



# A STUDY ABROAD RESOURCE FOR TRIO AND OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICES

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# A STUDY ABROAD RESOURCE FOR TRIO AND OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICES

## Diversity in Global Education Task Force on First Generation College/First Abroad & High Financial Need

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## Making the Case for Study Abroad

As study abroad program participation continues to increase, higher education is moving into a moment where study abroad will become an integral part of any undergraduate curriculum. The documented benefits of studying abroad cannot be understated, particularly for programs of at least six weeks in duration, and include improved personal, academic, and career outcomes relative to students who do not participate in study abroad programs. Specifically, student participation in study abroad programs can lead to increased self-confidence and maturity, greater intercultural learning and development, higher

academic achievement and improved student retention rates, and career benefits such as greater employment prospects. The outcomes, while beneficial to the students, also have a high return for institutions who invest in implementing study abroad programming into the fabric of their educational offerings or diversifying the types of students taking advantage of these global learning opportunities. Expanding study abroad opportunities to first-generation college students, students from a low socio-economic background, students with disabilities, students of color and other students underrepresented in study abroad is essential to providing an equitable institutional experience for marginalized student populations and ensures that all students are able to experience the benefits of study abroad (See Appendix A for scholarly references).

Students who study abroad often report transformative experiences that shift their world-view and understanding of their own identity in relation to their new social context. These types of experiences are valuable to any student, as it supports their ability to translate this newly acquired skill of shifting and adapting to a new environment or set of circumstances to the educational context when they return to campus and their professional life following graduation.

As a result, it can be said that participation in study abroad programs creates the opportunity to generate resilience in students, a necessary skill when adjusting to any life change. Moreover, cross-cultural competence is essential to fostering community and a sense of belonging on diverse campuses, while also preparing students for the global market they will enter following their studies. Employers are increasingly looking for employees who have technical skills but can also function well on diverse teams and generate innovative ideas through increased diversity in the workplace. Study abroad can support students in developing these highly sought-after skills to bolster their career prospects.

Academic success is also a key positive outcome of study abroad, which helps institutions retain the very students they have devoted considerable resources to recruit and admit into their undergraduate programs. Studies show that students who study abroad have higher grade point averages and degree completion rates relative to their peers who have not studied abroad. Though some of this could be due to the sense of community and support that comes from sending a cohort of students together to experience this academic challenge, many students self report gaining clarity on their academic trajectory following their study abroad experience. Students who are returning to campus with this new scholarly insight are better positioned to take advantage of the institutional resources and academic support services that will propel them to degree completion. Similarly, study abroad returnees report having a greater sense of their intended professional path and also benefit from employers taking an interest in the transferable skills students gain from their study abroad experience. Ultimately, study abroad programs are a tangible way to ensure marginalized student populations are able to benefit fully from their academic experience. Therefore, it benefits any institution to invest in their success.

## **Collaborating with the Study Abroad Office**

Given these benefits, it should be in everyone's best interest to expand study abroad opportunities for marginalized student populations. Doing so likely requires initiating or building on existing collaboration between the TRIO and Study Abroad offices. To begin this process, there are a few strategies you may want to consider:

- Do some research on your campus's Study Abroad Office to determine how study abroad works at your institution: What programs are available and how are they marketed to students? Who are the members of the Study Abroad staff? Has there been any previous collaboration between Study Abroad and Trio staff (and if so, is the Study Abroad staff member involved in that collaboration still a part of the office?)
- Talk to students you work with to see what they know about study abroad opportunities, what information seems to be lacking, and why or why not they considered studying abroad.

When you are ready to initiate outreach to the Study Abroad Office, contact one of the staff members (perhaps the director or manager of the office, if no previous collaboration has taken place with another member of the Study Abroad staff) to propose an informal first meeting. It might be best to suggest something brief and friendly, such as a coffee meeting, without a formal agenda, so that you can get a sense of the person's interest and willingness to collaborate. The initial meeting might need to be focused on convincing the Study Abroad staff person of the need for collaboration, so it's best to be prepared with any data you might be able to gather on the number of first generation and high financial need students who have studied abroad in the past few years at your institution or at least any impressions you have gathered from students you work with on any perceived barriers or obstacles to studying abroad. You should be prepared to state clearly that it is your goal to empower these students to study abroad and to boost the overall number of students in this population who study abroad at your institution. You may need to set up another informal, initial meeting of this kind with another member of the Study Abroad staff if your first contact is unable to devote sufficient time or energy to the collaboration.

Once you are able to confirm that the Study Abroad Office shares this goal (which hopefully they will!) and have identified a main contact in the office, you can set up a time to discuss concrete ideas for collaboration. Some of the following ideas might work well, suggested by the Center for Global Education on their website [AllAbroad.us](http://AllAbroad.us):

- Invite the Study Abroad Office to co-sponsor events or include a table for them at your events as well as student organizations' events.
- Agree to mention study abroad to parents and students at your orientations as an invaluable part of the college experience.
- Agree to list studying abroad as one of your student activities/ organizations in your flyers and on your website. (from <http://allabroad.us/trio-teacher.php>)

As you are thinking through potential ideas, it might be helpful to share with your Study Abroad contact any examples of previous successful collaboration between TRIO and other offices on campus. You might want to suggest that future collaborative efforts expand to include some of these other offices as well (such as Financial Aid and other student support offices like the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs). Later discussions can include how best to jointly promote external scholarship opportunities (such as the Gilman scholarship) and other resources that support study abroad among under-represented student populations (such as Diversity Abroad.)

Resource to consider: Diversity Abroad Community Discussion: [Collaborating with TRIO to Advance Inclusive Excellence in Global Education](#)

## Student Outreach

Once collaboration with the Study Abroad Office has begun, it's important to think about specific strategies for promoting study abroad opportunities to students and for making them aware of available resources:

- **Using or creating joint-branded resources**

The study abroad office will typically have materials, presentations, and student contacts that they may be willing to share. They may also be able to create tailored or joint-branded resources for your office. You may also consider joint programming such as application workshops or scholarship workshops.

- **Language and transparency**

Avoid or break down jargon and technical terms, and use the initial contact with students to address major misconceptions. The message should be clear and transparent. Emphasize tangible benefits of studying abroad and be honest about the process and what it entails (i.e. applications, budgets, etc.)

- **Meet students where they are**

When conducting outreach, considering doing so in a space where your students are comfortable or may visit often (such as a popular study space as opposed to an academic building they would have to go out of their way to visit). Consider tabling at events that are already taking place, doing classroom presentations, presentations to clubs or organizations, or Pop-Up advising around campus.

- **Utilizing returnees**

Utilize study abroad returnees and student stories, where possible. This can include having returnees in person or highlighting them in materials or on social media, for example, by including their photos and quotes about their experience. Make sure to consider representation when choosing photos in materials and on social media. Connecting students with peers who have successfully completed a study abroad program can also be a useful tool.

- **Advertising your events, programs, or scholarships**

Consider the most effective methods of reaching your students. . We often view emails as the most obvious or easiest way to communicate, but consider if this is the case. If you're using social media, consider the platforms that you're using (for example, are students at



your institution still using Twitter or more likely to see posts on Instagram?). Also consider tagging relevant offices or organizations that the students already follow, or that have high engagement.

#### ■ **Call to action**

Your presentations or materials should conclude with a call to action or a next step that can easily be remembered, such as visiting the study abroad office or speaking to an academic advisor.

## **Funding for Students**

There are many opportunities for students to apply for funding for their international experience. Many of these funding sources are external to the individual college or university, and open to student applicants, regardless of the structure and funding models of one's own institution.

The [Gilman Scholarship](#) is a grant program established by the US Department of State, that enables students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad. This scholarship program is open to US citizen undergraduate students who are receiving Federal Pell Grants at their two- or four-year college or university.

- Recipients of the Gilman may use the award to defray the costs of program tuition, room and board, books, local transportation, insurance, international airfare, passport and visa fees.
- Total award: \$5,000
- The [Critical Need Language](#) award of up to an additional \$3,000 may be given to students who are studying a critical need language while abroad. There are a limited number of Critical Need Language awards given each year, and are very competitive.
- The Gilman-McCain Scholarship is for undergraduate children of active duty service members

The [Boren](#) award is a scholarship and fellowship program focusing on geographic areas, languages, and fields of study that are critical to US interests and underrepresented in study abroad. Boren Scholarships fund US undergraduate students in world regions critical to US interests.

- Awards are determined by duration abroad:
  - » 25-52 weeks = up to \$20,000
  - » 12-24 weeks = up to \$10,000
  - » 8-11 weeks (STEM students only) = up to \$8,000
- Boren Fellowships fund research and language study proposals by US graduate students



The [Fund for Education Abroad](#) provides scholarships and ongoing support to US undergraduate students who are underrepresented in study abroad.

- Total awards:
  - » Academic Year = up to \$10,000
  - » One Semester = up to \$5,000
  - » Short-term Program (minimum 4-weeks) = \$1,250

[Diversity Abroad](#) provides scholarship opportunities each semester/summer to support US undergraduate students who are underrepresented in study abroad.

- [Diversity Abroad Consortium Summer Scholarship](#)
  - » Award total: up to \$1000
  - » Available only to current member institutions who identify as 4-year or 2-year colleges
  - » Awards available for Summer programs (minimum length of 4 weeks)
  - » No program restrictions
- [Diversity Abroad Overseas Ambassador Scholarship](#)
  - » Award total: up to \$500
  - » Up to five scholarships available for each Fall/Spring and up to two scholarships available for Summer
  - » No program restrictions
- [Diversity Abroad AIFS Achievement Scholarship](#)
  - » Award total: up to \$5000
  - » Up to three scholarships available for Fall/Spring Semester
  - » Must participate in an AIFS program

In addition to the funding sources listed above, your own institution may have internal funding opportunities as well. Students should be encouraged to reach out to the academic departments, Financial Aid office, Research & Fellowships office, and the Office of Career Services. Research internal university funding models/opportunities

- \*Encourage students to use financial aid resources, when appropriate.
- \*International travel is not an allowable cost for SSS grant funds.

*\*It is advisable to periodically visit the scholarship sites to ensure information has not changed*

## Building a Short-term Program

If existing study abroad opportunities at your institution are not meeting the needs of the students you work with, you may want to consider building a new, short-term program specifically for them. Doing so will likely involve working through the following steps:

- **Meeting with your study abroad office**

Depending on your institution, your study abroad office will typically have a process in place for building a program. The office may have a designated staff member who guides you through the process, a workshop that you must attend before proposing a program and/or a detailed proposal form that asks you to articulate all the important details of your intended program. Regardless of the exact process at your institution, it is best to make an appointment with the study abroad office as you begin to formulate your ideas and goals.

- **Articulating goals and learning outcomes**

This is perhaps the most important step of building a program, as having your goals and learning outcomes established will guide you through every other decision you need to make. Where are you traveling to? How long? What field trip/excursions must be included and what are just added tourist attractions? How much free time should you give students? What physical space is needed to deliver lectures, work on papers or projects, etc.? Knowing your goals will help you decide on what facilities you need and assist you in paring down the program to what is essential.

To set these goals and learning outcomes, think about the “why” of creating this program for your TRIO students. What do you want them to get out of it and why will it be beneficial for them to go? Are there particular skills you would like for them to develop? If you have a Center for Teaching and Learning at your institution, they will be a helpful resource as you think about learning outcomes. This [online resource](#) from Center for Online Learning, Research and Service @ Illinois Springfield is also a good place to start.

- **Selecting locations, length of time, academics, and activities with a budget, as well broad appeal and marketability in mind**

Once you have your goals and learning outcomes, you can start to build what the program will look like. It cannot be overstated that if enough students are not interested in the courses, theme or location, you won't have enough students to make the program run. For every ten students who say they are interested, maybe only one or two will actually end up committing to the program.

- » **Academics:** If this is a program for credit, can the course count towards many different majors/minors so there is wide appeal?

- » **Location:** What is your familiarity with this location? Have you looked at the health and safety of the location? How easy and affordable is it to get to? Will students be interested in this location? How can your goals be met in this location? It is often the most affordable to choose one central city location as your base and then do day trips to visit other sites.
- » **Length of Time:** Typically the longer you are there, the higher the cost will be, but you need to balance that with the length of time to get there and the time difference. What time of year are you going – are you trying to fit it into a spring break? How much time do you need to have your goals accomplished?
- » **Activities:** What are the must do activities? How many free activities can you incorporate into the itinerary that still meet your learning outcomes? Which sites have student discounts? Is it possible to use public transportation to get around? If it fits into your program, think outside of just typical site visits, but are their alumni in the area you can connect with that might have relevant experience to share or can you incorporate a volunteer experience or a visit to another university to interact with peers. Not only will these types of activities most likely to be free, they will also assist your students in having a more immersive experience.

#### ■ **Considering using a program provider**

A third-party program provider is a company that can put together all of the program logistics for you. They can arrange an airport pick-up, book hotels, plan excursions, provide on the ground transportation, plans meals and even provide a guide. However, using a provider will often significantly add to the cost of the program or may require that you make compromises on your goals as they may require you to go along with one of their package itineraries. Using a provider will depend on your familiarity with the program location and availability and/or capability to book the logistical elements. It usually will be easier to do many of the logistical arrangements on your own over the internet if you are visiting a country in Europe (though time consuming). However, traveling to many countries in the Global South that run on a cash economy, will almost surely require a local provider to assist.

As you make the decision on whether to use outside assistance, consult with your study abroad office. They may have preferred providers or can connect you with a site abroad affiliated with your institution that can provide on the ground support. You most likely will be working with a short-term program specialist who organizes programs like this all of the time. When you discuss your goals and parameters, they should be able to offer you several suggestions. You can then obtain several quotes from providers and see which one will work best for your program.

## ■ Helpful Resources

- » **NAFSA:** [Guide to Successful Short-term Programs Abroad](#)
- » **Article:** [Developing a Successful International Faculty-led program](#)
- » **Faculty Abroad:** A website for faculty-led (usually short-term) programs
- » **Diversity Abroad:** Best Practice Highlight - [University of Washington- Seattle - Brotherhood Initiative](#)
- » **Diversity Abroad:** Best Practice Highlight - [Indiana University: OVPDEMA Overseas Studies & Scholarship Program](#)

## Tips and Resources for Running the Program

Once your study abroad program is planned and your travel group is identified, there are some tips to help you achieve your learning outcomes. Creating bonding experiences prior to travel will help the students and staff become more comfortable.

### ■ Pre-departure

- » Meet with Study abroad staff to ensure that you are meeting the institutions rules/regulations.
- » Group flights are recommended if a majority of the students have not flown before.
- » Prior to class/departure, conduct mandatory information sessions. Use this time to prepare the group to travel. Topics can address areas that will prepare the group for travel (icebreakers/teambuilders, packing your suitcase, navigating the airport and customs, electrical adapters, using your cell phone internationally, budgeting your money abroad/ money conversions, travel notifications for bank card, appropriate dress, bringing in a speaker who has traveled/lived in the country, safety/buddy system, roommate selections, etc).
- » Review the itinerary to ensure it is sufficiently scheduled, allowing some free time for participants.
- » Allow the group to develop rules and a contract for conduct abroad. Have them sign it and make copies for all.

### ■ In Country

- » Allow time for reflection each day. Reflection can be written or group share. This gives the program leaders an opportunity to gauge how students are feeling and to address any concerns.
- » If you are using a program provider, communicate any concerns you have.
- » If travel is associated with a class, ensure that assignments are being completed.

- » Create a Vlog, blog, or Tumblr account to capture the group's travels. Assign a day and require each student to post. Share the link with campus administrators. Document with pictures, descriptions, and reflections.

#### ■ **Re-entry and Ambassador programs**

- » The students that have traveled are your best form of marketing. Use them to present to your TRIO students. Share the trip details, pictures, and discuss expenses and any funding students received for the program. This allows the study abroad process to be demystified. Presentations could be held in TRIO-specific courses, during your program orientation, or host a reception or presentation for students and campus partners.
- » Create a data file to continue to justify your trip and its benefits to students. Gather qualitative and quantitative data to support continued sponsoring of your study abroad program.

We hope you have found this guide to be a helpful resource as you explore study abroad options for your students. Our intent was to provide an introduction as opposed to an exhaustive guide to help you decide whether it would make sense for your office and students to initiate a program for your students as well as give you the ability to give them some helpful advice. To explore study abroad in depth we encourage you to seek out our institution's study abroad office as they will be the experts and able to provide much more information, especially within the context of your institution. If you do decide to move forward, know that while it will be a lot of work, it can be one of the most transformative experiences in a student's college career.

# APPENDIX A: SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

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