



Project Passport IFDS participants on a city tour in Santo Domingo.

Transforming Faculty-led Study Abroad for Minority Serving Institution Students

Faculty members are key stakeholders as they have the potential to create faculty-led programs and recruit students to study abroad. They are essential in promoting and encouraging the internationalization of institutions and curricula. However, faculty members themselves are often not encouraged to participate in study abroad (Esmieu et al., 2016).

WHY THE PROJECT PASSPORT INTERNATIONAL FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR?

The Project Passport International Faculty Development Seminar (IFDS) is a one-week seminar in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic developed specifically for Minority Serving Institution (MSI) faculty. This program is an extension of the Council on International Educational Exchange's (CIEE) previous discipline-specific seminars and draws from CIEE's expertise in preparing faculty to design their own faculty-led study abroad program. The program introduces key faculty leaders to the critical components of faculty-led programs; designing a framework for structured intercultural learning; integrating global learning experiences in academic curricula and student life on campus; and identifying strategies for student recruitment to study abroad. The goal is to leave participants with the confidence and skills necessary to develop their own faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs. Because faculty-led programs—especially short-term programs—tend to be more affordable, the program arms MSI faculty with the tools they need to make study abroad accessible and feasible for the predominantly low-income, first generation, student of color populations that most MSIs serve.

We cannot assume that faculty have professional or personal experiences with international education or travel. Through our work, we have found that many MSI faculty have not traveled abroad, and even encountered faculty that did not have a passport prior to the program. In our efforts to break down student barriers to study abroad, we acknowledge that faculty are key influencers (CIEE, n.d.). After participating in study abroad, faculty members are more likely to encourage undergraduate participation in similar programs (Hand, Ricketts, & Bruening, 2007). If faculty themselves have limited international experience, then it is less likely they will encourage students to pursue international academic experiences, let alone lead them on a study abroad program. As such, the MSI faculty who attend the Project Passport IFDS go through a study abroad experience that parallels a faculty-led study abroad program. In turn, they're able to put themselves in their students' shoes and consider challenges they might face while abroad. They also discover challenges a faculty member might face as they lead the program. By providing faculty with their own study abroad experience, Project Passport IFDS can spur innovative approaches to teaching and learning, as well as increase internationalization of course curricula and syllabi.

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A local history professor leading a tour of a colonial sugar mill outside of Santo Domingo.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

POPULATION: 10,735,896

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Spanish

CAPITAL: Santo Domingo

TOTAL AREA: 48,670 square kilometers

LITERACY RATE: 91.8%

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT: \$17,000/
person

INDEPENDENCE DAY: February 27, 1844

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 78.3

BIRTH RATE: 18.4 births/1,000

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: tourism, sugar
processing, gold mining, textiles,
cement, tobacco

Source: CIA, 2018

WHY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC?

The Dominican Republic was purposefully chosen as the Project Passport IFDS location for several reasons. The history of race relations in the Dominican Republic provides an interesting backdrop for scholars to explore issues of identity. Its proximity to the United States makes the country accessible as it is just a short flight from the East Coast. In addition, the Dominican Republic has a rich cultural heritage that can be seen through the Congos of Villa Mella, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that participants visit, as well as the Zona Colonial where they are lodged and spend much of their time. The location allows for exploration of the colonial sugar mills just outside of Santo Domingo where the faculty learn about the African diaspora in the Dominican Republic and connect with local scholars.

While MSI faculty have the opportunity to participate in academic excursions, they spend the majority of their time in skill-building workshops that contextualize the Dominican Republic as an exemplary location for developing an initial faculty-led program, regardless of discipline. Throughout the seminar, workshop facilitators model activities for intercultural development that faculty can implement with students from their MSIs. Faculty are asked to fully immerse themselves in these activities in order to gain perspective on how a student may experience them. They also have opportunities to make connections with locals and organizations that can play a role in their faculty-led program in the Dominican Republic.

During the Project Passport IFDS, MSI faculty learn about the four core competencies for intercultural development: knowing yourself, knowing others, managing emotions, and bridging. Learning about these competencies enables them to experience the Dominican Republic not as a tourist, but as a scholar. Lastly, faculty do hands-on work planning their own program and learn how to overcome the barriers and challenges they may face throughout the planning process.



Viewing ruins at a colonial sugar mill outside of Santo Domingo.

CONGOS OF VILLA MELLA

The Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit of the Congos of Villa Mella is distinguished in the fields of music, dance, and popular festivities. The Brotherhood musicians play instruments called "congos." These congos, the origin of which is attributed to the Holy Spirit, are hand-drums. The Brotherhood, which is now open to all without distinction of sex or origin, was founded in the sixteenth century by African slaves and people of mixed origin. For historical reasons, the Brotherhood is an important part of the cultural identity of its members and of the region as a whole.

The Festival of the Holy Spirit, celebrated at Pentecost, features prayers, dances and singing, accompanied by the music of the congos and a procession carrying the dove representing the Holy Spirit. When a member of the Brotherhood dies 21 traditional songs of the congos are played and sung in tribute to the deceased. This occurs at the wake, during the procession to the cemetery, and on the ninth day of mourning, when prayers are recited in front of a three-tiered catafalque carrying a doll representing the dead. At the Banko ceremony, three years after the death, the same catafalque is prepared and the living take leave of the deceased, who then becomes an ancestor. On this occasion, all the guests dance to the music of the congos.

The permanence of the Brotherhood has been threatened by the lack of interest shown by the elite in cultures of African and mixed origin. Today, the acceleration of urban growth, migration, unemployment, and the standardization of values is reinforcing prejudices and the lack of understanding of the Brotherhood.

Excerpt from UNESCO.org

"I really liked going to Congos de Villa Mella, it's one of the remaining communities that continue to celebrate their African heritage, and we were able to go to a funeral ceremony which they do for four days of dancing and celebrating the life of the person that has passed, and we were able to participate in the dance. I felt very privileged to be able to witness this, and also participate in it. I was thinking of my students, and what they would be drawn to. Visiting the sugar mill and the plantations, that also was really moving, and again thinking about my students over here, and teaching in the South of this country, and our own history with slavery and sugar plantations, I think there's an interesting connection to make there."

–Project Passport IFDS
Faculty Member

CUTTING COSTS

As part of the program, selected MSI faculty attend the Project Passport IFDS with all program fees, airfare, ground transportation, and meals covered by the partnership. Because many institutions of higher education are financially strapped, the program makes this opportunity free of charge to mitigate the cost barrier that some institutions may face in prioritizing study abroad. Reducing this barrier enables institutions to send a change agent who will return to campus with the skills and knowledge needed to create study abroad opportunities.

PROJECT PASSPORT IFDS FACULTY AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

MSI presidents who attend the Presidential Leadership Workshop at CIEE's Annual Conference nominate faculty from their institution to attend the Project Passport IFDS the following August. The program has run for the past three years and hosted 44 faculty members, the majority of whom were assistant professors. Participants came from 26 different MSIs including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). A handful of participants had experience leading a study abroad program but for the vast majority this was a new undertaking.

Participants have also come from a vast array of disciplinary backgrounds, from traditional liberal arts fields in the humanities and sciences, to fields such as kinesiology, dance, nursing, pharmacology, counseling, marketing, criminal justice, theater, and filmmaking. Such varied representation counters narratives about study abroad that suggest it is limited to certain disciplines. During the program, faculty work with each other and CIEE study abroad specialists to brainstorm and develop plans for unique faculty-led study abroad experiences.

OBSTACLES IN PLANNING THEIR OWN PROGRAMS

During interviews with participants following their participation, faculty discussed obstacles they experienced while trying to raise support for study abroad and faculty-led programs. These obstacles fell into two categories: institutional and student-related.

“The fellowship was great. Having the opportunity to hang out with professors from other MSIs and individuals who share similar interests. Just having the privilege to participate in that program and the practical knowledge and experience and wisdom that I got from those sessions. I don't think I could have ever imagined how to put together a [study abroad] program as well as what was taught there. All sorts of considerations from the seminars, the field excursions to just handling students and the things you need to be mindful of when you travel abroad with a group of young people under those circumstances. It was very comprehensive.”

–Project Passport IFDS
Faculty Member



Project Passport IFDS participants are engaged in a workshop.

Institutional Obstacles. Some participants were challenged garnering buy-in from institutional leadership, as well as their peers. While peers and institutions often recognized the educational value of study abroad, in many cases, they did not see it as a priority or as financially feasible. To combat this, seminar participants emphasized the importance of using study abroad as an incentive in tenure and promotion, thereby mitigating time constraints as a barrier to participation.

Unfortunately, some participants were from institutions where there was great support for internationalization at the time of their participation in the seminar, but had since experienced leadership turnover and the loss of that support. Instability in study abroad offices was sometimes a consequence of this turnover or of broader institutional challenges, such as financial difficulties. Some seminar participants described a lack of infrastructure at their schools for facilitating study abroad, such as a streamlined protocol for applying financial aid to participation, support for the marketing and promotion of opportunities, and processes for managing the necessary paperwork.

Student-related Obstacles. By and large, Project Passport IFDS participants found sufficient interest among students for study abroad and believed they would be able to recruit enough students to a program, and successfully lead that program once finances were sorted out. The exceptions to sufficient student interest were typically at smaller, rural institutions, including rural HBCUs and a tribal college, and at metropolitan PBIs and HSIs. Participants from these institutions described how a significant portion of their students are nontraditional and older than the typical 18-22-year-old college student, thus more likely to be employed full-time and have families. Faculty across MSIs who taught in graduate programs also pointed out these factors as influencing their ability to lead study abroad.

Faculty also alluded to documented barriers to student study abroad participation, namely cost and culture (CIEE, n.d.). Faculty at smaller, rural institutions described how cost was not solely in reference to students being able to pay out-of-pocket, travel-related expenses, but the opportunity cost that traveling meant in terms of being away from their job and losing a portion of their paycheck. In addition to working part-time, or in some cases full-time to help provide for their families, it is common for students in these communities to have significant caretaking responsibilities for family members, whether their own children or older family members. Such factors typically commingle to create a local culture in which these students remain in their communities and are reluctant to pursue education or employment elsewhere.

INTERNATIONALIZING AT HOME

While leading study abroad remains a distant goal for some Project Passport IFDS participants, the impact of the program on their courses has been immediate. Faculty across a range of disciplines expressed that Project Passport IFDS encouraged them to incorporate more international perspectives into their subject matter. Many discussed how important it was for them to learn how race is conceptualized in the Dominican Republic, the legacy of colorism, and how these phenomena are connected to the Dominican Republic's relationship with Haiti. In turn, they sought to educate their students by adapting their course curricula. They even cited “learning about the African diaspora” as a rationale for leading a study abroad experience in certain destinations. Those in the humanities also described incorporating more readings from international authors into their curriculum. In addition to comparing how social identities are viewed, faculty also expressed interest in comparing systems and institutions, such as healthcare, economics, and government. Introducing these comparative lenses was not dependent on study abroad and something they could incorporate into their standard curricula.

“I think the highlights of the experience were the cultural trips that we took and the dinners that we had. I think outside the set schedule was all of the conversations and the connections I was making with the other participants, the organizers, the people on the ground.”

–Project Passport IFDS
Faculty Member

ADOPTING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Faculty described how they began using some of the pedagogical practices that were modeled by the seminar’s facilitators. These included being more intentional in defining key terms and not assuming that people assign the same meaning to concepts, as well as building more time into lessons for debriefing. The importance of debriefing became especially salient when they discussed engaging students on topics related to culture and identity, as the importance of dedicating time for students to grapple with their thoughts and emotions was emphasized during the seminar. This deliberate reflection was a practice that they began to incorporate in class activities, and they planned on using it with field trips and in their study abroad programs.

Some faculty also used specific exercises from the seminar with their students, including a describe-interpret-evaluate exercise as well as cultural identity diagrams. In the describe-interpret-evaluate exercise, the class views a photo, makes judgments about it, and then learns of its background. The cultural identity diagram exercise consists of the participant centering themselves and illustrating the cultures that have influenced them. The faculty found these exercises to be helpful in orienting students to how their perspectives are shaped by their cultural norms and expectations.



Touring the Colonial City of Santo Domingo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES AT MSIs INCLUDE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRAM INITIATIVES



30%

of MSIs with study abroad experiences have programs led by their own faculty



40%

of MSIs with study abroad experiences use third parties to sponsor their programs



67%

of MSIs with study abroad experiences have direct exchange or consortia agreements with other institutions to structure their programs



A Project Passport IFDS facilitator presents to participants at the seminar hotel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT CAN MSI ADMINISTRATORS DO TO SUPPORT FACULTY WHO WANT TO LEAD STUDY ABROAD?

Administrators are well-served investing in study abroad for its range of institutional benefits including its leverage as a recruitment tool. It is important for faculty to be educated on the value of study abroad in order to garner their support, participation, and engagement (Esmieu et al., 2016). Study abroad is a high-impact practice that benefits students' academic and professional careers (Kuh, 2008; Li, 2016), as well as faculty members' development, pedagogy, and scholarship (Dooley, Dooley, & Carranza, 2008; Dooley & Rouse, 2009; Festervand & Tillery, 2001; Hand, Ricketts, & Bruening, 2007). In order to garner faculty buy-in for leading study abroad, faculty need to feel institutional support. MSI administrators must be strategic and create opportunities to overcome challenges that impede faculty involvement including workload, time constraints, and resources required to participate.

Flexible Faculty Requirement Options

Institutions can create more flexible requirements for faculty members, especially for those working toward tenure and promotion. Providing flexible requirement options can help ease workload constraints for those striving for tenure and/or promotion, teaching full course loads, and those with commitments such as research, advising, and leadership positions. Questions institutional leaders and department chairs should consider when revising practices to improve faculty engagement include:

- Does participation in study abroad experiences count toward tenure and promotion?
- Are course buy-outs and faculty releases offered in exchange for participation?
- Are sabbaticals abroad encouraged?
- Can faculty members fulfill portions of their service requirements through study abroad?
- Are faculty members being encouraged to brainstorm ways they could further their research during study abroad?
- How does our institution help ease the workload constraints faculty manage when considering tenure and promotion, teaching full course loads, and other commitments such as research, advising, and leadership positions?



Participants learned from local activists about the African diaspora in the Dominican Republic and explored issues of identity.

Lessen Financial Burden

It is probably no surprise that finances are one of the most commonly cited challenges faculty must overcome in order to participate in study abroad. Institutions should exercise financial creativity to ensure modestly paid professors are not economically overburdened by the experience (Dooley, Dooley, & Carranza, 2008). Programs that support dual-income families and provide childcare options, schooling, and partner-placement can be expanded to help faculty cover expenses while abroad (Dooley, Dooley, & Carranza, 2008). These options could also help address the challenge of being away from one's home and family for an extended period of time.

HOW CAN MSI FACULTY BE RESOURCEFUL IN PLANNING STUDY ABROAD?

Collaborate with Other Faculty

One means of increasing the feasibility and reducing the cost of study abroad for each student is to craft programs with larger cohorts of students. MSI faculty, including some Project Passport IFDS participants, have collaborated with faculty within and outside of their institutions in order to plan study abroad programs. To garner support, they gave presentations and led workshops on study abroad with their faculties. They also reached out to faculty in other disciplines and planned interdisciplinary programs, merging fields across the humanities and sciences, and drawing interest from a broad range of students. This collaboration can create enriching experiences for students who learn from one another's perspectives while navigating international contexts together (Blake, Gasman, Esmieu, Castro Samayoa, & Cener, 2019). Collaboration also creates strength in numbers for shifting cultures and educating college and local communities about the importance of study abroad. Such efforts are especially important at smaller, rural institutions described in the "Student-related Obstacles" section as it will take collective efforts to enable more students in these communities to participate given the cultural, financial, and familial hurdles they face.



Participants enjoy a meal.

Think Strategically About Duration and Timing

Traditional semester-long study abroad is less feasible for MSI students than it is for those at wealthier institutions. Students with strong financial aid packages can sometimes apply their funding toward semester-long study abroad through established partnerships or if they actively work with their home institution to align their international coursework with degree requirements. However, the cost of semester-long study abroad generally outweighs short-term programs' when other factors are considered. As such, short-term faculty-led study abroad can be a point of entry for MSI student participation, and is more likely to allow students with jobs and caretaking responsibilities to participate. Project Passport IFDS faculty were considering short-term programs during winter, spring, and summer breaks and planning to tie them into semester-long courses. The most accessible accommodation will vary across institutional context and audience, but faculty and administrators facing challenges in study abroad recruitment can survey their students to see which options work best. This is especially important at institutions with high proportions of nontraditional students who are more likely to balance education with employment and family.

Work with a Study Abroad Provider

Concerns about safety, lack of personal knowledge of the location, and fear of the unknown can create uncertainty that hinders faculty engagement in study abroad. Working with study abroad providers, such as CIEE, which has more than 70 years experience, can alleviate these concerns as they are able to dispel misconceptions, give faculty detailed information about host cultures, and work step-by-step through program logistics and course design. Many providers have resident staff who are experts in global locations and local languages as well as specific academic fields. They can leverage longstanding relationships with local communities to add location-specific components to the program and the curriculum. Competitive pricing typically includes medical insurance, 24/7 on-site support from resident staff members, and a collaborative planning process that eliminates potential budget pitfalls.

Apply for Grants and Scholarships

A range of funding opportunities exist for faculty interested in leading study abroad and increasing student participation. CIEE offers the following grants and scholarships; not all are for faculty-led study abroad, but individual student opportunities can generate interest and gain momentum for study abroad at an institution:

\$20,000 CIEE ACCESS GRANT

Provides funding for innovative faculty-led programs that increase access to international education opportunities. Call for proposals for the 2021 grant opens in February 2020.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP

Each cohort of 10 MSI students takes part in a fully-funded intensive 4-week, 3-credit summer study abroad program designed to enhance leadership and intercultural skills.

MSI SCHOLARSHIP

Offers \$2,000 for a semester-long CIEE program to any student from a Minority Serving Institution. Summer program students receive \$500 and winter program students receive \$100. (2020 Latin America programs excluded.)

GAIN TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

Provides up to \$2,000 toward airfare to CIEE program locations for any Federal Pell Grant recipient.

GILMAN GO GLOBAL GRANT

Awards \$2,500 to any qualified student that has applied for the Gilman Scholarship regardless of whether or not they are selected. Summer students receive \$1,000 toward study abroad expenses.

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