LGBTQ: helping students explore their identity and cultural heritage through short-term programs

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LGBTQ: session objectives

1. Better understand why we felt it was important to design a trip for the LGBTQ to study their own identity and community.

2. Gain tools to enhance cultural awareness on short-term programs.

3. Learn about unique opportunities for short-term programs and student opportunities on your campus.
LGBTQ: intro video
LGBTQ: why create an LGBTQ focused trip?

Short-Term Programs on the rise
Goal: Increase # of students going abroad but the institution isn’t providing more funding.

Like most universities, the University of Louisville was tasked with increasing their study abroad enrollment.

Cultural Heritage Tours
Individuals who select to study abroad to learn more about their own cultural heritage

Let’s get Innovative!
Let’s go one step further and stop designing trips just for academic areas, how about LGBT?
Activity

A. Explicit

  - Behavior
  - Expressions
  - Language

B. Implicit

  - Values
  - Norms
  - Beliefs
  - Expectations
  - Assumptions
  - Perceptions
Above the Water: Cultural

- Manners
- Clothing
- Music
- Food and drink
- Myths
- Legends
- Literature
- Dance
- Fashion
- Greetings
- Gestures
- Jokes
- Furniture
- Architecture
- Art
- Sports
- Rituals and ceremonies
Above the Water: Study Abroad

- Course credit
- Language skills
- Resume builder
- Friends went/are going
- Adventure
- Requirement
LGBTQ: where did we start?

Step 1. Reached out to the LGBTQ center on campus.
The center at The University of Louisville started in 2007. (In a closet...) Prior to this program, we had never even done a domestic program let alone think about study abroad.

They serve the whole campus community, and nearly 2,000 participated in our PRIDE.

Step 2. Got to know the demographics of our target audience.
Often afraid to travel, how will they be received?

Interested in global experiences and drawing closer to their community.

Very committed to their center and campus and not interested in leaving their comfort zone for a full semester.

What do they want to get out of the experience?
LGBTQ: where did we start?

**Step 3. Outlined the goals at the University level**

Focus: Giving LGBTQ students access to all opportunities other students have and see themselves reflected in study abroad opportunities.

Goal: To help students explore heritage and culture to see how LGBTQ issues are being addressed in other countries, what struggles other cultures are facing and these struggles relate to US struggles.
LGBTQ: where did we go from there?

Step 4. We started to make contacts and design their experience.
    CIS (third party provider) reached out to:
    U.S. Embassy (Human Rights Officer)
    Athens Pride Ambassadors (May 17th - Int’l Day Against Homophobia)
    LGBT Authors
    LGBT Activists
    Athens Rainbow House
    Colour Youth - Story Circles
    Ouranio Tokso Families (LGBT family group)
    Lesbos Island Tour (Mayor and City Hall)
Activity: Cultural Observation
LGBTQ: what did work?

We did have administrative support, faculty support and strong LGBT community support.

Connecting LGBT students to activists, educators, and other students in Greece

Creating a facebook group where participants could share resources, ask questions, and update each other

Communicating with donors and friends back home through a group-written and maintained tumblr blog

Holding class sessions in places other than classrooms.

Meeting as a group several times before the trip to build the team, learn basics, and ease travel fears
LGBTQ: what did work?
LGBTQ: what didn’t work?

Nothing didn’t work! But we had to adjust in the following ways:

More scholarship awards of greater value. We learned that most LGBT students don’t have the family support or resources to fund a trip like this themselves.

Be thoughtful about transgender travelers. So much about traveling, going through customs, assigning rooms, etc. can be problematic for trans people. Be pro-active so that they aren’t left out of any experience. (Greek baths, for example)

Similarly, be aware that some students are not “out” or may have reasons why they can’t appear in photos or stories about a LGBT-themed trip. Make a plan for protecting them.
LGBTQ: how did this spark other programs ideas?

**Step 5. We’re home, so where do we go from here?**

**U of Louisville**
- LGBTQ - Greece (about to leave again!)
- Women’s Center - Human Trafficking
- PEACC and Health Promotion: Healthcare in Costa Rica
- SPAD: Yoga and Health in India
- Law School: Service over spring break

**CIS**
- Athletes to the Dominican Republic for Service-Learning
- Bicycle Infrastructure in the Netherlands for cycling enthusiasts
- Entrepreneurship in the Silicon Valley for an International Entrepreneurship Club
LGBTQ: how did this spark other programs ideas?

Step 5. We’re home, so where do we go from here?

**Barcelona**

Semester long: Gender relations and LGBTQ changes
From Dictatorship to Democracy

Short-term or long-term Internships

Group programs with visits to *Orgullo* (Pride) organizers, seaside town of Sitges, Aids awareness and safe sex, activities for gay families, gay activism
Now design your own heritage/cultural identity program!

What department will you reach out to?

Where do you feel they would be interested in traveling to and what would they hope to experience?

What would be your first step(s) in designing and marketing the trip?
LGBTQ: reflecting on their experience
LGBTQ: where are they today?

2 people who had never been on a plane and of those 2, one is graduating and moving to New York City to do an internship with Ralph Lauren.

We were able to support Rainbow Families and donate funds to create a book that shows same-sex parents with children.

In addition to these things we found all the things you would expect from a study abroad: expanding world view, see own culture in a new way, etc.

And this also provided us with a new way to work across campus. Through this study abroad we created new collaborations, involved different people and helped the community see the university in a new light.
LGBTQ: learn more

Rainbow Families Book Fund:
http://www.gofundme.com/rainbowfamilies

UL Greece Webpage:
http://www.cisabroad.com/UL-Summer-Greece

Student Blogs:
http://greecelgbtstudyabroad.tumblr.com
LGBTQ: thanks!

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