

Indispensable Partners: Advocating for Education Abroad with Academic Advisers

Academic advisers (both professional and faculty advisers) in college offices and academic departments are a crucial, yet often underutilized, resource on our campuses. Academic advisers are natural allies for education abroad. Of all of the student services and faculty members on campus, only advisers engage students from matriculation through graduation. Advisers help students articulate personal, academic, and career goals and assist in implementing an effective plan to make education abroad a reality. Education abroad professionals benefit from knowing more about the role of academic advisers and from discussing with them how to best partner to support and serve student interest in education abroad.

The goal of these materials is to provide ideas and insights that can help each education abroad office formulate its own plan for advocating with academic advisers.

How academic advisers can be allies to education abroad professionals

- Advisers refer students to education abroad in each advising contact (orientation, individual appointments, first year freshman seminar courses, web sites, e-newsletters)
- Advisers collaborate with education abroad professionals and students to tailor an education abroad experience to the unique needs of each student.
- Advisers and education abroad professionals assist students with program selection, pre- and post-departure course evaluation, and major/minor plans
- Advisers incorporate study abroad into four-year graduation maps.

Important issues and considerations for academic advisers as they advise students

- Ability to provide accurate information and advice
- Establish and maintain good relationships with their advisees
- Help students plan their undergraduate experience (majors, minors, education abroad, career preparation, graduate or professional school preparation)
- Assist student with navigating the campus and becoming aware of resources (study skills, counseling, multi-cultural, health, education abroad, internships, honors, service learning, career development, etc.)
- Awareness that colleagues in education abroad are professionals and know something about academic advising
- Ability to enhance and connect academic and career opportunities through education abroad

Variety of approaches on how to advocate with academic advisers

- Talk with advisers about their own experience abroad and how it influenced their life and career. They can transfer these insights to their work with students.
- Talk with advisers about what they hear from students who have returned from an education abroad experience--what are the issues, concerns, and questions? Discuss how they can transfer this knowledge to other students.

- Engage advisers in education abroad office or campus-wide discussions about education abroad.
- Encourage advisers to be involved in training and other opportunities
- Go to advisers' regular staff meetings and to observe their stance on education abroad and their students.
- Let advisers know what types of information and contacts they can expect from your office, such as website with information on education abroad opportunities, print materials, handouts that guide students through the education abroad process, information and advising tools for faculty and academic advisers (see full list of effective communication tools below), and statistical reports to illustrate education abroad trends by campus and academic unit

Training and opportunities for involvement

Site visits

Visits to education abroad sites for faculty and academic advisers generate an understanding of and enthusiasm for education abroad opportunities available to undergraduate students. Faculty and advisers gain a better understanding of the design and operation of various programs, and are exposed to and experience the academic climate and local culture in which their students are immersed during education abroad. Faculty and advisers gain insight into the skills and perceptions that students acquire when they are abroad.

Study abroad scholarship applications

Invite advisers to be readers when scholarship applications are reviewed. This allows advisers to read about students' motivations, program selection rationale, and financial concerns. Advisers are keenly interested in individual students and their stories. This provides them with an easy venue to learn more about education abroad and to provide a service for the education abroad office and to gain a deeper connection to their education abroad colleagues.

Presenting at local, regional, and national conferences

Invite advisers to present with you at local, regional, and national conferences. They will be able to contribute substantively to the presentation and learn more about education abroad in the process. They become more informed allies from attending and participating in conferences.

Co-author articles

Invite advisers to co-author articles for publication in education abroad and academic advisers publications. Advisers do not often have many opportunities to publish and may appreciate this opportunity.

Speaking to groups of students, faculty, and other advisers

Invite advisers to speak about their own experiences and knowledge of education abroad and its impact on students whenever possible. Have them co-present with you to students in classes, to faculty in departmental meetings, and to other advisers at adviser training. Advisers add credibility since students turn to them for trusted academic advice.

Workshops and 'brown bag' sessions

Provide advisers with training and opportunities for discussion on a regular basis. These could take the form of adviser training workshops each semester, topical brown bag

meetings each month, or special sessions organized periodically throughout the year as appropriate. Advisers want to provide students with accurate and timely information. Give them the tools to do so.

Joint staff meetings

Regularly schedule joint staff meetings between study abroad professionals and academic advisers. They will tell you about new developments on campus that impact students and advisers and can keep you up to date on issues and concerns that students express to their advisers about education abroad.

Create resources for advisers to use with students and for their reference

Academic departments and the education abroad office can collaborate to create advising resources on education abroad for each degree program. These gives students, academic advisers, faculty, and educational abroad professionals to work from the same information.

Create a form or process that encourages (or requires) students to have a documented conversation with their academic advisers prior to studying abroad. This will help students make a more informed decision about which courses to take while they are overseas and provide a record of the decisions made. Academic advisers may be able to point out additional considerations for students that are specific to their major, minor, or college of enrollment.

Send clear messages to students like: “Being aware of how your study abroad coursework can potentially fulfill your requirements can help you complete degree requirements more efficiently and quickly, helping you graduate on time.” This helps academic advisers, too.

Provide easily accessible information about how credit transfers to meet degree requirements.

Provide a scholarship search engine so that advisers and students have good access to up-to-date scholarship information.

Widely distribute financial aid information noting that financial aid (loans, grants, and scholarships) is applicable to study, service-learning, and intern abroad experiences awarding academic credit and that work, intern, volunteer experiences that do not award credit are ineligible for financial aid.

Develop and distribute a Resume Tips handout that includes ideas for communicating the value of an international experience on your resume.

Advisers help students overcome the "cost barrier" by encouraging early planning for study abroad. *Provide advisers with concrete information* so that they can help their students be better informed and more effective in their financial aid planning.

Communication and Working with Academic Advisers

Audiences to consider when targeting communication with stakeholders:

Prospective Undergraduate Students
Parents
Current Undergraduate Students
Staff, Faculty, and Administrators
Colleagues and students on other system campuses
Colleagues Nation-wide
Alumni

Samples of effective communication tools:

Letter of Admission: can include such phrases as “Resources within the college and university provide exceptional opportunities for students undergraduate programs. These opportunities include . . . education abroad . . .”

New Student Parent Packet: Education abroad information can be included in parent orientation packets and in career development information presented to parents, for example “XXX College expects that our students will study abroad.”
New Student Handbook: Education abroad can be promoted as an important opportunity in resources given to all incoming students at orientation. This should include the web site and referral information.

Scrapbooks and Montages: Offices and departments have students bring in education abroad photos and create montages on their walls or scrapbooks in their offices. Students bring their friends into the office to show their pictures and talk about their experiences, and other students can peruse the photos as well.

Map-Pinning Events: Departments and colleges have used map-pinning events to bring together international students, education abroad participants, and faculty with international research interests, and also created attractive and informative promotional displays.

Alumni Communications: Departments and colleges can inform alumni about on education abroad within their disciplines. They have solicited support for internationalizing their programs.

Student and Faculty Panels: Various sorts of events for students can highlight student and faculty international experiences. These include panels highlighting faculty research interests, staff site visit experiences, and students’ study abroad, internship abroad, and research abroad experiences.

Web Development:

Here are a few ideas:

- Direct links to the campus study abroad office from student-related departmental pages, course pages, student services pages.
- Current study abroad topics (deadlines, information session schedules, highlighted programs, etc) listed in “hot links” or “news” sections of student-centered websites.

- Education abroad questions posed in monthly interactive web segments, and education abroad information provided to students as part of regular unit-wide email updates.
- Small education abroad web pages built with unit-specific information (including links to advising tools, links to pages updated by students abroad, links to faculty pages related to study abroad programs they lead or that they know and endorse).

Other Publications:

Study abroad messages have also been incorporated into new student orientation, career services emails and newsletters, undergraduate handbooks, departmental brochures, 4-year plans, advising sheets, and advising appointment protocols. Profiles of students can be placed on the web site. Video and still photos can be used (with permission). Audio testimonials can be made available for pod casting to I Pods.

Other advocacy initiatives related to academic advising

- Outreach to employers can be productive in several ways. It can boost acceptance of and motivation for students to participate in education abroad. It can lead to new sources of funding for education abroad programs and scholarships.
- Collaboration with graduate and professional programs can lead to greater demand for students to study abroad, e.g. Medical School
- Collaborate with career centers to teach career counselors how to educate students to discuss the value and relevance of their experience abroad with potential employers.

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