

EDUCATION ABROAD NETWORK

Awareness of Group Dynamics and Student
Behavior on Learning Abroad Programs

October 30, 2019

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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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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Managing Group Dynamics and Student Behavior



June Nobbe, Student Affairs
Ross Velure Roholt, Social Work

OUR CONTEXTS

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 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

Q & A



❑ Other strategies/experiences?

❑ Q & A

Thank you!



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