EDUCATION ABROAD NETWORK

Awareness of Group Dynamics and Student Behavior on Learning Abroad Programs

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EAN Advisory Board

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Session Outline

3:15    Announcements and Welcome (EAN member)
3:25    Excellence in Learning Abroad Series and Onsite Support
3:35    Managing Group Dynamics and Student Behavior

Case Studies and Discussion

4:30    End
Meeting Goals

- How can you be an ally to students as they consider or plan their learning abroad experience?
- What resources or processes are already in place?
- What type of support is available onsite?
- What trends are we seeing?
Leader Training & Support

- Short term programs are group based.
- Leaders required to complete a health and safety training.
- Supporting the management of group dynamics and student behavior is critical.
- LAC Seminar Series leaders required to attend 2 additional trainings during the year they lead.
Instructor-led programs-ELLAS

Excellence in Leading Learning Abroad Series (ELLAS)

- Series of workshops each academic year
- For anyone leading or thinking about leading
- Led by experienced leaders or campus experts
- Student Behavior & Group Dynamics specific session
Excellence in Leading Learning Abroad Series

- Describe, Interpret, Evaluate: Using your program location as your classroom
- Managing Group Dynamics & Student Behavior
- Digital Storytelling & Journaling
- Forming–Storming–Norming–Performing: Supporting the Diversity within the Group
- Inclusion & Student Dynamics
- Diversity & Intercultural learning
- A Room of One's Own: Finding Balance as a Program Leader
Onsite Staff Support

- LAC Staff know onsite staff very well

- Always happy to communicate with onsite staff to better support students, advisors, program

- LAC and onsite staff goal is for students to have best experience possible
What can advisors or faculty/staff do?

- Encourage students to **NOT** be Minnesota nice
- Encourage students to talk with onsite when issues arise
  - Every program has a student coordinator onsite
  - Don’t have to go to director
- LAC stresses utilizing onsite staff at orientation- Reiterate this message!
- Don’t give the message to adjust, have them reach out
Thank you and questions?

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Holly Zimmerman
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Managing Group Dynamics and Student Behavior

June Nobbe, Student Affairs
Ross Veturle Roholt, Social Work
Ross: Led LAC global seminar (3 week) to Croatia and Departmental seminar (3 week) to Northern Ireland and The Netherlands/ South Africa.

Worked and lived in Japan (2 years) and Northern Ireland (2 years) where he led global exchanges.

June: Led LAC global seminars (3 week) to Belfast, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, and Bastiementos, Panama

Worked with semester-long program in Rome
Setting the Stage With Students
Pre-Departure Conversations

It is not an isolated experience

Self awareness - how others may perceive you based on who you are/identities/experiences

What is their motivation for the program? Managing expectations
Setting the Stage for the Cohort/Group

- Tolerance of ambiguity

- Managing expectations - can’t meet all individual needs

- Importance of getting to know one another/how to appreciate differences (go back to perceptions others might have)
Opportunities for Learning Beyond Course Content

The group dynamic can be a source of motivation and support for both behavior and academic engagement.

Opportunities to explore cultural/individual differences among peers they don’t know/might not engage with otherwise at home.
Impact of Negative Behavior

Group dynamic

Perceptions in the host culture

Time and energy for faculty leader and/or on-site staff
Personality Issues

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

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

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
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
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
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
Other strategies/experiences?
Thank you!