

Introduction

“**THE FRONTIERS** are not east or west, north or south; but wherever a person fronts a fact.” So wrote that provincial yet wonderfully expansive soul, Henry David Thoreau, in the journal describing his travels down the Concord and Merrimack rivers. *This* journal is name *Frontiers*, and its subject matter evokes Thoreau’s definition: study abroad as the experience of “fronting facts,” of encountering the realities of and engaging actively in new and different cultures. The study abroad experience occurs at the place where two cultures meet, at a geographical, social, and cultural border. *Frontiers* will focus on the substance of this endeavor, on the themes, issues, problems, and challenges of being on the frontiers of cultures.

The idea for *Frontiers* grew out of the recognition that the majority of writings about study abroad are descriptive accounts rather than analytical studies. The founding editors of this journal share the conviction that study abroad is a legitimate field of academic study in need of a consistent forum for research-based articles that analyze rather than describe. We share the hope that *Frontiers* will inspire thoughtful analysis and rigorous research on study abroad in moving the field forward.

This first issue of *Frontiers* reflects the journal’s interdisciplinary perspective. Study abroad is a complex area of study, encompassing a broad range of issues that are legitimate subjects for study by a number of different disciplines. The articles in this inaugural volume reflect this variety of disciplinary perspectives, from an examination of gender and culture clash amongst American students studying in Costa Rica to a study of the personal stresses of cultural immersion in West Africa to an analysis of international educational exchange in European countries. This variety of approaches to the subject matter will continue to the strength of *Frontiers*. Rather than standardize footnoting practices, we have maintained those used by the authors to reflect their specific disciplinary or cultural norm. This first edition of *Frontiers* contains an essay as well, and we will continue to publish an occasional essay on a study abroad topic.

As we set out across the frontiers that have defined study abroad we cross into uncharted territory, but with a purpose that defines our path. For Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau’s neighbor and sometime hiking companion, the Frontier was a metaphor for experience; it meant a “self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end.” *Frontiers* will heed Emerson’s advice and be quick and strong (to) burst over that boundary on all sides.” Join us in the journey of encountering the frontiers of our field.

Brian Whalen, Editor