



Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne June 17th – 20th, 2015

**Submission Template for the
2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title of Proposal:

Creating community in a global setting: Transforming lives through Travel Abroad courses

2) Abstract:

In this session, we discuss the conceptual and practical aspects of leading Travel Abroad courses and creating community in a global setting. These courses transform individual students' lives in deep and lasting ways and create natural learning communities. By immersing students in another culture with their peers, Travel Abroad courses facilitate students' openness to experience while enhancing their cultural competence. Students are empowered to "see" their own culture through a new lens and appreciate better their critical role in the global community. With faculty leaders as guides, they make the oft-thrilling discovery that their personal limits are greater than imagined.

3) Keywords:

Travel Abroad, cultural competence, global community

4) Format

- Activity or exercise
- Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
- General discussion session

5) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:

Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

No

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

- a. Participants will discuss the role, purpose, and benefits of short-term Travel Abroad courses for both individual students and the community of students.
- b. Participants will consider the preparation needed by faculty members to successfully lead short-term Travel Abroad courses and create learning communities in a global setting.
- c. Participants will consider strategies for managing perceptions and expectations of fellow faculty members, participating students, and their loved ones.
- d. Participants will review the practical aspects of leading short-term travel courses, with special attention to potential pitfalls.

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Personality, especially openness to experience
Antecedents of cultural competence
Expectation management
Operational planning
Creating learning communities in a global setting

9) Session Description and Plan:

In this session, the discussion leaders will describe and engage the audience in discussing the challenges and opportunities associated with short-term Travel Abroad courses¹. The discussion leaders will relate the dialogue to their significant experience leading students, both undergraduates and graduates, on Travel Abroad courses. Attention will be given to the topic of ushering first generation college students out of the comfort zone of their home country. Attention will also be given to strategies designed to yield effective learning communities in a global setting.

The session will begin with consideration of the “big picture” issues associated with short-term travel courses. Questions to be explored include the following:

- a. What is/should be the role and purpose of Travel Abroad courses in a business curriculum at either the undergraduate or the graduate level? What do we want students to learn?
- b. To what extent is the learning in a Travel Abroad course distinct from and complementary to the learning in more traditional courses?
- c. To what extent is the learning in a Travel Abroad course – with a group of students – distinct from and complementary to the learning in a semester-long Study Abroad program for an individual student?
- d. What steps should a faculty member take to create a learning community of students in a Travel Abroad course? What are the advantages of focusing on the community of learners as opposed to the individual learners?
- e. Who benefits from Travel Abroad courses? What exactly are the short- and long-term benefits? Are there any downsides? How do we persuade students who may have never left their home state, who may have never been on a plane, to join us on an excursion to another country?
- f. What is/should be the faculty member’s role on a Travel Abroad course? Is the faculty member expected to be available for 24 hours per day, every day of the Travel Abroad course?
- g. What preparation should a faculty member have to lead a Travel Abroad course? How should Travel Abroad course leaders be selected?
- h. How can/should faculty members leading Travel Abroad courses address comments that they are “on vacation” while leading the course?
- i. What can/should faculty members do to manage student expectations? To deal with culture shock? To manage their parents and loved ones’ fears and expectations?
- j. Is it important to know the language of the country to be visited?
- k. What are the challenges associated with elective vs. required Travel Abroad courses?

¹ In this proposal, Travel Abroad courses are defined as courses led by faculty members to countries outside the institution’s country of origin that are short-term (i.e., shorter than a typical semester or term).

Consistent with the model outlined by Sachau, Brasher, & Fee (2010), the discussion leaders will take the audience on a whirlwind tour of such practical topics as:

- a. Pre-Trip planning: Making sure that everything that can be controlled is controlled. Sort of. Scheduling activities while remaining flexible and adaptable.
- b. Student orientation: Managing expectations to minimize and (hopefully) avoid meltdowns. Helping students to understand that they're taking a course, and not going on vacation, even if you are going to a really, really nice place. With a beach.
- c. On-site logistics: You've landed at the airport. Now what? How will you get to the places you're visiting?
- d. Housing: Staying with host families vs. other options – what's best?
- e. Insurance: Bad things can happen. Will you and your students be ready?
- f. Liability: When students ignore your warnings about avoiding drug deals and jail time in another country. When students "go rogue."
- g. Safety and travel warnings: What do students need to know to stay safe? When is it best to cancel a course and stay home? When is it best to expedite the group's departure from the travel country?
- h. Financial aid and scholarships: Helping students pay their way. Without financial aid and scholarships, many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may not be able to participate in this learning experience. What can faculty members do to help?
- i. Compensation: What's your time worth? Different models of paying for faculty compensation.
- j. Packing: What should students bring vs. what should they plan to buy vs. what should they live without. Helping students to understand how what they bring from home and what and how much they purchase suggests their values to people in the host country.

Photos taken during the discussion leaders' various Travel Abroad courses will be used to enhance the discussion of these practical topics. Participants will be given a handout with specific "how to's" to facilitate planning and executing their own Travel Abroad courses.

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions.

NA

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

**"One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things."
– Henry Miller**

Our goal is to help faculty colleagues increase their appreciation for the value of Travel Abroad courses and, most importantly, aid in our colleagues' knowledge of how they might go about developing and leading such courses and building a learning community for their students. We recognize that leading a Travel Abroad course can seem a daunting task, especially for faculty members who have not done so and who may not have role models or existing programs at their current institutions.

Our increasingly interdependent world needs people who are culturally competent and open to new experiences and new ways of thinking. Faculty members are in a unique position to facilitate students' learning about cultures other than their own, in such a way that the experience enables students to critically think about and better understand their own culture, its positive aspects, and its limitations. Faculty members are also uniquely qualified to help students discover that they can in fact "boldly go where they have never gone before." In an age when parents are described as "hovering" over their adult children, at least some students' best chance to Travel Abroad may be with a trusted faculty member.

While Travel Abroad courses yield a considerable array of positive consequences for students, they also provide faculty members with deep and immersive learning experiences. Faculty members have the opportunity to learn about their students in situations atypical from the traditional classroom; they are able to observe and interact with their students as complex individuals who have lives, interests, and priorities beyond the learning outcomes and assignments in a given class. The insight gained by faculty members leading Travel Abroad courses may be used to develop more effective traditional classes that are based in part on an authentic and empathetic understanding of students' thoughts, fears, hopes, goals, and histories. Together, faculty members and students can become a high-functioning community of learners who will be bound together by their shared experiences and learning.

12) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

Travel Abroad courses have the potential to yield high-functioning communities of learners that include both faculty and student members. In traditional courses and learning situations, students tend to see themselves as distinct from their faculty members; the faculty members ("us") have an agenda that may or may not align with the agenda of students ("them"). (The "us" vs. "them" roles are easily reversed.) In Travel Abroad courses, aligning the interests and goals of faculty members and students may be more easily accomplished, as faculty members and students spend significant time and face challenges together. As students have told us, "I feel like I can see you (the faculty member) and relate to you as a real person, now that we've done all these things together." Unlike traditional courses, where the faculty members and students may see each other for approximately three hours per week over 15

weeks, in a short-term Travel Abroad course, faculty members and students may see each other more than 60 hours per week for three or more weeks.

Being in a setting other than home reinforces opportunities to connect deeply, as faculty and student participants collectively compare and contrast what they are doing, seeing, hearing, thinking, smelling, etc. in their “home away from home” with what they would be doing, etc. at home. Students and faculty members have myriad opportunities to learn together, in diverse settings, and to process their learning as a learning collective. They are confronted with realities different from their own, and they are compelled to reflect deeply on their beliefs, values, stereotypes, and preferences. They have constant opportunities to share their thinking with peers and with faculty members and to adjust their thinking in the wake of rich conversations and impactful experiences. For faculty members, leading a Travel Abroad course provides the opportunity to show our authentic selves to our students, and to immerse ourselves in a collective learning experience that has no equivalent in a traditional classroom.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

We presented a version of this proposal at last year’s OBTC. Those attending strongly encouraged us to resubmit our proposal for this year and once again share what we have learned with our colleagues. They indicated that the knowledge we have acquired through many years of leading Travel Abroad courses was both interesting and valuable, and that many faculty members would benefit from the opportunity to learn what we have learned. We have adjusted the presentation to focus more directly on the notion of creating and celebrating community through Travel Abroad learning experiences. We look forward to engaging in reflective dialogue on the benefits of these learning experiences that accrue to both students and faculty members.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

Sachau, D., Brasher, N., & Fee, S. (2010). Three models for short-term study abroad. *Journal of Management Education*, 34(5): 645-670.