



First-Generation, Low-Income Students & Learning Abroad

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What We'll Cover

- What is TRIO?
- Demographics
- Who is going abroad?
- What is the **significance** of learning abroad for LI/FG college students?
- What are the **barriers** to learning abroad for LI/FG college students?
- What are some **solutions**?
- How do we **recruit** LI/FG college students for learning abroad?
- Questions and conversation.



Introduction

There has been increased discussion around the significance of providing meaningful learning abroad experiences to students of color; however, little is known about the complexities of learning abroad for low-income (LI) and first-generation (FG) college students. TRIO Student Support Services at the University of Minnesota (CEHD) works specifically with students from LI/FG backgrounds; the vast majority of TRIO students are people of color and includes several permanent resident green-card individuals and recent refugees.

In my experience as a TRIO professional, barriers to learning abroad are strongly correlated to economic class and citizenship status where financial and academic capital is often limited. This presentation focuses on common issues encountered when assisting LI/FG students with learning abroad opportunities.



Established in the 1965 Higher Education Act, TRIO is a set of federally-funded college opportunity programs that motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their pursuit of a college degree. 790,000 low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities — from sixth grade through college graduation — are served by over 2,800 programs nationally. TRIO programs provide academic tutoring, personal counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other supports necessary for educational access and retention. TRIO programs provide direct support services for students, and relevant training for directors and staff.

U of MN TRIO SSS Mission: Grounded in the Civil Rights Movement, TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) strives to ensure access and equal opportunity education for University of Minnesota students who are first-generation in college, low-income, students with disabilities, or students for whom English is not their first language. Through inclusive and accessible services, including academic support, counseling, teaching, and advocacy, the SSS program seeks to remove institutional and cultural barriers, foster a climate that values the social and cultural capital of our students, and promote retention to graduation.



TRIO Student Support Services

- Funded to serve 270 students per year
 - 2/3 must be low-income and first-generation
 - 1/3 can be LI, FG, or with disability
 - 1/3 of those with disability must also be low-income
- Students are admitted to the U of MN through TRIO
- Serve students for first two years until admitted to major (about 600 TRIO students on campus currently)
- US Department of Education requires us to provide:
 - Academic support/tutoring
 - Academic advising
 - Financial literacy/financial aid information
 - Graduate school information



TRIO Demographics (2014)

N = 139 (39 College English Transitions or CET) Gender: 65% Female; 35% Male

Academic Profile

- ACT comp: 20 (CET = 18)
- High School GPA: 3.5 (CET = 3.5)
- High School Rank: 82 (CET = 82)

	TRIO Total	U of MN Total	UMN Total who are TRIO
Low-income	85%	32%	5%
Low-income / First-generation	75%	16%	8%
LI-FG students of color	94%	46%	17%
Urban and first-ring suburbs	53%	-	-



TRIO Demographics (2014)

Race and Ethnicity

- Asian: 48%
- Black/African American: 37%
- Hispanic/Latino: 6%
- White: 6%
- American Indian: 1%
- Other/unknown: 2%
- 63% Non-native English Speakers
- 47% born outside of U.S.
- 43% Living off campus
- 49% Interested in STEM/health science majors

94% students of color
(39% CEHD overall)



TRIO Programing

Academic Support:

- TRIO course: required for all first-year students; taught by advisers to advisees.
- All TRIO students participate in CEHD's First Year Experience programming.
- Reserved sections of WRIT1201 and WRIT1301
- EDHD1501 (Editing for Writers) for all CET students; writing consultants in all sections.
- Integrated Learning (IL) courses paired with Psychology, Biology, and Chemistry.
- MCAE and Smart Learning Commons tutoring PALS sessions.
- Other support as needed.



TRIO Programing

Advising Model:

- Committed to equity and social justice.
- Smaller adviser-to-student ratio (average 120 students per caseload).
- Advisers specialize in advocacy for students in poverty, homelessness, refugee, ELL, disabilities, and federal financial aid.
- Advise all colleges, all majors.
- Provide financial literacy, graduate school information, etc.
- Social development programing and leadership development.



TRIO Programing

Leadership Development:

- TRIO Student Board.
- Fall Leadership Retreat (Camp Courage).
- TRIO Jobs Fair and Learning Abroad events.
- TRIO Nationwide Leadership Conferences.
- Students Today, Leaders Forever-Pay it Forward Tour
 - Spring break community service trip
- President's Emerging Scholars
- Other cultural fieldtrips and events.



Socrative Interactive Quiz

Please use any mobile device or laptop and go to www.socrative.com

Click on “Student Login”

Type in the class number: **851452**



Who is Learning Abroad?

Race & Ethnicity of Students Learning Abroad (United States)	Percent of Students Learning Abroad
White / Caucasian	83%
African American	3.5%
Hispanic / Latino	5.6%
Asian American / Pacific Islander	6.3%
Native American	0.4%
Multiracial	1%

The racial disparities among study-abroad participants are narrowing, but only slowly. For instance, the number of Black students who study abroad rose from 3.5 percent (from the total of all Black students at four-year institutions) 15 years ago to just over 5 percent in the 2011-12 academic year (Open Doors Report, 2014. Institute of International Education). Little is known about the number of LI/FG students who study abroad.



- There are many significant challenges for LI/FG students, including: unwritten cultural norms, folkways of academic culture, complex lives outside college, and a need for community (Jehangir, 2010).
- Learning Abroad is increasingly important for LI/FG students who often thrive in non-traditional academic settings with diverse pedagogies.
- Profound and lasting change in “students’ self-image, their academic and professional goals, and their attitudes about their roles in society” (Burkart, Hexter, & Thompson, 2001).
- Enhance experience for more traditional students via their (LI/FG students) ability to navigate multiple cultures, multi-language skills, and lived-experiences.



- Existence of diversity in higher education linked to increased critical thinking and problem solving skills, creativity, academic success, retention, satisfaction and student involvement (Smith & Schonfield, 2000).
- Increases efforts to address issues relating to oppression and prejudice LI/FG students may face (Smith & Schonfield, 2000).
- Retention and graduation. Of Fall 2003 freshmen at the University of Minnesota, 64.5% of those who studied abroad graduated by their 4th year, compared to 41.0% among non-study abroad students. 33.3% of this cohort dropped out by the 4th year compared to only 6.0% of those who studied abroad (Paige, R. M., Fry, G., LaBrack, B., Stallman, E. M., Josic, J., & Jon, J.-E., 2009).



- Pell Grants and additional scholarships often fall short. This aid is also often distributed after departure. Students cannot afford up-front fees and in-country costs.
- Basic program fees are often unfeasible.
- LI/FG student often have additional expenses: passport (\$150), application/confirmation (\$450), refugee status costs such as US I-131 (\$360), biometrics (\$85), and host-country VISA fees. Time consuming and difficult to navigate.
- Scarcity of need-based scholarships. Heavy attention on writing ability for most scholarships. Bias in evaluation of scholarship essays.
- Student's mindset might actually be a negative one toward the idea of overseas study. This may occur if a student's home background does not include family members or friends who have been abroad or had some type of positive international experience.



- Fear of learning abroad may relate to an abroad program itself: anxiety regarding interaction with other participants from privileged backgrounds, with the instructor, onsite program staff, and with the ethnicity and cultural inclusivity of the host country.
- Many LI/FG students are not cognizant of the short-term and long-term benefits of an education abroad experience and unlikely to take the critical first step of seeking study abroad information or counseling.
- LI/FG students often focus on day-to-day living that poverty requires (food, shelter, safety). Difficult to find additional time to navigate an already unfamiliar process.



- Folkways of academic culture and limited familiarity with college life. Families and community may not prioritize “external” academic experiences. LI/FG students want a college degree. Learning abroad is often not on their radar and not a part of what they envision as an integral part of their college experience.
- There is still a gap in educational opportunity, resources, and knowledge of LI/FG students. Many institutions have not altered how they make decisions, teach courses, and make resources available to meet LI/FG students in the middle. Difficult to navigate process, trust staff, and receive “warm referrals.”
- Collective Culture: community and family needs come before individual needs.
- In a 2012 TRIO needs analysis, 95% of TRIO students said learning abroad was not possible.



- Encourage faculty of color to be hired as learning abroad program leaders and diversify Learning Abroad Center staff.
- Recruit student peer advisers who are from LI/FG background that have successfully gone abroad.
- Form an on-going advisory board of appropriate faculty and staff (LAC Low-income Barriers Group)
- Encourage faculty to diversify program destinations to include non-Western European host countries that speak to a diverse student body.
- Have at least one mentor for yourself - an informant, so to speak - on equity issues in your department or college.



- Consider more need-based scholarships and attention to writing skills of many LI/FG students.
- Program fee deferment programs and loans (Bridging Loans in the Colleges).
- Hold scholarship-writing workshops.
- Increase access and availability to short-term programs that tend to fit well with LI/FG students due to family and financial obligations. The programs help students “get their feet wet” and are comfortable for students who have not been far from home, which is common for LI/FG students. They also provide structure, community, and safety that is important to both students and their families.
- “Warm referrals” and developing trust is a must regarding financial aid process, applying, and overall support.



- Be sure both students and parents are well-informed about the applicability of the student's financial aid package to study abroad and that information about special scholarships is made available.
- Develop informational material specifically geared to the LI/FG student and the availability of specially designated scholarships.
- Investigate options in your college or department to provide LI/FG student support for study abroad through both new and already existing sources of funding. For example, if there are ten LI/FG scholarships available through the college office or another funding unit, can one scholarship be set aside for a study abroad student?
- Scholarship and reserve funds for additional pre-departure and in-country costs are greatly needed.
- If it is the U of MN's goal to increase learning abroad opportunities and access, hold them to it. Demand increased support for underrepresented students.



Recruiting LI/FG Students

“If you want a more representative group, you have to work hard to get it. Not just for a little while: you have to sustain the investment.”

– Carl Herrin, Director of Education Abroad Initiatives
for the Academy for Educational Development

**“The question for me is not will underrepresented students apply for my seminar?
The question is, what do I need to do to make sure it happens?”**

- Nate Whittaker



Recruiting LI/FG Students

- Check your privilege. It is easy to be outraged at the lacking prospect of learning abroad for underrepresented students, but difficult to see how we may be a part of the problem.
- Remain mindful of the 5 F's (Johnnetta B. Cole, president of Bennett College for Women): family, faculty, finances, fear and friends.
- Reinforce the cultural capital LI/FG students DO have and value their engagement, what they bring to the experience, and how a diverse program makes everyone smarter.
- Marketing does very little for LI/FG students and formal information sessions typically do very little as well. Students who show up to sessions and read marketing material already have the academic capital to navigate this. You must expand your community to include LI/FG students.
- Develop an understanding of the barriers and cultural nuances. Become an ally in your work place.
- Invite challenging conversation about learning abroad: American abuse abroad, the white savior complex, good intentions, geographical ignorance, colonialism, etc.

A photograph of four diverse students (two men and two women) smiling and posing together on a beach. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle containing the title text.

Recruiting LI/FG Students

- Connect with admitted LI/FG students on their first trip to campus in pre-college or freshman orientation activities (TRIO, MCAE, etc.).
- Communicate with the parents of LI/FG in pre-college activities.
- Include LI/FG students in recruitment, orientation, and re-entry activities. They are the best salespeople for your program.
- Make real connections with the places on campus where LI/FG and other underrepresented students on campus find community.
- Be prepared to answer or have someone available to answer questions which may arise regarding class, racial or ethnic issues on campus or abroad.
- Make time for the students – be available to them and their families.



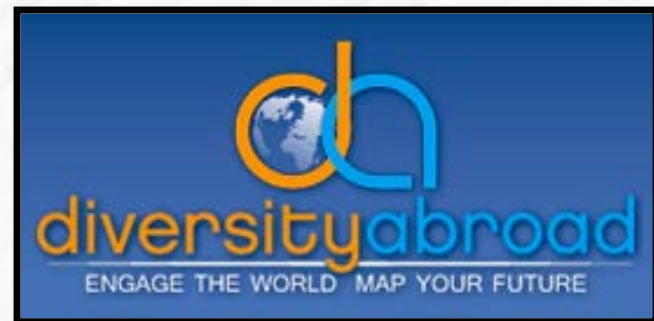
Recruiting LI/FG Students

- Network with your peers who work with LI/FG students on a daily basis.
- Double your efforts on all marketing, messaging, and emails sent.
- Walk LI/FG students through the application and financing process.
- Create websites or other online resources that use imagery, video, and audio to highlight your program.



Recruiting LI/FG Students

Finally, seek to bulldoze the institutional barriers that stand in the way of LI/FG students learning abroad (i.e. confirmation fees, unfair scholarship processes, dishonest marketing, asking them to “squeeze their budget,” and “safe” or “cosmetic” diversity work rather than deep social justice and equity work, etc.). Do not rely on your “default,” which could be Ameri-centric, Eurocentric, and middle-class.



www.diversityabroad.com/Economically-Disadvantaged



**Discussion / Questions
Comments / Protections**





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