Underrepresentation, Intersecting Identities, and Systemic Change
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Goals

• Interrogate if and how our every-day activities as international educators work counter to our best intentions to develop inclusive environments that support a wide range of student backgrounds.

• Discuss case studies that model how to address potential roadblocks to developing inclusive processes, procedures, and support systems.

• Devise individual action strategies that address one aspect of our work that we hope to modify upon return to campus.
Issue

Our (field of international education) approach to preparing students and providing applicable resources, may have been designed with majority students in mind.
Significance of Diversity & Inclusion

**Access** - the opportunity to benefit from an education abroad experience for any student who wishes to pursue this without regard to her/his identity.

**Inclusion** - the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity (of people, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and communities with which individuals might identify) in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, and understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

**Diversity** - individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability and religious affiliations) that can be engaged in learning and working together.

Reasons to Discuss Diversity & Inclusion

- **Top down mandates** - administrative enforced diversity goals
- **Ground-up movements** - student-led coalitions formed to address specific challenges
- **Moral imperative** - personal or office objective to do “the right thing”
- **Bottom line objectives** - goal-driven effort to get more students
Social Identities & Their Significance

- Social identities often seen as “intrinsically negative” and difference generally marginalized.

- Approach to socially constructed identities has been to eliminate social significance of different identities.

- Rather than advance inclusive practices, eliminating social significance of identity has actively excluded those who are different.
Identity & Intersectionality

Identity politics, rather than overcoming differences, often has the opposite effect in that we end up conflating and/or ignoring intragroup difference.

As a result, we may only consider one piece of a student’s/person’s identity in our approach to advising, hiring, guiding, or interactions.
Identity & Intersectionality (Cont)

Intersectionality, a theoretical framework born from radical feminism, suggests that socially constructed identities are overlapping and inextricably linked, and suggests that systemic injustice/inequality occurs in a multidimensional way.

While general identity categorizations might be initially helpful (e.g., data collection, assessment), being aware of individual differences and the various identities students bring with them is important.
Systems View of Education Abroad

We work within structures that are multilayered. Some areas we may have more or less control over

- Individual
- Office
- Institution
- Beyond the institution

International education has historically been centered on serving a specific type of student and thus our “system” may be perpetuating exclusion rather than developing inclusive spaces.
Case Studies
Instructions for Working with Case Studies

• Three case studies for consideration

• Identity Cards

• Discussion of observations

• Link to Action Plan: http://ow.ly/10nh3R
Case Study #1:
Pablo & Ava

Pablo, a sophomore, comes into the study abroad office in search of information related to summer study abroad programs and is guided by the staff member at the front desk to speak with Ava, the study abroad advisor managing open office hours. Ava initially suggests to Pablo to think about fall programs since he’d be able to apply for aid and funding, which aren’t available now for summer. Pablo mentions that he has a scholarship that offers summer funding to support an internship or study abroad experience, and that’s his reason for coming in (he just heard about it). Their conversation is brief.

Ava sends Pablo an email a few days later with some of the general information about the application and a couple of suggestions for next steps. She doesn't hear back from Pablo until he's confirming his summer program admittance. She also receives an email from the scholarship advisor in another office about next steps for transferring funding for Pablo’s program.
Case Study Reflection Questions

Who are the key stakeholders in the case and how are they interacting with each other?

What, if any, assumptions being made?

What lessons can we take from this experience?
Case Study #2:
Student Experience

A student on campus who identifies as Asian American and gay chose to study abroad in The Netherlands because of the perception that it is a socially progressive destination. He was very excited to spend a semester in a country where he believed that he could truly be himself, especially in the context of his sexuality. As an advisor, you met with the student several times and had established rapport. You had no concerns about the student’s study abroad plans.

You reach out to the student upon return to the home campus and find that he had a difficult experience abroad, having felt isolated because of his Asian heritage.
Case Study Reflection Questions

Who are the key stakeholders in the case and how are they interacting with each other?

What, if any, assumptions are being made?

What lessons can we take from this experience?
Case Study #3:
You notice your office hires student assistants who come from similar backgrounds and from a specific student organization. You bring this concern to your hiring team and question whether the application process and interview process is set to serve a specific group of students. You all agree to review the application, outreach, interview and selection process.

As a group review the interview selection process. In what ways can the interview questions be modified to be more inclusive?
Case Study Reflection Questions

Who are the key stakeholders in the case and how are they interacting with each other?

What, if any, assumptions are being made?

What lessons can we take from this experience?
Resources

• Diversity Abroad
• Country Diversity Climate Notes
• Upcoming Webinars (Hiring – May 12)
• Diversity and Inclusive Advising Online Course
Thank you

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