Planning Beyond the Pandemic: Assessing the Value of Alternative Exchange Programs

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Team Introductions

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Communication Studies; Jyväskylä, Finland

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Political Science, Russian; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Problem

• How can we increase accessibility and representation in intercultural exchange programs?
• Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on International Education: move to virtual and domestic exchange
• The goal: Make intercultural experiences accessible to as many students as possible and motivate them to take advantage
AEPs
Alternative Exchange Programs
Domestic Exchange

- Service-learning, volunteering, or internship opportunities with cultural components
- Broader intercultural perspectives result of emphasized cultural differences
- Cultural differences
  - rural vs. urban
  - ethnic or linguistic populations
  - indigenous cultures
Virtual Exchange

• Existed pre-Covid but now increasingly used
• Case studies have demonstrated increased communication skills, intercultural competence and more (Otto, 2018, p. 92)
• Impossible to fully replicate immersion experience but still valuable supplements to education
Access and Representation

Barriers to Participation
Barriers AEPs Address

- Financial Barriers
- Mobility Barriers
- Greater Participation From Under-Represented Groups
- Lack of Awareness
Supplements, Not Substitutes

• Increased intercultural competence, achieved through:
  • Human development
    • Students adapt to unfamiliar environments
  • Intercultural communication
    • Students interact in an intercultural context
    • Highlighting cultural differences and facilitating discussions
Solution

Survey, Story Collection, and Toolkit

WHAT INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

VIRTUAL?

DOMESTIC?

IN-PERSON?

NEW QUIZ AND TOOLKIT ON THE EDU. ABROAD WEBSITE
Student Survey

• Interest in domestic, in-person experiences while COVID prevents mobility

• Majority did not know where to find information about AEPs

• Website as the best way to find information about global experiences
Advisor Survey

- Student interest is there
- Majority not currently aware of AEPs at UM
Story Collection
Toolkit: Available Soon on the UM Global Engagement Webpage

- Quiz
  What type of exchange is right for you?
- Value of AEP's
  Quotes, photos, descriptions, examples
- Resources
  UM offices and organizations to contact
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