

Preparing Faculty to Teach Abroad

Best Practices and Lessons Learned



“It’s crucial to draw on the expertise of faculty with experience directing programs abroad, both because they have invaluable experience to share and because they often have the most credibility in the eyes of their colleagues.”

AS INTERNATIONALIZATION CONTINUES TO BE A GROWING PRIORITY on most campuses, faculty-led programs continue to trend upward: sixty-one percent of campus respondents to the Institute of International Education (IIE) 2011 *Open Doors* survey indicated that they had added short-term faculty led programs to their study abroad offerings.

“Some institutions are now including international activities in promotion and tenure reviews, which has been encouraged for years by IIE and ACE as important recognition for the extra effort involved,” says Robin Melavalin, director of the Center for Global Connections at Mount Ida College. “Faculty are enthusiastic about traveling with students if the program is well-organized and there is adequate support.”

That, of course, is a big, and very important, “if.” And the need to adequately prepare faculty for the special demands of teaching and directing programs abroad is something that is well understood by education abroad professionals, if not always by faculty and administrators.

“Faculty on campus have an army of professionals to support them—deans, medical, and mental health personnel, safety and security officers, university counsel, residential life staff, student activities officers,” says James Citron, intercultural education specialist at Dartmouth College, who has for some years taught a NAFSA workshop on preparing U.S. faculty to direct programs abroad, along with Melavalin and other colleagues. “But often faculty members who direct a program abroad can feel ill-equipped to handle the variety of situations that can come up. Being an outstanding academic does not always prepare you to handle all the expectations students, parents, host country contacts, and home campus administrators have of you when teaching abroad. It’s important for faculty to understand these expectations.”

One effective practice is to draw on the expertise of those who have previous experience teaching abroad.

“I encourage returning faculty to come to orientations because I want them to serve as resources for the new people,” says Lisa Chieffo, associate director

for study abroad at the University of Delaware Institute for Global Studies. “The new people can ask me how to handle a crisis, but I’ve never done that. If someone’s been teaching abroad for 10 years, they can answer those kinds of questions better than I can.”

Chieffo regularly invites three faculty veterans from study abroad programs to serve on a panel, to talk about their experiences to other faculty, to include information likewhich to do and what not to do, and to give their colleagues tips. “I can give them information,” Chieffo says, “but I want the faculty to talk to each other. That’s more valuable.”

Citron agrees. “It’s crucial to draw on the expertise of faculty with experience directing programs abroad, both because they have invaluable experience to share and because they often have the most credibility in the eyes of their colleagues,” he says. “The best sessions are the ones that involve collegial sharing of ideas, strategies, and information that new and veteran faculty directors alike find valuable. This is an ongoing process, and there are always new ideas to glean from others no matter how long you’ve been doing this. The best directors I know understand this and are always looking for new ideas to incorporate into their practices.”

And it’s not “just” preparation for the logistical demands of study abroad, and the all-important risk management and emergency response procedures that are important.

“Current research supports the notion that the most learning occurs when there’s intentional, structured facilitation of learning moments,” Citron says. “Students who are left alone without any intervention have what Milton Bennett would call an ‘American Experience in the Vicinity of Foreign Events,’ rather than an authentic immersion experience. There are lots of



TIPS FOR PREPARING FACULTY

“A holistic approach is important, one that covers everything from the initial idea for a program to the return to campus. This means a detailed proposal process reviewed by knowledgeable peers, and a reasonable development time—nine months, not two!”

—Sarah Spencer, director of study abroad at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

“Our proposal itself is a pretty long document that walks them through a lot of the things they need to be thinking about. Then we have a page on our website where, once their proposal is approved, there are a lot of resources they can refer to: templates, samples of orientation presentations, etc., that they can use as models to create their own.”

—Lisa Chieffo, associate director for study abroad at the University of Delaware

“Orientation is not a one-time event: the best orientation is ongoing. Discussions, exercises, case studies, all are important. We have lunchtime sessions on topics like facilitating intercultural learning, health and safety, etc., and we bring in campus personnel as well as guest lecturers from the outside.”

—Jim Citron, intercultural education specialist at Dartmouth College

“Encourage faculty to contact the college immediately if there is a natural disaster or other emergency. Include money in the preapproved budget for Internet café costs, phone calls, etc. You may also want to have faculty use their personal phones if they can. They may be more likely to use them than ones they are unfamiliar with.”

—Robin Melavalin, director of the Center for Global Connections at Mount Ida College

tools for facilitating this type of learning. We share many of them in our workshops.”

Choosing Faculty to Lead Programs Abroad

Most institutions don't actually “recruit” faculty to lead study abroad programs. But sometimes, institutions think strategically about specific needs to round out abroad offerings and get in touch with faculty members who might fit.

“While faculty definitely approach us, we also plant seeds, especially around curricular needs, underrepresented regions, or disciplines or programming appropriate to short-term experiences, such as our January term study abroad for first-year students only,” says Sarah Spencer, director of study abroad at the University of St. Thomas.

Oftentimes, faculty members will want to teach abroad where they have been themselves.

“Some faculty initiate programs inspired by their own travels,” Melavalin says. “They want students to experience the extraordinary learning they have had, and they have the knowledge and confidence to lead a

group of students to the destinations they're familiar with.”

In some cases, third-party providers are used to facilitate faculty-led programs. “Sometimes a faculty member is contacted by a provider, and we follow up to see if it would be a good fit for our academic and regional priorities,” Melavalin explains. “For some destinations—for example, for Cuba, I initiate the contact with a provider who can facilitate the logistics, and then work through the departments to find a faculty member who is interested in developing an academic program.”

Faculty Orientations 101

At the University of Delaware, where 60 faculty-led programs are offered each year, each semester the education abroad office offers a large-scale orientation, and all faculty who will be teaching abroad are asked to attend.

“Some of the faculty who teach abroad every year don't come to the large meeting, where we go over liability, student conduct, and so on,” says Chieffo. “But I keep attendance and I send an e-mail to the ones who didn't come, with all the attachments, so no

one can say they didn't get the information. And I have a record of that. And I always tell them to ask me if they have any questions.” In order to accommodate faculty schedules, the faculty orientation is offered twice each semester, at different times. “We also offer smaller sessions focused on particular aspects of study abroad, managing crises, budgets, etc.,” Chieffo says, adding, “The smaller sessions give people a chance to talk more in-depth, and more specifically about their programs.”

Many education abroad professionals wonder if faculty orientation for study abroad should be required. “This is a question that comes up every year at our workshop,” says Citron. “It's a delicate question, and the answer is that it depends on the institution, on the culture and organizational structure of each campus. Some places require it. At other places you will probably win more goodwill by making it really attractive and interesting, and finding ways to motivate faculty to attend. If you've got people sitting in the room who don't want to be there, that can sour the session for everyone else.”

CUBA

Witness it now on custom tours for life and learning

Cuba Education Tours offer a comprehensive examination of island life on peer-to-peer cultural encounters.

Tailored to your academic requirements, we introduce faculty, students and staff to the rich fabric of Cuban history and society.

We've sent thousands of students to Cuba on licensed learning programs since 1997.



Toll free 1-888-965-5647 or visit
CubaEducationTours.com

Melavalin agrees. "The goal is to have the workshops be so interesting and informative that faculty feel like they would be missing out if they didn't attend. It's important also that they're respected in the process. We don't use the word 'training,' we use the word 'preparing.' I see my role as helping faculty be successful in doing something that's outside of their job description, and often outside of their experience."

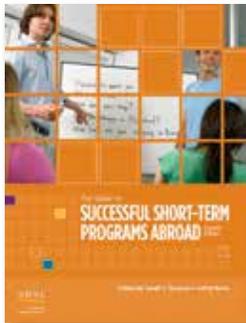
"At schools that do require it, often it is best when it comes from the upper administration," Citron adds. "It's hard for an administrator who doesn't have faculty status to require faculty to attend something that they don't necessarily see a reason for. But if a dean or a provost or legal counsel says that in order for faculty to direct programs off-campus, they need to attend this session, or the liability insurance from the institution won't go with them, that's a good motivator."

James Dorsey is a professor of Japanese at Dartmouth who has directed summer programs abroad for some years, and who regularly attends Citron's sessions. "I've developed greater awareness of possible legal issues: for example, what it might mean for me, and for the college's liability, should I even tacitly condone an activity that might be dangerous," he says. "I've also learned strategies for running more effective student orientations; how to deal with mental health crises when you are the first point of contact for the student; been reminded of the chain of command, and the resources available to me back on the Dartmouth campus even when I'm on the other side of the globe. And I've been introduced to books and other useful materials. The list of how it's been helpful is really endless."

NAFSA Publication

THE GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS ABROAD, SECOND EDITION

Sarah E. Spencer and Kathy Tuma, Editors



This edition is a practical guide for practitioners who administer short-term programs. Edited by two experts with considerable experience in the field the second edition includes new chapters on internships, independent study, and service learning. It also includes new resources related to budgeting and financial matters. The tools provided can help readers tailor successful short-term programs for their own institutions. 200? 246 pp.

(ITEM 991) Plus Shipping+Handling

MEMBERS \$38.99
NONMEMBERS \$51.99

NAFSA
Association of
International Educators

ORDER ONLINE AT
WWW.NAFSA.ORG/PUBLICATIONS
OR CALL TOLL FREE 1.866.538.1927

If Things Go Wrong—What Then?

Sometimes, despite the best intentions of faculty, and the best efforts of education abroad professionals to maintain quality control, things go wrong. What then?

Many education abroad professionals find that it is critical to assess the program to figure out how to prevent any mishaps and include that in future plans to send faculty abroad with students.

"After a program is over we write a little summary of all the aspects of the program: how it was organized, how many students went, how the budget worked out, the feedback we got," Chieffo says. "We send that to the faculty person, their chairs, and their deans. So if somebody did a really bad job, the chair and the dean read about it, and then we can say, 'Look, this was a disaster last time. As you're considering faculty for future study abroad programs, you need to put some restrictions in place for this person if they ever want to do it again, something that will assure us they can do it well! Closing the loop is important, and following up if someone really drops the ball. The students' safety or well being may be in jeopardy, or just their overall satisfaction with the program. If it's an organizational mess, it's not fair to them."

The lessons learned don't always have to be from one's own campus. Melavalin suggests sharing news stories about crises that have occurred during study abroad programs with faculty to launch discussions about what to do in various situations.

"I think it's important to talk about how to handle a student death, how to handle media in a crisis, what types of messages to give stu-

dents, and so on," she says. "Part of our role is to educate both faculty and students so that they will have a healthy caution in their planning and in their everyday behaviors." She admits that she has occasionally received feedback from faculty or students that some of what she says is "scary." But, she says,



Part of our role is to educate both faculty and students so that they will have a healthy caution in their planning and in their everyday behaviors.

"There's a balance to achieve: how do we help students and faculty understand that they are entering into a risky area? It might seem to them that we're being negative, but really we just want them to come home safely. Also, while we want to support faculty and protect students, another part of the goal in preparing them for travel is that we want faculty to understand their responsibility to the institution. There are so many liability issues involved in international travel, especially on a program where it's fully organized by the campus; there's no shared liability with a provider. We try to encourage faculty to un-

derstand that we are all supporting both the students and the institution."

A Fringe Benefit: Improved Collaboration

Though it is not the main goal, one very valuable result of faculty attending orientations is that faculty and education abroad professionals have the chance to become more familiar with and more sensitive to their respective roles and areas of expertise, ideally leading to a better, more collaborative relationship.

"I think the most helpful thing was that the sessions with off-campus programs peo-

ple and fellow program directors made me more fully aware of the complexity of how these programs function at a multitude of levels," says Dorsey. And Chieffo says, "It's important to make the work of the faculty easier and to think about what the value added of the study abroad office is, so that we're not just setting up hurdles and making their lives difficult. When they have a problem we help them solve the problem, and they know they can count on us when they're abroad, not just during office hours. They need to know they can count on us to fix problems. That's important." **IE**

JANET HULSTRAND is a writer, editor, and teacher based in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has created and taught literature courses for Queens College, CUNY in Paris, Florence, Hawaii and Cuba, as well as faculty training workshops for programs abroad. Her most recent *International Educator* article was "Should They Go? Academic and Disciplinary Considerations for Education Abroad" in the July/August 2013 issue.

Teach About Asia • Learn About Asia



Education About Asia

Education About Asia is a unique and innovative magazine—an important journal for international educators and professors of education interested in international education, as well as an invaluable source of information for students, scholars, libraries, and those who have an interest in Asia.

Thematic issues on topics of particular interest include Islam in Asia, marriage and family in Asia, religion in Asia, youth culture, economics and business in Asia, visual and performing arts, and a special series on Asia in world history.

Special offers on back issues are available.

NEW!

ONLINE ARCHIVE NOW AVAILABLE!

Register today to access approximately 900 articles from all thirty-seven back issues of *Education About Asia* from 1996–2008!

Browse or search Tables of Contents.

Registration is free!

Subscribe Today!

Association for Asian Studies, Inc.

Key Issues in Asian Studies

"KEY ISSUES IN ASIAN STUDIES" booklets are designed for use in undergraduate humanities and social science courses, as well as by advanced high school students and their teachers. These booklets introduce students to major cultural and historical themes and are designed to encourage classroom debate and discussion.

Confucius in East Asia, Jeffrey L. Richey

The Story of Việt Nam, Shelton Woods

Modern Chinese History, David Kenley

Korea in World History, Donald N. Clark

Traditional China in Asian and World History,

Tansen Sen/Victor Mair

Zen Past and Present, Eric Cunningham

Japan and Imperialism, 1853–1945, James L. Huffman

Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization, William M. Tsutsumi

Global India circa 100 CE, Richard H. Davis

Caste in India, Diane P. Mines

Understanding East Asia's Economic "Miracles", Zhiqun Zhu

Gender, Sexuality, and Body Politics in Modern Asia, Michael G. Peletz

Political Rights in Post-Mao China, Merle Goldman

All booklets are \$10 each (\$8 for AAS member)

