Engaging First-Generation College Students in Study Abroad

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• Private university, based in Winston-Salem, ~4775 ug.

• 60-65% of undergraduates study abroad for credit before graduation (around 675 this year)

• Approximately 2/3 of students who study abroad do so for a semester or year, 1/3 for a summer term

• Annually accept around 100 first-generation students

• 30 of those students are categorized as Magnolia Scholars, special group of first-generation students
Institute for Study Abroad

• Non-profit program provider founded in 1988
• About 100 programs in 15 countries
• Mostly direct-enroll semester/year
• Recent data on our first-generation students
  - 66 total (30 England/Wales, 14 Australia, 6 Argentina, 4 Costa Rica, 3 Scotland, 3 Ireland, 2 New Zealand, 2 Peru, 2 Chile, 1 Egypt)
Purpose of this Session

• Outline characteristics of first-generation students

• Challenges faced by these students before and during the abroad experience

• Best practices for advising first-generation students and increasing study abroad applications

• Overview of unique financial and pre-professional incentives campuses and program providers are offering
Characteristics of First-Generation Students

- First-generation students - dependent or independent students whose custodial parents/guardians did not graduate from a four-year college or university.
- Up to 40% of all undergraduates, **very** heterogeneous group
- Less likely to participate in study abroad, not in Open Doors
- “Invisible” group - not necessarily low Socioeconomic Status or Ethnic Minority
- More practical and focused on academic career & vocation, non-humanities majors
- Typically reasons for going abroad (independence, new challenges) are not as applicable for these students
Characteristics of First-Generation Students (cont’d)

• Great work ethic
• Go-getters, hustlers!
• Resourceful
• Independent
• Appreciative
• Already somewhat nimble navigating multiple cultures
Challenges

• Family & Friends

• Financial constraints – less likely to have loans, more likely to have job

• Academic – study abroad has to be “worth it”

• Lack of knowledge of systems
Family Affair

- Different type of helicopter parents
- More and different questions
- Engaging and including the family
- Providing additional material beyond typical pre-departure material
Advising

- Personalized time
- Passports
- Engaging with the student outside of the study abroad process
- Presenting comfortable opportunities for questions
- Focus on career preparation
Application Support

• Reviewing material and essays

• Assisting with application fees and deposits

• Continued support while abroad (regarding FAFSA, housing, course enrollment back at home)
Pre-Departure Extras

- Passport Workshops
- Specialized scholarships
- Travel Workshops
- Cooking lessons
- Visa assistance
Financial and Pre-Professional Incentives

- **UT Austin**
  - Hutchison Scholars
    - Upon acceptance to UT, $4000 each
  - First Abroad Program
    - 25 awards, $3000 each

- **IFSA-Butler First Generation Scholar Program**
  - Up-front costs, up to $2500
  - Specialized publications & on-site services for students & parents
  - Resume building/reentry workshop
  - Fill-the-GAP matching scholarships

- **Wake Forest**
  - Magnolia Scholars
  - Specific need-based scholarships, overall $400,000.00 awarded annually
  - Passport Workshop
    - Pay for all costs associated with obtaining a passport
Your Allies

- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Financial Aid and Financial and Accounting Services
- Office of Career and Personal Development
- Develop Advocates throughout campus
- Program Providers
Rewards

• Admissions & recruitment
• Increased retention
• Best supporters on campus for other First Gens to go abroad
• Increased belief in future abroad opportunities
• Add new dimension and depth to on-site group dynamic
• Tendency to get involved more locally (due to limited travel budgets), and often this encourages fellow participants to do the same
• Student growth (example from a first-gen blogger abroad)
Questions or Comments

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