

NAFSA 2016: Report to Funders

1. Introduction

This report details the 'Study in Wales' presence at the NAFSA 2016 conference and exhibition, and makes recommendations for future activity for Welsh universities' NAFSA presence going forward.

2. Background

NAFSA or 'Association of International Educators' is a non-profit organisation for professionals in all areas of international education. This includes education abroad advice and administration, international student advice, campus internationalisation, admissions, outreach, overseas advice, and English as a second language administration.

Each year, the NAFSA Annual Conference brings together between 9,000 and 14,000 practitioners and industry professionals in the field of international education for five days of networking, workshops and educational sessions. The event is a one-stop-shop for business between countries in higher education and research from across the globe. It is the largest single international higher education event in the world.

In 2016, the NAFSA Annual Conference took place in Denver, Colorado from 30th May to the 3rd June. Wales' universities attended the conference, hosting a booth in the exhibition hall, holding a 'Study in Wales' panel session on the conference floor and hosting a reception for international partners. The Welsh presence was funded by Universities Wales (Unis Wales), British Council Wales (BC Wales) and Welsh Government (WG) through the 'Global Wales' partnership as well as through contributions from the participating Welsh universities.

This report is being submitted to the Vice Chancellors of Wales' universities, WG officials, and BC Wales.

3. Benefits of attending NAFSA

Universities

NAFSA is a worldwide conference and as such is a cost effective way of raising universities' profiles on the international stage and meeting partners from around the globe in one location. The meetings conducted at NAFSA help to foster the relationship between our universities and key international partners, most of which send fee-paying students to Wales. This year colleagues met with around 250 overseas partners¹, from study abroad and exchange partners to institutional and departmental level collaborations. Keeping those partners updated on changes that could influence the decisions of their students is vital to maintain a good working relationship. Colleagues from the participating Welsh universities all cite this as being the primary benefit for them of taking part.

¹ See 'International Partners and Contacts', page 4

NAFSA conference delegates this year came from more than 100 countries. 60% of participants were based in the USA. Of the non US participants, the make-up was:

- Europe 40%
- Asia / Pacific 34%
- Latin America 9%
- North America 16%
- Africa 1%

Wales

The US is one of Global Wales' two priority markets, making the NAFSA conference an invaluable opportunity to showcase our offer. As well as directly benefitting Welsh universities, NAFSA provides a high-profile platform to boost Wales' profile more broadly. Universities in Wales work together at the event promoting Wales as a whole, with their respective university promotion underpinning the Wales-wide messages.

The Study in Wales stand provides a visual centrepiece for promoting Wales as a tourist destination. The images shown in Annex A show the two large banners showcasing the Welsh coastline, which provide a striking backdrop to the stand and which generate a significant amount of interest from passers-by at the event. In addition to promoting Wales as a destination to colleagues representing universities across the globe, every international student that comes to Wales attracts on average two overseas visitors, resulting in over 50,000 international visits to Wales by friends and family of international students in 2014-15.

Research collaboration between universities in Wales and the USA also stimulates partnerships with industry, thereby encouraging further investment to Wales. Despite the fact that NAFSA is not intended as a conference to drive university-industry collaboration, the indirect benefit of the wider institutional partnerships consolidated at NAFSA should not be ignored.

In summary, for Wales NAFSA is an opportunity to create new relationships for student exchanges, recruit incoming students, and to promote outward mobility for students in Wales to study in other countries. NAFSA also provides a platform to promote Wales as a country on the global stage, boosting tourism, enabling departmental exchanges and promoting industry links with our universities.

4. Funding for Study in Wales at NAFSA 2016

Universities in Wales had a budget of £57,500 for NAFSA 2016; this was £5,000 higher than anticipated due to the participation of an additional university. The budget was comprised of

£30,500 from participating universities and a commitment of £27,000 from the Global Wales partnership.

Aberystwyth University (AU), Bangor University (BU), Cardiff University (CU), Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU), Swansea University (SU) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) each invested £5,000 in the Study in Wales stand. The University of South Wales (USW) also attended the conference but did not opt for a table on the booth. USW contributed £500 for participation in the Wales reception.

The budget increase meant that an underspend of £5,943.67 was achieved. Global Wales's actual contribution to NAFSA therefore decreased to **£21,056.33**, with a commitment that the remainder would be ringfenced for NAFSA 2017. The breakdown of expenditure for Wales at NAFSA 2016 is included in Annex B.

5. Wales Activity at NAFSA 2016

Wales' presence at NAFSA comprised of two principal activities: the Study in Wales booth and the Wales reception. All the Welsh universities that attended provided comprehensive feedback on their attendance and participation at both events (detailed below). Universities met a range of new and existing partners and will be monitoring the impact of this activity moving forward as part of their wider international activities.

i) *The 'Study in Wales' Booth*

The booth is the most visual element of a country's presence at NAFSA and feedback from NAFSA 2015 was that Wales had a much improved presence compared to previous years. Following this positive feedback, we decided to reuse the 'Study in Wales' branding and materials from 2015, enabling us to save on design and production costs and providing continuity in terms of the brand. The booth (20' x 20') allowed for meeting space for the six universities who had contributed financially to the booth. University colleagues, their partners and passers-by all commented on the quality of the booth's finish and its striking appearance.

Catering was organised for the booth for a 'Study in Wales' tea on the afternoon of the 31st May. There were over 100 attendees present at this event. Another addition to this year's booth was a photo-booth, which was hugely successful for networking and in drawing interest in the stand.

ii) *The Wales Reception*

The Wales reception has become an annual event at NAFSA and is an opportunity for Welsh universities to meet with partners, maintain existing relationships, and to showcase the best of Wales. Given that the event has built a reputation for being welcoming and engaging, the decision was taken to organise a small scale event in terms of venue capacity and to invite all of the Welsh universities' key partners and contacts. This made for a busy

and vibrant atmosphere and maintained partners' expectations in terms of the type of event staged.

The reception was well attended with the venue full to capacity (100 guests). The venue was decorated with Welsh flags and bunting and catering was provided. The Vice Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, Professor April McMahon, gave a speech on the importance of our universities international partnerships. The speech, which was very well received, was also an opportunity to promote all of the Welsh universities and to highlight the key messages of the Study in Wales brand.

6. International Partners and Contacts

This year saw a slight drop in the number of partners and contacts made. This is most likely due to the drop in attendance of NAFSA generally this year, from 12,000 in 2015 to 9,500 in 2016. It is thought that this decrease was linked to the location of the conference.

The feedback detailed on the following pages has been provided by representatives of the institutions who attended:

- Aberystwyth University (AU);
- Bangor University (BU);
- Cardiff University (CU);
- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Swansea University (SU);
- University of South Wales (USW)
- The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

The table below outlines the number of **existing partners** met and the number of **new partners** met during NAFSA. It also shows the figures from 2014-2015 for comparison:

University	2014 Existing Partners	2015 Existing Partners	2016 Existing Partners	2014 New Partners	2015 New Partners	2016 New Partners
AU	29	27	30	34	22	33
BU	29	35	53	22	21	22
CU	14	36	27	22	38	16
SU	44	40	27	5	8	13
USW	16	34	17	18	11	6
UWTSD	n/a	14	11	n/a	6	4

Total	132	186	165	101	106	94

7. Feedback on the Wales Booth and Reception

The Study in Wales presence – both booth and reception - received positive feedback from Welsh university representatives, their international partners and passers-by. Below are some examples of their feedback:

Excellent; the booth stood out with the amazing backdrop. The photo-booth was a massive and very much appreciated draw to the stand; it was well received by partners and a great way to put names to faces for future reference

Kay Llewellyn, Exchange and Study Abroad Coordinator, Swansea University

The reception was well-planned, with many partners choosing to stay the whole evening. Plenty of food and drink!

Annika Axelsen, Study Abroad Manager, Cardiff University

8. Recommendations following NAFSA 2015

The key recommendations for NAFSA 2016 following on from the previous conference were:

1. To secure a commitment of £5000 each from the Welsh universities keen to participate on the stand of £5000 (or £500 from those opting out of the stand and taking part in the reception). This will form part of the funding package already secured and agreed by the Global Wales partners and should be early enough in the NAFSA timetable, ideally by end September 2015, to ensure a prime location and significant and professional presence in the exhibition hall.

Achieved – This was only possible due to an early commitment from Global Wales and the participating institutions.

2. To ensure the Wales booth is located within the 'UK sector' in the exhibition hall, to emphasise that Wales is part of the UK – alongside the BC pavilion and the Study in Scotland stand. This is to a large extent dependent on the outcome of Recommendation 1.

Achieved – Study in Wales was located next to the British Council stand in the exhibition hall

3. To ensure enough scope for universities to display individual branding on the Study in Wales stand.

Achieved – new signs were produced using some of the additional funding and these can be reused in following years.

4. To use WG, BC and Welsh university networks to explore corporate sponsorship for a NAFSA reception, for example, a Welsh drinks company. If successful, explore celebrity alumni, noteworthy academics, or honorary degree holders to ‘host’ the reception event.

Ongoing – this was not possible at NAFSA 2016, but as the conference will take place in LA in 2017, the team is exploring options for celebrity and alumni involvement through the Welsh Government office in California.

9. The future of Wales at NAFSA: Next Steps

The 2017 NAFSA annual conference and exhibition is taking place from 28 May – 2 June in Los Angeles, California. The conference theme is ‘Expanding Community, Strengthening Connections’.

Recommendations for future NAFSA conferences

1. Ensure early payment of funding contributions for NAFSA 2017 to allow for flexibility to manage unfavourable exchange rate.
2. Use WG, BC and Welsh university networks to explore corporate sponsorship for a NAFSA reception. If successful, explore celebrity alumni, noteworthy academics, or honorary degree holders to ‘host’ the reception event.
3. Consider whether any materials, including those pertaining to the booth design, need replacing or upgrading for future conferences and assess the cost implications of this.

Annex A: Photographs from NAFSA 2016

Study in Wales Booth



Stand Reception



A selection of other booths





Wales reception





Annex B: Breakdown of NAFSA Budget

NAFSA 2016 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME	£	\$
Study in Wales	£21,056.33	
AU	£5,000.00	
BU	£5,000.00	
CU	£5,000.00	
SU	£5,000.00	
UWTSD	£5,000.00	
Cardiff Met	£5,000.00	
USW	£500.00	
	£51,556.33	\$82359.97
BUDGETED EXPENDITURE		
Booth Space	£19,574.01	\$29,457.91
Booth Design Fees	£5,429.59	\$7,615.00
Booth furniture fees	£11,364.66	\$15,678.68
Reception	£8,343.09	\$11,635.75
Tea and cakes	£1,508.67	\$2,134.01
Attendance costs UW	£2,805.75	
Photo Booth	£2,147.88	\$3,050.00
Cost for banners	£0.00	\$0.00
Promo Materials	£702.00	
Refund of booth costs	-£319.32	-\$415.96
	Costs	£51,556.33 \$69,155.39
	current balance	£0.00