Top 7 Things You Need to Know Sending Students Abroad

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Top 7 things to know about sending students abroad

ICC info session
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Decide who’s in charge

• Determine who will be in charge of the group (both before, during and after) and what his/her responsibilities will be

• Make sure students know who is in charge and how to contact him/her in case of a problem

• In some cases, MISTI staff with expertise in the host country can serve as a trip coordinator/point person (contact misti@mit.edu)
Health and safety is priority #1

- Ensure that trip location is safe per MIT’s policy
- Require students to follow MIT’s health and safety guidelines and protocols
- Ask students to attend a MISTI health and safety info session (December and April/May)
  - Visit MIT Medical (vaccines, Rxs)
  - Use common sense/stay vigilant
  - Don’t drive while abroad
- Employ campus resources if incidents do occur
  - Program Manager, Int’l Safety and Security
  - Violence Prevention and Response
  - MIT Medical
  - MIT Mental Health
Details, details...

• Ensure that all logistical and practical arrangements have been made in advance of the trip:
  • Passport, visa, immigration status (international students visit ISO)
  • Finances, banking, ATMs
  • Cell phone plans
  • Register with MIT and complete forms

• Ask students to use the GECD checklist: https://gecd.mit.edu/go-abroad
To make the most, know your host

• Encourage students to learn about the place they’re going in order to make the most of their experience
  • Language
  • Culture
  • History
  • Politics
  • Current events

• Require or encourage them to take an MIT course, read newspapers, consult online resources (GlobeSmart), use a language app (DuoLinguo)
Be a chameleon

- Communication norms vary from culture to culture
  - Direct vs. indirect
  - High context vs. low context
  - Non-verbal communication

- To successfully communicate, students need to be aware of these differences

- Just like students had to adapt to the Boston/New England/MIT culture, they’ll need to adapt a new culture with different customs and norms

- Students should be ready to let go of preconceived ideas about how things are “supposed” to work and to change plans when necessary

- Get used to not being good at things, being comfortable with being uncomfortable... To fail is to learn

- Ask students to visit the Cultural Resources page on the ICC website and explore GlobeSmart and MISTI online Prep and Training resources
Think about identity

• Be aware that going abroad presents different challenges for different students
  • Minority students
  • LGBTQ students
  • Students with disabilities
  • Women
  • First-generation students

• Encourage students to think about how to best prepare for their trip given their unique identity and take advantage of campus resources
  • Office of Minority Education
  • LGBTQ students
  • Student Disability Services
  • Violence Prevention and Response
  • First Generation Program
Remember, it’s a journey

1. Before the trip:
Encourage students to think about where they’ve been, what skills and interests they’re bringing to the experience. What would they like to get out of it? Ask them to set some goals.

2. During the trip
Encourage students to find ways to take advantage of being in that place at that time? What can they do/learn that they can only do/learn there? Ask them to unplug from social media and instead immerse themselves in the culture.

Some tips:
• Get out of the MIT bubble
• Build your network of colleagues and friends
• Volunteer or get involved in local organizations
• Keep a journal or write a blog

3. After the trip
Create an opportunity for students to reflect on the experience:
• What did it mean to you, what did you accomplish, how did you change?
• Plan to keep in touch with contacts you made.
• Consider follow-up experiences: MISTI, GEO, IROP, D-Lab, PKG Center...