

Getting Started on a Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program Proposal: Questions to Consider

Thank you for your interest in exploring the possibility of developing and directing a faculty-led study abroad program! The following information was prepared to help potential faculty leaders think through the planning and proposal process. If you don't know much about leading such a program, we encourage you to read the information that follows and to talk with Mr. Jay Ward, Associate Director of the Office of International Programs (jward@sfsu.edu/415-338-1121) as well as with colleagues who have directed programs in the past. Proposals are due approximately seven months in advance of your planned departure date, and you will probably need a semester of lead time to prepare. We look forward to working with you during this early phase of your program.

I. Is Leading A Short-Term Study Abroad Program Right For You?

- Are you **adventurous, flexible, adaptable**? Will you be able to maintain your composure and improvise if things don't go as planned? Remember that travel is full of unexpected events.
- Do you **enjoy spending time with students** in a non-academic setting and helping them with non-academic matters? You may have to deal with homesickness, lost passports, conduct issues [excessive partying, lateness], family emergencies, roommate or host family issues, and more!
- Do you have a **sense of humor**? VERY important!
- Are you a **good organizer and bookkeeper**? You will need to gather cost information, develop a budget (with our help), and stick to it. You will be entrusted with thousands of dollars of University funds and will have to properly account for how you spend them. At the same time you will have to teach your course(s) and grade assignments.
- Do you **have the time** (for preparation, program, and wrap-up)? Will other obligations permit you to recruit students, attend several pre-departure meetings, invest time in budget and itinerary planning, go abroad, and come home to deal with financial reconciliation and the program report?

II. What Are The Responsibilities Of Being A Faculty Leader Or Co-Leader?

1. Student Recruitment And Preparation:

- Promote program (class visits, e-mail, word of mouth, etc.).
- Organize and facilitate several interest meetings.
- Interview and select applicants.
- Organize at least both a pre-departure and on-site orientation meeting.
- Disseminate site-specific orientation materials to students, including a day-by-day program itinerary, faculty pre-departure and on-site contact information, and student housing information (with copies to Enterprise Risk Management and the Office of International Programs [OIP]).

2. Program Planning And Design:

- Establish program itinerary.

- Make flight/transportation arrangements.
- Organize and plan all group trips and events (academically and culturally relevant excursions, speakers, farewell dinner, etc.).
- Liaise with overseas agents and vendors (host institutions, hotels, travel agency, housing coordinator, etc.).
- Establish preliminary and final program budgets to be reviewed by your specific academic department chair and college dean, CEL Budget Office, etc.
- Attend pre-departure meetings/faculty orientation held by OIP/ERM.

3. Academic Responsibilities:

- Distribute course syllabi to students (one for each course), with copy to OIP/ERM.
- Teach course(s) approved on program proposal with the appropriate number of contact hours.
- Obtain any necessary approvals from the Dean & Chair of your specific academic college/department.
- Collect copies of syllabi for courses taught by on-site faculty and submit to OIP/ERM.
- Select and arrange for local guest lecturers to enrich course(s).
- Oversee drop/add procedure where applicable.
- Oversee course registration and payment process.

4. On-Site Responsibilities:

- Fly outbound with students; if not returning with students, then accompany them to the airport and through the check-in process, remaining at airport until their flight has departed.
- Check in with Enterprise Risk Management/OIP upon arrival at your program site.
- Participate in group excursions and events.
- Provide students and Risk Management/OIP with faculty contact information during program free periods; collect such information from students.
- Proactively assist students as needed with logistical challenges (how to ride public transportation, change money, use a telephone, etc.).
- Respond in a timely manner to students in crisis (accident, illness, family problems at home, etc.); contact Risk Management/OIP about serious cases.
- Monitor group dynamics and activities as is feasible and intervene as needed.
- Promptly report to Risk Management/OIP and document any inappropriate student behavior of which faculty is informed.
- Monitor spending against program budget.
- Schedule time shortly before close of program to meet with students for debriefing/program assessment; actively encourage students to complete program evaluation forms immediately upon return to the U.S.

5. Post-Program Responsibilities:

- As required by Fiscal Affairs, reconcile budget/cash advance with original receipts within 30 days of end of program.
- Submit program report to OIP within 30 days of end of program.
- Submit final course grades in a timely manner.

6. Compensation (assuming that program meets minimal enrollment goal):

- Faculty leaders may choose to receive their salary and/or be reimbursed for their expenses (if program generates sufficient income).
- Program expenses paid as budgeted for the duration of the program (normally includes group airfare, U.S. and international ground transportation, per diem, lodging, group excursions and events)

III. Where Should You Go?

- Where in the world have you **lived and traveled**? Where might you feel comfortable leading a group? Do you have a working knowledge/fluency in any foreign languages? You should have a certain level of logistical expertise at your program site, and academic expertise will be necessary for sound and rigorous courses.
- What sites relate best to your **discipline area**? What sites might appeal to students? Remember that students may be less interested in the courses or area of study than they are in the site. But don't force a fit; the site and the course material should logically connect.
- Where do you have **professional contacts**? For example, perhaps you know of a host institution where you could hold classes, or which may provide housing for you and your students? Or, you may know a person who could help with on-site logistical arrangements.
- Where does the **University have an infrastructure or contacts**? If you haven't traveled much and have few or no leads of your own, you may want to consider building on what SF State already has. We have resident directors and contacts in many countries around the world.
- Where is the University **under-represented**? Broadly-speaking, we are under-represented in Africa, Central/South America, & in Central and South Asia. We strongly encourage faculty with ties and expertise in these areas to develop new programs.

IV. When Should You Go: Summer, Winter, Spring, Fall Break?

- Is your site **more pleasant in winter or summer**? Do you have **other obligations** during either term? Think about research, teaching, conferences, child care, family events, etc. When can your **host(s) best accommodate the group**? Maybe they have other groups coming in January or June, or the locals are away on holiday during all or part of the month. When would the costs of travel, accommodations, etc. be more reasonable?

V. What Courses Should You Teach?

- Do any of your **usual course offerings** lend themselves to being taught at a particular site? Think about what advantages the site lends to your course material. Try to choose courses that will allow you to get the students out of the classroom and incorporate things like attendance at performances, visits to companies or museums, city walkabouts, interviews, observations (data collection), interaction with locals, etc.
- Will you be able to **cover necessary course material** abroad? Remember that, as a rule of thumb, a 3-credit course meets for approximately 35 hours (not counting breaks); courses abroad should hold to similar standards. Though instruction abroad often takes place outside of the classroom, it is often not the case that each hour of a course-related excursion is as content-rich as each hour of traditional classroom instruction. Tours are meant to enhance instruction, not replace it. A rule of thumb is that two hours of out-of-class instruction count as one hour of traditional instruction. However this will necessarily depend on the nature of the excursion and the individual who delivers the content. For example, a superficial museum tour

typically booked by tourist groups may not be considered the academic equivalent of an in-depth lecture given especially to your students by a local art historian.

- Should the program be **co-sponsored** (the course is co-taught by a faculty co-leader in a different academic department)? Think about what disciplines go well together. Is there a colleague in another department with whom you might like to travel? Co-sponsored arrangements work best when both faculty are recruiting from similar large pools of students (for example Political Science and Foreign Languages) and when they are equally committed to the program. If your department is large enough, both leaders could come from the same department; this is a good way to train new faculty leaders.
- Try to choose a course that **fulfills requirements** for your target audience (such as group requirements in Arts and Science, major/minor requirements, multicultural requirement).
- If you wish to offer an **experimental course**, keep in mind that the course may be put forward for permanent status only after it has been offered a certain number of times. In addition, note that experimental courses may not fulfill any requirements, since they do not appear in the catalog. It is the faculty leader's responsibility to obtain approvals from the appropriate college and/or University committees in order for experimental courses to fulfill such requirements. Since knowledge of the host location is critical, experimental courses that are designed to jump from one destination to another should be avoided.

VI. What Would It Involve To Include A Service-Learning Component?

- Study abroad faculty leaders are encouraged to add a service-learning component to the existing academic courses on their programs. Service-learning courses abroad are first and foremost academic courses with lectures, readings and reflective assignments that integrate the academic theory learned in class with hands-on experience. The service component may count towards the minimum contact hour requirement, with the weight of a lab or practicum (2-to-1 in most cases). Study abroad programs include two courses for a total of 6-7 credits, with the following rubric recommended for programs involving service:
 1. 3 credit service-learning course with a minimum of 15-20 lecture or discussion hours and a maximum of 20-35 hours of service
 2. 3-4 credit traditional academic course
- For more information, visit the **SF State Institute for Civic & Community Engagement's** website at: <http://icce.sfsu.edu/>

VII. Who Is Your Target Audience And How Will You Recruit Them?

- Is the program relevant only to a **specific major or other group**? If so, can the program attract enough students from this group to remain solvent? This approach can be risky, but not impossible to put together.
- Can you target **feeder courses**? For example Foreign Language programs that offer Spanish, French, or German 101 target students in the lower level course, 100.
- Is the program targeted to **too wide an audience**? If the program appeals to everyone but is not targeted at any specific group, then where do you recruit? You have to rely on the attractiveness of the site.
- How will you **recruit**? Your department/college/CEL may be able to post your program on their website, advertise your interest meetings, and can produce a color poster/flyer, if necessary. We highly recommend that you e-mail students in target majors and/or target courses.

Classroom visits can also be very effective. If colleagues don't permit class visits, ask them if they would be willing to distribute handouts and mention the program to their students.

VIII. Where Should You Go For Excursions?

- Faculty-led study abroad programs are not "educational tours" and should not involve students spending most of their time on a bus or plane together as a group. Most excursions should be directly related to your academic course; others should focus on the history or culture of the host site. Activities that are essentially tourism or that have nothing more than recreational value should not be included in the program; students may choose to engage in such activities during their free time and with their own funds.
- What excursions make sense from a **cultural standpoint**? For example, if in Rome, the Vatican is a must.
- What excursions make sense from an **academic standpoint**? Remember that you are not taking students on a vacation tour. One of the reasons for your program is to enable them to engage in learning that they would not likely be exposed to if they went abroad themselves as tourists. Typical tourist fare should be avoided, even if it seems relevant to your course. Giving students a more authentic experience, with as much in-depth contact with the host culture and environment as possible, will provide a more fulfilling, memorable, and educational program.
- What excursions give the most **bang for their buck**? Consider distance, time, and expense. Is this excursion going to be worth the time and money? Is it relevant enough to the program's core component--the courses--that it's worth the investment of limited resources (time and money)? What would you gain if you didn't go? (A lower program fee? More free time? A slower-paced program?) What would you gain if you did go? (Nothing more than a "selling point" for recruitment purposes? A valuable educational and course-related experience?)

IX. What Size Group Is Right?

- Programs generally enroll between 8 and 15 students. **The preferred Risk Management ration of faculty-to-students is approximately 8-10 students per faculty member.** A program with more than 8-10 students may require two faculty leaders, a volunteer or other assistant. Please remember that you will also need to recruit enough students to cover any expenses (for example, your faculty salary and trip-related expenses) for which you would like to obtain reimbursement. Faculty who wish to receive their faculty salary and/or claim reimbursement of any trip-related expenses will need to recruit enough students so that the tuition generated is sufficient to cover all program costs. (Note that any non-traditional students on your program [for example older matriculated students, non SF State students, SF State employees] are treated the same with regard to application procedures, payments, lodging, courses, and all other program aspects.)
- Apart from Risk Management/CEL guidelines, there are other questions to consider regarding group size. **How many students can your host site handle (housing, site visits, buses)?** Can you trek through the wilderness (or stroll through a museum or visit a local school) with 25 students? With 30?
- **How many students can your course handle?** Think about time for discussion, presentations, field work, and access to facilities. What are the typical enrollment limits for such a course on campus? How might this need to be changed abroad?
- **How many students can you handle?** This answer will be determined in part by your level of comfort with the host site, your support system at the host site, and your ability to handle multiple students' problems.

X. What Program Model Works Best For Your Site And Course?

- In keeping with the ***Standards of Good Practice for Short-Term Education Abroad Programs*** issued by the Forum on Education Abroad in January, 2009, faculty should design programs around one or two primary locations which are closely linked to the program's academic content, and with short, class-related excursions originating from those locations as necessary. Programs which involve multiple in-country or intra-country flights and/or long bus rides are often more expensive than more stationary programs and do not grant students the same opportunities to become well-acquainted with a particular site and its inhabitants. In addition, extensive travel increases the risk of serious disruptions in the program itinerary (for example, due to weather or strikes, missed connections, etc.), as well as unduly complicates the management of student crises (because the group must be prepared to move on to the next location). If it is safe to do so, faculty leaders may build a small number of free days into their program itinerary (typically 2-3) during which students and faculty may choose to travel on their own and at their own expense if they wish.

XI. Can Everyone Afford It - Faculty, Students, Your Department/College, CEL?

- Will overall **program costs** be reasonable? Students on SF State's programs pay not only tuition but also additional costs which will differ from program to program (consisting of airfare, housing, excursions, meals, ground transportation, site-specific fees [exit tax, visa], mandatory travel insurance, etc.). You have no control over tuition, nor do you have much control over costs at your host site, but keep in mind that many of the choices you make about your program will impact the other costs that students will incur. For example, extra travel (particularly intra-country flights) increases program costs. Also keep in mind that students may not appreciate paying too many extra "hidden costs" (such as local ground transportation/subway costs, meals, etc.).
- Will **other expenses** be reasonable? Additional expenses directly related to instruction that may be "extra" include expenses for guest lecturers, facility rental, phone calls, etc. If expenses in one of these areas is unusually high at your site, think about how you can lower costs in other areas.
- What about **faculty compensation**? Faculty may choose to receive their salary and/or obtain reimbursement of their trip-related expenses (lodging, per diem, ground transportation in the U.S. and abroad, excursions, and site-specific expenses such as airport taxes), depending on the income that their program generates. CEL & OIP do not cover the cost of faculty passports or routine immunizations or first-aid training; any and all faculty expenses to be covered by the program must appear in the program's approved final budget.
- Will the program attract the **minimum number of students** necessary? What happens if it doesn't? If a program's budget is in the red due to under-enrollment, we usually work with the faculty to reach a compromise on their compensation (for example a reduction or relinquishing of per diem, ground transportation, or other items.) On occasion, a faculty member's department or college has agreed to pay all or a portion of the budget shortfall. If no agreement can be reached, or if there are too few students to sustain the program, then the program will be cancelled.

XII. How And When Do I Submit A Proposal?

- The first step in the process is to schedule an “In-Take” meeting with Mr. Jay Ward, Associate Director of the Office of International Programs. Please contact Jay Ward at 415-338-1121 or via email at: jward@sfsu.edu
- We also strongly recommend that you read the helpful “**Faculty Leader Information**” on OIP’s **Faculty-Led Study Abroad website** at: <http://oip.sfsu.edu/facultyleader>
- **Proposal deadlines:** For winter session, the deadline is June 1st, about 7 months in advance of your planned departure date. For summer session, the deadline is November 1st, also 7 months in advance of your scheduled departure date, while the deadline for Spring Break is September 1st.
- We require that all proposals be submitted to our office **at least seven months in advance of your scheduled departure date** because of the lengthy on-campus approval process. Chancellor’s Office Executive Orders require the campus President to approval of all faculty-lead study abroad programs. Before your proposal can be submitted to the President, however, it must be carefully reviewed by several offices including your department chair, dean, Enterprise Risk Management, CEL Budget Office (if you run your program through CEL Self-Support), legal counsel and finally by the Provost. In certain cases, your proposal may also require review and approval by the Chancellor’s Office in Long Beach. In addition, students want to know **in advance** what their study abroad options are. Therefore we require winter proposals no later than June 1st, summer proposal no later than November 1st and Spring Break proposals no later than September 1st so that there will be sufficient time for you to market your course to prospective students as well as to make the necessary arrangements (visas, airline reservations, orientation, etc.) **AFTER** your proposal makes it through the on-campus review and approval process.
- **Who can I talk to about my proposal?** Before you submit a proposal, we highly recommend that you contact Mr. Jay Ward, Associate Director of the Office of International Programs to schedule an In-Take meeting so that we can discuss your ideas.
- **Questions?** Feel free to contact Mr. Jay Ward, Associate Director of the Office of International Programs at 415-338-1121 or via email at: jward@sfsu.edu