

## **How to Recruit Students for SRJC's Study Abroad Program**

There are many important factors involved in a successful study abroad program - the faculty selected, the range of courses offered, the appeal of the non-academic events and the actual program components. But none of these are as important as the students themselves. Without them there is no study abroad program and that is why recruitment of students has to be one of the first things to think about.

All programs are priced on a target enrolment and if that number is not reached the program may have to be cancelled or restructured. Also, your college will have requirements for minimum class size and may not allow your course to run unless enough students sign up for it. Finally, faculty benefits (housing allowance and airfare) are based on a student: faculty ratio and if this is not met, you may not receive the full allowance.

Many faculty have not had experience of recruiting students, but the success of the program will depend largely on you helping to explain the benefits of study abroad and generating student interest.

### **WHEN TO START**

As soon as faculty have been selected for a program they should begin to recruit. Even before detailed promotional materials are available, you can start talking about the program on campus and letting students know where to find information. In addition to any materials your study abroad office may produce, AIFS provides posters, fliers, brochures and a short promotional DVD as well as student application forms. Basic program information can also be found on the AIFS website at [www.aifspartnerships.com](http://www.aifspartnerships.com) and students can apply online.

Ideally, word needs to be out on campus 12 months before the start of the program. Students need time to plan their finances, speak to academic advisors, family members, employers, etc. The Paris and Florence programs have both been running successfully for many years and students on your campus may already be aware that studying in these locations is a possibility, but you will still need to reach out to them with more specific detail and encourage them to apply.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

- **CLASS VISITS**
  - Class visits are a very successful way of attracting students so talk to as many of your colleagues as possible about giving you a few minutes to address students at the start of their classes.
  - Go to large lecture classes, especially those in the fields which will be offered on your semester abroad program.
  - If they'll give you the time, show the DVD (or part of it) as it shows students talking about their experiences and really conveys the excitement of study abroad. If you only have 5 minutes, just give a brief overview and hand out the flyers.
  - If a foreign language is involved, meet immediately with the Department Chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and ASL as well as any instructors of that language.

Brainstorm with them as to how they can help you. Visit as many language classes as you can and contact other instructors directly so they can reach students you cannot. The more other instructors hear from you personally, the more they will work to help you in your recruiting.

- Make sure that you talk to the faculty selected from other colleges in the Consortium about the courses they will be teaching abroad so that you are able to promote them along with your own courses when recruiting on your campus.

- **INFORMATION MEETINGS**

- Set dates for a series of information meetings that interested students (and their parents) can attend to find out more about the program. Be prepared to talk about all the courses that are on offer, not just your own. Make sure you talk about any special activities that your colleagues plan to include in the courses taught abroad – museum/gallery visits, guest speakers, etc. as these really make them come alive for students. As well as the DVD, AIFS can provide you with a PowerPoint presentation with details of what's included, photos of the on-site facilities, and students at cultural events to assist you at the information meetings.

- **PUBLICIZE**

- Put posters up on both campuses, especially where students gather (libraries, cafeteria, performing arts spaces, etc). Make sure Patty has copies of your materials for the Language Lab.
- Confirm that the SRJC website has timely information on your program so students can easily access the information they're looking for.
- Email potentially interested students (advisors may have lists that they've built in anticipation of a given program). You can now use Constant Contact, an email service that the Study Abroad Program has contracted with.
- Build a Facebook page (or build on one that's already been set up) and include the link to the AIFS Partnerships Facebook page – <http://www.facebook.com/AIFSPartnerships>.
- Consider creating a MySpace page or using Twitter. The best thing about these social networking pages is that they tend to have lots of photos and this is what students want to see.
- Consider presenting at various campus forums, etc.
- Use SRJC's email system (staff.all DL) to get word out to all faculty & staff---introduce yourself and let them know when the informational meetings are. Really talk up the program, and include a color flyer for others to post around campus or include in a lecture.
- Talk to Freyja Pereira about posting a message in the student cubby.
- Contact the Oakleaf and the Insider to let students, faculty & staff know when the informational meetings are and when the deadlines are.
- Consider tabling outside of the student center on both campuses. Students who have previously attended the program may be willing to

participate with you. Talk to the student representative on the International Studies committee about rounding up volunteers.

- **ESTABLISH CONTACTS**
  - Meet with members of the International Studies Committee soon after selection.
  - Get to know your semester abroad colleagues. Meet in the middle for dinner and discuss strategies together. It will make things seem more real to you and it will help you build a synergistic recruitment plan. As you recruit in your own field at your own school, you can also recruit in your colleagues' fields at your own school, and they can do the same for you.
  - It is also a good idea to contact faculty who have taught on the program in previous years. Remember that programs change a little each semester so not everything will be the same, but they will be able to give you a good idea of what to expect.
  
- **THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**
  - Do not limit your recruitment to the campus. Study Abroad traditionally has recruited many mature students, especially those from the retiree community. They may not be attending the college at all but they see the program as a cost effective way to spend 3 months abroad and the classes give it some structure and a chance to stretch their minds. In fact each semester there are a substantial number of students who have not attended the colleges previously and are purely enrolled for the study abroad experience.
  - To appeal to the local community it might be worth considering an ad in a local paper or on local radio. These will of course also be seen by the student community and their parents. You may want to speak to local stores, coffee shops, restaurants, and gyms to see if they will put up some of the flyers.
  - Look at what organizations there are in the local community that might want to support the program. For example, there might be a local Italian organization that would be happy to spread the word about the Florence program. If they hold regular meetings they might also welcome faculty as speakers. Each community is different and you (and your students) know your own best. Most of the above costs no money – but it does cost time and effort.
  
- **FINANCES**
  - As much as students may love the idea of art in Italy or theatre in London, at the end of the day their final decision may well come down to whether they can afford it or not. Financial Aid can be applied to the semester programs. Make sure you have access to FA forms and understand how the process works. Students will want to know and you will have more chance keeping them as an interested student if you can answer some of their initial FA questions rather than sending them off to the sometimes daunting FA office.
  - Fee Comparisons: In the past, faculty have produced a comparison document detailing how the cost of study abroad with the Consortium

compares to the cost of study abroad through a CSU or UC. This helps convince the parent that this is a good investment. If a student plans to study abroad at some point during their academic career, these fee comparisons can convince them that now is the time!

- Figures for comparison to colleges in your area can easily be found on the Internet. You can also make the comparison that a semester abroad is actually cheaper than a semester in San Francisco (for example) once you factor in accommodations, fees, etc.
  - Scholarships: There are various scholarships out there available to students. One nationwide one is the Gilman and there are also many others that might be applicable to your state. A quick search of the Internet will reveal them and you can add them to your materials emphasizing the possible amount and the deadlines for applying. Your study abroad office will have more information on the scholarships available.
- **OTHER COLLEGES**
    - There may be other colleges in your area who are not involved in study abroad but would be happy to welcome you on campus to talk to their students or at the very least would be happy to put up flyers, posters, etc. with your contact information. Please speak to your study abroad office about who to contact on other campuses to ask permission to advertise there.