

Tips on Advising for Study Abroad

- *Remember that there are many types of successful advising.* What works for one student may not work for another; what worked this year may not work next year. Consider challenging students who are not open to study abroad. They might not be looking at the rewards of study abroad from various perspectives. Usually they do not plan to work abroad or in a large city so it is important to educate them on how diversity and global interactions are occurring at the local level. These students might not be ready for a study abroad experience. They might better benefit from on-campus diversity opportunities and courses.
- *Mention study abroad early and often!* Beginning with AOP, you are a critical player in guiding students as they plan to incorporate study abroad into their courses and college career. Advanced planning is the key to a successful academic experience abroad. Don't wait for students to bring up the topic. Mention to students how it expands their education in the college, their major, and their life experience. If you don't have time to discuss study abroad at length during your advising sessions, put a study abroad poster on your wall so the students will be visually reminded of the opportunity. The Office of Study Abroad would also be pleased to provide you with a supply of OSA catalogs, brochures, flyers, etc. Printed material is highly effective because students often take them home where parents have the opportunity to read them.
- *Don't feel you need to know it all.* Feel free to always refer students to the Office of Study Abroad (OSA). Check the OSA staff listing on the Web site for regions of expertise. Keep in mind that you are the expert regarding academic issues, whereas the OSA staff has expertise regarding the administration and implementation of programs. In many cases, OSA will also be able to help students obtain course information and syllabi for courses taught at one of our partner institutions. However, if you do not know the answer to an academic question, it is more likely the student will find the answer from the program faculty leader/contact than from OSA.
- *Encourage students to use all the resources available to them.* Even if you do not feel like you know all the answers to their questions, encourage students to collect more information from the OSA web site, <http://studyabroad.msu.edu>, or stop by the Office of Study Abroad Resource Room, 107 International Center, where they can informally talk to peer advisers who have studied abroad. It is helpful for students to bring a list of courses required for their major.
- *Help students begin the planning process.* Your time is limited and there are volumes of information to consider. However, mentioning the following items can help students begin the thinking and planning process:
 - *Ask "Why?"*. The most important question you can ask is "What are your reasons for wanting to go abroad?" Some students may have a clear idea of what they hope to accomplish, while others will not - they simply want to experience another culture and are open to a variety of possibilities. You can help them get started on clarifying their objectives by asking them what they hope to accomplish by participating in a study abroad program. Do they hope to grow personally? Do they want to begin or continue the study of another language? Do they want to enhance their résumé? Do they want to take specific courses that will complement their academic program at MSU? Do they want to gain experience dealing with other

cultures? It is best to go abroad primarily for a unique learning experience. It is never wise to go to escape from problems existing in the home situation. Do not feel pressured to push students aren't ready to study abroad. It is more important to send fewer mature, responsible academically prepared students than large numbers of unprepared students.

- *Encourage students to discuss and share their plans and information with relevant others, be it parents, family or significant others.* In some cases it is critical to have the support of these individuals in order for a student to have a successful experience. If so, students should be encouraged to involve them from the beginning of the planning process. Check the OSA Web site, particularly the “Parents” and “Safety/Security” sections, for answers to typical questions.
 - *Encourage students to take a realistic look at finances.* See the “Finances” section of this notebook, along with the OSA Web site (“Financial Aid” and “Scholarships”) for general information and refer students to OSA for detailed information. Even if finances are not a major concern, students should realistically look at all costs associated with participation.
 - *Encourage students to find information from other sources.* Some students may wish to investigate countries and regions of the world before considering specific programs. Encourage them to contact the area study centers, talk to faculty with international experience, talk to OSA staff members, visit the OSA Resource Room in 107 International Center, explore on the web, read international newspapers (available in the library and on the web), browse bookstores, contact international students from that country/region, etc.
- *Inform students of the different types of programs.* Students often know the location and optimal timing of their desired program but have given little consideration to the best type of program for their individual background preparation and learning styles. More independent students or students with sufficient foreign language skills, prior area studies coursework, or prior experiences abroad are well prepared for direct enrollment immersion programs; whereas, less independent students, or those students without prior experience abroad, study of the language and culture may prefer to short-term faculty-led program. Study abroad programs vary along many dimensions, among them location, duration, types of courses offered, foreign language requirements, type of housing, and whether or not courses are taught by MSU or host country faculty.
- *Address safety concerns with facts.* Students and parents may express concerns about health and safety issues and how MSU is addressing them. Refer to the “Safety” section in this notebook and on the OSA Web site for information and advice. Please refer inquiries to the Office of Study Abroad so OSA can respond to specific program, regional or country questions.
- *Encourage your students to share their study abroad experiences while abroad and upon return.* Quotes, stories and photographs from previous students can make your job easier and are usually well received by potential participants.