important for international collaboration between the two countries. When a U.S. university is looking at the different partner Czech universities and programs they can send their students to in the Czech Republic, in addition to the important factors already listed, safety is a high priority. When U.S. students are living abroad, the schools want to ensure that their students feel safe and also have a support system available if anything bad may occur.

- 2) A challenge with educational collaboration between the United States and the Czech Republic is that United States' universities believe they do not have enough information about Czech universities. Prior to this workshop, many representatives admitted to not thinking too deeply about the STEM fields available in the Czech Republic. Experiences like this workshop are very important to increase awareness about the STEM opportunities but also to create and establish relationships with universities abroad. In having little knowledge about Czech higher education, U.S. college representatives admit to not fully understanding the curriculum available at the Czech Universities and what would be equivalent to the courses their students could be taking in the U.S.
- 3) U.S. universities take a lot into consideration when searching for a Czech university to create a relationship with. As previously mentioned, the curriculum is of the upmost importance. The syllabi for the courses should be readily available so the home universities can read an in-depth description of the coursework and guidelines. The courses' credit should transfer back to the U.S. university and the courses should be in English with Czech students. Having U.S. students engage in a Czech language course is an important aspect of the experience. A timely delivery of the U.S. students' transcripts back to the home university is crucial. Additionally, a low cost of living for the U.S. student and reassurance that the student will be safe and have support in the Czech Republic is essential.
- 4) U.S. students either study abroad through an established study abroad program or through a Czech partner university, but it varies by school and is dependent upon the curriculum offered. The U.S. universities that have a pre-existing relationship with a Czech university have already created a curriculum with equivalent courses. For the U.S. universities that opt for a study abroad program, it is because those programs better fit the needs for their students in regards to curriculum, housing, accommodations, and safety.
- 5) It is a two-way street when establishing a partnership and collaboration between a U.S. and Czech university. U.S. representatives need to reach out to representatives in the Czech Republic and visa versa. If a Czech university is ready for collaboration, it is important to reach out to the right person in the U.S.

U.S. representatives state that a bottom up approach is more successful. If a Czech representative reaches out to a specific U.S. faculty member, that faculty member can then discuss the opportunity with the head of international education. It is more beneficial to co-create a program with a U.S. and Czech university than try to reach out to a university with a preexisting program with another school.

- 6) If a Czech university is interested in attracting more U.S. students, there are conferences for STEM study abroad education where U.S. universities will be present and would encourage Czech universities to attend. There is the a NAFSA national conference, STEM conferences, specific discipline conferences, and education conferences across the United States. These Conferences would be the perfect time to learn more about STEM curriculums and ways the U.S. universities and Czech universities can better collaborate and meet new potential partnerships.
- 7) Due to the vast differences in the financial situations between the U.S. and the Czech Republic, it is important that the exchange needs to be financially neutral. A way universities can do this is that is for every student a U.S. institution sends to the Czech Republic, the same number of Czech students will come to the United States. Some U.S. universities practice an incentive based budgeting model which means the more students are in a specific department, the more money they receive. Therefore, the more money they have for their students to travel abroad.
- 8) As previously mentioned, trying to match a curriculum is the most important factor when sending STEM students abroad. A year or even a semester abroad is very difficult for a STEM student's course load, so a solution would be to have shorter programs available to students during the summer months. During a summer program, Czech universities should add a value component to the time abroad. This would include research opportunities, internship opportunities, and the opportunity for the student to create a portfolio to show future employers. The most important advantage of a study abroad experience is that there is the whole package and the U.S. student will have a significant take away from the experience.

During further personal discussions of the topic of study abroad and in what ways the collaboration could be better between the U.S. and the Czech Republic with the representatives from the United States, the U.S. representatives were consistent with the answers at the panel discussion. They all mentioned that when they send students to the Czech Republic, a matched curriculum is very important. U.S. universities want their students to have the experience of studying abroad, however they do not want that if it means their students will fall behind and take classes that are not equivalent to those in the U.S. Orientation programs are also helpful in order for the U.S. students to feel more comfortable and acclimated when they reach the Czech Republic. A “Day in the Life” video would be very beneficial to show prospective students and parents what a typical day would be like for the student in the Czech Republic. U.S. universities believe that the partner university or program should be responsible for finding affordable housing for their students. They mentioned they would like for their students to be immersed into the Czech culture through a Czech language course, field trips, and living with a Czech Buddy.

In order to improve accessibility to Czech universities, the U.S. representatives would like to see an improvement in the universities’ websites. On the website, they would like to see the courses and the syllabi available to the students and the dates and times of the abroad program. Additionally, U.S. universities understand that the semester timeline in the Czech Republic is different than in the United States. However, if American students could take exams early or take exams back in the U.S. so they can return by the holidays, those programs and universities would become much more attractive to U.S. universities.

Through talking to a variety of U.S. universities, they all answered differently to why they sometimes choose to send their students to the Czech Republic through a study abroad program and not through a Czech university. For the schools that opt for a study abroad program, it is because they are very accommodating to the U.S. schedule. The timeline is similar to a U.S. university, the courses are equivalent to those in the U.S. (although many do not have STEM courses), most if not all of the courses are taught in English, and there are great orientation programs available to the students. For the U.S. universities that do not opt for a study abroad program but instead send their students to a Czech university, it is because of an established relationship that has been long lasting and successful. Some U.S. universities though have never created their own study abroad program with

collaboration of a European university and do not know how to move forward. Their lack of experience is why the universities are grateful for a workshop like this that encourages and promotes collaboration and creation of relationships.

In addition to this research, there was a panel discussing the current capacities of Czech Universities with individuals representing each university. Each university has unique study abroad opportunities available for international students, and are looking for further collaboration with U.S. universities. They discussed how many of their international students are from Europe and are a part of ERASMUS, but they are looking to expand to U.S. students. They discussed the ways in which they believe they can do that while being more accommodating to the U.S. academic schedule and providing more student services for U.S. students during their stay in the Czech Republic. I interviewed some representatives from the Czech universities to further learn how they think they can improve their collaboration with the U.S. universities in addition to the ways they mentioned in the panel.

The biggest barrier all of the Czech representatives said about sending Czech students to the United States is the tuition fee. Even if their students want to study in the United States, many are unable to because of the expenses. However, when Czech universities are looking to become more accessible to American students, one university said they do not understand why Americans are not coming to the Czech Republic because they receive students from everywhere else in the world and feel as though they are very open and welcoming. They hypothesized that in order to further reach out to American students, they can increase the English competency of their professors and offer more English courses. This change would hopefully improve the communication between professors and American students to make the students feel more comfortable and acclimated in the Czech Republic. Another Czech university said they do not believe the Czech Republic is 100% open to American students. In order to improve their openness, these universities believe they can restructure their programs through inspiration from their Western neighbors as well as provide more interdisciplinary programs for their students.

There are already some preexisting relationships between U.S. and Czech universities that are very successful and are at the workshop to provide information to others who are looking to create similar relationships. There is a preexisting program called Global E3 where U.S. and foreign universities collaborate through

this program to have educational exchanges. Global E3 is through IIE, an organization that promotes scholarship management and educational exchanges. It serves 25,000 individuals in 175 different countries. Before IIE accepts a university into Global E3, they look at the courses, curriculum, emergency plan, and engineering courses available. Many U.S. universities and some Czech universities are a part of Global E3, which helps the collaboration between the two universities and promotes the educational exchanges through support in coordination. An important requirement of Global E3 is that for every student the U.S. university sends, they will receive a Czech student in return to create a balanced exchange. There are also successful collaborations with other international programs and Czech universities as well as single U.S. universities that have a strong relationship with a single or multiple Czech university.

In addition to undergraduate study abroad exchanges between the United States and the Czech Republic, there are also graduate STEM research opportunities, undergraduate and graduate STEM internships in the Czech Republic through universities or corporations. The research and internship opportunities provides a different and an international experience to U.S. students and scholars who are looking for a new and unique perspective to their studies, research, and professional experiences. The Czech Republic has an ample amount of STEM field research and careers which they want to encourage U.S. students and scholars to further look into.

The panel of representatives of companies and technical universities offering internships for students discussed how U.S. students can be included in such internships program in the Czech Republic. Universities usually offer internships in research labs, however, engineering students are also interested in gaining work experience in a company. Students usually go for practical training for one semester or through summer. The training may be combined with the study abroad program but it seems like a good idea separate the internship from teaching in the classroom. So, for example, U.S. students can spend the fall semester at a Czech university and the spring semester interning in a company. The other option students have is to combine the spring semester with summer internship.

According to Martin Margala, current U.S. Fulbright scholar at Czech Technical University, internships could be integrated into study abroad of students in

or after their junior year as they are already enough prepared for the work. The internship should ideally take place during summer, so it does not interfere with the academic work. This gained work experience outside of their education can help students find a job after graduation.

Vaclav Matyas from the Masaryk University Faculty of Informatics described the close cooperation of this school with companies in Brno as successful and growing. Therefore, it would be easy to include U.S. students in these programs. Many companies also mentioned that internships are the way for them to find talented students that could be later employed.

Last but not least, the follow-up discussion touched the issues of administration of payments. In general, international students can have paid internships arranged through a non-profit organization like IAESTE (The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience). IAESTE is an independent, non-profit and non-political student exchange organization that provides students of science, engineering, technology and the applied arts with paid, course-related, technical training abroad. The companies that are involved, pay the amount equal to interns' salaries to IAESTE and this organization gives students grants.

It was also mentioned that engineering students in the Czech Republic are probably paid less than internships that can be acquired in the U.S. (\$1,000 per week in CR compared up to \$4,000 in the U.S.). However, students should be attracted to the abroad internship experience (and thus better employability in multinational companies in global environment) over the amount of money.

At the end of the workshop, the U.S. representatives expressed their gratitude to the Fulbright Commission for putting on a workshop that educated them about all the STEM study abroad experiences available in the Czech Republic. The money for this workshop was funded through a grant from the government, so they do not have any more money to provide the same type of workshop in the United States. However, they encouraged the U.S. universities to look for grants in the U.S. because the government has a strong interest in studying abroad. Following the workshop, U.S. representatives say they have changed attitudes towards the Czech Republic and their study abroad opportunities. Before the workshop, many had the preconceived idea that the Czech Republic had a very "traditional" edu-

cation system, but now they are pleasantly surprised that they are actually very innovative in terms of education. They now believe that the U.S. universities should collaborate together to increase the number of U.S. STEM students studying in the Czech Republic, considering it is hard to do so alone.

The Czech representatives said the workshop provided them with some ways in which they can attempt to increase the number of U.S. students at their universities. One problem they want to address is that they believe their English language presentations on their websites do not do an adequate job. Additionally, they think it would be beneficial if they had a U.S. study abroad coordinator, because currently they only have one for ERASMUS, which encourages study abroad but only among Europe and not into the United States.

Overall, the STEM Capacity Building Workshop was very beneficial to both the U.S. representatives and the Czech representatives. On both sides, they learned about ways to increase the number of U.S. and Czech students studying at their universities. This workshop also provided the opportunity to create new relationships and encourage collaboration. The workshop provided the necessary first steps to having more international educational opportunities. Looking forward, now that each side knows where they need to improve, they can do that and start to create programs in collaboration with other universities.

How User Friendly University Websites Are From the Perspective of a U.S. Student

Kai Armstrong, Fairfield University

For many American students, coming to Prague for an entire semester seems like an extremely daunting idea. From leaving one's friends, family and culture, to immersing themselves in country that speaks an entirely different language, and above all else, figuring out what classes to take upon arrival in the Czech Republic, and everything in between the process is not easy. The Czech Republic has 10 faculties that offer programs for students looking to come and study on exchange. Each of the schools involved offer different programs tailored to specific majors and fields of study. For those who choose to study abroad without a program or as Fulbright Scholars, it is up to them to figure out which faculty will suit them best and help them achieve the greatest success. A previous STEM workshop through the Fulbright Commission discussed the user friendliness of Czech university websites and concluded; "The dense and unorganized nature of most Czech University websites was identified during the STEM workshop as a barrier to attracting U.S. students and university partnerships. Czech university STEM programs are not adequately described, and enrichment, internship and research opportunities are often left unmentioned." At the conclusion of this workshop, it was proposed that a U.S. student and U.S. study abroad professional should conduct a case study to identify specific shortcomings in Czech university webpage. As this semester's U.S. intern, I will be discussing my analysis of the individual faculties' websites and the strengths and weaknesses of the websites through my own eyes, as well as some of my peers through a short survey I conducted.

According to an article on Inside Higher Education, the rise of the internet has forced universities to change their marketing tactics when it comes to attracting possible students. Next, the article draws attention to the fact that simplifying the sites is an important first step in bridging the missing information. Kenneth Hartman, the former president of Drexel University Online states, "websites are the most important digital tool colleges have to reach students, so they need to be clear, easy to navigate, and mobile friendly." An additional note of importance

was made by Preston Davis, a director of instructional services at Northern Virginia Community College. Davis states, “If it takes too long for that information to load, or the navigation is too complicated and they’re not seeing something that is engaging them, they will disappear very quickly.” This is something that is easily fixable and should be fixed immediately because it loses the university potential business each time the potential student leaves the site and searches for another university to pursue their education due to the lack of information on the current website. After examining each of the ten websites, I can say that each of them could be more user friendly in one way or the other. Myself and those who I surveyed all agree that the first and foremost important feature is English translation. One of the most basic marketing tactics is an excellent appearance. Regardless of the actual content, appearance is responsible for about 50% if not more of any sale. In the following paragraphs, I am going to discuss what I found on each of the websites.

When I viewed the Czech Technical University page I was a bit confused as to how to change the language of the page. There is a small speech button that says “EN” inside it but until I found it I was very lost. I think that an improvement that could be made is if they used the flags as a means to change the language of the page. I also did not see an option to change the language to anything other than English which I found on every other website. After looking at the study abroad section I found that the English grammar is not very good which made me question the website’s credibility as a whole. This error could easily be a result of Google Translate, but I feel that this is something that should be corrected. The site has a section about what makes them unique which I think is a very good selling point. They advertise their International Student Club which provides an opportunity for foreign students to integrate themselves into life in the Czech Republic. I think this is a really excellent thing to have on the website as some students might be concerned about studying abroad and feeling isolated. They also include a contact for this club which is helpful to have on the website in case potential students want to reach out and learn more.

The VSB Technical University of Ostrava has a “Services for International Students and Academics” link on the homepage that provides a list of all the information and assistance they provide (including visa and passport support which I haven’t seen elsewhere). They also provide a direct email and phone number for additional questions which is very comforting to see as a student and I’m sure it

would be for a parent. The VSB Technical University also informs the prospective student that they are home to a brand new Contact Point for foreign students. This is a huge selling point because it provides peace of mind for the student to have on site assistance should they ever need it. The English translation of the site is perfect and also the sentences are short and sweet which prevents information overloads. I found that there was nothing bad with this site and did not have any additional suggestions.

University of West Bohemia did not do a great job with their international student section. I found that there was a link that looked like it would have the information for an international student but after clicking on it, I was redirected to a page that had a picture and nothing else. After clicking around I eventually found a section that provided more guidance for international students but there were no links to click on that would further explain what was listed. I think that the university would get more applicants if they added links and more information about the international student opportunity and experience.

After analyzing Brno University of Technology's website, I have found that despite some grammatical English errors. It is organized well, and set up very methodologically. The first thing on the page for International Students at BUT is the answer to the question "Why Study in Brno?" The testimony states that it is "Conveniently situated close to three capitals - Prague, Bratislava and Vienna, Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, is known as a centre of science, research and innovations. With more than 20 % of its population being students of six public universities, Brno is often dubbed „a city with student spirit“. Its citizens as well as visitors are offered numerous cultural, sporting and leisurely activities." I was especially drawn to read more on their page after reading this because of the selling points made above. After exploring the page I discovered all of the links they provided worked, as well as the fact that they had online resources for students.

The Technical University of Liberec has a unique feature in the form of a chat box that opens when you visit the page. Visitors have the opportunity to chat with someone and ask questions about the school. I think this is a really good thing to have because many people get nervous about the accuracy of the information they see and like to see validation from an official figure. That being said, the website also does a great job listing important information such as living accommodations

and what they come with- again not something I have seen on other websites and would suggest they add. They also include a video tutorial on how to order food through their dining hall. This website does a good job of eliminating the most likely points of confusion for potential students. I would not suggest they change anything except maybe including the total price for study abroad programs.

Both Charles University Faculty of Mathematics and Physics and the Charles University Faculty of Science have websites that include a lot of ERASMUS+ information. They both provide reasons to study in Prague at their universities while providing specifics such as the fact that Charles University ranked 34 in the World's Most Influential Universities, and that they are among the top 10 institutions in discrete mathematics. They also include their tuition price in CZK and Euros which is not something that can be said for every university. As we know, the Euro is a lot more than the CZK so when prospective American students and their parents see how cheap it is here in comparison they will likely be inclined to learn more. Overall, these two websites have everything a prospective student could need and more.

Palacky University Faculty of Science's website while it has all the right information, it is not super clear as to whether or not the information applies to students who are from the country or for exchange students. While perusing the site, I also noted that it is not inherently clear where to find information for expat students, only Erasmus students (Students who are from European countries coming to study in a different European country). This difference is important to note because the requirements for these applicants are usually not the same. Other than this, I feel that the website just needs to be reorganized and is otherwise one of the better websites I analyzed.

The next website I looked at was the Faculty of Informatics at Masaryk University. Again, the majority of the information that was provided pertained to ERASMUS+ students but they do include a link that redirects the user to the Centre for International Cooperation website. In addition, this page has details about the application process for international students. This website also has a link that provides prospective students with a list of courses taught in English and languages other than Czech. This list is a hugely important resource that I think all faculties should be required to have and keep up to date as it could be a deciding factor. There is a drop-down area that lists all the study programs available for students.

When you click on the page, it redirects you to a new page that provides information on the selected program. This is definitely the most thorough website I have assessed thus far covering everything from scholarships to the grading systems.

One of the first things you see on The University of South Bohemia Faculty of Science website is, “We are among the ten best rated faculties in the Czech Republic.” They also have links that when clicked on, have clear and comprehensive information about what is required for studying at this particular university. The website organizes the information in a way that is complete but not cluttered and the English translation is excellent.

After completing this analysis, I feel that it would be beneficial for the websites to be proof read and not just directly translated from Czech to English. Overall, I found that none of the websites were impossible to navigate but there is still definite room for improvement. As I mentioned previously, appearance is a marketing tactic and therefore it is important that they use all the resources possible to show their university in the best light possible.

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