International Service Learning

Faculty Guide Series

ASU Service-Learning & Community-Based Research
University College | Appalachian State University

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Introduction

Appalachian State University recognizes its responsibility to educate students to become knowledgeable world citizens who are aware of other cultures and able to navigate these differences as tolerant citizens within a multicultural society. The university seeks to intensify its mission to internationalize the campus, by expanding study abroad options, building a more diverse student body, and helping faculty develop robust international components to their work. In recent years, Appalachian has become a national leader in study-abroad – ranking second in the nation among Master's level institutions during the 2007-08 academic year in the short-term study abroad category and sixth in the nation in the overall (short-term, mid-term, and long-term) category (Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, Institute of International Education, October 2009).

In addition to this general call for more study-abroad opportunities, campuses are including "global citizenship" within their campus-wide strategic plans and asking campus units to offer engaging opportunities to achieve this important goal. Global citizenship is defined as a moral and ethical disposition which may guide an individual or groups' understanding of local and global contexts and their responsibilities within different communities. It is motivated through a complex set of commitments to local interests and a sense of universal equality and notions of care for human beings and the world in its entirety. Global citizenship, as participatory action, entails a responsibility to alleviating local and global inequality, while simultaneously avoiding action that hinders the well-being of individuals or damages the world. In its final report as a participant in the ACE Internationalization Lab in Spring 2009, Appalachian articulated global citizenship as one of its global learning goals for all students: "Globally competent students graduating from Appalachian will understand responsibilities of global citizenship." The two other global learning goals were:

➢ Globally competent students graduating from Appalachian will demonstrate an understanding of world community, world diversity, and global interdependence from a comparative perspective.

➢ Globally competent students graduating from Appalachian will be able to communicate with people of other cultures and put into practice solutions to crucial issues affecting the global community.

International service-learning logically combines two aspects of experiential learning in an internationalized curriculum designed to educate globally competent students and global citizens: service-learning and study abroad. The ACT (Appalachian & the Community Together) program has collaborated with the Office of International Education & Development to develop international opportunities for student/faculty service-learning and community-based research.

When designing global engagement opportunities, there are many travel/group related considerations that need to be taken into account before, during, after embarking on the challenge of taking a student group abroad to serve with and/or conduct research with people on other continents. These considerations are, though not limited to: mitigating potential negative socio-cultural impact on the host community, reducing/offsetting the group's carbon footprint, establishing positive group dynamics through individual and group development, and preparing students to speak the language of the host culture. All of these considerations are addressed in this Guide, along with tangible ideas for how to effectively approach this work.

Getting Started: Campus Contacts

➢ International Education & Development: www.international.appstate.edu

➢ The Engagement website: www. engagement.appstate.edu and

Appalachian & the Community Together (ACT): www.act.appstate.edu

Developing Your Syllabus: Global Learning Goals & Outcomes

Faculty will likely develop an international service learning course as part of a short-term faculty-led program abroad through the Office of International Education and Development's Appalachian Overseas Education Program (AOEP). Please consult the guide on Creating a Service-Learning Syllabus and also the Guidelines for Appalachian Overseas Education Programs. It is essential to consider global learning outcomes in the development of both the course and the program.

For more information, please see the inserts for "Creating a Service-Learning Syllabus" and "Guidelines for Appalachian Overseas Education Programs."

Preparing Students for the Host Culture: Dealing with Language

While students can often survive in the host culture with little or no knowledge of the host culture's native language, the depth of their engagement is compromised by their inability to exchange crucial information about their culture, values, government, etc. Imagine trying to share your life story, your ideas, your values with someone who does not speak your native language? Impossible? No. Difficult? Yes! Now imagine only having about 2-3 weeks to accomplish this goal? Your service-learning project may be your students' only opportunity to engage with this culture, and without the ability

to communicate in a common language (not just gestures), they will miss out on some significant, often life-changing opportunities, to communicate with the local population.

A 2009 assessment study done on short-term international service-learning students informed us that they describe a desire for a "diversity of contact" and a greater "depth of contact" with the host culture (Green and McCombs, 2009). Providing students with opportunities to learn the host culture language prior to and during the experience will allow this level of cultural engagement to happen on a broader and deeper level.

What can you do? Here are a few tangible ideas for how to include language development within your program are outlined below. Appalachian has a tremendous number of resources available to you!

➢ You are one of those resources, of course. If the language of the host culture is one that you know, start by teaching your students some common, everyday phrases. You may also encourage your students to do some self-study prior to the trip.

➢ The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures is an important resource as well. If the language of the host culture is one that is taught in Appalachian's Department of Foreign Languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish), contact the chair or one of the professors for assistance (www.fll.appstate.edu). Foreign language faculty are trained to teach language and culture; they are excellent partners for you and your students as you prepare for international service learning!

➢ Appalachian faculty represent and speak a number of other languages that are not taught in the FL curriculum. Contact the Global Studies program (www.globalstudies.appstate.edu) to find faculty with expertise in less commonly taught languages, like Tamil (if you were going to southern India) or Quechua (if you were going to Ecuador).

While your program will not be a language-based program, language will inevitably play a role if your service-learning course is taking place in a non-English-speaking culture. Experiencing the language of a host culture is a positive step toward learning to know that culture on its own terms, so do include language learning as part of your students' preparation before they are on location. The key here is language development and language learning appropriate to your program and your project. Perhaps your students will be inspired to continue that learning after they return home!

Mitigating Negative Socio-Cultural Impact on the Host Community

In a recent study on short-term faculty led programs, many faculty leaders reported that they had given little or no thought to the negative impacts that their groups have (or could have) had on the host culture. While some faculty in the study acknowledged thoughts about negative economic issues that result in inequity or dependency in host communities, many did not consider the myriad of socio-cultural impacts that a large group can have on non-western societies, tribes, and cultures (Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koehn, 2009). While there is no way to eliminate such negative consequences (other than making the decision to stay home), it is important to consider how you can mitigate these problems when planning and implementing your program. Here are a few questions to consider when planning and implementing your program:

Environmental: Are the basic daily needs of your group creating a hardship on the community during your visit/after you leave (e.g., food/water shortages, trash left behind, additional pollution, land used for visitors rather than locals, etc.)?

Cultural: How will you reduce possible negative cultural impacts that your students may have on the community you are serving (e.g., negative student behavior, demonstrations of privilege by bringing high-end travel gear, viewing the local culture as a consumable commodity, inappropriate dress, etc.)?

Economic: Could your group's presence create an unintended negative economic impact on the community you are serving (e.g., causing local prices to go up, supporting hotels owned by foreigners rather than locals, giving expensive gifts to locals, developing a dependence on outsiders for money/supplies, etc.)?

Human Rights: Are there human rights issues that might be affected by or related to your visit (e.g. some areas local people are not allowed to go, or higher police scrutiny of the people due to the presence of foreigners)?

For more information, see the insert titled: "First, Do No Harm: Ideas for Mitigating Negative Community Impacts of Short-Term Study Abroad."

Establishing Positive Group Dynamics Through Individual & Group Development

When taking a group outside of a classroom environment, whether it's across the street to the local homeless shelter or across the globe to South Africa, the faculty leader(s), students, and community members will greatly benefit from positive and healthy group dynamics. Taking a group half-way across the world is a significant challenge that many faculty refuse to take on, mainly because they can lose "control" of the group when they are not operating within the confines of four walls. Congratulations for being willing to take on this challenge!

Focusing on individual and group preparation before and during your short-term study abroad experience will allow students/faculty

to share expectations, discuss issues of diversity and cultural expectations, get to know each others' strengths/skills/weaknesses, set common goals, establish norms, and allow the group to move more quickly through the typical stages of group development which are: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). Does group development eliminate all aspects of unhealthy student behavior and its impact on the community? No. But, providing an open space for communication, conducting diversity training, establishing a group covenant, taking the time for individual/group reflection, and developing pre-travel strategies for dealing with negative behavior will help eliminate many of the potential problems, while lessening the negative impact on the host culture – not to mention making your job as the faculty leader much easier!

For ideas to prepare students for their experience abroad, while establishing a high functioning group, please see the insert titled "Establishing Positive Group Dynamics Through Individual & Group Development."

Establishing a Carbon Neutral Program

In April 2008, Appalachian State signed the President's Climate Commitment to become a carbon neutral institution. Our Climate Action Plan will provide tangible steps to reduce our carbon and will establish a date in which to accomplish these goals. In addition, the UNC system has stated that by 2050, all UNC institutions will be climate neutral (Moody, G., personal communication, October 2009).

Since travel is a large portion of our carbon footprint (18%), ACT has collaborated with the Office of Sustainability to establish new guidelines for individual and group travel (Appalachian State University, 2007 Greenhouse Gas Inventory, May 2009). We urge you to consider how you/your group will minimize your impact during the planning, traveling, implementation, and re-entry stages of your program.

Ideas for making your program as sustainable as possible are explained in the insert titled "Reducing Your Group's Carbon Footprint". To calculate your group's carbon footprint, as well as potential offsets, visit the Office of Sustainability website at http://sustain.appstate.edu/travel-carbon-calculator

Further Readings on this Topic

ASU's International Community Development Initiative: www.act.appstate.edu/icdi

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