

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



Champions for Inclusion

share their road map for engaging people with disabilities in education abroad



A Publication of the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange

A WORLD AWAITS YOU: THE ROAD TO “YES”!

One day in 1971, members of the Berkeley City Council were stunned to see a posse of UC Berkeley students in wheelchairs stream into their council meeting.

The students—which included Hale Zukas and Ed Roberts, two pioneering leaders of the disability rights movement—were there because they wanted curb cuts on every street corner in Berkeley, explaining that they needed to get around and wanted to do so as independently as possible. Since curb cuts were not standard at the time, wheelchair riders contending with curbs meant hoping a willing passerby would show up to give a hand or having to wheel into traffic to avoid curbs entirely.

Loni Hancock, the mayor at the time, recalls what went through her mind after the students made their case:

“Realizing the effort that it took for them to be there—and that they were requesting something that had NEVER BEEN DONE, to our knowledge anywhere on earth... was an overwhelming sensation. But realizing it was something we could do and should do and would do.”

At a time when many would have said “no,” the City Council started with “yes.” They made a long-term plan, starting with 15 corners in the center of town and expanding from there. It did not happen overnight, but with the help of the roadmap that city planners assembled, the city of Berkeley made strides towards achieving that dream of access initiated by the group of students with disabilities and championed by the City Council nearly 50 years ago.

To be a divergent voice saying “yes!” is to be part of something exciting. In the context of international exchange—where the stakes are high and the room for creativity great, it can be positively exhilarating.

As international educators, we can effect change to make going abroad a reality for students with disabilities.

We just need a road map of our own.

“The philosophy in our office with regard to students with disabilities who would like to study abroad is to default to yes and then find a way.”

—Ryan Larsen

Director, Education Abroad
Institute for Global Engagement
Western Washington University

For this issue of A World Awaits You, we asked higher education professionals from institutions across the United States about their best practices for adding to the disability diversity of their education abroad programs. Points along their road map include:

- Designating a study abroad advisor to formally liaise with the disability services office at the University of Texas at Austin
- Offering trainings for international exchange staff at Missouri State and the University of Denver to learn about disability culture, rights, and resources
- Creating funding streams at Duke and University of Arizona which ensure that the cost of disability-related accommodations are never a barrier to sending a disabled student abroad

Whether you are a longtime champion for inclusion abroad or you’re just getting started, we hope that this A World Awaits You will show you that you’re not alone on your journey and that you’ll be able to map out some new strategies along the way.

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange is a project of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, designed to increase the participation of people with disabilities in international exchange between the United States and other countries, and is supported in its implementation by Mobility International USA.

www.miusa.org/ncde

IN THIS ISSUE

ADVOCACY

ADVOCATING FOR ACCESS

PAGE 04

OUTREACH

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

PAGE 08

FUNDING

FUNDING ACCESS TO A PRICELESS EXPERIENCE

PAGE 10

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NEXUS OF CHAMPIONS: WHAT THE CLEARINGHOUSE CAN DO FOR YOU

PAGE 14

POLICY

ON THE RIO GRANDE, DREAMS MATTER

PAGE 16

COLLABORATION

THINK GLOBAL, ACT UNIVERSAL

PAGE 18

REPORTING

HOW TO TRACK STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN STUDY ABROAD

PAGE 21

**START
HERE**



ADVOCATING FOR ACCESS

The international education field is comprised of many champions for students with disabilities to access international exchange, but some of the greatest champions of all are students with disabilities who advocate for themselves and others.

One of those students was Hugo Trevino, who developed his passion for international travel while an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Hugo's first international exchange experience was a two-week exchange program through Mobility International USA which took place in Costa Rica and focused on disabled youth and leadership, bringing together young people from the United States and Costa Rica with diverse disabilities. This trip impacted Hugo significantly because he not only discovered how it could be possible for a person with his disability—Spinal Muscular Atrophy—to travel abroad, but how it could also be possible for his peers who have sensory disabilities, invisible disabilities, and more.

Hugo's epiphany on the short-term program became the genesis of an impressive chain of events that included additional studies abroad to such disparate destinations as Costa Rica, China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Italy throughout his higher education career.

But it also led to another outcome that would potentially impact countless Illinois students with disabilities: Enabled Abroad, a scholarship and support resource offered through the University's campus study abroad office, Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange (IAGE).



UNIV ILLINOIS URBANA-
CHAMPAIGN

ADVOCATING FOR ACCESS

Hugo knew that study abroad was an experience he would want to integrate into his college career. He figured that since Illinois is regarded as one of the most accessible universities in the United States for wheelchair users, and recognized as one of the first higher education institutions to establish a disability services office, why shouldn't it also excel in facilitating access abroad? Hugo was confident that with his self-advocacy skills and his institution's reputation for inclusive excellence, studying abroad would be a realistic option.

Hugo wasted no time getting started. He would frequently visit the IAGE to meet the advisors, learn about different programs (taking into account his goal to learn Spanish), discuss accessibility at the various host sites, and identify an advocate who would commit to join Hugo in his quest to find the best study abroad fit for him.

Hugo found a fellow champion in Teneisha Ellis, his study abroad advisor at the time. Teneisha was curious to learn from Hugo about what he would need to fully participate in a study abroad program. From there, Teneisha began thinking creatively to explore all options for Hugo and reached out to the IAGE director to ensure that the university's stellar accessibility reputation would also extend to their study abroad programs.

Indeed, Illinois strives to arrange reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities going abroad. IAGE reached out to a few programs that interested Hugo, including the university's centers in Costa Rica and Spain, to determine whether they were physically accessible

“Knowing it was possible because I did it before, helped me advocate for myself because no one could tell me I couldn't.”

—Hugo Trevino,
study abroad alum

to a student using a wheelchair. Although Illinois informs students that certain accommodations may not be possible at all sites, in this case the program was able to arrange for the sites in Costa Rica and Spain to install ramps when it was discovered there were none.

IAGE was excited to offer these options to Hugo, but there was still one more major logistical question. Hugo would also require a personal assistant for tasks like lifting, transferring and



personal care. While such services would allow him to fully participate in the study abroad experiences, they also come at a hefty expense. How could such costs be addressed to level the playing field for Hugo and other students requiring similar accommodations?

It was a puzzling question that was new for IAGE, but their director was committed to finding a solution and therefore reached out to their long-term partner, the director of the University's Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES) office, Susann Sears, for support.

Together, the two offices decided to draft a proposal to the University's Vice Provost for International Affairs and Global Strategies office for possible scholarship options for Hugo and other students with disabilities. The directors interviewed Hugo frequently to capture the importance of disability inclusion in study abroad, the additional expenses needed for students with disabilities to go abroad, and Hugo's specific needs for a personal assistant. Outlining the expenses and seeing the significant hardship it could be for students with disabilities to access study abroad was important

to make clear in the proposal and to the university. After reviewing the thorough proposal, IAGE and DRES received strong support from the Vice Provost's office.

And so the Enabled Abroad Scholarship was launched. This scholarship is specifically designated for Illinois undergraduates with physical and/or sensory disabilities to study abroad. The scholarship is offered on a rolling basis at an amount determined after an assessment of each student's individual needs. To fund the scholarship, the University solicits donations from various academic departments and donors.

Besides scholarship funds, IAGE also maintains an online resource center to provide practical information for prospective study abroad students with disabilities as well as those from other diverse backgrounds. For instance, in addition to Enabled Abroad, students can find entries for LGBTQ+ Abroad, Women Abroad, Race and Ethnicity Abroad, and more. Each of these resource centers are developed in collaboration with cultural and student services offices across campus.



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

An important piece of the proposal was to illustrate that Enabled Abroad wasn't merely a collaboration between IAGE and DRES; rather, it was part of a larger institutional commitment to inclusion.

The proposal emphasized how it was in Illinois' best interest for its students to be global citizens and to be more marketable upon graduation. Unfortunately people with disabilities generally face more discrimination when it comes to employment. By prioritizing removing barriers to study abroad, students with disabilities can be as competitive as their non-disabled peers in a job market that values international experiences.

Hugo saw this first-hand when he started his own job search.

"An employer loved me on paper and in my interview, but it always comes back to my disability. They asked if I would be able to get to work every day. I was able to use my study abroad experience and say 'well if I made it to Costa Rica and China, coming to work will not be a problem.'"

The domino effect, resulting from a conversation which started in a small office, will continue to stay in motion as a number of other students with disabilities access the Enabled Abroad Scholarship to study abroad and as employers reap the benefits of hiring Enabled Abroad alumni.

"If I made it to
Costa Rica and China,
coming to work will not
be a problem."

—Hugo Trevino,
study abroad alum



CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Change the tapestry of your study abroad programs by weaving disability inclusion into every thread of recruitment efforts.

Far too often, college and university students with disabilities recall being discouraged from going abroad by faculty leaders or other university staff.

The University of Texas at Austin (UT), for one, is determined to never let this happen, recognizing that greater visibility to the inclusion of people with disabilities in study abroad is one of the most important steps to shifting a campus culture to greater access.

With more than 4,000 students studying abroad each year, the university strives to ensure that this growth in numbers reflects its population of students with disabilities through multiple outreach strategies. It initiates relationships with a broad range of stakeholders—students with disabilities, study abroad staff, disability services staff, and faculty members—to bring about a campus-wide consciousness of the fact that students with disabilities can and do go abroad!

To help keep everyone accountable for disability inclusion in education abroad, the International Office at UT designated Laura Caloudas, one of its study abroad advisors*, to serve as a liaison to the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office. In this role, she collaborates with SSD on a number of initiatives such as planning study abroad events targeting students with disabilities, coordinating reasonable accommodations for international exchange participants with disabilities, and being the point of contact whom faculty and staff can turn to when questions arise about access abroad.



UNIV **TEXAS** AUSTIN

“There is more visibility on campus that study abroad is an option for students with disabilities.”

Since incorporating a disability liaison position into UT’s International Office, Laura believes a change is definitely happening.

“There is more visibility on campus that study abroad is an option for students with disabilities.”

Every semester, the International Office and SSD offers a workshop for students with disabilities about how they can explore opportunities abroad, and one of the highlights of such events is the participation of returned international exchange alumni with disabilities who can share their experiences as peers. In the past, this has included a student with a physical disability who studied in Barcelona as well as a student with a mental health disability who studied abroad.

The two offices share the joint task of promoting the workshop to reach the campus disability community but also to the larger campus community, even getting it featured in the campus newspaper on occasion. By broadcasting it to media outlets beyond the disability community, non-disabled students and staff can also learn more about UT’s disability inclusion initiatives.

The UT International Office also has peer advisors in their office who serve as the frontline to meet students interested in study abroad and have found it key to recruit peer advisors who represent diverse backgrounds and communities—first-generation college students, LGBTQ students, students of color, and students with disabilities, and more—to show that all students have access to study abroad.

In this leadership role, peer advisors are provided a seat at the head of the table to share their experiences and recommendations.

Long-regarded as a model institution in the field of international education, UT International Office is frequently contacted by other programs for guidance when it comes to inclusion. To enhance professional development and cross-sharing in the field, Laura Caloudas has presented her experiences supporting students with disabilities at live and virtual events hosted by Diversity Abroad and NAFSA while also connecting with champions for disability inclusion at other institutions.

Study abroad and other educational programs offered through higher education are not limited to one type of student. Ensure that access to these programs includes the full tapestry of your student population by implementing strategies of collaboration and connection across your campus.

** Laura is now working as a Senior Program Coordinator on the President’s Award for Global Learning initiative at the University of Texas at Austin, and will continue to advocate for disability access in her new role.*



FUNDING ACCESS TO A PRICELESS EXPERIENCE

To fully soak in sunshine-drenched Italy or to behold the towering sandscapes of Namibia are priceless experiences. But even priceless experiences have their price tags!

That's the idea behind many higher education institutions' forward-thinking approach to ensuring that no disabled student is denied the opportunity to study abroad due to the costs of facilitating access.

In a perfect world, there would not be any extra costs associated with having a disability because the built environment, virtual environment and learning environment would already be accessible to everyone. Until that becomes a reality, the cost to remove those barriers is often another barrier still for people with disabilities, putting opportunities like study abroad even further out of reach.

To counter this, institutions like the University of Arizona and Duke University have established sound strategies for relieving students with disabilities of some of those financial burdens.

The University of Arizona proactively engages disabled students and Study Abroad staff to strategize for access abroad. In addition, it uses a unique funding model to pay for "unforeseen and unpredictable funding accommodations" to support disabled students to study abroad. In other words, it's a safeguard against the dreaded, frustrating, and inequitable: "Whoops! There's no funding for this!"

Arizona established the central institutional account over a decade ago. Initially the fund—currently \$1 million, reloaded annually, was housed in the provost's office but later moved to Student Affairs to be stewarded by the Disability Resource Center (DRC), separate from DRC's departmental funding.



UNIV ARIZONA
DUKE UNIVERSITY

“It’s not just about ADA compliance issues; it also fits with the social model of disability.”

This offers several advantages says Amanda Kraus, Director of the DRC, such as providing a centralized resource that is consistent and practical. It also allows the DRC to nurture campus relationships and identify emerging trends that might not be as apparent if requests were made via multiple points of entry.

The institutional fund also offers peace of mind. On a campus with many departments and divisions—with varying budgets—it’s risky to allow individual departments to determine whether they will be able to meet unforeseen requests for accommodations. Ultimately, says Amanda, it’s the University of Arizona’s responsibility—not the individual departments’—to ensure an accessible experience for its students and employees.

“It’s not just about ADA compliance issues; it also fits with the social model of disability.”

Some examples of disability-related accommodations that Arizona was able to fund include:

- Transportable ramps and assistive equipment in an apartment bathroom for a student studying geosciences in Italy.
- Upgrade to business-class airfare for a student studying business in China, when a standard economy seat would cause extreme discomfort due to their disability.

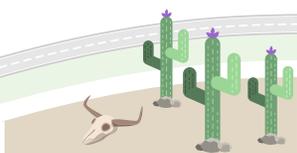
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for a student traveling to Namibia and beyond.

Access to ASL interpreting abroad comes with the heftiest price tag by far—Amanda estimates that about 80% of the funding for study abroad accommodations is applied towards communication access. With its institutional account system in place, the University of Arizona makes it possible to meet this need without depleting the financial resources of any single department.

Not all disability-related accommodations are expensive; in fact, some incur no additional expenses at all, such as adjusting the time or location of a class if needed. Ensuring that accessible course material is built into the curriculum design means that fewer resources need to be dedicated to retrofitting or adapting later on.

At Duke University, meanwhile, “No two abroad programs look exactly the same, and that is very much true for funding too.”

So says Leigh Fickling, Director of Duke’s Disability Management System, which is housed under



Duke's Administration instead of being under Student Affairs like at the University of Arizona and many other institutions. Duke uses an integrated system that oversees all disability-related requests for students, faculty, staff and visitors which allows them to reach every part of the University and Health System.

Whether accommodations are needed for use at Duke or away, the Disability Management System reviews all requests on a case-by-case basis and partners with many other stakeholders to plan next steps. This includes the student, the ADA Facilities Director, the Global Education program, external resources like MIUSA, among others.

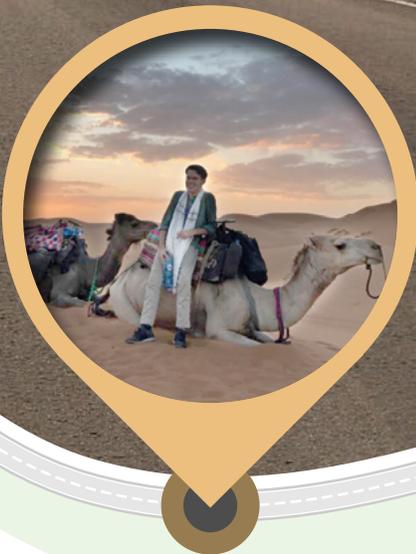
While Leigh's office assists with some of the larger expenses as needed, the academic department in which the student is enrolled also contributes. For example, they've worked with the institution's Psychology Program as well as the College of Arts and Sciences to reach this goal.

With these supports in place, jet-setting Duke students with disabilities have accessed housing in Morocco and transportation in Oxford. Duke has arranged for one student, who will study in Berlin this summer, to access both.

Of course, achieving equitable access to education abroad for students with disabilities entails much, much more than just locating funding. And yet, without it, it's often one of the first hurdles that diverts a student from their path to go abroad. Perhaps, with time, establishing funds for "unforeseen and predictable individual accommodations" will signal to disabled students that their participation in international opportunities is in fact foreseen, predicted, and encouraged.



“It’s the University of Arizona’s responsibility...to ensure an accessible experience for its students and employees.”



NEXUS OF CHAMPIONS

WHAT THE CLEARINGHOUSE CAN DO FOR YOU

The champions for inclusive international experiences are out there—and you’re likely among them! Find out how a national project is bringing them together and building their capacity as change-makers.

It’s not always easy being a champion for disability inclusion in international education. However, finding allies can make all the difference for driving change at our own institutions and organizations. It can lead to building the critical mass needed to make a lasting impact in the field.

Enter the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, a project of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, designed to increase the participation of people with disabilities in international exchange between the United States and other countries, and is supported in its implementation by Mobility International USA (MIUSA). Since 1995, the Clearinghouse has supported champions to innovate strategies and develop best practices that increase and enhance the participation of people with disabilities in international exchange.

Many international exchange programs are already taking action towards implementing practices of inclusion and inviting the Clearinghouse to be part of the process.

As part of its core services, the Clearinghouse offers extensive online resources on the MIUSA website, trainings and conference presentations, and one-on-one technical assistance to anyone seeking information on

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

CLEARINGHOUSE

MIUSA →

← US DEPT OF STATE

BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL AFFAIRS →



LET'S COLLABORATE!

There are a number of ways your institution, office, organization can connect with the Clearinghouse!

access to international exchange. Collaborations with higher education institutions, international exchange organizations, ECA staff and partners, and others have led to unique opportunities such as:

- Organizing a symposium on international exchange and disability
- Convening a consortium of international exchange organizations and disability organizations
- Facilitating webinars and conference exhibit tables for people with disabilities to learn about international opportunities
- Leading trainings hosted by the ECA, University of Denver, Missouri State University, World Learning and others

The Clearinghouse is continuously reaching out to exchange organizations to learn about their disability inclusion practices, note trends, and capture lessons learned from international exchange alumni. Consider inviting the Clearinghouse to connect with you and your team to explore ways to take the next step in your commitment to inclusion!



PRESENTATIONS AND TRAININGS

- Invite the Clearinghouse to introduce its staff, resources and services on a conference call with your team
- Invite the Clearinghouse to conduct a training or workshop for your staff, faculty, and/or participants with disabilities, virtually or on your campus/offices
- Request referrals to international exchange alumni with disabilities who can present at your event



CONFERENCE PROPOSALS

- Put in a session proposal with Clearinghouse staff
- Ask the Clearinghouse to review your conference proposal and provide feedback
- Request template presentation slides or talking points to incorporate in your presentation



MATERIALS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Request NCDE brochures, posters, and A World Awaits You (AWAY) journals—all with disability-positive images and messages—to be sent to you in print and accessible formats
- Have a best practice to share? Contact us for an interview, so we can highlight you on our website or in a future publication!

ON THE RIO GRANDE DREAMS MATTER



UNIV **TEXAS** EL PASO

A sense of mission and a presumption that the ADA applies to international exchange programs means the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) does not shy away from supporting its disabled students in overseas programs.

Cara*, a UTEP student with a mental health-related disability, could have given up on her dream of studying European art abroad on an expedition to Rome when the faculty leader expressed doubts about whether she could bring her service dog. Instead she sought advice from the university's Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS).

When she did, CASS staff sprang into action.

First, they researched whether or not the faculty's concerns were founded by looking up whether or not a service animal would be welcome in Europe. After they discovered that there would be no issue for Cara to take her animal on flights, through customs and into places of public accommodation, they met with the faculty member. They shared what they had found, and explained that as far as UTEP was concerned, disability civil rights laws required that the student's request be accommodated.

Where many universities and providers of international programs have struggled to interpret the application and jurisdiction of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to their overseas programs—a longtime source of confusion and controversy—UTEP has found an elegant solution. It simply proceeds as if those laws *do* apply.

"We just interpret the ADA as going worldwide," explains CASS Director Bill Dethlefs "If the student is going to be traveling and needs some kind of an accommodation, we work with them to get it."

This approach has served the institution well. Between 2016 and 2018, the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education published a list



“Just like any other student at the university, many of [the students registered with disability services] have exciting dreams on where they want to go, and we want to make those dreams come true.”

of the disability-related complaints that it received. Bill points out that there were 50 complaints about universities in Texas during that time, but UTEP was not among them. They want to keep it that way.

Apart from wanting to avoid OCR complaints, UTEP also regards the ADA as going overseas because it is just the right thing to do.

“Just like any other student at the university, many of [the students registered with disability services] have exciting dreams on where they want to go, and we want to make those dreams come true.”

They would not be able to make those dreams into reality without the support of the study abroad office, which is just as enthusiastic as they are about preparing students to achieve their international exchange goals.

“It is rewarding every time!” says Dania Brandford-Calvo, Director of the Study Abroad Office. “For me and others, it extends our knowledge, humanity, balance and commitment.”

For UTEP, when it comes to making a student’s experience possible, it is all about “we,” without any distinction between the student, the CASS, the study abroad office or overseas hosts. Disability Services Coordinator Manelic Alcala agrees that it’s all about collaboration. “That’s why we refer to it as ‘we,’ because we would not be able to accommodate our students without the help of other departments as well as Mobility International USA [the NCDE]. It’s a team effort.”

Leadership at UTEP have also supported a proactive policy around disability access. In 2008, the Vice President of the Student Affairs Division collaborated with CASS to develop a training module reviewing disability-related etiquette, laws and techniques for providing disability-related accommodations. It became a requirement for all staff under the Division of Student Affairs—including

the Office of International Programs—to complete that module. The administration wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page with UTEP’s goal to facilitate access for all students.

With a culture of inclusion in place, CASS has been able to provide support to students in a variety of different situations overseas. When concerns arose about the need for an accessible hotel room for a wheelchair rider traveling with a group to London, CASS found, through its conversations with the student and the hotel, that the single step in the front would not pose an obstacle for the student to get over with or without assistance, and that the hotel could make a room on the first floor available. In another case, a student had concerns about accessible transportation in Mexico City, so CASS did some research and found that the student could use taxis to get around. When a deaf student participated in a program in Costa Rica, CASS fortuitously found a certified ASL interpreter living in San Jose who provided communication access during the student’s classes.

It’s all about ensuring that all students can access a quality education, according to Bill Dethlefs, whether that education takes place at home or abroad.

“Study abroad is an educational program. For adventurous students with disabilities, part of their education is to go and experience what it’s like to have, for example, a mobility disability in Rome versus New York City. Maybe for them there isn’t any difference, but it’s part of their willingness to pioneer and experience something new.”

**Not the student’s real name.*

THINK GLOBAL, ACT UNIVERSAL

COLLABORATION

PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

“What if they don’t disclose?”

It’s a question that often arises in conversations about accommodating students with disabilities in international exchange. Some international education professionals share anecdotes about scrambling to find accessible housing and transportation options when a student unexpectedly showed up to the program site in a wheelchair; others recall students who took them by surprise by exhibiting signs of depression shortly after arriving in their host destination.

While of course no one wants to feel caught off guard or uninformed, some forward-thinking international educators are less concerned about whether international exchange participants disclose their disabilities in advance. Instead, they place greater emphasis on something that is more within their control: implementing good program standards that allow for broad access and flexibility for diverse students.

Anne Frey, Education Abroad Manager at Portland Community College (PCC), is one such international educator who, over the course of advising a PCC student in his study abroad pursuits, came to recognize how adapting processes and systems to be more inclusive diminishes the need to focus so much on any one individual.

“As an open access institution, every student should have access to everything that is offered at PCC. My role is to meet the students where they are and figure out policies and processes that will allow every student access to study abroad if they choose to do so.”

Studying abroad was a goal that Chris*, a PCC student, had expressed many, many times to his professors. So when one faculty member offered an opportunity to join a faculty-led course outside the United States and far from Portland, Chris was ready to dive in! He completed all the required tasks for the application process.



“We shouldn’t limit someone’s opportunity based on what we fear might happen. We need to be clear and objective and give people opportunities to show what they can do.”

—Kaela Parks,
Director of PCC’s Disability Services

However, some red flags started popping up in the pre-departure phase. He disclosed concerning behaviors such as difficulty getting to class and sleeping all day. He had also expressed being in a dark emotional state. “We were a little alarmed about whether or not this student could succeed in the program, and whether or not he should go abroad,” Anne confides. “Our greatest fear was that the student was going to spend a lot of money and be a long way from home, only to be unsuccessful in completing the course and not be able to take advantage of being in the host culture.”

For guidance, Anne reached out to PCC faculty and staff familiar with the student. When they suggested that the student may have a non-apparent disability that affects his social interactions and executive function, Anne next reached out to Kaela Parks, Director of PCC’s Disability Services.

“We had connected a bit prior to that about how our offices might work together, but we hadn’t really had the chance to dig in together on any specific project.”

Per Kaela, the role of Disability Services is to serve as a consultant to PCC staff and faculty. When Anne reached out, Kaela made it clear in their series of conversations that, while there was no magic wand that she could wave to satisfy everyone, it would be important to strike a good balance in terms of how Education Abroad could work effectively with a very diverse population, including students with non-apparent disabilities.

Students perceived to have a disability—including Chris—may not identify as such and therefore may not formally register with disability services or request disability-related accommodations. Even students who do identify as disabled may opt to not register with disability services if they don’t anticipate needing any of their services, or for other reasons.

With this in mind, Anne and Kaela both agreed that it was time to take a more direct approach. They saw an opportunity to have clear, objective conversations with the student, the faculty, and the study coach about what behavior was causing folks to feel concerned about the student and to talk about those concerns openly. A key outcome of the conversations was to identify specific, concrete tasks that Chris—and all students going abroad—should be expected to fulfill.

A short while later, Chris not only went on the trip abroad—he thrived on the experience, exploring ancient ruins, completing his coursework, and forging friendships with his fellow travelers. Upon his return, he started planning for another faculty-led experience in Oceania and joined a peer mentor program to advise prospective study abroad students. Some of the same characteristics that initially caused concern in PCC staff are the same characteristics that make Chris a stellar peer mentor.

“It was a wake-up call,” says Anne. “What if we had not figured this out? What if we had prevented him from having this amazing experience? It brought weight to us as far as our ability to support a student to be successful in an experience like this.”

Kaela agrees that the experience served to challenge assumptions. “We shouldn’t limit someone’s opportunity based on what we fear might happen. We need to be clear and objective and give people opportunities to show what they can do.”

The next step was to scale up the lessons learned from advising Chris in order to change how the Education Abroad office approaches working with students with disabilities, recognizing that students with disabilities are an ever-present population in higher education, and that they contribute to a culture of valuing all aspects of identity and intersectionality. At the design stage of study abroad programming, it’s sustainable to anticipate that students with disabilities will participate and plan accordingly. Otherwise, it’s harder to retrofit

a program that wasn’t designed with disabled students in mind. Concrete ways in which Education Abroad has modified its processes include changing some of the language in the program documentation and more clearly outlining behavioral expectations to all participants. They are adding information to the website – such as student stories, videos, and useful links—to signal that students with disabilities are encouraged to go abroad.

Encouraged by this progress, Anne believes the international education field is turning a corner. “Rather than having something exclusionary, the field needs everyone to be included in this experience. We need to figure out a way to support diverse students and all they bring to the table.”

**Not the student’s real name.*



TOWARD A UNIVERSALLY DESIGNED EXCHANGE PROGRAM

1

Train staff and volunteers to answer inquiries about disability and diversity policy and using appropriate and respectful language.

2

Give lists of accepted participants, if relevant, to equity offices, disability services and counseling centers on campus so they can know and talk with their clients about going abroad.

3

Create essential requirements sharing more details about the program so everyone can better assess for themselves if it is a good fit or not.

4

Set up more housing options, such as ground floor, single occupancy, wheelchair accessible, and close to public transportation, so it’s available when needed.

5

Permit early arrival options to allow time to settle in and work out any unexpected challenges for any participants who may need it.

6

Offer group insurance coverage that does not exclude pre-existing or mental health conditions or medications coverage, and providing upfront costs for participants to use for counseling, or related appointments that support them in maintaining their health, that can be reimbursed by the participants later.

7

Connect in advance to local resources, including disability or diverse organizations, peers, and community groups and English-speaking doctors, counselors, and tutors so questions can be directed to people who can more specifically respond.

8

Set up academic options, if relevant, that have pass and fail coursework, reduced course loads, pre-registration, flexibility in scheduling/breaks, lecture notes available to all participants, and course materials in universally accessible online formats.

9

Build in funding supports and recognize that diversity brings unexpected or less common requests that may incur a cost, such as sign language interpreters, braille materials, sighted guides, orientation and mobility training, personal assistants, social mentors, assistive technology replacement or repairs, etc.

10

Check in regularly with participants whether it be more thorough and repeated communications about health, safety and security resources; availability of Internet and other tools for accessing remote support; or staff checking in more regularly during a program with participants.



HOW TO TRACK STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN STUDY ABROAD

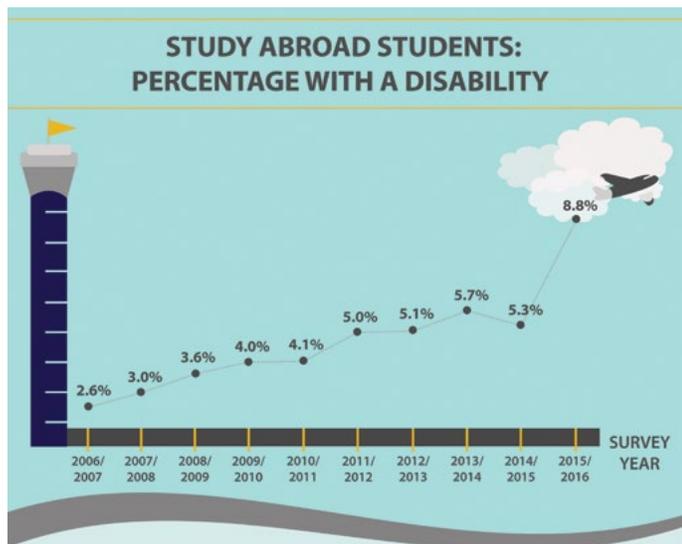
Data from the 2017 Open Doors® Report on International Educational Exchange

341 institutions reported that they had 5,641 students studying abroad with a disability in 2015/2016

The question remains: How many students with disabilities are going abroad each year, and what types of disabilities are represented?

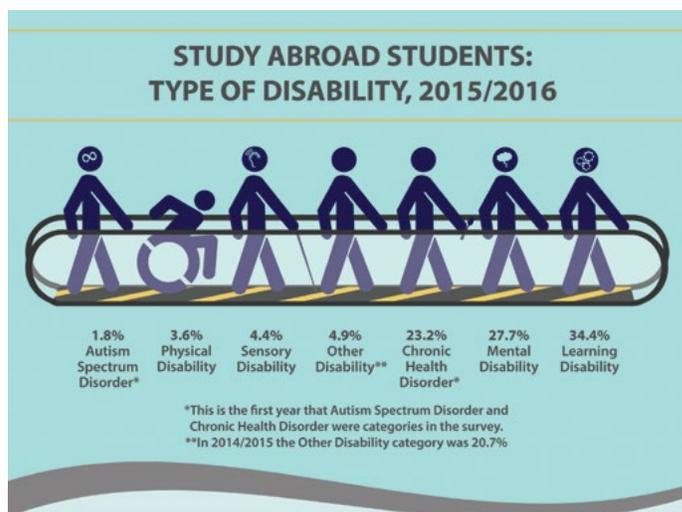
Through the Open Doors® survey compiled annually by the Institute on International Education, with funding from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, we have a general snapshot of how many U.S. college students with disabilities study abroad and their disability types.

The 2017 Open Doors® Report indicated that among U.S. postsecondary institutions where the disability status of study abroad students is known, 8.8% of study abroad students had disabilities in 2015/2016—an increase from 5.3% the previous year!



While this progress is promising, consider that students with disabilities typically represent 11% of the student population on U.S. campuses according to 2014 findings from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. With this figure in mind, it becomes clear that there is still room for improvement.

Among those institutions that know the specific disability of the study abroad participants, the breakdown sees students with learning disabilities as the most represented (34.4%), followed by students with mental health-related disabilities (27.7%). Far less represented are students with physical disabilities (3.6%) and sensory disabilities (4.4%), which includes students who are blind and/or deaf.



One major change to the most recent survey was the addition of new disability categories: Chronic Health Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder. In previous years, students with chronic health conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy, as well as those along the autism spectrum, may have been grouped under “Other.”

A total of 341 higher education institutions provided data to Open Doors® about the study abroad participation of students with disabilities in 2015/2016. But until more U.S. higher education institutions respond with these disability statistics, we won’t have a complete picture. Your institution is needed to bring the snapshot into greater focus, and it may already be collecting this data!

Use the checklist on the next page to gather the data you need. ▶

Source: Institute of International Education. (2017). “Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2004/05-2015/16” Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

Checklist on Disability Data Collection

Do you gather health/accommodation forms?

- Ask your disability services office to help you learn how to classify the information on the forms into types of disability.
- Develop a process through which you can enter the information into a confidential database or locked spreadsheet.
- Require students studying in third-party provider programs to fill out standardized forms or ask department-led programs to use these forms and report back.

Do you gather student intake forms?

- If the form is filled in during or before the application stage, make reporting a disability optional.
- Consider asking all demographic questions, including disability, post-acceptance -- assuring students that the information is not used to determine eligibility.

Do you work with your disability, health, or counseling office?

- Direct students in several places on your education abroad forms to meet with the disability, health or counseling office if they would like accommodations abroad.
- Provide the disability, health, or counseling office with a list of all education abroad students so they may cross-check it with their database. These offices can report the total number of students and the number for each disability category while maintaining the confidentiality of individual students.
- Find out if the disability office is connected to the institutional database.

Do you work with your Office of Institutional Research?

- Find out if the centralized database can keep disability and education abroad data.
- Ask a person with clearance to view both disability and education abroad data in the centralized database to assist with the number count.

How Other Institutions Collect Data

Linfield College collects data from student health information forms. This is possible because after students are admitted to their overseas programs, they are asked to disclose their disabilities so that staff can provide adequate support both pre-departure and abroad.

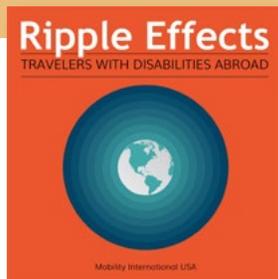
Purdue University's disability resource center uses an education abroad list to tally numbers from their database of registered students with disabilities.

San Diego State University sends their education abroad students' school identification numbers to the registrar's office and receives a tally back of the number of listed students who also receive disability support services.

Adapted from the article "Tracking Students with Disabilities Who Study Abroad" by Michele Scheib, which appeared in the *International Educator* (Mar/Apr 2009). See more: <http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/tracking>

ADDITIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE RESOURCES

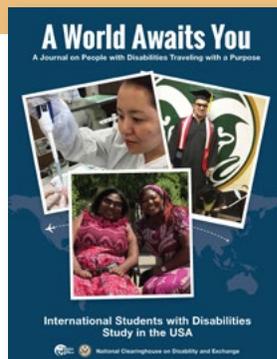
PODCAST



Ripple Effects Podcast Travelers with Disabilities Abroad

www.miusa.org/podcast

MAGAZINES



A World Awaits You (AWAY) A Journal Featuring U.S. and International Exchange Participants

www.miusa.org/away

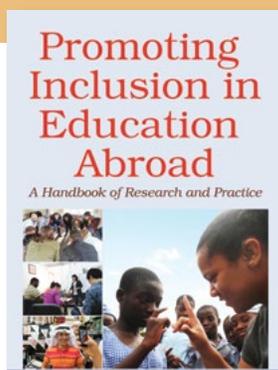
YOUTUBE CHANNEL



Access to Exchange Videos Passport to Possibilities

youtube.com/user/miusa1981

EXTERNAL PUBLICATION



Promoting Inclusion in Education Abroad A Handbook of Research and Practice

www.miusa.org/handbook



This issue is available in alternative formats.

Contact NCDE:

www.miusa.org/NCDE



Information provided throughout the A World Awaits You (AWAY) publication has been compiled by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange.

The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange is a project of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, designed to increase the participation of people with disabilities in international exchange between the United States and other countries, and is supported in its implementation by Mobility International USA.

Editor: Ashley Holben

Authors: Justin Harford
Ashley Holben
Monica Malhotra

Copyright © 2018 Mobility International USA, All rights reserved.
This publication may be printed for educational purposes only.



Mobility International USA
132 E. Broadway, Suite 343
Eugene, Oregon USA 97401

Tel: +1-541-343-1284
Email: clearinghouse@miusa.org
Website: www.miusa.org