

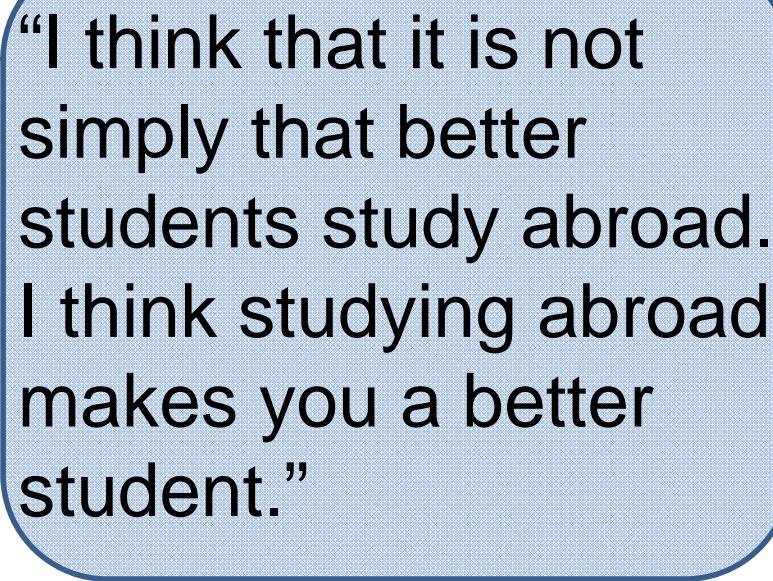
Academic Achievement and Study Abroad

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May College
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Academic Achievement and Study Off-Campus

- Began with Alissa Beideck SLU '11 and her SLU Fellowship idea



“I think that it is not simply that better students study abroad. I think studying abroad makes you a better student.”

Previous Literature

- Supports a positive relationship between study abroad and self-reported academic and intellectual growth (Graban, 2007; McKeown, 2009)
- Supports an increase in academic focus (Hadis, 2005)

“[Students who study abroad are] less often distracted by non-academic, age-related stimuli”
(p. 58).

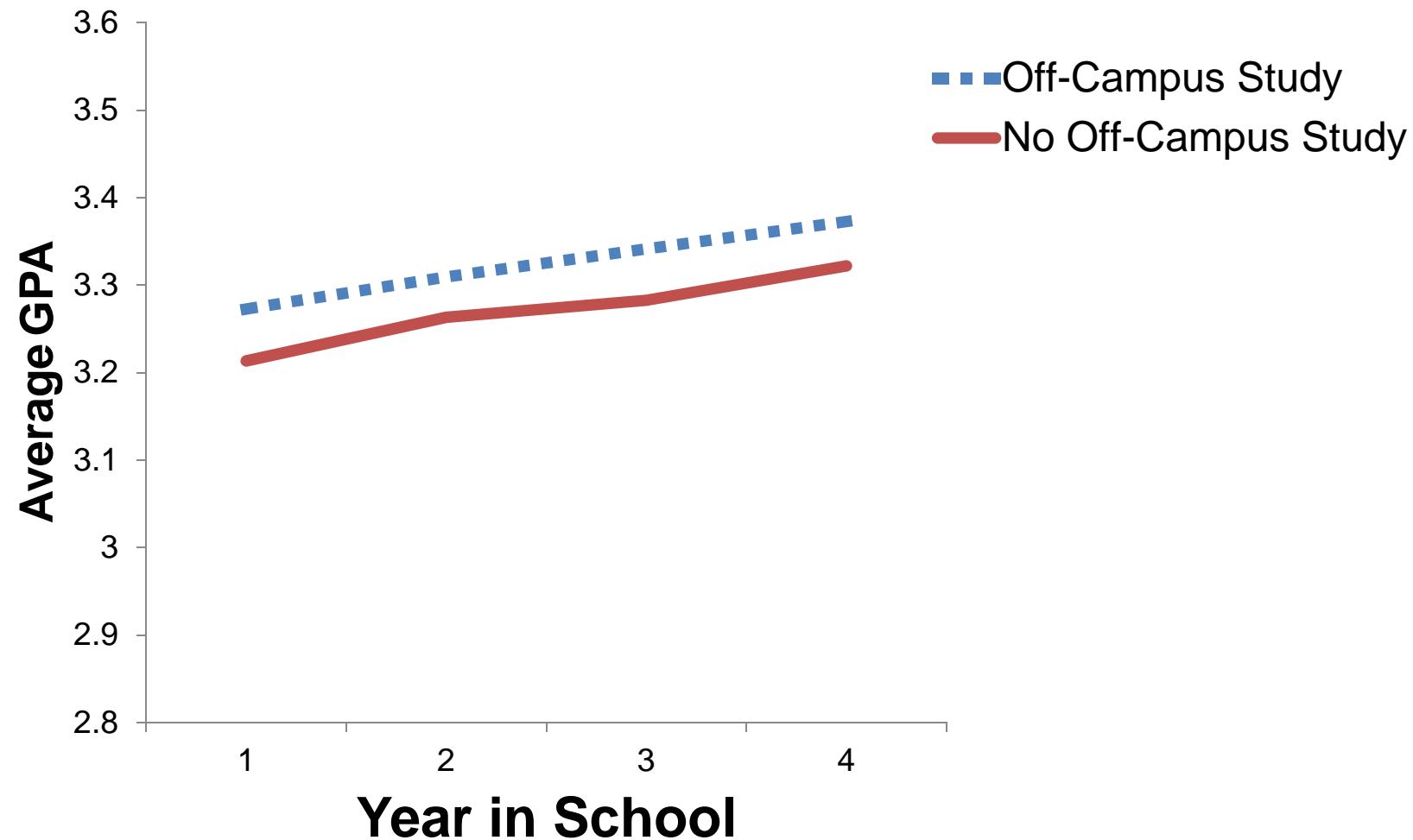
Quantitative Study

- Study focus –
 - relationship between study off-campus and academic achievement as measured by GPA and participation in an optional SYE
- GPA –
 - limited measure of academic achievement but objective and easily measurable and comparable

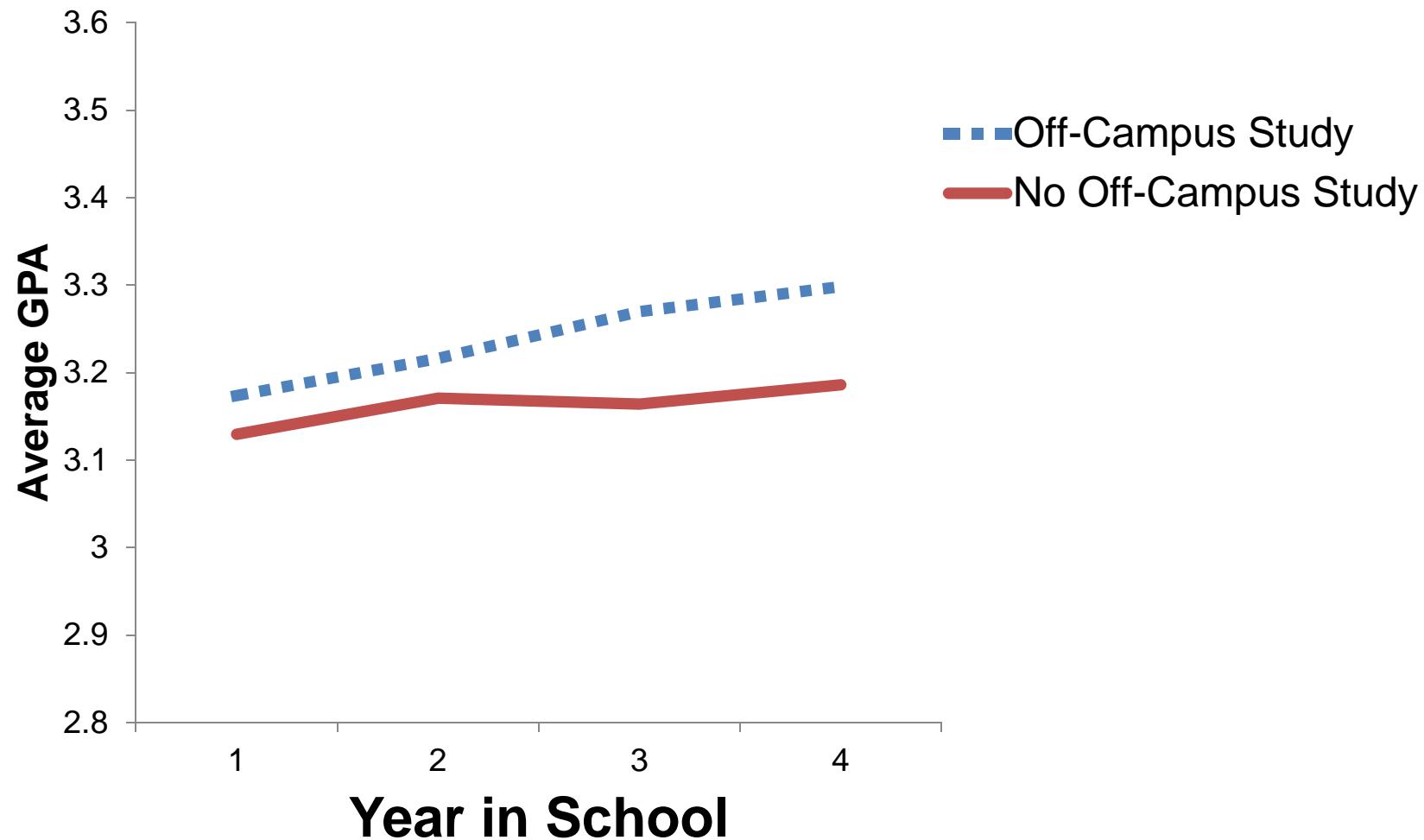
Quantitative Study

- Archival dataset –
 - GPA information for all 4-year graduates from 2006-2010
 - International students excluded
- Main measure –
 - GPA trajectories: change in a student's cumulative GPA across the four years
- Main comparison –
 - between the GPA trajectories of students (with GPAs at or above 2.8) who did and did not study off-campus in their junior year

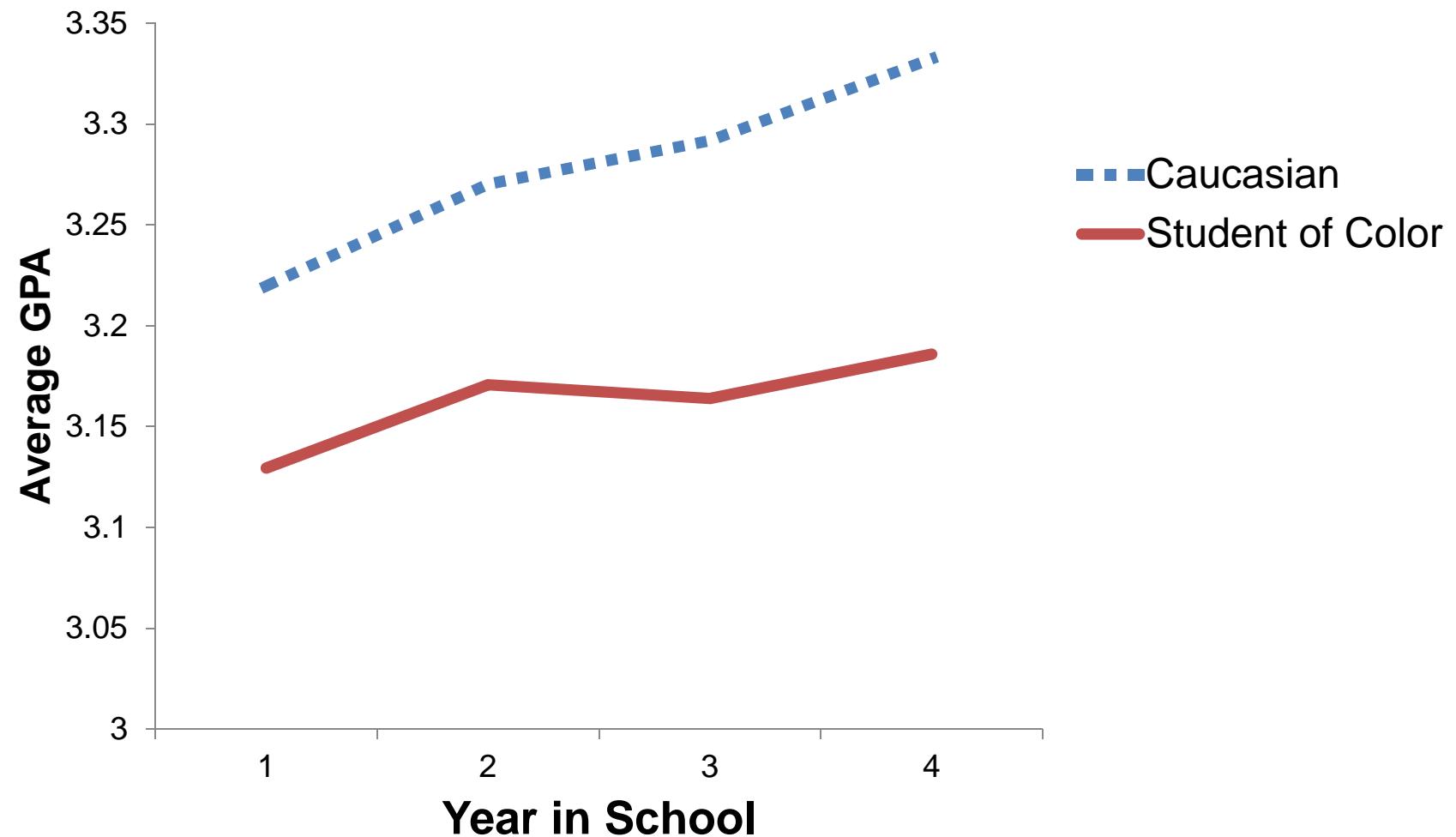
Significantly higher GPAs for students who study off-campus but no difference in trajectory slope



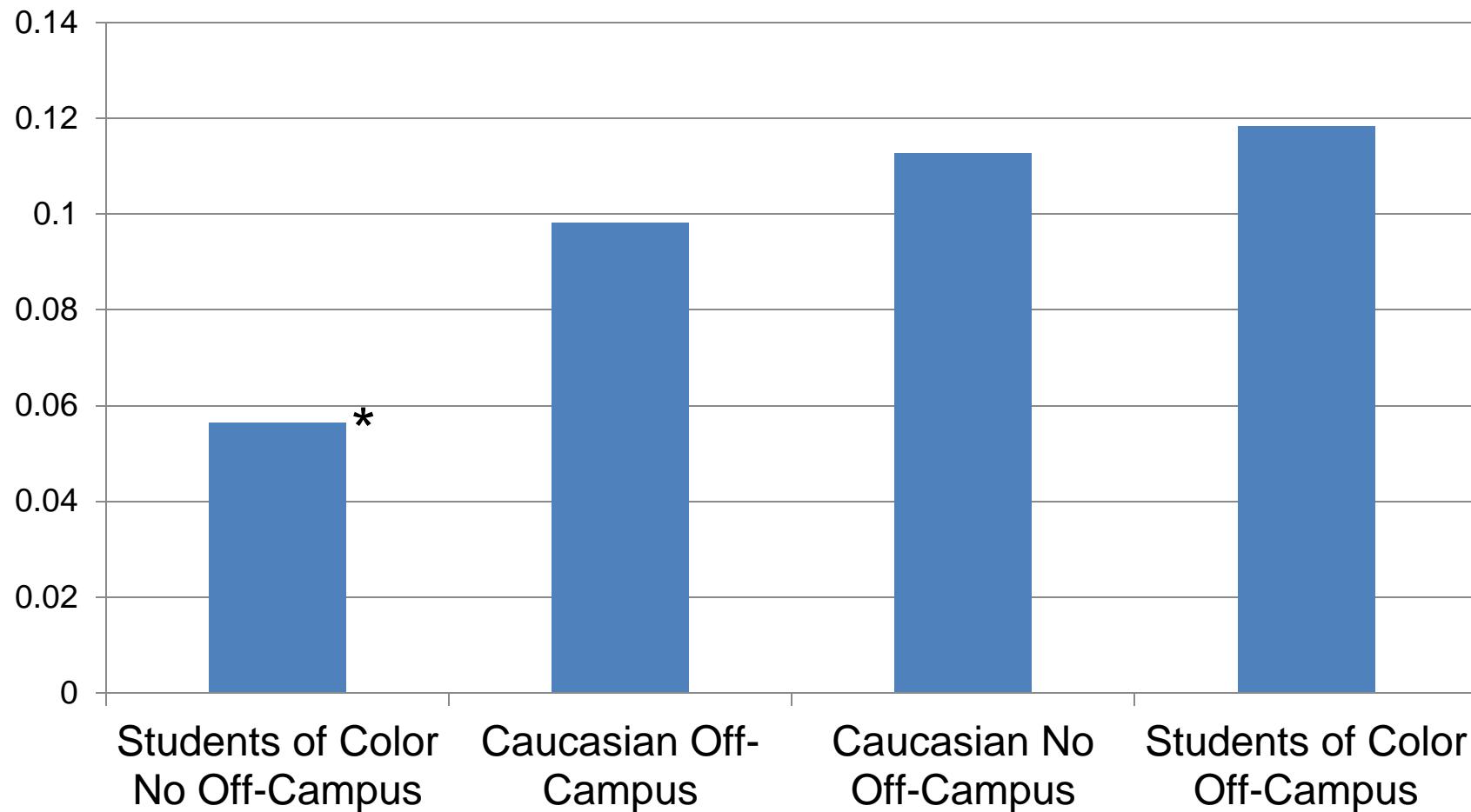
Students of color only: trend in direction of more linear trajectory for students who study off-campus



No off-campus study students only: significantly more linear trajectory for Caucasian students compared to students of color



Average GPA gains from end of first to end of senior year

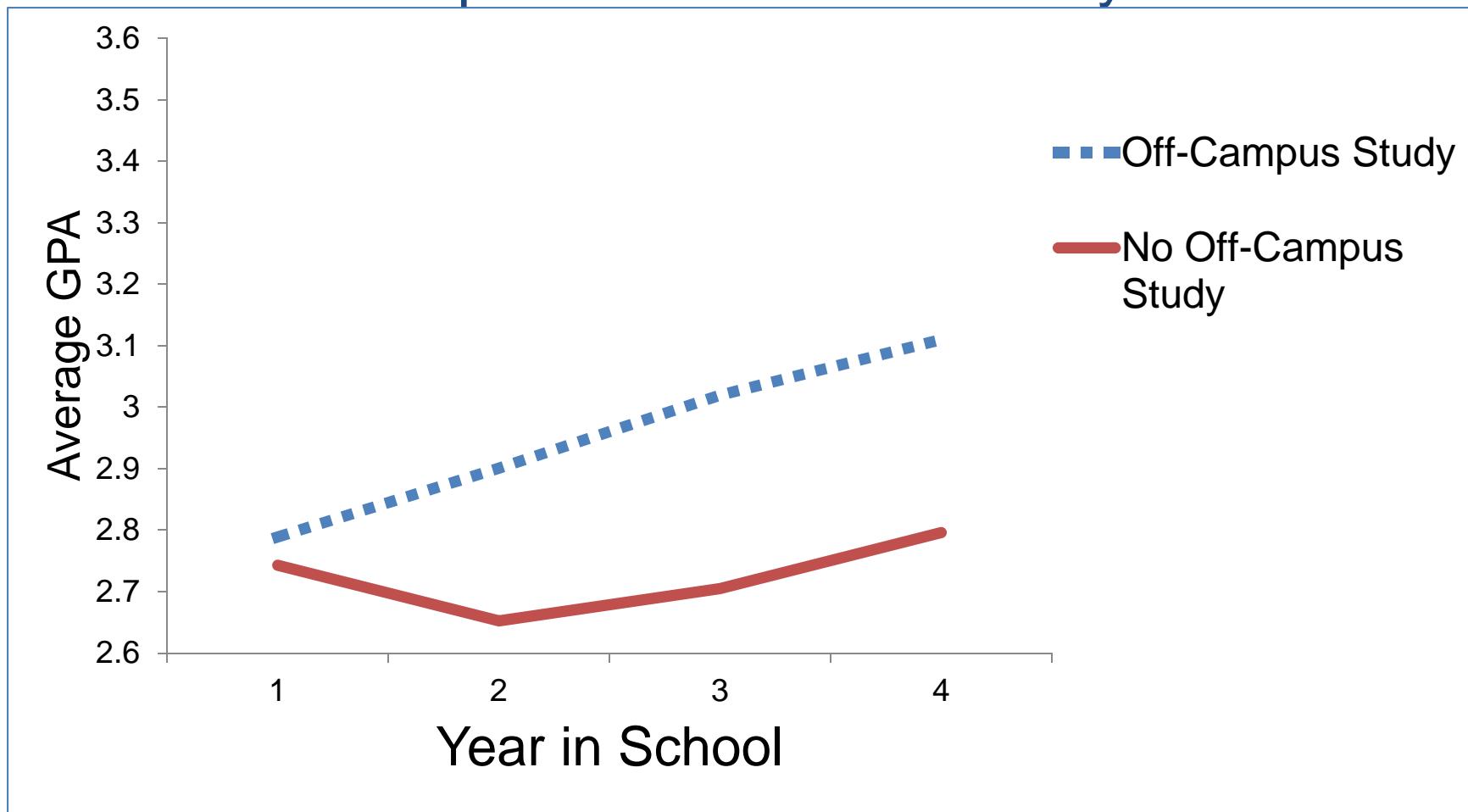


*indicates significantly lower gains than other three groups.

Lowest Quartile Students

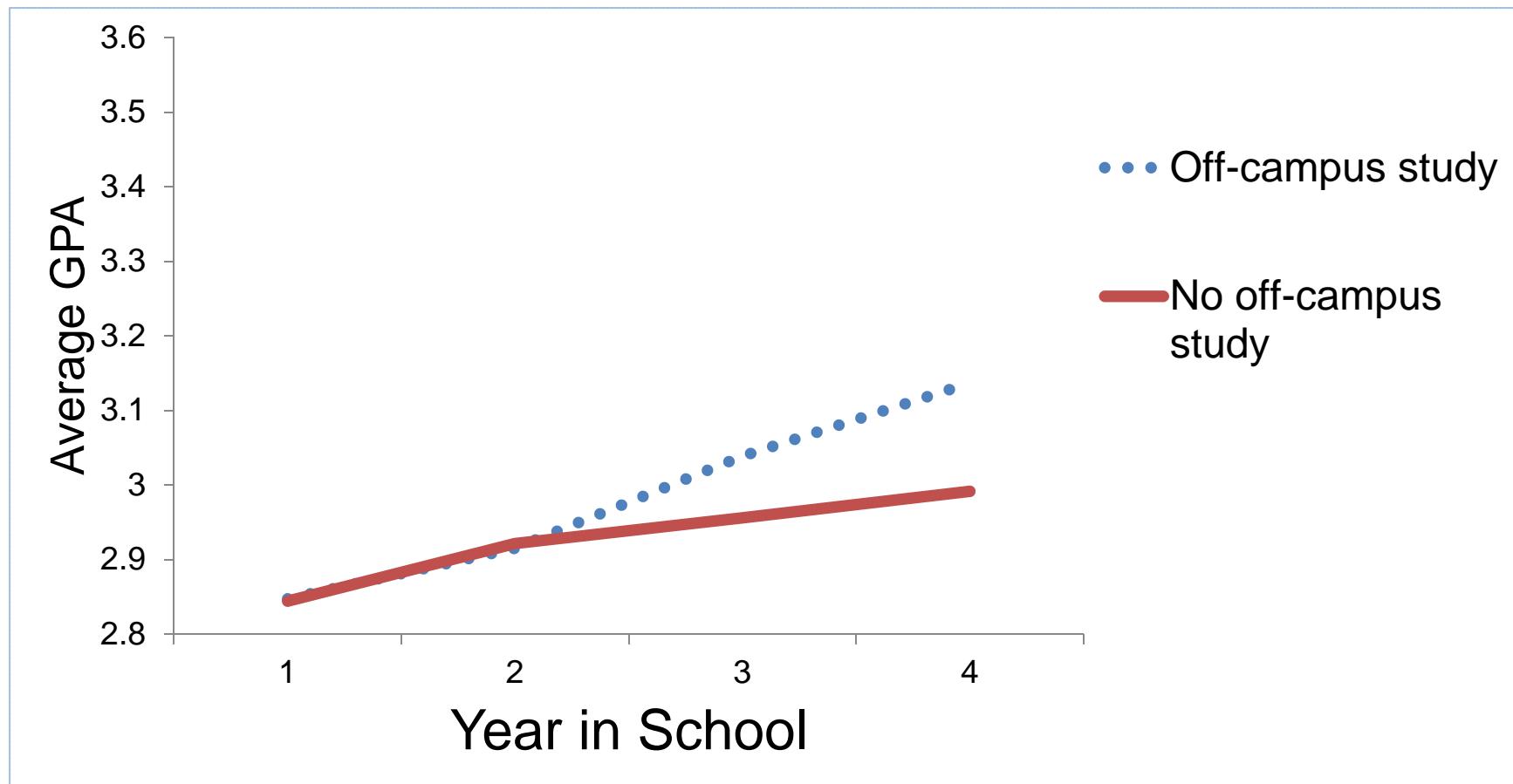
- Might those unusual, underachieving students who study off-campus experience the most academic gains?
- Matched students from the lowest quartile at the end of the sophomore year who did and did not study abroad on sex, race, major and
 - GPA at the end of the first-year
 - And GPA at the end of the first and sophomore years

Significant difference in GPA trajectories for sample from the lowest quartile* matched on first-year GPA



*among all students based on GPA at end of sophomore year

Significant difference in GPA trajectories for sample from the lowest quartile* matched on first-year and sophomore GPAs



*among all students based on GPA at end of sophomore year

Qualitative Follow-up

- Semi-structured interviews with 15 graduating seniors
 - 6 participants had studied off-campus
 - 6 participants were among the lowest quartile at the end of their sophomore year
 - 3 of those students had studied off-campus
- Conducted a content analysis of transcripts to uncover themes

Qualitative Follow-up

- Themes relevant to the off-campus study decision:
 - Students' perceived challenge from adjusting to college affected their decision to take on the challenge of off-campus study
 - No off-campus study student
 - Off-campus study student

“I definitely feel out of my element, not just due to the weather. But the climate of people that are attracted to St. Lawrence is not what I’m used to.”

“For the most part, I do feel comfortable, and I make new friends all the time, and being able to do that makes me feel like it’s not that uncomfortable here. I felt like I would be alright to be away.”

Qualitative Follow-up

- Themes relevant to the study off-campus decision:
 - Importance of academic advising in the decision to study off-campus
 - No off-campus study students
 - Off-campus study student

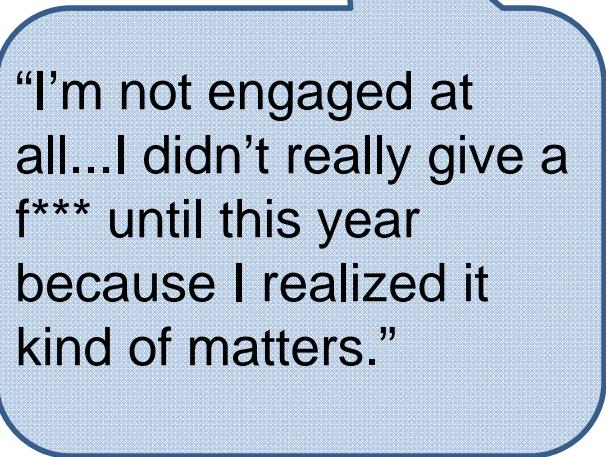
“My advisor is not helpful; she doesn’t do anything.”

“I don’t think my advisors have influenced my academic plan.”

“[Study abroad] started coming up in advising meetings. [She said] pick the program that was right for me.”

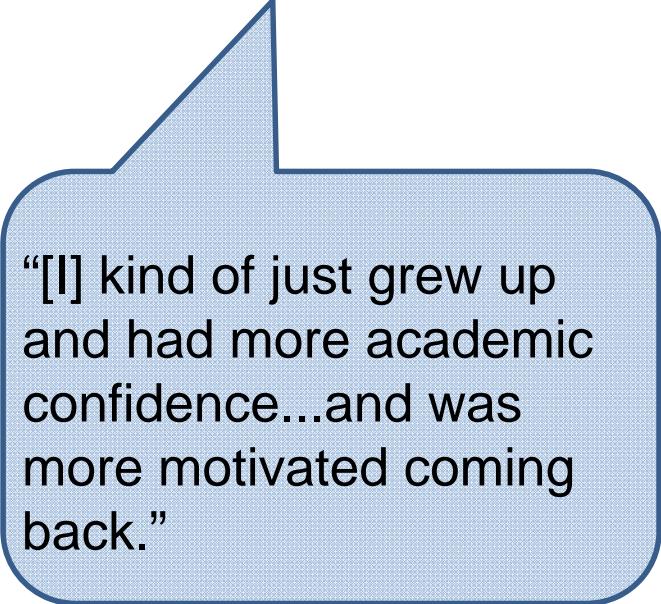
Qualitative Follow-up

- Theme relevant to changes upon return:
 - Increased academic focus and confidence
 - No off-campus study student



"I'm not engaged at all...I didn't really give a f*** until this year because I realized it kind of matters."

- Off-campus study student



"[I] kind of just grew up and had more academic confidence...and was more motivated coming back."