

# **Changing Perspectives in California: A Transformative Summer Exchange for Criminology Students from Stockholm University and Sonoma State University**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sonoma State University (SSU), a California four-year public university, hosted 16 Swedish criminology college students from Stockholm University. The students participated in an educational and cultural exchange program from June 13 to June 20, 2024. We had five SSU student ambassadors participate in the program. Their role was to represent California and the university, as well as to assist the Swedish students during their stay. It was a rewarding cross-cultural academic experience for everyone involved. The Swedish students expanded their views of California and the United States through engaging experiences with the SSU student ambassadors, exploring historical sites like Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge, and immersing themselves in California culture. They also heard presentations from leading criminologists about crime prevention, as well as from practitioners, such as the SSU Police Chief, on current issues regarding what is being done to reform policing in California and the United States. The SSU ambassadors, many of whom had never left California, gained an international perspective by representing California and SSU. The ambassadors indicated that they had a greater desire to study abroad, either in a short-term or semester-long academic program. Faculty members enjoyed working with and teaching the Swedish students. This experience instilled in them a renewed pride in being Californians. This international experience also helped inform our teaching and has helped increase our scholarly production. We implemented this program cost-effectively, allowing more students to attend. We hope in the future to expand it to include a cross-cultural experience.

**Keywords:** criminology; criminal justice; experiential learning; short-term study abroad; university internationalization