

A STRATEGY FOR LEADING SUMMER MISSION EXPERIENCES FOR ASSEMBLIES OF GOD (AG) UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Short-term mission (STM) represents the largest and fastest growing—yet the least studied and most misunderstood segment—of worldwide mission activity. About three of every four graduates of Assemblies of God colleges will have completed at least one overseas STM trip by the time they graduate. Many will have done so as a requirement for graduation. The extent to which their experience translates into value for themselves and for those impacted by their experience is the subject of this project.

Though scholarly research is scant, the preponderance of empirical evidence suggests that while STM experiences do enhance the spiritual vitality of participants they often create more harm than good for their hosts in the receiving field. The problems with STM are numerous and varied, but they all relate in some way to ineffective preparation. Most STM preparation revolves around trip planning and travel issues to the neglect of the personal development of participants.

The findings of this project revealed that STM orientation that includes personality assessment, cross-cultural awareness, and missiological assumptions not only can reduce negative impressions but also generate benefit to participants as well as to the receiving field. To further enhance student preparation this project suggests that AG colleges offer a course that covers the appropriate structure and design, as well as the missiological implications of STM. This suggestion is particularly critical for students enrolled in programs that require an STM experience. This project affirms that investing in STM experiences for AG college students is a worthy allocation of resources, but only if the investment is managed properly.