

DEFINITIONS:

Education Abroad Returned Student Services refers to the comprehensive approach institutions can provide in assisting students who have returned from an academic or pre-professional experience abroad. The term “returnee” is used to emphasize the person (verses the action) and position returned student services as a key segment of the returned students’ developmental continuum.

Returnee: A student who has participated in an education abroad experience for any duration and has since returned to his/her home environment.

Services: Denotes the various elements/environments/activities included in addressing the needs of returned students.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs):

Returned student services should provide education abroad participants opportunities to intentionally reflect upon and process their education abroad experience. Engagement in returnee activities can encourage students to more fully consider how their values, attitudes, and behaviors may have shifted and to better understand the deep impact of coming home. Recognition and application of new knowledge and skills is vital so that students may test their new competencies in their home environments.

Effective returned student services provide students with opportunities to:

Reflect: Intentionally process and analyze the layered meanings of the time spent abroad and the feelings and experiences of coming home.

Articulate: Learn how to convey newly acquired skills, perspectives, and life choices in various settings (e.g. classroom, job interview, etc.)

Integrate: Apply aspects of the education abroad experience in immediate and life-long educational, professional, and personal endeavors.

PROGRAM MODELS:

Orientations and Meetings

The pre-departure meeting is intended to prepare students for the education abroad experience, which should be inclusive of the challenges and struggles of returning from a program abroad. At the most basic level, a pre-departure meeting will start the conversation by discussing the realities of reverse culture shock. All orientations and meetings should be designed to address learning outcomes outlined in returnee services.

Conferences

Returnee conferences are a collaborative effort hosted and organized by volunteer professionals in higher education (including international education organizations and career services) for all returning students in a geographical region. The goal of the returnee conference is to allow students to process their time spent abroad in a group setting with peers from the region. The conference model allows for resource sharing among colleges, universities, and international education organizations. Finally, it allows students to connect with a larger peer group to support transitions, adjustment and networking.

Returnee courses

Returnee courses give students the opportunity to unpack their experiences in a reflective and academic setting. It is important that a course provides guidance through a process of self-reflection such that students are able to articulate skills gained and integrate them into future professional aspirations. Depending on the organization’s goals and circumstances, a returnee course can be credit bearing, a certificate program or an extracurricular model (i.e., non-credit bearing). Collaboration with other departments can be helpful in building varying perspectives and resources into a returnee course that supports reflection, articulation and integration holistically.

Peer Mentor / Global Ambassador program

Peer mentor and global ambassador programs can improve and enhance returnee services while encouraging greater interaction between prospective, accepted, and past participants in abroad experiences. Examples may include student-led returnee dinners, coffee hours, weekend retreats, and collaborative informational sessions with departments across campus. Additionally, peer mentor and ambassador programs can provide needed marketing and outreach support for education abroad opportunities as well as enhance and strengthen alumni relations and professional networking initiatives. Successful peer mentor and ambassador programming must have clearly outlined and stated objectives, an assessment and evaluation processes, and strongly supportive leadership.

Guided Reflection and Public Expression

For a number of education abroad returnees, the most effective processing takes place when students are simply given a venue to tell their stories. Facilitating guided reflection through storytelling can be a valuable and multifaceted tool for students to both process their unique set of experiences, and to share with others about the ways those experiences have contributed to personal growth. Through the process of recollecting, formulating, writing, depicting, and telling a meaningful story, students think about their experiences more intentionally, and with fresh perspective on its long-lasting impact. Utilizing a variety of media and/or traditional formats, students can tell their stories in ways that both capture and explain the complexity of their experiences abroad, and require them to articulate how their own pictures, videos, and cultural knowledge inform their ever-changing perspectives and future endeavors.

SWOT ANALYSIS (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS):

Using the example provided at your table, how can each of the following SWOT aspects impact (and/or suggest change to) the campus model? Please consider using the Best Practices document information to influence your discussion.

1. What are the strengths of the current program?
2. What are the weaknesses of the current program?
3. What opportunities (resources: campus and off-campus) that could be employed to address the strengths and weaknesses?
4. What are the threats to implementing the above opportunities and how can those threats be addressed?

Orientation and Meetings:

<p>CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT/SAINT JOHN’S UNIVERSITY Accomplished through a partnership between the Office for Education Abroad (OEA) and the Faculty Directors. Each semester, OEA hosts a Welcome Back Dinner to mark student’s return to campus and introduce them to resources available to help unpack the experience and articulate its value. This is a celebratory event to encourage students to be proud of what they have accomplished thus far and challenge them not to shoebox their experiences. Groups come dressed in local garb representing their study abroad site and there is a competition for the highest participation rate. We consistently have 75% or higher participation rates. Subsequent reentry meetings are hosted by the Faculty Directors who use the Faculty Resource Guide created by OEA to provide activities, talking points and other tools to facilitate the returnee process. The faculty are particularly successful for they are able to draw upon specific experiences abroad to help students identify the skills they learned and integrate them with their liberal arts experience, with their future vocation, and into lifelong patterns of learning. Students also receive a resource guide from OEA which leads them through the reflection process.</p>	
STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

Conferences:

<p>CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: LESSONS FROM ABROAD Lessons From Abroad is an annual conference for returning study abroad students, run in collaboration with regional study abroad offices and program providers, with the goal of addressing the professional, emotional and academic needs of recently returned study abroad alumni. The conference has both half and full-day models and provides resources on how to go abroad again, the importance of living an internationally-focused life and serves as an excellent networking opportunity for both students and professionals. Since their beginning in 2008, more than 1,500 students have participated in sixteen Lessons From Abroad conferences and approximately 200 professionals have volunteered their time in conjunction with the conferences.</p>	
STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

Returnee Courses:

<p>CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: INS 252: CROSS-CULTURAL REENTRY FROM STUDY ABROAD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE</p> <p>Course description: The course will review the concept of reentry shock discussed in INS 250, examine the process of reentry, and provide strategies for integrating the study abroad experience with academics, professional goals and personal development.</p> <p>Objectives of this course: This course provides a structured environment for returning study abroad students to reflect on knowledge and skills acquired abroad, and design strategies for integrating them with their academic and professional goals. These objectives will be accomplished through activities designed to: 1. provide support for dealing with the emotional and intellectual challenges that students face when returning from abroad; 2. encourage reflection on learning gained abroad, both cross-cultural competencies and personal identity development; 3. provide a theoretical framework for analysis of one’s own experience and relating it to theories of cross-cultural communication; 4 provide opportunities for students to integrate new skills and knowledge.</p>	
STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

Peer Mentor / Global Ambassador Program:

<p>CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT/SAINT JOHN’S UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Description: After completing an online profile and two-hour training session, ambassadors are recognized as an official advocate for the CSB/SJU study abroad programs through this unpaid experience. Ambassadors are expected to conduct themselves in a mature, responsible and competent manner at all times.</p> <p>Objectives: 1. Overview on how to select program and resource during the application process; 2. To increase interest and encourage enrollment in study abroad programs sponsored by the Office for Education Abroad; 3. To volunteer service as a good will ambassador for CSB/SJU Office for Education Abroad for future programs</p>	
STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

Guided Reflection and Public Expression:

<p>CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: BAGGAGE CLAIM AT POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY</p> <p>PLNU is taking a topical and longitudinal approach to re-entry processing. Students meet each week, for 6-10 weeks following their return, to discuss relevant issues (i.e. reverse culture shock; politics; effective ways of staying connected to your international experience; etc.) The first and last sessions are used as venues for storytelling giving students an audience of enthusiastic listeners other than friends and family. Baggage Claim provides a place for students to process their international experiences in an informal, yet directed, venue, with students who have a similar set of recent experiences to draw from. Bookending the sessions with storytelling has been an effective way of building cohesion and creating an environment of openness. Baggage Claim also utilizes “Check-ins”: 2-3 weeks of sessions for pre-departure students to hear from study abroad veterans about lessons they learned from their study abroad experience. “Check-ins” gives the returnees some closure to their initial processing, transitioning them to being authorities and peer mentors.</p>	
STRENGTHS:	
WEAKNESSES:	
OPPORTUNITIES:	
THREATS:	

Resources

Returnee Courses / Tool-Kits / Handbooks:
The Center for Global Education Course 3: http://globalscholar.us/course_index.asp?course=R

Willamette University, IDS 102X (.25), Maximizing the Study Abroad Experience: <http://www.willamette.edu/dept/oie/abroad/accepted/maximize/index.html>

University of California, San Diego. "Study Abroad Brought Home" Seminar, ERC 192. <http://pao.ucsd.edu/pao/uponreturn.html>

University of Kentucky Faculty Tool-Kit: <http://www.uky.edu/toolkit/taxonomy/term/4>

What’s Up With Culture?: <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

The Center for Global Education handbook: <http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/reverse-culture-shock.php?country=general>

“Beyond Abroad: Innovative Re-entry Exercises” handbook: <http://melibeeglobal.com/beyond-abroad-innovative-re-entry-exercises/>

Returnee Conferences:
Lessons from Abroad: lessonsfromabroad.org

On-Campus Programming:
PLNU Baggage Claim: <http://www.pointloma.edu/experience/academics/special-programs/study-abroad/returnee-students/baggage-claim>

University of Missouri – Columbia, Returnee Workshops. <http://international.missouri.edu/study-outside-the-us/returning-home/index.php>

University of Texas, Arlington. OIE International Programs: http://studyabroad.uta.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.ViewLink&Parent_ID=0&Link_ID=4D76BB03-BCDE-E7F3-5A6582FA5B6E8C35

Best Practices, Resources and Programming for Returned Students: Supporting Reflection, Articulation and Integration

Session Chair:
Lorien Romito
Director, Education Abroad
Glavin Office of Multicultural and International Education
Babson College
231 Forest Street
Hollister Hall
Babson Park, MA 02457
781-239-4005
lromito@babson.edu

Presenters:
Katie Roller, Ed.D.
Director, Office of International Programs
Whittier College
13406 E. Philadelphia Street
Platner 205
Whittier, CA 90608
kroller@whittier.edu
562-464-4582

Frank Serna
Director of Study Abroad
Point Loma Nazarene University
3900 Lomaland Drive
San Diego, CA 92106
FrankSerna@pointloma.edu
619-849-2783

Abstract: The Forum on Education Abroad’s latest edition of Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad will now include an essential section highlighting education abroad returned student services. Since education abroad learning acquisition is more and more frequently measured on a continuum that moves far beyond the day students return to their home communities, this session will highlight best practices, resources and programming for education abroad returnees. Discussion will center on concrete examples of returned student services’ learning outcomes, emphasizing the ways students reflect, articulate and integrate experiences abroad in their personal, academic and professional endeavors.

Attendees at this session will:

- learn terminology and student learning outcomes associated with the *Forum’s Working Group for Best Practices, Resources & Programming for Returned Students* document
- learn about returned student services models from practitioners
- explore strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats around the implementation of returnee services in the context of their own organization