

Reaching the Mountain Top:

*Partnering with Academic Advisors to
Reach Study Abroad Goals*



**NAFSA Region III Conference
October 26, 2011**

**Kelli Anderson, Southern Methodist University
Jill Clemmons, Louisiana State University
Kevin Kehl, Abilene Christian University
Orie Varner, Texas A&M University**



Overview

- **Introduction**
- **Session 1 – Campus Successes**
 - Texas A&M University
 - Louisiana State University
 - Southern Methodist University
 - Abilene Christian University
 - Q&A
 - Instructions for Session 2
- **Coffee Break**
- **Session 2 – Overcoming Setbacks to Achieve Success**
 - Recap of Session 1
 - Round Table Discussion Groups

Study Abroad Programs Office
Texas A&M University

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Background on Texas A&M

- Public university in College Station, TX
 - 40,500 undergrads (Fall 2011 tentative figures)
 - 9,500 grad students (Fall 2011 tentative figures)
- Decentralized college model
 - 10 academic colleges across 5,200 acres of land
 - 120 undergraduate and 240 masters/Ph.D degree programs
 - 400+ academic advisors and counselors
- 2,800+ student experiences abroad in 2010-2011 on credit and non-credit bearing programs
- Centralized study abroad office with 13 FT advisors



What are We Doing?

- Presentations at Academic Advisor Functions
 - Advisor Briefing Days (Fall)
 - University Advisors and Counselors (UAC) Symposium (Spring)
 - Monthly UAC program agenda
 - UAC Advisor Exchange
 - College/department advisor meetings
- Messages on List Servs
 - UAC list serv
 - Study abroad list servs
 - General
 - Academic advisor specific
- Development of Materials and Resources
 - Electronic academic advisors handbook
 - Specific section on website



Advocates for Aggies Abroad Group

- Began Dec 2010
- Monthly group meeting during fall and spring
- Informal group so advisors attend when they can or questions arise
- Provides a sounding board for questions and feedback both for advisors and study abroad



Sample Discussion Topics

- Perceived barriers to study abroad
- Differences between various program types
- When should students go abroad?
(classification and academic term)
- Best resources for academic advisors
- Revisions for transfer (third party) credit pre-approval form and processes
- Providing students in-absentia credit for internships and research abroad
- Differences in practice among academic colleges



Successes and Challenges

- **Successes**

- Receiving valuable recommendations and feedback
 - Want more than just presentations
 - Web resources and Youtube 'how to videos'
 - Overwhelmed by the vast depth of information
 - Want more pictures and simpler information upfront
- Guest speakers
 - Registrar's Office
 - Admissions
 - Hispanic Studies

- **Challenges**

- Primarily advisors from 'the choir,' e.g. Liberal Arts
- Some offices only have one advisor and are not able to make it often
- Encouraging advisors to active taken on projects without creating a burden
- The development of a more comprehensive plan to reach more advisors

Education Abroad
Southern Methodist University

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Basic SMU Facts

- Private university in University Park (Dallas, TX)
- 11,000 students (6,000 undergraduates)
- 700 students abroad during the 2010-2011 academic year
- Five undergraduate schools
 - Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
 - Cox School of Business
 - Lyle School of Engineering
 - Meadows School of the Arts
 - Simmons School of Education and Human Development



2 Broad Groups for Advising

- Advisors and Degree Counselors
 - Students enter as Dedman College pre-majors and are assigned to one of the Dedman Advising Center pre-major advisors
 - Degree counselors assigned to each school also assist with degree planning, especially when close to graduation
- Faculty and Academic Departments
 - After students declare majors or are accepted into school of record, students are assigned to a faculty advisor and/or academic advisor within their school or major department



Working with Advisors and Degree Counselors

- MustANG (Advising Network Group) on campus
 - Attend meetings and present to group
 - Utilize listserve of advisors
- Summer orientation and registration sessions
 - Promote early planning for study abroad
 - Encourage collaboration between advisors and SMU Abroad
- Fairs and events
 - Invite advisors to attend
 - Advisors help promote events to students
- Thank you cards at the beginning of academic year



Working with Faculty Advisors and Academic Departments

- More challenging because, well, they are faculty 😊
 - More focused on teaching and research
 - Less involved with outreach to academic advisors
- Reflect department concerns about study abroad
 - Misinformation about study abroad credit
 - *“Students in our major can’t study abroad.”*
 - Fearful about *“outsourcing”* education
 - *“We do it better.”*

These concerns prompted a University-wide task force...



Timeline

- Spring & Fall 2008 – Expansion of SMU Abroad programs to include approved provider programs
- Spring 2009 – Confusion and concern from academic advisors and departments about credit earned abroad
- Fall 2009 – Task Force for Approval of Education Abroad Credit
- Spring 2010 – Recommendations submitted to and approved by Provost’s Office, including:
 - Academic departments designating point person to serve as Study Abroad Representative (SAR) in regards to course approval
 - Academic departments identifying SMU Abroad programs appropriate for their major
- Fall 2010 – SARs and SMU Abroad course approval procedures in place



Successes after 1 Year

(In addition to courses being approved)

- Better communication and collaboration with faculty and academic departments about study abroad as enhancement of SMU degree
- Departments identifying existing programs as well as proposing new programs appropriate for their majors
- Academic departments/SARs develop advising tools to help their students select appropriate study abroad programs
- Sample of SOCI brochure



On-going Challenges

- Some advisors and departments more engaged than others
- Rotating department leadership means educating (and re-educating) faculty and advisors
- Clarifying that courses taken abroad complement rather than compete with courses on campus

Academic Programs Abroad
Louisiana State University

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Louisiana State University

- 123,686 undergraduate students
- 5,085 graduate students
- 17 academic colleges/schools
- 74 undergraduate majors/degree programs

Based on Fall 2010 enrollment



Challenges

- **Challenge # 1:**

Advisors telling students not to participate in study abroad

- **Challenge # 2:**

Wrong information going out to students



Solution #1

- **Advisor's Orientation**
 - Fall 2006
 - Open to all academic advisors on campus
 - Billed as a “conversation between advisors and study abroad”
 - Encouraged advisors to tell us what they wanted changed in the study abroad process
- **Result: 50 advisors from Humanities and Social Sciences, Business, and Freshman Experience**



Agenda for Advisor's Orientation

- Welcome/Introductions
- What is APA? What is study abroad?
- Benefits of Study Abroad
- Types of programs
 - Summer/short-term
 - International exchange
 - National Exchange
 - Non-LSU
- Application Process, Language Requirements
- Credit Transfer Process
- Financial Aid and Study Abroad



Solution # 2

- **Advisor's Handbook**
 - Could be revised annually and sent electronically
 - Provide updates to continuing advisors and training for new advisors
 - Saved time and money!
- **Result: nobody read them, after two years, we stopped writing them**



Solution # 3

- **College-by-College meetings with academic advisors**
 - Fall 2010
 - Asked Deans to set up a chance for APA to meet with advising staff
 - Polled advisors from each college ahead of time to determine each college's specific needs, questions
- **Result: very time consuming, but effective**
- **To be repeated bi-annually**



Advisor's Questionnaire

- In what ways does your college promote study abroad?
- Are seniors from your college allowed to participate? If so, what permission do they need?
- Accreditation requirements for students bringing credits back?
- Do your majors have certain classes they have to take each semester? Can these be taken away from campus?
- Are your majors required to complete an internship?
- Which courses would be best for students to take abroad?

International Programs
Abilene Christian University

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Background on ACU

- Private Master's Level University
 - 4000 Undergraduate and 700 Graduate
 - 3 Permanent sites and 3 to 5 faculty led sites
 - Semester and Summer Programs
 - Oxford, England
 - Montevideo, Uruguay
 - Leipzig, Germany



Montevideo



Leipzig



Oxford

Overview of ACU Programs

- Abilene Christian University
 - Approx. 220 students abroad split evenly between semester-long and summer programs
 - General Education during semesters
 - Discipline specific programs during summers
 - ACU On-site directors, ACU visiting faculty, local adjuncts and partner universities



ACU International Goals

- University Mission and Vision
 - Increase participation to reach 50% by 2020 (currently 28%)
 - Expectation that we balance our budget



Removing Barriers: Building Bridges - 1

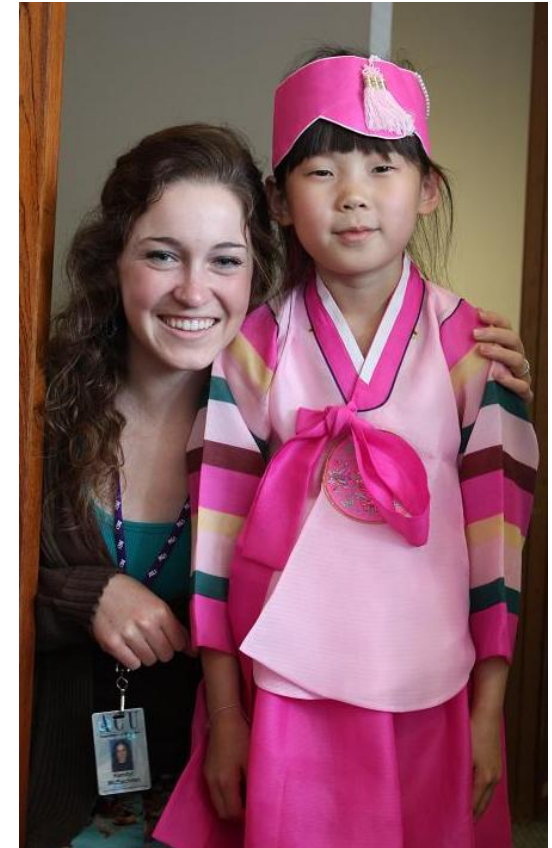
- **# 1 - Train and be trained**
 - Provide advisors and advising offices with
 - Program information brochures
 - Application packets
 - Promotional materials – luggage tags, t-shirts, decals etc.
 - Orient and help advisors navigate the study abroad website
 - Share program changes and updates
 - Study Abroad staff get training to understand degree plans and barriers faced by advisors



Kevin Kehl, Abilene Christian

Removing Barriers: Building Bridges- 2

- **#2 Feed and be Fed**
 - Regular meetings with Academic Advisors
 - 15 to 20 advisors meet for lunch
 - Timing is important - prior to beginning of the semester and/or course enrollment/registration
 - Recognize hard work of advisors
 - Solicit feedback about the challenges/barriers that advisors face in advising students
 - Allow time for Q&A and discussion
 - Get a sense for what advisors are hearing “out there.”
 - Great opportunity for academic advisors to share best practices



Removing Barriers: Building Bridges- 3



- **#3 - Outside of the box advertising/marketing**
 - Redirected dollars traditionally used to purchase postcards, posters, newspaper ads, spots on social media, university radio and television - toward a Study Abroad On-site visit for advisors.
 - Cost-sharing partnership between Academic departments and The Center for International Education
 - Professional development for academic advisors = Training/Marketing for Study Abroad

Questions and Answer Time





Preparations for 2nd Session

- As we prepare for the coffee break, please think about:
 - What activities are taking place at your institution that are focused on academic advisors?
 - What endeavors have proved to be successful?
 - What endeavors have not successful and how have you overcome this/these setbacks?



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Session 2: Overcoming Setbacks to Achieve Success

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Session 1 Recap

- Highlights of Activities
 - Texas A&M University
 - Informal monthly meeting with advisors to talk about questions and cases that have come up
 - Southern Methodist University
 - University wide task force created to address concerns about 'outsourcing' education
 - Establishing designated Study Abroad Representative for each academic department
 - Working with academic departments to identifying SMU Abroad programs appropriate for their major
 - Louisiana State
 - Host general orientation for advisors
 - Host college specific orientations to concerns unique to their department/college
 - Abilene Christian University
 - Three prong approach
 - Provide reciprocal training and promotional materials for academic advisors so they can be more knowledgeable, as well as, study abroad advisors about degree plans
 - Meetings with advisors at beginning of semester and/or before course registration time regarding updates and offerings
 - Redirected marketing funds towards co-sponsoring site visits for academic advisor



Discussion Groups

- Please make sure that you sit at a table with people from other institutions.
- Identify someone to take notes for the group
- At your table, each person should discuss:
 - One endeavor targeting academic advisors that was not successful
 - Ways to overcome that setback
 - One effort that was successful
 - Identify what made that effort successful
- Designate one person to discuss your group's best case to the session

**Please Take a
Moment to
Complete the
Seminar Evaluation**

Thank you for coming

