Comfort Zones and Conflict Zones: Balancing the Act

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Introduction

- Common paradigm for considering programs in conflict zones
- Problematics of this paradigm
- Expected outcomes of presentation
  - Benefits of study in conflicted zones
  - Best practices – organization, communication, academics, security
  - Methods to evaluate programs
  - Ways to advocate for chosen programs
- Definition of Terms: home institution, provider, host institution
- Introduction of Panelists
Home Institution Perspective

- Philosophy and policy development
  - How risk tolerant is the institution?
  - Is this consistent across locations and program models?
- Decision-making protocol
  - Who makes decisions?
  - Who can you consult with?
  - What about conflicting assessments?
  - How are decisions communicated?
- Program development
  - Do you need supplemental support?
  - Instructor led implications
- Practice preparation
  - Are plans in place institutionally or with partners?
  - Who pays?
Student Perspective

- Clarity about site specific behavior and communication expectations
- Enforcement of relevant policies
- Instructor preparation
- Parent and emergency contact communication
- Recruitment implications
Successful Strategies

- Establish philosophy with leadership first, know your institution
- Educate colleagues
- Address in agreements
- Know your students
- Don’t let it be personal
- Address the money before the crisis
- Be a good partner
- Don’t create policies for exceptions, make exceptions to policies
Study Abroad Provider Perspective

- Why conflict zones?
  - Value of the experience
  - Reality check
    - Risk to students
    - Some numbers
  - Real risk vs. perceived risk
Advantages of Working with Providers

- Working with a provider!
  - They do it all, right?
  - More options and opportunities
  - More support and flexibility
- Risk management
  - Site assessments
  - Security analysis
  - Insurance
- Health, safety and security support
  - 24/7 crisis teams, crisis plans
  - Local support and resources
  - Experience in emergencies
- Communication plans
Potential Challenges when Working with Providers

- Working with a provider!
  - Different goals, timeframes, ideas, etc.
  - Additional legal counsel
  - Can they do it all?

- Flexibility
  - Evolving security environments

- Faculty-led programs
  - Expectations, training
  - Who takes the lead?

- Balancing act
  - Institutional Goals vs. Provider Recommendations
  - Who makes the final decision?
Successful Strategies for Partnerships

- Do you see eye to eye?
  - Goals, risk tolerance, mission, decision making
- Investigate and ask questions
  - Do they follow standards?
  - Do they have guidelines and response plans?
  - Do they communicate well?
- Institutional Agreements
  - Do they address everything?
- Get references
- Flexibility
- Handout
Host Institutions: Curricular Considerations

- Benefits
  - Potential to learn first-hand about other values and value systems
  - Personal growth – put personal beliefs into perspective; learn to behave appropriately

- Importance of a balanced curriculum

- Role of teachers

- Exposure to host society (curricular and extracurricular)
Considerations Regarding a Host Institution

**Potential Advantages**
- Familiarity with region, developed infrastructure, strong contacts
- Good sense of actual security risk
- Suitable safety and security protocols
- Long-term presence – can build up a relationship, evaluate and adapt protocols

**Potential Challenges**
- Criteria for security measures (e.g. evacuation)
- Limited flexibility regarding relocation
- Legal and moral responsibilities of home institution
Security: Best Practices

- Clear policy and protocol
  - Reporting and communication with home institutions
  - Rules and regulations
  - Emergency scenarios, procedures, risk management, campus alignment
- Security infrastructure – fences, cameras, security personnel
- Clear and constant communication with students – orientation, city tour, current updates, info sessions
- Student support: informal (peer counsellor), formal and professional
- Health coverage – importance of user-friendly system
- Question of certification
Questions and Discussion
Key Take-Away Points

- Paradigm shift from danger to dilemma
- Philosophy, policy and protocol
- Centrality of communication with all stakeholders
- Importance of information
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