

## **The Forum on Education Abroad**

August 1, 2019

This Request for Proposal (RFP) introduces the opportunity to serve as The Forum on Education Abroad's next Strategic Partner (SP).

The Forum on Education Abroad (The Forum) is an institutional membership association and welcomes as members all institutions of higher education, consortia, agencies, and organizations who are committed to improving education abroad. The Forum develops and disseminates comprehensive standards of good practice, resources and training, advocates for education abroad and its value, and engages the field in critical dialogue to benefit students. The Forum is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization for Education Abroad.

As the landscape of international education continues to expand, The Forum's work has never been so essential. As students increasingly see the importance of international programs to their overall education and institutions of higher education recognize the importance of education abroad as central to fulfilling their mission, the field of education abroad increasingly relies upon The Forum to advocate for high standards, research, assessment and investment.

The Forum has been fortunate to partner with Dickinson College for the past 13 years. The current contract between the two organizations expires on June 30, 2021 and as is best practice, we are opening the process to consider all interested SPs, including Dickinson College. Through this RFP process, The Forum's Board of Directors is reviewing the current and future needs of the organization to identify the SP who can best help us achieve our vision for The Forum's future. The Board seeks a SP who supports the mission of The Forum and is willing to provide The Forum's secretariat access to facilities, staff, programs and resources. The SP will be an organization or institution with a solid reputation in and commitment to education abroad and desires to help The Forum grow and prosper. The ideal SP will have:

- The capacity and willingness to work collaboratively with The Forum on matters of strategic importance to the field of education abroad;
- An established record of leadership in the field of education abroad;
- A location that allows for interactions with a number of university and educational communities and provides convenient access to air and other transportation;
- The resources and services to provide in-kind support as described below;
- The willingness to commit to a minimum term of five years as the SP, with the likelihood of extending the relationship to a second or third term.

Guidance on sharing an expression of interest is provided at the end of this document.

## About The Forum on Education Abroad

The mission of The Forum on Education Abroad is to serve as the collective voice of the education abroad community. The Forum envisions a future in which education abroad is integral to the mission of higher education, meets *Standards of Good Practice*, and is accessible to all students.

The Forum's foundational principles declare that:

- Through education abroad, students of every background benefit from their experiences with other peoples, cultures and countries, in ways not available on their home campus. Together these experiences advance students' personal, academic and professional growth. In return, host communities and home institutions benefit from students participating in education abroad.
- Widely-accepted standards, sustained by best practices and implemented by well-informed professionals, are critical to education abroad as a field of professional practice. The Forum's Standards must remain adaptable to the unique mission and operational model of each institution or organization engaged in education abroad.
- The Forum, as a leading source of intellectual inquiry and innovative research in education abroad, depends on the knowledge, experience and voices of all education abroad stakeholders and on collaboration with professions outside the field.

## History

The Forum was conceived in 2000 by a group of education abroad professionals who felt the need for a stand-alone organization focused on engendering dialogue and learning in the education abroad community. In early 2001 The Forum's organizational statement and goals were defined and a mission statement with five goal areas was developed. The organization filed for incorporation in July 2001 and held its first annual meeting. The Forum's first office opened at Smith College before developing a new strategic partnership with Dickinson College four years later. In 2004, the first edition of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* was developed and the first annual conference was held.

The Forum received recognition from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to serve as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad in 2005. Through SDOs, the U.S. government encourages self-regulation and compliance with standards in a wide variety of fields. This important status grants The Forum legal protection in undertaking standards development work and obligates the organization to exhibit openness, balance, transparency, consensus and due process in developing and disseminating standards.

In 2007, the Quality Improvement Program (QUIP) was launched as a voluntary process for Forum member institutions and organizations to be recognized for how well their programs meet the *Standards of Good Practice*. The following year The Forum issued the first edition of the *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad*.

By 2010, the Forum membership had grown to include more than 450 member institutions and over 90% of the U.S. students who study abroad. An example of The Forum's consistent effort to broaden support for its members can be seen in 2010 as well, as The Forum launched the Critical Incident Database (CID), a tool for use by Forum member institutions and organizations in tracking critical incidents that occur while students are abroad. In addition, the CID serves as a method for reporting information as required by the Department of Education in compliance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (the Clery Act), Title IX, and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

In 2012, The Forum hosted the first European Conference. Held in Dublin, Ireland, the conference drew 410 attendees from 23 countries and included a welcome address by the President of Ireland. The Forum's *Professional Certification in Education Abroad* program was introduced in 2014. The Forum is currently leading the creation of the sixth edition of the *Standards of Good Practice* and third edition of the *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad*.

## **Membership**

Today, The Forum boasts a membership of over 825 members from U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, provider organizations and foundations. The Forum serves its membership through developing and implementing standards of good practice, encouraging and supporting research initiatives and offering educational programs and resources to its members. As the membership has grown, a wider range of institutions and organizations benefit from its network of dedicated professionals. While non-U.S. institutions, community colleges and minority-serving institutions are underrepresented in the membership, The Forum recognizes this imbalance and strives to welcome and support members from these communities through outreach, resources and programming. The Forum's renewal rate is consistently above 90%.

## **Strategic Plan 2017-2021**

The Forum's Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 outlines both new and ongoing initiatives and activities. The plan seeks to expand and improve many signature activities, resources, events and programs to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying membership. At the same time, new initiatives will keep The Forum on the cutting edge of the education abroad field to help its members meet the challenges ahead. The plan's cornerstone priorities are consistent with the enduring mission of The Forum. They are: Critical Dialogue; Education, Training, Outreach and Professional Development; Membership; and serving as the Collective Voice for education abroad.

- **Standards of Good Practice**

As previously stated, The Forum is recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad. The Forum's commitment to developing and promoting standards of good practice for the field of education abroad lies at the core of The Forum's mission. The ultimate goal of the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* is to improve practices in education abroad, so that students' international educational experiences are as rich and meaningful as possible.

- **Annual Conference**

More than 1,300 participants from 30 different countries attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference held in Denver, CO in March 2019. Each Annual Conference invites attendees to revisit the foundations of good practice, while elevating the discussion to address current realities of international education. Attendees engage in substantive dialogue and return to their offices with concrete takeaways that support quality education abroad programs.

Each year, the education abroad community strives to adapt to shifting student populations, developments in higher education in the U.S. and internationally and an evolving global landscape. In this dynamic environment, widely-accepted standards provide a solid foundation and the necessary tools to face new challenges.

As a community of practice, The Forum's membership has come to expect that they will gather, discuss and cultivate best practices. Through critical dialogue, they reflect, rethink and reevaluate what they do, to improve education abroad for students and all stakeholders in education abroad.

The Forum's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will take place March 25-27, 2020, in Kansas City, MO. The theme will be "Education Abroad at a Crossroads: Actions for a Sustainable Future," which recognizes that education abroad has the potential to make a transformative impact on a student's personal, academic, cultural, and professional trajectory. However, education abroad impacts much more than the participants: home and host communities and institutions, local economies, partners, faculty and program leaders, and the environment all feel the effects of our growing global industry. Participants' shared dialogue will explore these issues in the field and the broader milieu in which education abroad exists.

- **European Conference**

The Forum also facilitates a bi-annual European Conference. Over 400 people from 19 countries attended the 4th European Conference (*Local, National, Global: Understanding Diversity and Community in Europe*) held in Prague, Czech Republic in October 2018.

The Forum's 5<sup>th</sup> European Conference, hosted by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and occurring October 29-31, 2020 in Milan, Italy, will examine how education abroad professionals work with their students and partners in Europe and the United States.

- **Standards of Good Practice Institute**

Standards of Good Practice Institutes are small-scale, one-day conferences on a particular Standard. The primary purpose of Standards Institutes is to offer participants the opportunity to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the field's *Standards of Good Practice* and hone their skills in implementing them. The Forum's 11th Annual Institute on Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management will convene on June 18, 2020 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI.

- **Professional Certification in Education Abroad**

The Professional Certification in Education Abroad program is intended for any and all colleagues in the field who want to certify their knowledge and expertise in the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*.

Participants complete six modules based on the *Standards of Good Practice* and a culminating project. Modules are comprised of written assignments designed to be challenging and have practical application in participants' current and future positions. Highly qualified, trained Forum Certification Assessors with expertise in each of the *Standards* review and provide valuable feedback. The program is individualizable, self-paced and flexible. Completion of the program is a distinction recognized across the field of education abroad.

- **Quality Improvement Program**

The Forum's Quality Improvement Program (QUIP) is the only objective, independent review system in education abroad based on the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*. A QUIP Review provides institutions and organizations that offer education abroad programs recognition of how the institution or organization's education abroad programs are conducted in relation to the *Standards of Good Practice*, and if the institution or organization shows a commitment to continuous quality improvement. Customized Forum Consultancies complement QUIP Reviews and provide practical recommendations and strategic-level advice for an institution or organization on specific topics of their choosing.

## **Role of the Strategic Partner**

The SP will provide a base of operations for the Forum secretariat. While the Forum secretariat will function as an independent body, it is expected that there will be multiple opportunities for professional interchange and cross-fertilization between the two organizations. The Forum anticipates opportunities for project and research collaboration.

In particular the Strategic Partner will ideally provide:

- Co-located office space for 8-12 professional staff (negotiable);
- Human resource, payroll and benefit services and programs for Forum secretariat staff;
- Access to telephone and computer network infrastructure, including video conferencing capability;
- E-mail access, IT, and Facilities support;
- Administrative support in the form of meeting room space and mail services;
- Active engagement of faculty and/or staff, and the knowledge base that exists within the SP organization.

The Forum will be responsible for all direct costs associated with the operation of the secretariat including:

- Cost of salary and benefits for its staff;
- Telecommunications and website hosting;
- Printing costs for publications and mailing;
- Equipment costs that are not available as in-kind contributions from the SP;
- Travel arrangements and costs for Forum staff.

Ideally, the Strategic Partner will provide:

- Demonstrated support for becoming the SP from institutional leadership and a variety of units and departments across the organization;
- An internationally recognized reputation for academic excellence and commitment to education abroad;
- Periodic access to meeting rooms, conference facilities or classrooms for Forum training and events;
- Technical support for developing online education courses and conducting webinars;
- Collaboration on grant proposals and/or participation as Co-Principal Investigator;
- Access to graduate and doctoral students for possible internships, research and other projects;
- Flexible workspace that promotes collaboration and/or the ability to accommodate growth in the number of Forum secretariat staff.

### **Benefits for the Strategic Partner**

The Forum is internationally known and respected as the preeminent education abroad association and, as a result, brings recognition to its Strategic Partner, enhancing the SP's profile as a leader in global education. Additional benefits include:

- Access to best practices in the education abroad field by having The Forum close at hand;
- SP logo and name appears on all Forum publications and on its website;
- Ability for administrators, faculty and staff to participate in local Forum training and events free of charge;
- Complimentary institutional membership in The Forum;

- Opportunity to collaborate on research projects and joint funding proposals;
- First opportunity to consider graduate degree programs, pilot projects, or other significant initiatives that The Forum may pursue, where partnership with the SP is appropriate;
- An opportunity to host periodically Forum regional workshops, events and special institutes and to collaborate on the focus of such programs;
- Referral of media outlets to appropriate SP staff/experts when such outlets are working with The Forum and seek the perspective of an SP type of institution on developments within the field of education abroad;
- Quarterly strategic meetings between appropriate Forum and SP staff to discuss possible collaborations in the strategic interest of both entities;
- Complimentary booth space at the annual Forum conference and a complimentary full-page advertisement in the conference program to help the SP promote its programs and initiatives to an outside audience;
- Complimentary registration in The Forum's Professional Certification in Education Abroad program for up to 3 interested staff or faculty members annually.

For confidential consideration and an invitation to submit a full proposal, please send expressions of interest, including contact information for a designated contact from the institution, by **September 30, 2019** to The Forum's President and CEO at the contact information below.

If invited to submit a proposal, the institution will have until 5 p.m. ET on January 8, 2020 to submit the completed proposal. The Forum will review proposals and expects to notify finalists by February 2020, with a final determination by March 2020.

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The Forum on Education Abroad is an equal opportunity employer. The Forum welcomes expressions of interest from all qualified institutions regardless of institutional type, geographic location, or membership status.