Completing the Cycle: Building and Using Peer Advising Programs to Engage Prospective Students and Deepen the Study Abroad Experience for Returnees

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Claremont McKenna College

- Small, private liberal arts college
- ~1,300 undergraduate students
- ~45% study abroad
Peer Ambassadors

- 3rd year
- 7 paid positions
- Off-campus study alumni
- Specific job titles and descriptions
- Diverse representation
- Hiring & training in fall
- Weekly team meetings
- One-on-one check ins
- Walk-in office hours
Incorporating SA Alumni into Programming

- Intro to Study Abroad
- Pre-departure Orientations
- Research presentation dinner
- Classroom visits
- Tabling
- Study Abroad in the Quad
Intro to Study Abroad Sessions

- First step to study abroad
- 1 hour group meetings
- 6-10 sessions/semester
- Alumni panels
- Apprenticeship Model
  - Model
  - Scaffold
  - Coach
  - Fade
- One-on-one sessions
Benefits

- **To prospective/outbound students**
  - Connect with peers who have gone before
  - Hear specific details and stories
  - Chance to ask questions
- **To alumni**
  - Structured forum to reflect and share experiences
  - Professional development for PAs on presenting
  - Leadership roles
- **To staff**
  - More work to train and support up front, but less work in the long run as PAs lead future sessions
  - Students receive peer-delivered messages differently

“The apprenticeship model is such an organic way to slowly integrate into a new field at a pace that is comfortable for you. This semester, my goal as a Peer Ambassador was develop my presentation skills. As someone who has had trouble with expressing myself fluidly and confidently in front of my peers, the apprenticeship model facilitates a way to slowly gain confidence and experience presenting.” – Melanie, Peer Ambassador
How does this apply to my school?

- Levels of involvement
- Paid vs. volunteer
- Front-loading training
- PAs lead big projects
- Students convey essential info and fill in details
Columbia University
Outcomes of LGBTQ Abroad

- Three undergraduate colleges: Columbia College (Liberal Arts), Columbia Engineering, General Studies (Non-traditional students).
- 7,000 undergraduates
- About 20-25% study abroad, primarily from Columbia College
Peer Advisor Program

- 10-15 paid Peer Advisors per year
- All study abroad alumni
- Each student represents a different study abroad program or location
- Hired primarily to express the student experience to drive student recruitment
Peer Advisor Events

- Location based: Pasta making workshop to learn about Italy or Senegalese dinner night to learn about studying abroad in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Theme based: First Generation Students Abroad, Women Abroad, LGBTQ Abroad.
  - Semesterly event led by at least one Peer Advisor
  - Run with support from the Office of Global Programs (OGP) and the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA).
Learning outcomes: Students going abroad

- Knowledge about what to ask and issues to research before choosing a program/location and before going abroad.
- Awareness that the OGP is a safe space for discussing these issues.
- Pre-departure reflection: questions to ask themselves.
- Increased intercultural awareness.
- Modeling of post-study abroad behavior.
Learning outcomes: Alumni

- Camaraderie building with not only an on-campus LGBTQ community, but also a sub-set of globally minded LGBT students.
- Pride in having mentored another student.
- Re-entry reflection on identity.
  - “The events, for me, asked important questions that made me think deeply about my own relation to LGBTQ culture, to Italian culture, and to my own identity and it's expression.”
Learning outcomes: Administrators

- Increase collaboration between various offices on campus (OMA)
- Creates a LGBTQ safe reputation for our office.
- Learn more about the student experience in general.
- Enhances the program vetting process.
How does this apply to my school?

- The template for this event can be used for a wide variety of sensitive issues and topics: women abroad, issues of race and ethnicity abroad, religion and so on.
- Are there particular student experiences that might be enhanced by having a PA event on your campus?
- How can PA events help create new linkages amongst other advising groups or student resources on campus?
UC Davis Study Abroad

• UC Davis is a large, four-year land grant University

• 33,000 students

• Send about ~1,400 students abroad annually

• 15.7% of graduating seniors have participated in UC Davis Study Abroad run/facilitated programs (Open Doors)
UC Davis Study Abroad Student Staff

- 21 Professional Staff
- 17 Student Staff
  - 6 Peer Advisors
  - 11 Administrative Assistants
Peer Advising Program

- Juniors/Seniors, have spent time studying abroad or have international experience and can speak to it.
- Hire in May
- 2-day all student staff training in September
- 9-month training program & weekly meetings
  - Learning your story & sharing your story
  - Using your story for professional growth & development
Storytelling: Learning your story & sharing your story

What is your story?

- Have an experience abroad
- How to tell your story
  - Process in training
- How does your experience relate to potential study abroad students?
- When to pass the student off to professional staff

Kolb’s Cycle of Experiential Learning

Through the storytelling process, peer advisors reflect on their experiences and how to articulate them.
Storytelling: Using your story in professional growth and development

- Resume building through on campus partnership
- Social Media branding
  - Facebook/LinkedIn
  - Aggies Abroad Network
- Use networks to connect with like-minded students, employers
- Presentation skills & job interviews
  - Dorm presentations
  - Panel presentations
  - Freshmen seminars
  - Classroom presentations
  - Pubs
Connect the study abroad experience and the returnee enthusiasm to help students thrive and succeed in their future endeavors.
Small Group Discussions

- How does your peer advisor program encourage students to apply lessons learned from studying abroad?
- How are your peer advisors encouraging outbound students to think critically about their study abroad choices? (program selection, goals, preparation, activities while abroad, etc.)
- If you do not currently have a PA program, are there particular challenges in your office to creating one?
- What further ideas do you have for including peer advisors in the work of your office?
Next Steps

• Write down:
  o One thing you’d like to research or learn more about
  o One thing you’d like to do or implement immediately upon your return to campus
  o One person you’d like to meet with on your campus

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