



# Communicating Study Abroad Opportunities to Student-Athletes: What's Happening at Division I Schools?



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## Abstract

The opportunity to participate in high impact practices in college is often beneficial and rewarding (Kuh, 2008). More specifically, the opportunity college students have to study abroad for a certain duration of time is a unique experience for many reasons. In particular, students return with a new perspective on culture, a greater knowledge and understanding of the world, and open-mindedness (Hadis, 2005). Students also are impacted in the areas of intercultural and personal development (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Dwyer, 2004), academic attainment (Dobly, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010), and increased self-confidence (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; O'Neil, 2017). These aspects help with future employment as they show experience and ability to adapt to new situations (Dwyer, 2004). Over the years, studying abroad has become gradually more important in developing better educational programs at colleges (Kitsantas, 2004). O'Neil (2017) emphasized the importance of study abroad opportunities at colleges as they "have evolved to be more inclusive of students' desired durations, topics of study, and the locations of the host countries" (p.1). The duration of study abroad programs also has an impact on the students (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Dwyer, 2004). Dwyer (2004) found that students benefited more from longer durations of study abroad programs. The purpose of this summer experience was to understand the landscape of Division I student-athlete opportunities in studying abroad. Content analysis was used to analyze findings from Division I institutions websites (n=351) to better understand study abroad offerings and information provided for student-athletes.

## Background and Significance

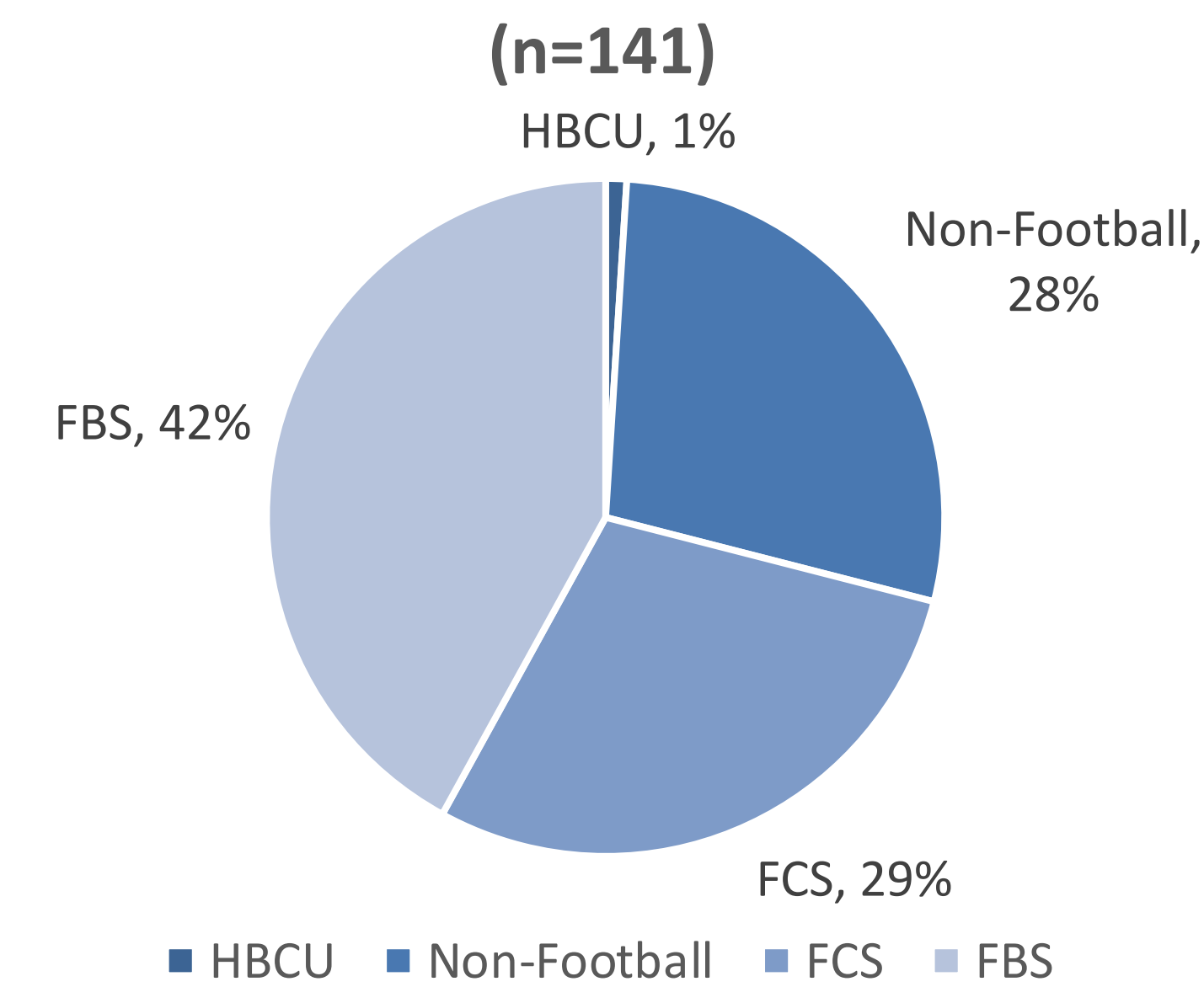
There have been numerous studies which address the impact studying abroad has on college students. Specifically, articles go into depth on the benefits of studying abroad and how the experience enhances personal development and exposure to other cultures (Dwyer, & Peters, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; O'Neil, 2017; Paus & Robinson, 2008). However, there have been very few studies that gather in-depth information about the opportunities student-athletes have to participate in high impact practices such as study abroad, specifically at a Division I institution (O'Neil, 2017; Henderson, 2018). O'Neil (2017) found that a strong campus commitment toward studying abroad and coaches' support were two important factors to a successful study abroad experience for student-athletes. However, one barrier that continues to exist is the "uniform, mythical understanding that student-athletes just cannot study abroad" (Salzbreener, 2015). One of the reasons this myth continues appears to be a lack of communication. A 2012 study of perceived barriers to studying abroad, conducted by the British Council, found that "just 24 percent of American students said they had enough information to make a decision about studying abroad" (Fischer, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the information that is provided to student-athletes about study abroad experiences at their institution.

## Purpose Statement

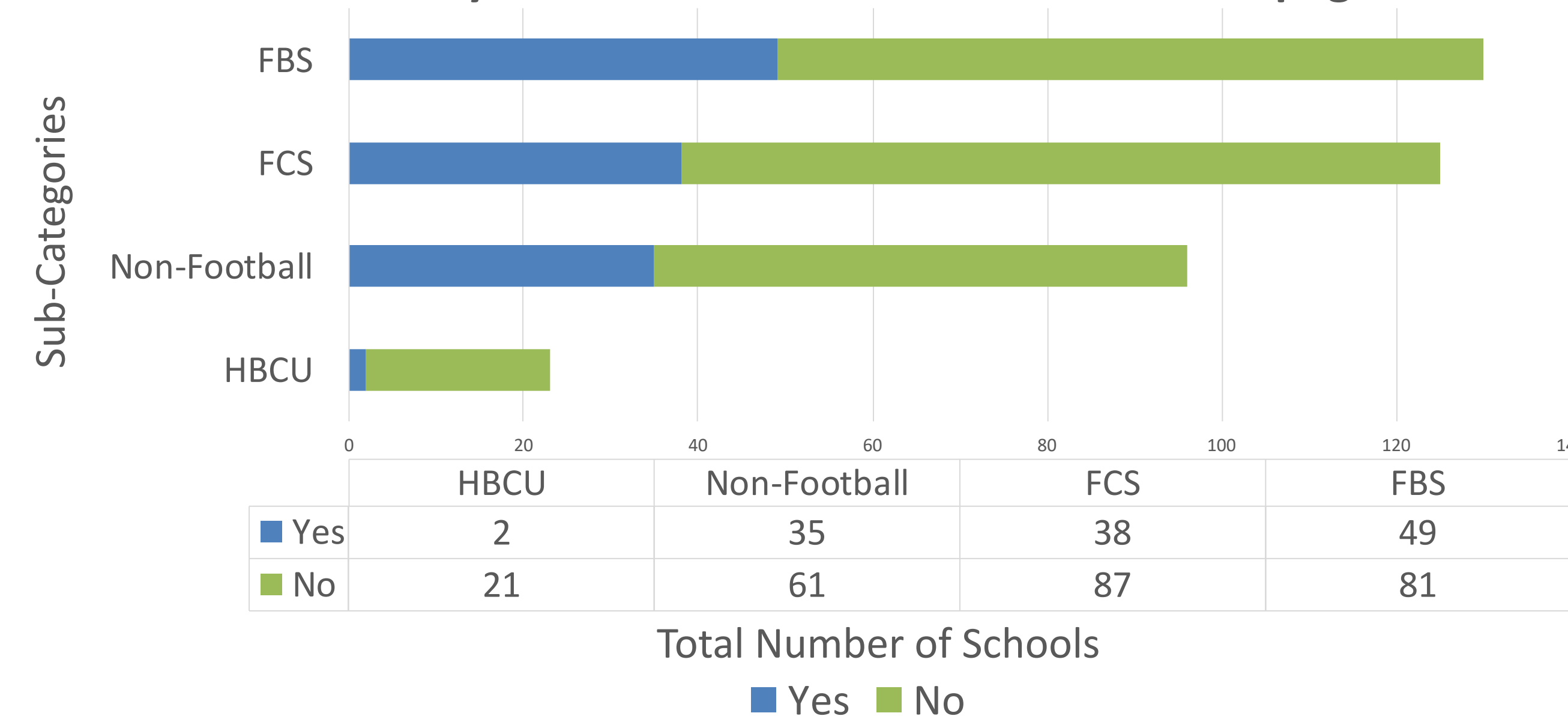
The purpose of this research is to understand the landscape of Division I student-athlete opportunities for studying abroad. Specifically, identifying study abroad opportunities targeted to student-athletes at Division I programs on both the academic and athletic webpages and examining the benefits and challenges associated with studying abroad.

## Results

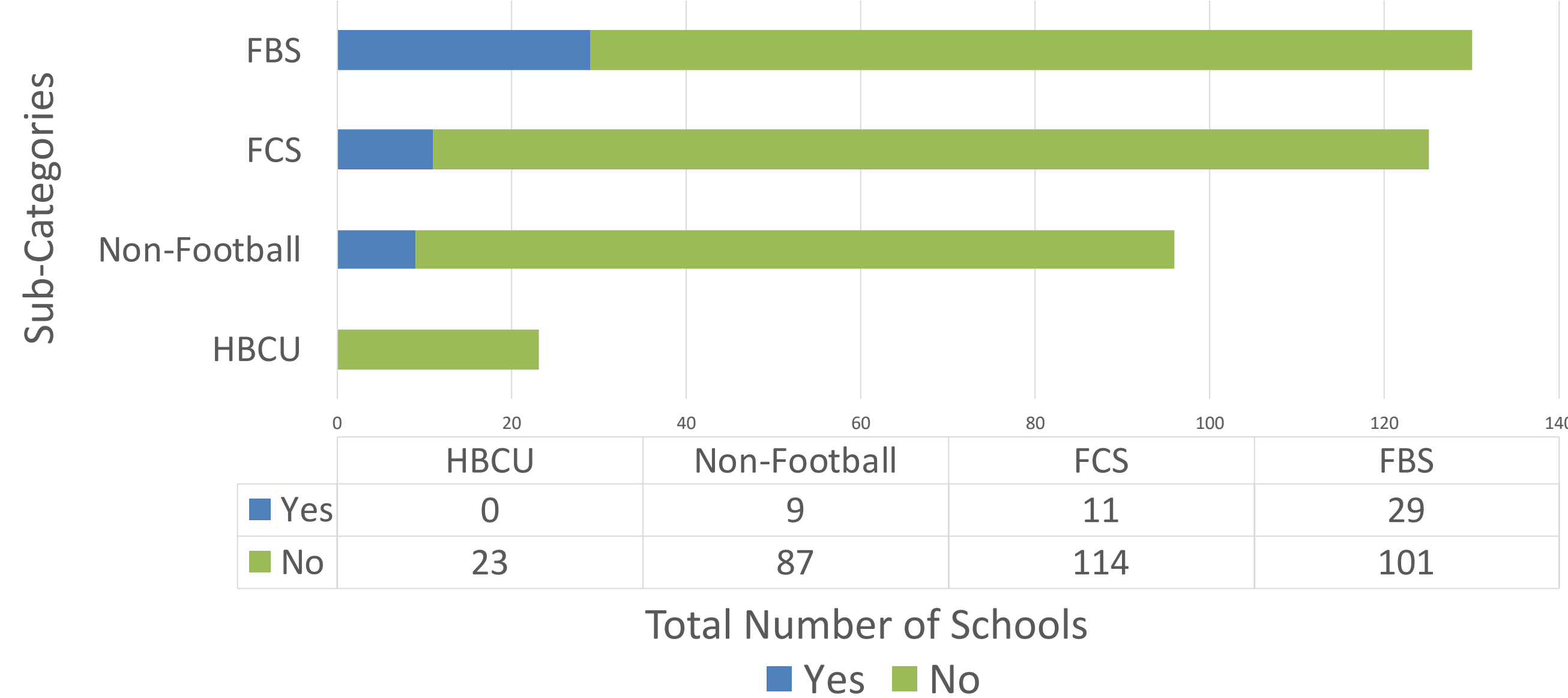
Number of Schools Providing Study Abroad Information to Student-Athletes (n=141)



Division I Sub-Category Comparison: Study Abroad Information on Athletic Webpages



Division I Sub-Category Comparison: Study Abroad Information on Academic Webpages



In general, Division I universities are providing very little information on their academic or athletic webpages. From the information provided, some benefits and barriers include:

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|--|---|
| <p><b>Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience and education abroad</li> <li>• Ability to play/train abroad</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> party programs available for student-athletes</li> </ul> | <p><b>Barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term/summer programs</li> <li>• Individualized efforts (not all athletes have the same opportunities with the programs offered)</li> <li>• Financial costs</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Methodology

Data were collected from 351 Division I university academic and athletic department websites that provide information on study abroad experiences for student-athletes. The analysis of websites was guided by the following sample questions:

- Does the institution provide information, specifically to student-athletes, about study abroad programs/opportunities? If yes, what information is provided?
  - Is there information on the benefits of studying abroad?
  - Is there information about the barriers to studying abroad?
  - Is there information about the protocol or logistics of studying abroad?
  - Is there other advice for student-athletes about the overall study abroad program?
- Where is the information provided?

### Athletic Webpage Information

0	No information
1	Information on past experiences of student-athletes or teams
2	Information on how to study abroad
3	Both 1 and 2

### Academic Webpage Information

0	No information
1	Information on study abroad from an internal source
2	Information on study abroad from an external source
3	Both 1 and 2

- Is there a difference across Sub-Categories in information provided?
- Are there study abroad programs offered specifically for student-athletes or are student-athletes directed toward general student population opportunities?

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1:

Present more information on academic and athletic webpages for student-athletes. Only 32 universities provide substantial information on both their academic and athletic webpages specific to student-athletes.

### Recommendation 2:

In order for student-athletes to maintain training while studying abroad, more schools can promote outsourced study abroad programs such as Global Players or Coach for College.

### Recommendation 3:

Universities could provide in-depth information and tables outlining when student-athletes are able to study abroad. For example, providing a chart for both men's and women's sports outlining the timeframes student-athletes are allowed to study abroad. The table below shows an outline similar to the table provided on the academic webpage from the University of Minnesota for women's sports.

Sport	Women's Sports					
	Fall Sem.	Winter Break	Spring Sem.	Spring Break	Summer	Spring Sr. Yr.
Basketball				Y	M	
Golf		Y			Y	
Gymnastics				Y	Y	
Soccer		M		Y	Y	Y
Softball					Y	
Swimming/Diving				Y	M	
Track & Field/CC					Y	
Tennis		M		M	Y	
Volleyball		M		Y	M	Y

### KEY:

Y - Times generally work; M - Less optimal times, but still possible; Blank - Times to avoid