



# Top 5 Tips to Developing a Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

For many college students of color, study abroad tends to fall behind in the list of priorities, and as a result, study abroad is often deemed unattainable. Irrespective of their rationale, one central concern remains: students of color, in comparison to their white counterparts, continue to receive fewer messages that study abroad is a worthwhile endeavor. The perception that study abroad is unattainable in tandem with fewer positive messages means students of color miss out on a key experience - one that could impact their likelihood to complete a college degree.

Intentional strategic planning for diversity and inclusion must be infused into every education abroad office. Without an intentional plan, results to achieve gains in equal access and affordability for students of color will be mediocre at best, and furthermore, lack of planning isolates students of color from recognizing education abroad as a worthwhile endeavor. Drawing from the Access, Inclusion, and Diversity (AID) Roadmap guideline on Diversity & Inclusion, the Race and Ethnicity Task Force would like to offer the top tips/best practices for equalizing access for students of color in education abroad:

1

#### **Assessment of current Education Abroad environment and resources.**

Education Abroad offices must first focus their attention internally and assess themselves before beginning any action externally. It is helpful to start by asking: “what are we currently doing/what has already been done for students of color?” Once a general list of actions has been generated, consider these tips for digging deeper into your office’s diversity and inclusion strategy:

- Identify which programs/resources exist for students of color
- Identify which programs have higher enrollment of students of color participation and find out why
- Consider creating a focus group with students of color
- Consider benchmarking Education Abroad environments of similar or aspiring peer institutions
- Supplement your assessment with professional development resources

2

#### **Collaboration and community building for student support.**

The student experience is tangential to support from a variety of offices, service providers, and institutional actors. This support is instrumental in providing a holistic and nurturing environment in which students can thrive. Collaboration between campus departments is a fruitful endeavor which can yield a greater impact on recruitment, student support, retention, and matriculation.

Cross-unit collaboration can occur in many ways. Education Abroad Programs can partner with other units to collect and distribute institutional data about student demographics, needs, academic progress, etc, to support programs. Units can aim to share resources across various communities to appeal to those who may have not heard of or had access to Education Abroad.

3

#### **Evaluating institutional priorities.**

Understanding institutional priorities is integral to creating a campus culture of respect and value for diversity and inclusion. Further, paving the way for equal access to education abroad for students of color would be strengthened with the alignment of a diversity mission and the mission of global education.

It’s important for an institution to evaluate its mission and strategic plan for global education programs, and how diversity and inclusion fits in. A review of the use of language and its impact is important in considering what values may be espoused that reflect (or do not reflect) students of color. Institutions who promote diversity and inclusion should also ensure that there are mechanisms in place to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

# 4

## **Place importance on the recruitment & retention of diversity on campus.**

There must be conscious recognition of the value and importance of both recruiting and retaining diverse and multicultural staff and students in global education programming. Develop a plan to recruit diverse students, faculty, and staff. Make a concerted effort to promote opportunities directly to students in the spaces they occupy on campus, and host information sessions about the benefits of leading programs abroad for faculty. When recruiting staff of diverse backgrounds, why not consider hiring student alumni; or connecting with student alumni active in multicultural affairs?

Be weary that diverse students and staff can suffer from “diversity fatigue” when they are often expected to be present and provide a perspective that might otherwise be missing in conversations. That said, consider hosting focus groups for diverse students, faculty and staff to identify what their needs are, and identify where and how they can gain personal and professional skills by having global experiences.

# 5

## **Diversify What Programs and Services Are Provided**

When creating and or looking at reallocating services for study abroad programs, it is important to diversify the location, lengths and services provided to students. The allocation of services provided to students both before and after studying abroad are important to the success of the program itself, as well as the success of engaging students as well as the message echoed across the campus.

This starts with reviewing what is offered, and building relationships across campus to ensure that existing and future opportunities abroad fit into the current curriculum, as well as meet campus wide graduation requirements. Advocating for increased program variety - such as length and location - can impact student interest as well.