

Open Forum on Developing Risk Mitigation

Gifty Ako-Adounvo, University of Rhode Island

Tracey Bradley, TN Consortium of International Studies

Noah Hansen, San Diego State University

Susan Popko, Santa Clara University

Robin Reliford, WorldStrides

Natalie A. Mello, The Forum on Education Abroad

Melissa Torres, The Forum on Education Abroad



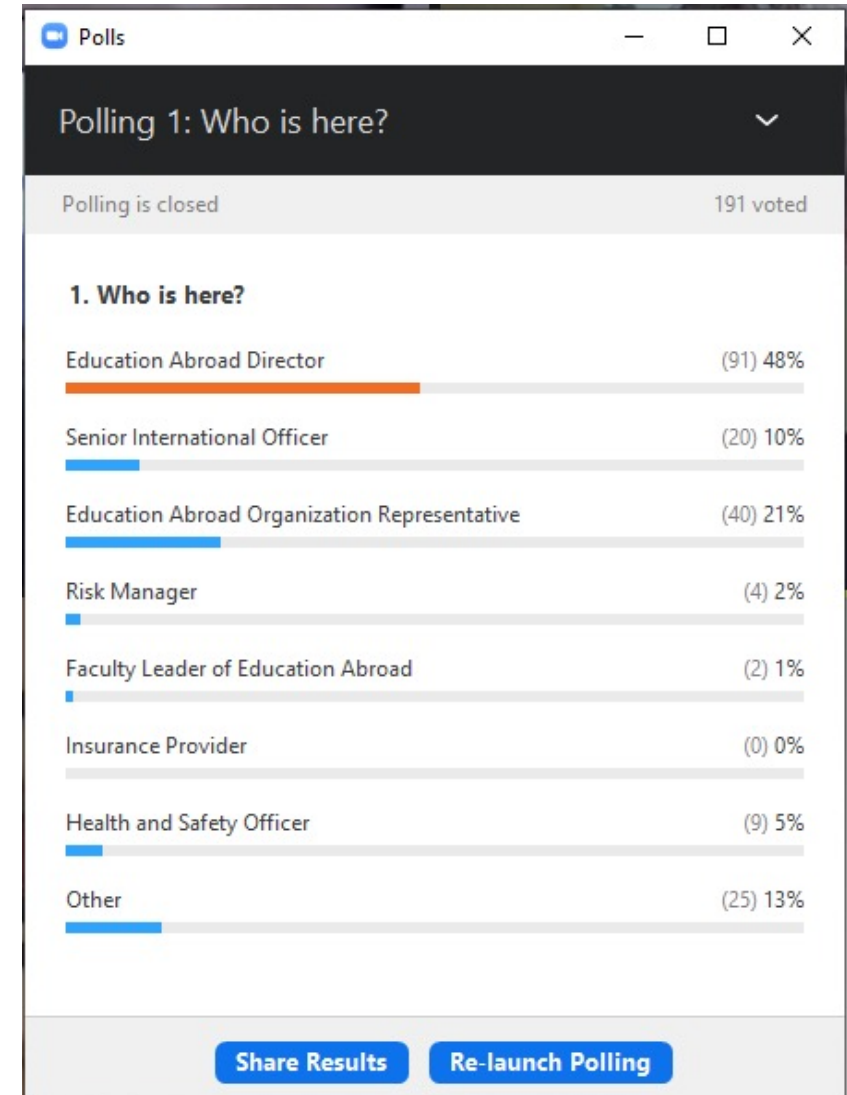
Agenda

- Learn about different approaches and perspectives
- Complete some polls to get us situated
- Go to breakout rooms for discussion and sharing
- Sharing resources



Who is here?

- Education Abroad Director
- Senior International Officer
- Education Abroad Organization Representative
- Risk Manager
- Faculty Leader of Education Abroad
- Insurance Provider
- Health and Safety Officer
- Other



Tennessee Consortium for International Studies

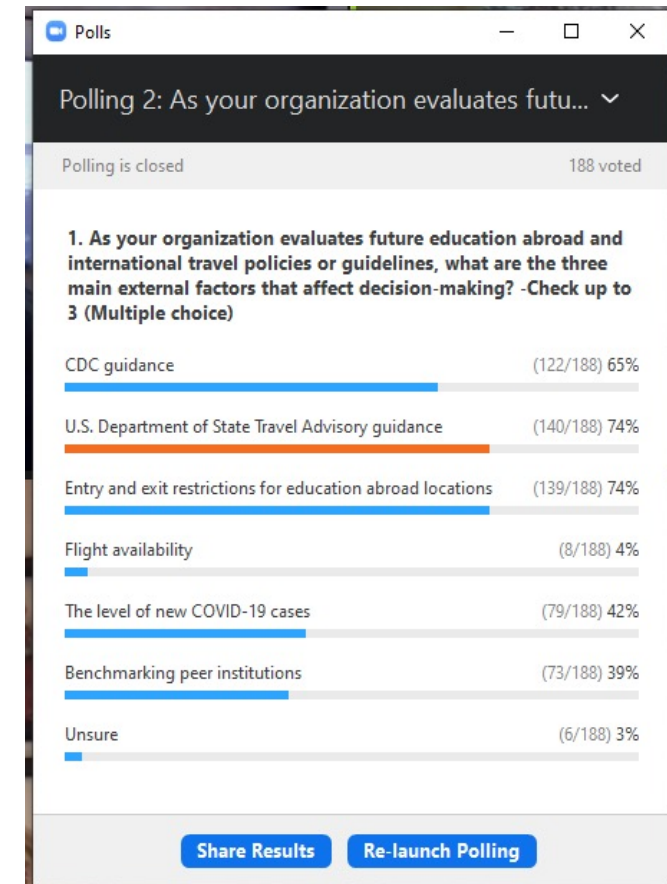
- Opportune time to review/revise existing policies
- Consider information from multiple sources, including outside of the U.S.
- In-country contacts are more important than ever
- Decision makers must have experience and program familiarity (i.e. General Council)
- Safety/Security protocols during and post-pandemic are “moving targets”
- No Guarantees



As your organization evaluates future education abroad and international travel policies or guidelines, what are the three main **external** factors that affect decision-making?

Check up to 3

- CDC guidance
- U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory guidance
- Entry and exit restrictions for education abroad locations
- Flight availability
- The level of new COVID-19 cases
- Benchmarking peer institutions
- Unsure



Will your organization allow travel to countries rated at Level 4 by the US Department of State?

- Yes
- Only as an exception
- No
- Unsure



Susan Popko

Associate Provost for International Programs

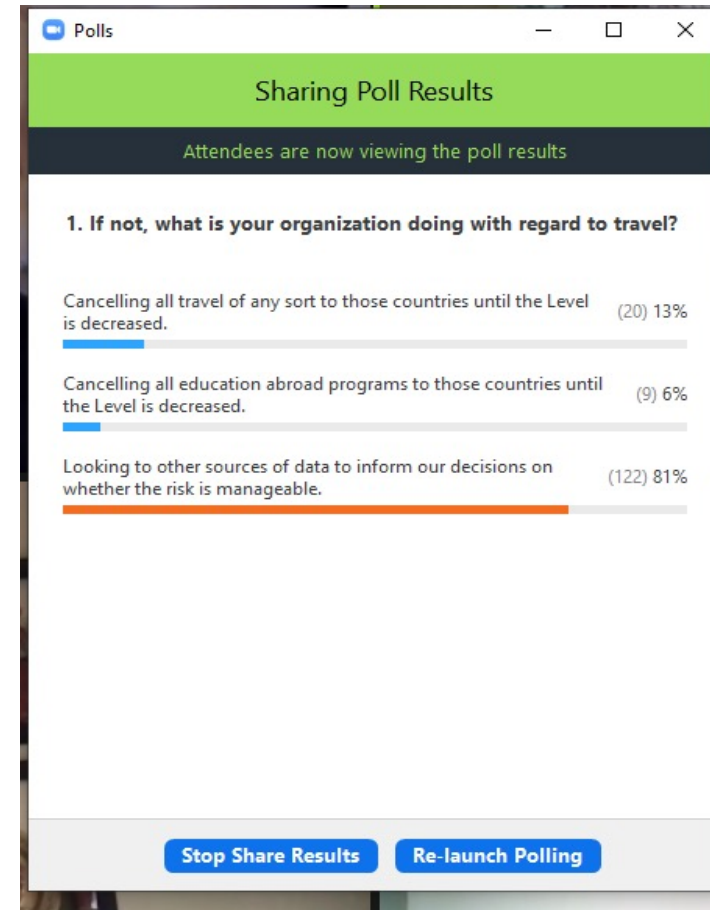
Santa Clara University

- ▶ SCU's elements of managing university-sponsored travel for students, faculty staff - 1) Travel policy, 2) committee, 3) crisis abroad response team.
- ▶ Implications of DOS Travel Advisory update for policy
- ▶ Current approach



If not, what is your organization doing with regard to travel?

- Cancelling all travel of any sort to those countries until the Level is decreased.
- Cancelling all education abroad programs to those countries until the Level is decreased.
- Looking to other sources of data to inform our decisions on whether the risk is manageable.



WorldStrides Spring 2021 & Beyond

Who We Are

- Provider organization comprised of WorldStrides Custom Programs, International Studies Abroad (ISA) and The Education Abroad Network (TEAN) at the Higher Ed level
- Pre-COVID-19: 100+ countries
- Pre-COVID-19: 20,000+ travelers / year

Spring 2021

- Study abroad semesters in Costa Rica, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, and Spain
- Semester and Custom Programs for foreign nationals in China and Vietnam
- Faculty-led programs to Hawaii, Costa Rica and Spain with more on deck

Destination Assessment

- We are continuing to offer in-person Summer and Fall 2021 Programs
- *“Like any other indicator, OSAC members should not necessarily view CDC THNs or Department of State Travel Advisories as a singular tripwire, evacuating staff or cutting programs the moment a level increases or restarting operations the moment they decrease. Rather, OSAC encourages private-sector organizations to incorporate the information in this system into their travel security protocols ... alongside other indicators such as those in OSAC Country Security Reports, foreign government security assessments, and/or assessments from travel security providers.”*
- OSAC Updates to the Department of State Travel Advisory System , April 2021



Resources

- <https://forumea.org/resources/guidelines/conducting-education-abroad-during-covid-19/>
- <https://forumea.org/resources/guidelines/responsible-ed-abroad/>
- <https://forumea.org/resources/standards-6th-edition/>
- <https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-international-education/mobility-and-management-balancing-new-priorities>
- All resources collected in breakout rooms will be shared with all participants.



Thank you!

Melissa A Torres, President & CEO
The Forum on Education Abroad
torresme@forumea.org

Natalie A. Mello, Vice President for Programs, Training & Services
The Forum on Education Abroad
mellona@forumea.org





Open Forum on Developing Risk Mitigation

May 3, 2021

Notes & Resources Shared

The following are lists of resources and tips shared within each of the breakout rooms. Please note that the conversation within each breakout room was different, The Open Forum was designed to be speak about the challenges and solutions that different institutions were facing during this time.

Room 1

Resources:

- APUAF Covid Info Sheet (resource for France)
<https://www.apuaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/APUAF-Covid-Info-Sheet-v16-May-3rd-2021.pdf>
- AACUPI in Italy (which is a consortium of American programs) puts out guidance/advice
- Country Destination Risk Assessment (SouthBridge Access) <https://uofi.box.com/s/b5ffb4x439uxv2csmqlw6dthwym2mk4y>
- Max Security's COVID dashboard product: <https://www.max-security.com/covid-19-portal/>
- CIEE's Health Risk Index: <https://www.ciee.org/about/blog/health-risk-index-report>
- Reliance on partner universities and on-site program partners
- Global Epidemics Risk Rating: <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>
- Global Health Security Index: <https://www.ghsindex.org/>
- Days to herd immunity <https://timetoherd.com/>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-data>
- Bing: <https://bing.com/covid/local/unitedstates>

Advice:

- Consider looking at data related to vaccine rollouts/availability now to help inform program decisions later on
- Within the Department of State Travel Advisories there is still information about non-COVID-19 related risk management issues to help institutions make more nuanced decisions



Room 2

Resources:

International Sustainable Development Studies Institute: pages and resources on COVID, including a case study of how we were able to continue operating through Fall 2020/Spring 2021 <https://isdsi.org/covid-19/>

Spain situation resources:

- Spanish Ministry of Health <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/en/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/situacionActual.htm>
- National Epidemiological Center
<https://cnecovid.isciii.es/covid19/#distribuci%C3%B3n-geogr%C3%A1fica>

New approaches shared:

The new criteria for programs for 2022 is that only our experienced program leaders could submit a proposal, one country only per person, reduced number of students per program (only 10 students), reduced number of programs (5 non-honors programs), running non-Honors programs in the summer only (spring break only one program - Honors program). All programs will receive preliminary approval from our Study Abroad and Global Experiences Committee with final review and approval occurring 30 days prior to departure date. This approach is from small office and supports about 120 students going abroad every year.

Adaptive Suggestions for DOS Level 4 No Travel Policies

- Waivers at program level
- Individual student petitions



Room 3

Successes:

- We're alive!
- Virtual opportunities developed
- Small groups abroad this year have worked well: they have time, space, and will to support them under the circumstances.
- Evals of student participating in a program showed that no students regretted choice to go abroad during this time.
- Domestic programs created.
- Allowed to build stronger connections with students. There were more frequent meetings. Staff got to know students personally, which means students are more likely to reach out to study abroad advisors.

Challenges:

- Mental Health
- Insurance in level 4 countries
- Current situation is an ever-changing moving target. There is a lot of ambiguity and is hard to try to predict the future.
 - There is also financial ambiguity. Students are wary of losing money if refunds aren't possible.
 - Some institutions are working with campus colleagues to ensure academic continuity.
 - Purring back-up plans in place.
- Some institutions are placid students in quarantine in the case of positive tests.

Resources:

- Participants in this room request samples of various waivers. Some waivers can be found in the Forum Member Resources.



Room 4

Resources:

- [World Health Organization Designations](#)
- [Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources \(EIOS\) dashboard \(Case Counts by Country\)](#)
- [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)'s COVID-19 Travel Regulations Map](#)
- Vaccine rollouts:
 - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1194939/rate-covid-vaccination-by-county-worldwide/>
 - <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>
- [The International Air Transport Association](#) can be a resource for evaluating air travel frequency/capacity
- [IHME COVID projections](#)
- [Adaptations required for faculty-led programs](#)

Advice:

- Remember that COVID-19 may be blinding us from paying attention to other types of risks, like traffic accidents.
- Try to evaluate other key attributes such as:
 - vaccination rates in host country
 - COVID Case numbers in host country
 - Health care capacity in host country

some institutions are relying in third-party partners in country. If they have a comprehensive plan for supporting students during the COVID pandemic, then they are offering that particular program. Direct exchange programs need to go through an individual petition process



Room 5

Successes:

- cross-institutional collaboration, forging relationship with institutional council/risk management, interdisciplinary task force (facilities, health & safety, academic continuity, financial)
- engaging with more virtual programming, more collaboration
- grown relationships regionally with other institutions
- drawing on professional associations and networks
- time to refresh policies and procedures during the “down time”
- strong communication and support from provider partners

Challenges:

- There is a lack of support from leadership and expertise within institutions
- There are financial concerns between balancing institutional financial priorities with education abroad interests; Risk management can sometimes be used as an “excuse”
- There will not be momentum to promote future study abroad as returnees begin graduate
- Institutions are currently facing staff reduction and staff morale
- Replenishment of emergency contingency funds while study abroad returns slowly
- There are reductions to the “bottom line”

Advice:

- Can't join PULSE and you don't have an international risk manager? You can join OSAC Academia Sector Committee!
- Considering opening programming to non-traditional groups



Room 6

Successes:

- Some institutions had good experiences sending students to Spain and Taiwan from a few Schools.
- Other institutions also sent a cohort to London at the end of March when they had more clarity.
- Majority of the participants cancelled summer programs but are making a decision this week for the fall.
- Participants from small colleges considered it easier to have high level conversations
- Created an online training travel course, for faculty to be aware of any potential risks, what to do, what can they expect, to have the on the ground knowledge, know what to do, etc. It has been helpful to them on what they could do to move forward. An Instructional designer was able to do it within this institution since they had several programs.

Advice:

- Recommended to students to take direct flights and to look at which language their COVID test is in. For example, one participant had a case of a student that had a stop in Mexico and the test was not accepted as it was in Spanish.
- If there is a high interest of students to go abroad, consider the level of interest of students and to which programs and countries they are applying more to create new programs.
- Go case by case on taking decisions of whether to cancel programs or not
- Some offices were able to advocate for study abroad with decision makers. They compared the number cases and and the responses in USA and abroad. In some cases it was safer to send a student to Spain than to Florida.

Resources:

- USDOS, CDC, JHU, OurWorldInData, OSAC, health assessments from providers, and information from host country government sites and other government



Room 7

Successes:

- Reliance on In-country partners who serve in national roles who help understand nuances and loopholes,
- There is a lot more emphasis on student responsibility, informed consent, and the code of conduct to modify student behavior

Advice:

- Know what the visa and entry restrictions are for countries you are sending students

Resources:

- [Survey for each provider/partner university host around COVID modifications to operations.](#) This includes location by location reviews and assessments, focus on mitigation strategies, how they are modifying operations, requiring vaccination, etc.
- Tracking Coronavirus Vaccinations Around the World: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>
- WHO Covid Dashboard: <https://covid19.who.int/>
- World Health Organization, Global Health Security Index, Harvard Metrics on Case Rates, Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins, European Center for Disease Control
- Twitter handles to follow:
 - <https://twitter.com/nataliexdean>
 - <https://twitter.com/DrTomFrieden>
 - <https://twitter.com/ScottGottliebMD>
 - https://twitter.com/michaelmina_lab

