Office of Global Studies (OGS)
Program Leader Pre-Departure Orientation
Spring 2010
Overview

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Orientation Purpose

To provide tools and discuss best practices for ensuring a successful & safe educational experience abroad.
Opening Questions

What is the program leader role?

What are your chief concerns about leading a program?

Did any questions or ideas arise from the preliminary readings?
Study Abroad Trends: Enrollment

U.S. Students Abroad, 2007-08: 262,416
Up 8.5% in one year, 102% in last decade

Source: IIE Open Doors 2009
Program Length

% by Program Duration

- Long-Term (Year)
- Mid-Term (Semester)
- Short-Term (Other)

Source: IIE Open Doors 2009
OGS “Home” Values

C-Culturally Integrated
A-Academically Rich
S-Service-Focused
S-Safe
A-Affordable
Academics

- Academics are the core of any credit-bearing program

- Keys to a successful international education experience:
  - Incorporating the local setting into the course
  - Maintain required contact hours
  - Assign the “usual” amount of homework—study abroad courses should have the same requirements
  - Remind students, as needed, that study abroad is not a vacation
  - Mandatory morning activities to ensure reasonable nighttime behavior
Service Learning

The Basics

- Service is what makes our programs “distinctively Vincentian:
  - Connects program to STJ’s heritage of serving the underserved
  - Connects students to community, giving back by giving of themselves
  - Service should be tied to course (AS-L)
- Service should have a specific, measurable impact on the community

Golden Rules

- Know your service partners
- Prepare students for what to expect
- Provide students with the cultural context
- Guide reflection immediately after service
- Keep your group’s commitments
Cultural Integration

The Basics

• Cultural integration...
  – Is a key part of study abroad
  – Increases student satisfaction
  – Builds cross-cultural knowledge
  – Gives students a sense of local “safe exploration” for free time

Ways to Integrate Culture

• Excursions & Weekend Programming
• Social gatherings with local students
• Service learning
• Local guest speakers
• Local helpers, guides, etc.

The OGS 8

• Eight guidelines/suggestions for how to maximize cultural exposure
The Office of Global Studies 8 Rules for Success Abroad

1. **Learn** – It’s study abroad (‘nuff said). And get to know your professors – they have a ton of different and fascinating experiences.

2. **Serve** – Service is the core of STJ’s Vincentian mission. Get to know the people and the culture by giving back and giving of yourself.

3. **Speak** – Learn 10 words in each language you encounter. Start with “hello,” “please,” and “thank you”
   - Extra Credit: Make it 10 phrases! (“How are you?” “Nice to meet you”)

4. **Eat** – Try at least 5 new foods in every country, even if you start simple – a new flavor of potato chips. And don’t be afraid of escargot – it’s delicious!
5. **Befriend** – Talk to the locals. Make it a point to have at least a 5-minute conversation with someone from each city.

6. **Get Lost** – Guidebooks and websites are great, but why not come up with your own places to recommend? Get lost in a safe part of town and truly explore. Let us know what you discover!!

7. **Expect “different”** – Abroad is different. But different does not mean worse or inferior, though you may feel like that sometimes. Try to cherish those opportunities to learn and expand your comfort zone.

8. **Plan** – It goes quickly. Be sure to set goals for your time away, then take steps to actually meet them.
Finances

The Basics:
• Pay before departure when possible
• Obtain pre-approval for airfare and other travel expenses
• Keep receipts
• Document actual exchange rates received
• Follow alcohol expense policy.
• Request reimbursement through the GERS system

Notes:
• Unauthorized expenditures may not be compensated
• Accounts should be settled within 30 days of return
Student Life – Phones

- Cell Phones
  - Provided by STJ
  - Arrival, weekly, departure calls (to OGS)
  - Arrival calls (to parents)
  - For business use only
  - Avoid student use except on arrival and for emergencies
- Pack the STJ phone in your carry on—never checked luggage
- Emergency Binders
  - Contains student information (maintain confidentiality)
  - Keep accessible (ideally, with the phone)
Student Life – HTH

- Cashless Medical Care
- General Emergency & Medical Services
  - Travel Documents, Legal & Medical Advice
  - Prescription “Translation”
- Evacuation & Repatriation
- Using HTH
  - Phone: +1.610.254.8771 (collect)
    Toll free within the U.S. 800.257.4823
  - Online
    www.hthstudents.com
The Good News
• True emergencies are rare.

Golden Rules
2. Take any immediate measures needed to ensure student—and your own—safety & well-being, then call us.
3. Refer to wallet card.
4. Remember: you are not alone!
Student Life – General Emergency Guidelines

• First things first: ensure immediate safety and well-being
• Keep the program moving, but leave no one behind.
• Keep a positive outlook—faculty negativity begets student negativity, and reflects badly on program leaders and OGS.
• Be patient with local partners. Consider STJ’s long-term relationships even when the experience is less than ideal.
• Do not speak with members of the press. If pressured to respond, simply say “No comment.” All press matters are coordinated through the Queens Campus Office of Media Relations
• Remember that STJ doesn’t have unlimited resources to solve problems. Be creative and strive to make do.
• Never give medical advice.
• Never promise confidentiality.
• Respect FERPA.
• Maintain program integrity.
• When in doubt, call for assistance.
• Incidents range from moderate to severe. They key is to take action, document, and contact OGS on all student infractions so that we can assist you.

• Five rules for managing behavioral issues:
  2. Respond to issues—be careful not to “let things slide.”
  3. Be specific and concrete in your verbal and written communication to the student and OGS—avoid diagnosing or speculation.
  4. Contact OGS.
  5. Remember FERPA.
Student Life – Behavioral Issues

- Working with students (minor to moderate infractions)
  - Give private verbal warning.
  - Be specific about the behaviors and actions that you’ve noticed.
  - Tell the student that these behaviors and actions must stop immediately.
  - Contact OGS for support, guidance, and to “CYB.”

- Working with students (recurring or serious infractions):
  - Student will be required to leave program.
  - Work with OGS/Judicial Affairs from the beginning. Do not communicate sanctions without checking in with OGS.
  - Parents will likely to be contacted by OGS.
Student Life – Planning for Emergencies

- Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.
- Unplanned changes to the program can result in serious problems:
  - Semester at Sea, 1996: four students and one chaperone killed when their overnight bus crashed on a dangerous road in India; the group was originally scheduled to fly for that part of the trip.
  - Even when the students are the genesis of the idea for the change, serious consideration of risk factors needs to take place before an activity can commence.
- It’s not just about reducing liability and legal exposure, it’s about doing what’s safe for the students.
Student Life – Table Top Exercises

- Barely Conscious
- Changes to Group Plans
- Natural Disaster/Volcano
- Hotel Trouble
- Missing Student
- Sexual Assault
- Troubling Behavior
- Missing student
- Theft
- Legal Trouble
- Alcohol Abuse
- Missing Program Activities
Student Life – Group Dynamics

- Programs, like classes, have a unique and difficult-to-predict “personality” or group dynamic
- Most participants will only know one or two other members of the group, so everyone is getting to know each other
- Take early action should any friction or conflict arise – don’t let a situation fester until it begins to negatively impact the program
- Be mindful of interactions within the group, especially any mocking, bullying, or intentional exclusion
Program Leader Behavior

• You are the Authority Figure

• You are On-Duty 24/7

• Distractions include:
  – Alcohol
  – Family
  – Research

• Risks of Crossing Fraternizations Boundaries
  – Loss of authority
  – Sexual harassment accusations
  – Conflict of interest between duties as STJ staff and being friend of student
Preparing for Orientation

• As you prepare for orientation & your leadership role, remember that many/most students…
  – Have never lived away from home.
  – Do not have local language skills
  – Have not traveled abroad, or at the very least, have not traveled to your program location.
  – Have limited or NYC-specific “street smarts” (e.g., pickpockets, sexual predators).
  – Do not come with an understanding of local customs (e.g., dressing norms, gender relationships, drinking norms)
NYC Orientations – OGS and Program-Specific

OGS will cover…

- General Medical & Health Preparations
- Department of State and CDC Information
- STJ Rules & Expectations
- General Banking Guidelines
- General Packing Guidelines

You should cover…

- Academic Program & Expectations
- Syllabus & Course/Program Materials
- Pre-Reading or Assignments
- Country- or Program-Specific Rules
- Program Itinerary
- Arrival Logistics
On-Site Orientation

The Basics

• Local orientation sets the tone for the program & establishes your authority.

• Create a time for a formal orientation—don’t run it “on the fly.” Schedule it as close to arrival as possible.

• Use the time to build community (e.g., icebreakers, group activities, etc.).

• Consider setting non-essential rules collectively.

• Make few assumptions about student preparation.

• Structure is good. Strict rules & clear consequences make successful programs.

• Plan for emergencies.
On-Site Orientation (Continued)

**Required Topics**

- Program expectations
  - Academic expectations
  - Itinerary & program timeline
- Program & STJ rules (e.g., alcohol, drugs)
- Logistics
  - Internet, phones
  - Local orientation (e.g., restaurants, shopping, transportation)
  - Money (e.g., nearest safe ATMs)
- Emergency Planning
  - Expert safety & health advice (e.g., CDC, DOS)
  - Getting immediate help (e.g., wallet cards, your number, cell phones, local “911,” HTH)
  - Group emergencies & possible evacuation
  - Standard meeting places if separated from group
  - Buddy system – pair the students up, or have them self-select – this is important not only for tracking students and taking attendance, but it help ensure students don’t travel alone
  - Call-in procedure – discuss expectations for students to check-in in the event of a serious incident
Post-Program Details

- Grade Submission
  - Same as U.S., within 72 hours online
- SurveyMonkey Evaluations
- T&Es through GERS
- Globalums & Ambassadors
- Keeping in touch with students
  - Post-program letter
  - Post-program photo sharing
Thank you for giving our students this wonderful opportunity!