Managing Group Dynamics and Student Behavior

June Nobbe, Global Seminar Leader
Melissa Palmer, CFANS Faculty
Our Contexts

Melissa:
3-week CFANS International Program (May Short-Term Program) – Belize and Guatemala
Topic: Group Dynamics

June:
3-week LAC Global Seminar – Belfast, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, and Bocas del Toro (Panama)
Topic: Leadership and Social Change
Impact of negative behavior

- Group dynamic
- Perceptions in the host culture
- Time and energy of site host
- Your sanity!
Team Building

- Rearranging groups

- Team building ideas
  - Physically strenuous
  - Caving, night hikes, sunrise/waterfall missions
Managing Expectations

- Tolerance of ambiguity – things may not go as planned!
- Can’t meet all individual needs
- Not a vacation! Have to balance with onsite coursework
Personality Issues

- Personality clashes
  - Importance of icebreakers – strengths/triggers/background values, etc.
  - Mixing up pairs/groups often

- Cliques
  - Again, mix up often!
  - Assign a “coffee date” with someone you don’t know well. Report back on something you learned about that person

- Not connecting with the group
  - Do more small group activities
  - Identify another student who could be proactive
Behavior Issues

- Alcohol
- Lack of respectful engagement
- Mental health
- General health
Preventive Strategies

Alcohol

- Identify your 2-3 areas of zero tolerance – consult with site host

- Pre-departure or first few days – have group identify expectations for how they want to represent themselves, and how they will handle conflict

- Accountability/Responsibility Contract

- Prompt response is essential
Contract as a Learning Tool

- Broader impact of individual behavior
- Increased awareness of how they are representing themselves in a different cultural context
- Increased attention to respect and responsibility in a different cultural context
- Reflection on individual credibility/leadership
- Carrying responsibility back home
Lack of Respectful Engagement

- One-on-one discussion with student first

- Engage in a group conversation about how they are being perceived
Mental Health

- Be familiar with issues on health forms
  - Have site host locate a provider ahead of time

- Be observant for signs

- Give time off if needed
General Health

- Allergic reactions – different foods/sources
  - Advise they bring Benadryl, stomach digestive relief

- Motion Sickness – plane, vans, busses, boats, trains
  - Dramamine, wristbands

- Colds/flu – take a break!
Other strategies/experiences?

Q & A