

THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

www.forumea.org JUNE 2004



STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE
FOR EDUCATION ABROAD

“ We need a group of
academic leaders
to challenge us,
to make us dream,
to lead us to sacrifice a little
for the long-term
benefit of our nation
and the world. ”

—THE LATE SENATOR PAUL SIMON OF ILLINOIS

In this first publication, we present “resources” for only a select number of questions. Fleshing out the rest of the resources is the next major step for the Committee in 2004–05. We welcome the assistance of our colleagues in refining the standards and in identifying appropriate resource materials for different institutions as they grapple with these questions.

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THE CHARGE FROM THE BOARD

In 2002, as one of its first acts, *The Forum on Education Abroad* conducted a membership survey of study abroad professionals to determine the profession's views on establishing standards of good practice. The result, published and posted on *The Forum's* web-site for the last two years, showed a strong consensus that education abroad, as a profession, needs clear and comprehensive standards and that *The Forum* should take the lead in establishing them.

This publication of *The Forum* presents the culmination of our first stage in preparing these comprehensive standards. They have consumed the efforts of volunteer professionals, staff and external consultants for almost two years, and yet we present them still as a “work in progress.” We do so because we intend for the “standards” to be seen and used across a wide variety of institutions and program structures internationally.

For any “standards” document to be successful, it needs much more than a one-time publication. Standards need and demand the continuous attention of a wide array of real-life users to make sure they hold up in practice. We do not underestimate either the substantial achievements of the professionals who have brought these standards into being, namely the members of The Advisory Council and the five Goals Committees which comprise the working structure of *The Forum*, nor the challenges that lie ahead.

The Forum is committed to presenting standards that can be used by the simplest and smallest organizations interested in self-improvement, through to the largest and most complex organizations in the field concerned with internal efficiency, student service and public confidence. This publication represents a first step in the creation of a system for promoting standards of good practice for education abroad, and it represents a milestone in this new and important direction for *The Forum*.

I wish to thank the members of the Board of Directors, from the founders to the present, who have sustained the vision of a dynamic new entity committed to standards in education abroad. It goes without saying, that we all extend our thanks to the colleagues and professional staff who have put in so many hours of foundational work.

We wish also to thank the “providers” who gave so much of their experience in program standards and assessment practices to this process, but especially our colleagues at the *Institute for the International Education of Students* (IES) who contributed an invaluable starting point with their “Model Assessment Practice” (IES MAP©). Without this starting point and the introduction they provided to one of the leading practitioners of the field of assessment, Dr. Larry Braskamp, we would not be where we are today—at the beginning of an ever more public process of developing, refining and implementing the most comprehensive set of standards ever produced for education abroad.

DR. KATHLEEN SIDELI
Indiana University
Chair of The Board of Directors

THE VIEW FROM THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council members join me in congratulating the Committee on Standards of Good Practice on their production of this seminal document. The process was initiated under the leadership of the Board of Directors, and was transferred to the Council in April 2003, as the Board transitioned from its founding membership to a more mature, externally and strategically focused policy body. Since the transfer of responsibility, the Committee has expanded its membership, continually bringing new faces and new viewpoints to the process.

It would be less than forthright, however, if we failed to acknowledge the substantial debt this publication owes to Jon Booth of Syracuse University. The results have come a long way and involved many new people, but the founding architecture is still visible. Bill Anthony of Northwestern University has led the project over its second year, ably assisted by Joan Raducha, University of Wisconsin, and Michael Steinberg, IES, together with a growing body of colleagues from our shores and beyond.

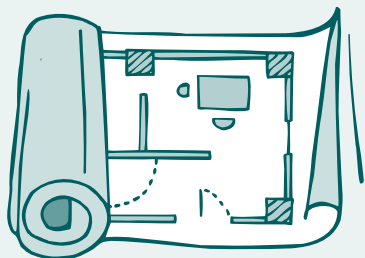
We look forward to seeing the “Standards” grow and develop through practical application. Like the Board, the Council is committed to an open process both for the development and utilization of our work products. We see this publication as a tool to be used in a variety of ways by a variety of institutions, from the largest and most sophisticated down to the simplest and most elemental student support unit.

In the end, our success will be judged by the improvements in service it allows the field to bring to students, and our progress will be determined by the participation of our member institutions in applying themselves to a continuous self-improvement process. We have many months of work ahead of us as we refine the language and structures, and as we develop the systems and processes to help *Forum* members use these standards effectively. We look forward to the challenge.

DR. PETER WOLLITZER

University of California
Chair of the Advisory Council

A WORK IN PROGRESS



This document represents the culmination of over two-years of work and the beginnings of a new and important phase. The standards we have explicated are not meant to be a “final product.” They are part of a work in progress. We need and expect substantial contributions from the field simply because our aspirations are high. It is, and has been, our goal to develop a set of standards to help guide a wide variety of programs in making their programs ever better for our students.

The Standards are divided into eight sections, each of which begins with a simple declaratory statement about the issue at hand. These statements are followed by a series of queries which tell the program assessor what to look for. In its final form, the document will also be replete with resources for answering each question according to the special needs, aspirations and situations of the program under review.

We do not attempt to set absolutes because we do not think that a “one-size-fits-all” is possible or even appropriate for education abroad. The nature of the educational experience is too subtle and complex, and the institutions and structures too varied for a simplistic approach to work.

Rather, our approach works forward from the mission statement of the organization under review. The rich diversity of American higher education has stood it in good stead, and our Standards respect and support that diversity. By asking the right questions, we intend to lead organizations into structured self-evaluation. By providing “resources” behind each question we intend to allow for open-ended answers to complex questions, but answers that must still adhere to and answer our basic questions about standards.

This process follows current best practice in fields such as accreditation, where mission-focused and continuous quality improvement models are the driving forces as they are today in so much of American society. While accreditation is not our goal, and we do not find it appropriate for education abroad, nevertheless the structures and processes of this type of review are instructive for our endeavor to set flexible and appropriate standards for the field.

I must end by thanking my colleagues for the time and effort they have put into this project. We have battled through the threats and realities of wars, pestilence and budget cuts to get here today. When working professionals take on a task of this magnitude, fitting the work into the non-existent interstices of their “free time,” it is a tribute to their professionalism when the project takes such substantial form. In addition to the many members of the Council, the Standards Committee and its volunteers, I must thank Michael Steinberg and Joan Raducha for providing leadership when I was traveling overseas, Jon Booth for his leadership and foundational contributions, and Larry Braskamp for his professional insights into structure and function for systems of the kind we are building.

DR. WILLIAM ANTHONY

Northwestern University

Chair of the Committee on Standards of Good Practice

COMMITTEE ON THE STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

2003–04

2002–03

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LOOKING AHEAD

The Forum's commitment to developing flexible and appropriate standards of good practice for education abroad is foundational. The field has grown, as documented over recent years by IIE's publication of "Open Doors," and we have seen an increasing professionalization of the field. We welcome the globalization of education abroad, recognizing it as a central element of collegiate education for the future—yet we understand and appreciate the need for the field to grow as a profession as increasingly complex demands are placed upon it.

A national demand for accountability in education has not seen education abroad go unnoticed. Institutional accreditation has struggled many times in the past with the rigors and challenges of assessing overseas program opportunities, but the costs and difficulties of site visits have proven prohibitive to most previous efforts.

Specialized accreditation in fields such as business and engineering have turned from obstacles to positive challenges—forcing hitherto minority fields into leadership challenges. University administrations nervous about legal liabilities have become ever more concerned in a rapidly changing global security and health environment, and the field has responded with substantial efforts to create standards for health and safety.

The combination of assessment pressures, off-shore realities and professional commitments by study abroad advisors and their offices have brought us to the point of recognition that establishing clear and unequivocal standards of good practice is no longer a choice—it is a practical and educational necessity.

The Forum is committed to continuous development and self-improvement of the very standards it proposes for its members. In the coming months of Summer 2004, we are challenging our member institutions to begin informal reviews and applications of the standards to their own programs and practices. These reviews will form the basis for intense discussion over *The Forum's* new electronic communications network and for debate and resolution at the forthcoming Annual Conference of *The Forum on Education Abroad* in Santa Fe, New Mexico, November 12–13, 2004.

The contributions of our members, who together catered to over half of all 160,000 U.S. college and university students who studied abroad for credit last year, will define the assessment map of the future. By early 2005, it is *The Forum's* intention to create facilitated and supported self-evaluation systems based on these standards, to be used by smaller institutions, and to create the conditions for a voluntary system of certification for those programs that value and can support an even more rigorous, externally driven peer review process designed around the standards.

Gradually, and piece-by-piece, *The Forum* intends to create a supportive and widely available set of standards and systems for their use that will set the future path for assessment, student learning, curriculum integration, health and safety, liability, research and outreach to project education abroad to its rightful place in the center field of international education.

DR. GEOFFREY BANNISTER

Executive Director, *The Forum on Education Abroad*

TIMETABLE FOR THE FUTURE



JUNE 2004

Publication of *The Forum's* first draft of "Standards of Good Practice."

SUMMER 2004

Application of the Standards through informal processes by a select number of member institutions. Continuous, facilitated dialogue among the participants in an electronic setting.

NOVEMBER 2004

The Forum's conference in Santa Fe, November 12 and 13, is the site for facilitated group interactions leading to suggestions for revisions and additions/alterations to the current document.

JANUARY 2005

Revised Standards are presented through the Advisory Council to *The Forum's* Board of Directors for review and final approval.

SPRING, SUMMER
AND FALL 2005

The revised Standards are field tested in selected institutions, ranging from small institutions testing the self-evaluation systems to larger ones using full-scale peer review processes.

JANUARY 2006

Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Council and feedback from member participation in the annual conference and field tests, *The Forum's* Board will adopt necessary revisions to the original Standards for use in a multi-level voluntary certification process.



THE STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. BASIC PRINCIPLES

Members of *The Forum on Education Abroad* are committed, as a condition of membership, to the following:

- Remaining informed of, familiar with and adhering to ethical standards and good practices developed by the major national and international professional organizations,
- Supporting excellence in all aspects of international education, including continuous evaluation and improvement of their work and programs,
- Fostering genuine international partnerships, and
- Fostering student growth in intellectual and international awareness and cultural understanding.

B. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Education Abroad Program (EDAP)

In-classroom and out-of-classroom related activities that comprise a credit-bearing education abroad experience.

Home Institution

The college or university at which the education abroad student is earning the primary degree.

Host Institution

An overseas college, university or other entity that provides academic and program related support to the education abroad student.

Provider

An institutional unit or a stand-alone profit or non-profit entity that administers an education abroad program.

Organization

An institution or a provider.

“Campus internationalization is moving rapidly to the forefront of institutional strategy, largely driven by campus leaders who see how critical it is to a quality education.”

—Madeleine Green
American Council
on Education

NOTES

2. MISSION, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: THE ORGANIZATION HAS A FORMALLY ADOPTED MISSION STATEMENT FOR ITS OVERALL OPERATIONS AND FOR ITS INDIVIDUAL EDAP’S THAT IS KNOWN TO AND ACCEPTED BY ITS FACULTY AND STAFF.

a. Mission and Commitment: The organization has mission statements appropriate for each EDAP.

- i. Does the organization have a mission statement for its EDAP’s?
- ii. Does each EDAP have articulated goals?
- iii. Does the organization encourage students to choose programs that will provide them with the most meaningful experience in light both of their academic interests and the incremental value of longer stays abroad?

b. Policies: The organization has adequate and published policies that govern its education abroad programs.

- i. Does the organization have criteria in place for establishing and terminating EDAP’s?
- ii. Does the organization have legal guidelines and adhere to the laws for functioning at EDAP sites?
- iii. Does the organization have standards for accepting and reporting student credits from an EDAP?
- iv. Does the organization have appropriate waivers and agreements with students participating in EDAP’s?
- v. Does the organization have contractual agreements with international educational and/or cultural institutions?
- vi. Does the organization have contractual agreements among participating institutions, providers and EDAP’s?
- vii. Does the organization support, mentor and learn from others in the general field of international education?
- viii. Does the organization play an active role in professional organizations at the local, regional or national level?

c. Personnel: The organization has defined policies with respect to personnel issues.

- i. Do EDAP faculty make an effort to establish professional working relationships with institutions’ or providers’ academic leaders and faculty, and vice-versa?
- ii. Does the organization provide feedback to provider staff and leadership?
- iii. Does the organization have procedures for evaluating faculty and staff?
- iv. Are opportunities provided for EDAP staff and faculty development?
- v. Do staff and faculty have access to and participate in professional development opportunities?

“The earning of academic credit remains at the heart of integrated study abroad. Therefore, curriculum integration and institutional and discipline-specific policies need to be clear and advising systems pro-active in this regard.”

—Al Balkcum
University of Minnesota

NOTES

- iv. Does the organization have a policy for evaluating and approving academic programs?
- v. Does the organization have an evaluation plan for evaluating EDAP's?
- vi. Does the organization provide an opportunity for periodic independent peer review?
- vii. Does the organization take cultural differences into account when evaluating EDAP's?
- viii. Where appropriate, does the organization share evaluation findings with home and host institutional, provider and EDAP staff and academic leaders?
- ix. Are students provided an opportunity to evaluate each course and are these evaluations reviewed by EDAP staff and faculty?
- x. Are students provided an opportunity to evaluate the EDAP courses and overall program?

3. ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK: THE ORGANIZATION MAINTAINS CLEARLY STATED AND PUBLICLY AVAILABLE POLICIES ON ACADEMIC MATTERS RELATED TO EDUCATION ABROAD.

a. Academic Credit: The organization has clearly stated and publicly available policies on the awarding of academic credit.

- i. Does the organization have clearly articulated policies and procedures for awarding or recommending course grades and course credit?
- ii. Is the award of academic credit consistent with home institution standards?
- iii. Does the EDAP inform students in advance about policies with respect to course credit?

b. Academic Coursework: The organization provides an academically challenging program of study.

- i. Are courses appropriately rigorous?
- ii. Are course requirements clear to students?
- iii. Are students provided with clear guidelines on what is expected of them and on how their performance in the course will be evaluated?
- iv. Is the overall academic program organized to enhance student engagement in the intellectual, political, cultural and social institutions of the host country consistent with the program mission?
- v. Do class experiences make effective use of location and/or resources?
- vi. Does class instruction make effective use of field study and local cultural institutions?
- vii. Are academic programs designed to encourage independent learning?
- viii. Are out of classroom activities integrated with in-class course work?
- ix. Are students encouraged to compare and understand differences and similarities between home and host countries?

“Even the best designed program fails its students if the support system is not fully articulated and adequately funded.”

—Mary Dwyer
Institute for the International
Education of Students

NOTES

**4. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROGRAM RESOURCES:
THE ORGANIZATION PROVIDES ADEQUATE FINANCIAL
AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ITS EDAP’S.**

a. Personnel-Academic: EDAP faculty have the qualifications, knowledge and an appropriate level of engagement to support the curriculum and the learning environment of students inside and outside the classroom.

- i. Does the organization have qualification standards for hiring EDAP faculty?
- ii. Do EDAP faculty have qualifications and in-depth experience appropriate to the mission of the program and the courses taught?
- iii. Do EDAP faculty have academic credibility and appropriate credentials in their host country?
- iv. Do the scholarly achievements of the EDAP faculty meet appropriate home and local university equivalent standards?
- v. Do EDAP faculty ensure that student academic experiences are rigorous?
- vi. Do EDAP faculty accept their role as educators and fulfill their responsibilities to each student?
- vii. Do EDAP faculty and/or staff have appropriate information on learning styles and expectations of students from another culture and do they employ appropriate teaching strategies?
- viii. Do EDAP faculty and staff have the necessary skills and background to prepare students for the educational system they will be entering?
- ix. Are EDAP faculty engaged in scholarship, or other appropriate activities in the arts or their chosen profession?
- x. Are EDAP faculty involved in developing new courses according to the organization’s approved curriculum design?
- xi. Do EDAP faculty assist students to make informed and independent academic choices?

b. Personnel—Administration and Support: EDAP staff have the qualifications, knowledge and an appropriate level of engagement to administer the program effectively and to promote the learning, health and well being of students.

- i. Is the ratio of staff-to-students appropriate for the mission of the EDAP?
- ii. Does the organization have standards of competencies in selecting staff and a protocol for periodic staff evaluation?
- iii. Does the organization have appropriate policies in areas such as harassment, diversity issues, and hiring and termination policies?
- iv. Are the on-site senior administrators adequately trained and experienced for the duties they must perform?
- v. Are guides qualified to lead field trips?

“Education abroad is best seen not as a short-term event but as an experiential sea of learning for which the student needs both pre-preparation and structured time for post-experience reflection and internalization.”

—Adrian Beaulieu
Smith College

NOTES

- iii. Does the organization encourage students from a wide variety of majors and fields of study to apply?
- iv. Does the admissions process reflect a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, or national and ethnic origin?

b. Code of Conduct: The organization makes explicit its student code of conduct and disciplinary processes.

- i. Does the organization have a drug and alcohol abuse policy?
- ii. Does the organization have student disciplinary codes and processes, and are these made available to students?
- iii. Do students meet the minimum behavior standards as specified by the organization’s code of student responsibility?
- iv. Does the organization have an appeal process for decisions about admissions and code of conduct violations?
- v. Does the organization have a policy with respect to sexual harassment and assault?

6. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: THE ORGANIZATION PROVIDES ADVISING AND ORIENTATION SUPPORT THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE EDAP’S MISSION AND THE NEEDS OF ITS STUDENTS.

a. Pre and Post-Departure Advising and Orientation: The EDAP provides appropriate advising support to meet student needs.

- i. Does the organization encourage and challenge students to explore alternative program options, e.g. full-year and non-traditional programs?
- ii. Does the organization provide pre-departure support?
- iii. Does the organization help students use available resources including the Internet in preparation for study abroad?
- iv. Does pre-departure information include practical information about academic credit, program requirements, living and travel arrangements, safety and health considerations, and expectations about expenses?
- v. Does the organization facilitate students’ use of support services on campus (e.g., financial aid, student health) before they study abroad?
- vi. Does the program ensure that students have sufficient prerequisite knowledge of the language of the host country before enrolling?
- vii. Do students have sufficient academic preparation and appropriate course prerequisites at the home institution before enrolling in the EDAP?
- viii. Does the organization require insurance or inform students about the need for health and repatriation insurance?
- ix. Does the organization inform students about the potential risks involved in study abroad and the specific risks at the study abroad location?

“Education abroad has made more progress in standards for health, safety and security than in any other area of operations, but the legal, operational and international security issues of tomorrow demand that we find new ways of imagining and tackling the challenges we have yet to meet.”

—David Larsen
Arcadia University

NOTES

- ii. Do academic studies, support services and integrative activities contribute to students’ appreciation and respect for persons with differing cultural values?
- iii. Are integrative activities designed to assist students in acquiring general adaptive skills that prepare them to live in a foreign culture or cultures?
- iv. Do opportunities exist for students to interact with persons of different backgrounds? For example, do EDAP’s have agreements with universities or other similar entities for access to sponsored activities and student clubs?
- v. Are students assessed for their comparative knowledge of multiple cultures?
- vi. Are assessments made of the students’ ability to adapt to a different culture?
- vii. Is assessment of students’ cultural learning used to enhance the EDAP’s curriculum, student services and integrative activities?

c. Language and Communication: The organization encourages the development of language and/or inter-cultural communication skills.

- i. Are students tested and placed in appropriate language courses?
- ii. Are students encouraged to use the host language as much as possible in the EDAP, in class and on excursions?
- iii. Does the EDAP provide students with the opportunity to develop language and inter-cultural communication skills by interacting with the host culture?
- iv. Do students engage in periodic self-evaluation of their communication skills in the language of the host culture during their course of study?

8. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY: THE ORGANIZATION HAS ESTABLISHED AND CONTINUOUSLY MAINTAINS EFFECTIVE HEALTH, SAFETY, SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FACULTY-STAFF TRAINING.

a. Safety and Security: The organization ensures continuous attention to safety and security issues.

- i. Does the organization have procedures for handling student emergencies?
- ii. Are staff trained to handle emergencies?
- iii. Does the organization have a written crisis management plan?
- iv. Does the organization have a safety and security plan?
- v. Are crisis management, emergency and safety plans reviewed and evaluated regularly by appropriate administrative staff and local legal counsel?

WHAT IS THE FORUM



The Forum on Education Abroad is an institutional membership association whose exclusive purpose is to serve the field of education abroad. The association is self-perpetuating. Its members are educational institutions, consortia, agencies, organizations, and individuals that provide, direct, or manage educational opportunities in the field of education abroad. Its policies are guided and set by the Board of Directors whose only interest is to further the Mission of *The Forum* to promote the greater good of the field of education abroad, without fear or favor of any one group or particular constituent.

By providing opportunities for discourse and information sharing, *The Forum* promotes high quality and effective programming through:

- Advocating standards of good practice,
- Promoting excellence in curricular development and academic design,
- Encouraging outcomes assessment and other research,
- Facilitating data collection, and
- Advocating education abroad at all levels.

Participation in *The Forum* is appropriate not just for institutions, but also for persons at all levels of experience who are interested in contributing to the growth of knowledge and understanding about education abroad and its impact on learning and skills development. *The Forum* invites active participation by university and non-university-based education abroad administrators, advisors and faculty members from all disciplines and all nations in shaping and carrying out the purposes of the organization.

Forum member institutions cater to over half of all education abroad students from the United States. As leaders in the field, they are committed to the following basic principles of good practice:

- Remaining informed of, familiar with and adhering to ethical standards and good practices developed by the major national and international professional organizations,
- Supporting excellence in all aspects of international education, including continuous evaluation and improvement of their work and programs,
- Fostering genuine international partnerships, and
- Fostering student growth in intellectual and international awareness and cultural understanding.

To contact *The Forum*, write, call or e-mail to:

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THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The fifteen elected members of *The Forum's* Advisory Council represent the professional working body of the organization. Each member serves one or more three-year terms and the Council elects its own leadership from within its number.

PETER WOLLITZER (CHAIR)

University of California

JANE EDWARDS (VICE-CHAIR)

Harvard University

WILLIAM ANTHONY

Northwestern University

ADRIAN BEAULIEU

Smith College

MELL BOLEN

Brown University

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Whitman College

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CAROL DICKERMAN

University of Michigan

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Provence

PATRICIA C. MARTIN

Senior Overseas Program Manager
University of Pennsylvania

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MICHAEL STEINBERG

Institute for the International
Education of Students (IES)

J. SCOTT VAN DER MEID

Brandeis University

BRIAN WHALEN

Dickinson College

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is the policy setting body for *The Forum on Education Abroad* and maintains the ultimate legal and financial authorities and responsibilities for the well-being of the organization. Directors are drawn from a variety of fields and the By-Laws require a structured mix of education abroad professionals and persons from outside the field.

KATHLEEN SIDELI (CHAIR)

Director, Office of Overseas Study
Indiana University

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MICHAEL STOHL

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University of California, Santa Barbara

MICHAEL VANDE BERG

Director of International Programs
Georgetown University

BOARD NOMINEES, 2004–07 TERM

JUDITH IRWIN

Director of International Programs
and Services
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Colleges

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Administration
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Syracuse University

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Education
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American University Center of
Provence
Arizona State University
AustraLearn
Australian Education Office
Ball State University
Bentley College
Brethren Colleges Abroad
Central College Abroad
Claremont McKenna College
College Year in Athens
Colorado State University
Cornell University
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