

Chapter 1

Developing a Faculty–Led Study Abroad Program for Education Majors in a Non–English Speaking Country

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how faculty can plan, develop, prepare, and lead a study abroad program in a non-English speaking country for students majoring in education. It presents an overview and timeline for directing a program, discusses how to plan and develop a program, tells how to recruit and prepare participants, and describes how to support participants while living and teaching abroad. It also presents issues that faculty should consider during each phase of a study abroad, and it provides suggestions for addressing these concerns.

It is strange what walking far from home will do to a person, strange and beautiful. The more you see, the less you will realize that you know. Still, a journey such as this is quite literally a “choose your own adventure” in that you get out exactly what you decide to put in. I think more people should know what it is to completely relinquish control by stepping outside the so-called comfort zone. In doing so you might find that the other side is not so frightening or unfamiliar and that, after it all, you are a better person because of it. (Italy Study Abroad Participant, 2011)

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INTRODUCTION

While the number of American college students studying abroad is increasing, the number of students majoring in education who study abroad has decreased to only 2.1 percent of this population in recent years (Institute of International Education, 2014). Increasing the number of education majors studying abroad is important because such programs help preservice teachers to reflect on language, culture, and teaching (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Phillion, Malewski, Sharm, & Wang, 2009), in ways that support culturally responsive teaching practices (Phillion & Malewski, 2011). Faculty-led programs are particularly important because teacher educators can create experiences that develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions future teachers need. However, developing and leading a study abroad may seem like a daunting task for faculty. Consequently, this chapter describes a study abroad program that has been taking education majors to Italy since 2000. In 2009, it was recognized by the Institute of International Education and received the Andrew Heiskill Award for Innovation in International Education in Study Abroad (Institute of International Education, 2015). To help faculty who are interested in developing a study abroad for education majors, this chapter presents a brief overview and timeline for directing a program; it discusses issues that need to be considered when planning and developing a program; it tells how to recruit and prepare participants; and it describes how to support participants while living and teaching in a non-English speaking country.

Overview of the Study Abroad Program

This chapter is based on a four-week summer study abroad program located in a town of approximately 69,000 people in Northern Italy. Each participant stays with and becomes a part of an Italian host family. Each participant also is placed in a classroom and spends approximately 70 hours across the length of the program observing and teaching in a school. Afternoon activities include a weekly program meeting, short field trips (e.g., visit a school or local museum), and one optional activity. The program also includes a weekend trip to Florence and Venice.

Timeline for Directing a Study Abroad

Although this program is held from early May to early June, planning begins in August, approximately 10 months prior to departure. Table 1 presents the primary activities that occur during each month.

In short, directing the study abroad is essentially a year-round venture. However, based on participants' evaluation of the program, it is the most meaningful experience of their teacher education program, and it is certainly rewarding for the program directors.

Directing a Short-Term Study Abroad Program

The following section provides a detailed description about the Italy program, as well as guidance for planning and developing a study abroad program in a non-English speaking country.

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