Students with Disabilities in Education Abroad

7 years ago: 2.6%

3 years ago: 4.1%

Last year: 5.1%

Can we double it to close the gap?

Track disability status of your students for Open Doors Report!
Who Goes Abroad?

Percentage distribution of disabilities by type among self-disclosing study abroad participants

Source: Open Doors Report
Share Compelling Stories in Outreach

Video Series

YouTube: MIUSA1981

miusa.org/away

#BlindAbroad

miusa.org/podcast
Is Capacity for Inclusion Increasing?

Have you tried these three approaches?

**Universal** – Process designed for inclusion

**Social** – Remove barriers in environment

**Individual** – Person with disability adaptations
Be the Champion of Change

Let us support you in reaching more students with disabilities and preparing for inclusive programs!

Free services sponsored since 1995 by U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

www.miusa.org
Celebrate Disability Month & IEW

“All my life, people told me my disability would not stop me from doing whatever I wanted to do. Successfully completing a trip abroad allowed me to really believe that.”

Haben Girma, Deaf Blind volunteer and study abroad alumna who is now a lawyer
Generation Study Abroad
IIE SUMMIT 2015
OCTOBER 1 - 2, 2015 | GRAND HYATT HOTEL | WASHINGTON, DC

Matthew Rader
IES Abroad

#IIESummit2015
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IES Abroad

- Consortium of over 225 Colleges and Universities in the U.S.
- 35 program locations, in 18 countries, on 5 continents.
- Approximately 5,800 students study with IES Abroad annually.
- IES has accommodated students with disabilities of varying degrees in all the countries we serve.
## Concerns of Prospective Study Abroad Students with Disabilities

**PRIMARY**
- Finances
- Relevance to degree plan/academic plans
- Career benefits
- Program structure

**SECONDARY**
- Health and safety
- Knowledge of a foreign language
- Ability to be accommodated in host country

Source: 2011 Study Abroad Survey of Texas A&M University students registered with the Department of Disability Services, n=121.
Supporting Students with Disabilities

Differing Program Models

• Home university owned and operated
• Home university partnerships
• Independent student
• Individual faculty/staff travel study program
• Third-Party Providers
• Hybrid Programs
Providing Disability Accommodations in Host Culture

• **Procedural:** Accommodations are provided based on the law. Additional paperwork may be required to access and confirm services.

• **Personal:** Accommodations are arranged through direct communication about what is needed and why. Services are facilitated through networks and partnerships.

• **Community:** Accommodations are the responsibility of the individual’s peers, family and community, rather than by institutions or governments.

Source: Mobility International USA
Accommodation Considerations on Study Abroad Programs

- Mobility/Transportation
- Housing
- Learning (testing, note taking, reading, etc.)
- Meals/Diet
- Health (medication, doctors, counselors, etc.)
- Excursions
- Program schedule and pace
Student Responsibilities

• Disclose disability to initiate the accommodation process. Failure to do so can result in loss of money, time, and satisfaction.
• Research the host destination and develop realistic expectations about the availability of program accommodations in the host countries.
• Be proactive and create awareness of your needs prior to departure and while abroad (e.g., learn how to describe your disability and ask for help in the local language).
• Follow-through with any program-related tasks, as well as further review and discuss program itinerary with program coordinators.
• If required, provide adequate documentation or accommodation letter.
• Provide own personal devices, equipment, and personal assistants.
Disability Services Responsibilities

- Research and understand institutional goals and policies.
- Determine reasonable accommodations for students.
- If registered with Disability Services, share accommodation letter with program coordinators with student’s permission.
- Educate students and staff of legal rights and responsibilities, as they pertain to the university goals and missions. Students have the right to equal access and reasonable accommodations.
- Help students make the best accommodation choices for their needs based on program structure (lecture/classroom based vs. activity/project based).
- Set up an action plan that the students and program coordinators can follow.
- Do best to arrange and fund whatever accommodations the student would use if he/she was on campus taking classes.
Study Abroad Office Responsibilities

• Encourage early disclosure (application, student handbook, and/or pre-departure orientation).
• Assess students’ interests and goals.
• Assist with program research and program selection process.
• Inform appropriate parties of student’s disclosure with student’s permission.
• Address cultural and/or logistical concerns related to student’s anticipated program location. Explain cultural implications/perceptions in foreign countries (if applicable).
• In the event of disclosure of disability, facilitate follow-up with student to obtain more information and ensure emergency preparedness.
• Document actions that need to be taken.
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater’s IIE Generation Study Abroad Commitment Pledge:

“The UW-Whitewater Foundation and the Center for Students with Disabilities will establish an endowed scholarship to support the participation of students with physical, learning, sensory, psychological or other disabilities substantially affecting a major life activity (e.g. walking, hearing, seeing, breathing, learning) in education abroad.”
Examined UW-Whitewater’s Success with Other Underrepresented Cohorts

- Office of Multicultural Affairs & Student Success (MASS) serves needs and interests of first generation, low income, multicultural and under-represented minority (URM) students.
- In 1994 MASS engaged faculty, staff, and these students in a “Study Abroad Forum”.
- Connect students with the prospect of education abroad.
- New program demonstrates extremely strong participation of underrepresented groups: 21 of 26 participants are African American; one is Hispanic student.
Applied Campus Strategies to Abroad Programs

- Mentoring
- Enhanced academic advising
- Cohort-based academic support
- Multicultural programming
- Collateral issues
- Scholarships
- Transitional programs
- Peer Advising

- MASS academic staff partnered with faculty members
- Targeted all academic colleges
- Co-sponsored global programming
- Scholarship mentoring
- Semester-long classes culminated in abroad component
- Involved peer leaders in recruitment
Impact of MASS Strategy

• Participating in study abroad experiences became more normative for URM students.

• URM students, who comprise just over 10% of the student population at UWW, comprised between 19 - 23% of the population participating in education abroad (2010-2014).

• In 2014-15, approximately 61/350 education abroad participants were URM students (17.5%).
Now Applying Strategy to Center for Students with Disabilities

- CSD Director partnering with inter-cultural communication faculty member.
- Will examine diversity issues in amateur and professional sport from the 1930's to present day.
- Address diversity barriers in sports & need for and rising significance of the Paralympic Games, Gay Games, and Special Olympics.
- Thus far 5 of 7 applicants have significant disabilities (mobility, vision, Asperger’s).
LGBT Views of Europe: Art, Civils Rights and Literature

- Developed by director of the Pride Center and openly gay faculty and CGE staff.

- Explore cultural trends in LGBT communities and acceptance in Western Europe.

- Attracting LGBT students and their allies, but also women’s studies, political science majors.

- Many applicants are members of other underrepresented groups (ethnicity, disability, first generation)
Lessons Learned

- Commitment goal has become more focused on making education abroad interesting and of interest to traditionally underrepresented groups.

- If focused on only doubling the participant numbers, the CGE might be working alone.

- By working on expanding the number of participants from URM groups, students with disabilities, and LGBT students, we have created a goal that has the buy in of more offices, faculty and students across campus.
Meet Justin Harford

- BA in Latin American history and minor in Spanish literature at University of California, Berkeley
- 10 week summer immersion program in Morelia Mexico
- Academic year in Santiago, Chile
Ensure All Program Activities are Inclusive and Barrier Free

- Physical barriers
- Social barriers
- Don’t fund discrimination
Find Creative Solutions
Engage with Host Country Organizations
Study Abroad is an Important Experience

• Spanish fluency
• Problem solving
• Opportunities
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