

Faculty-Led, Short-Term Study Abroad Programs: Stories and Dilemmas of Practice

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Abstract

This first-person narrative unifies one professor's experiences in applying best-practices to implement faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs in Sicily and Rome. Building on published scholarly work, the article uncovers insights to benefit international faculty while designing and implementing culturally responsive, field-based learning experiences. This narrative focuses on the dilemmas and challenges to realize student learning outcomes given unavoidable quirks of the abroad site and inevitable unexpected issues that arise while shepherding college students from the culturally familiar to the strange.

Keywords: faculty-led study abroad, student abroad issues, study abroad

Midnight, May 27, 2010, Ortygia, Sicily

Under a full moon, on the fifth day of our faculty-led study abroad program, my university colleague, Stephan, and I were savoring traditional Sicilian cannoli at an outdoor café in Piazza Duomo when we were approached by a pair of our students. This was my fourth short-term, faculty-led program in Sicily, and so far, this year's curriculum was moving along as well as could be expected. Jet-lag behind us, we were settling into the routine of study first, play later, when the first complication arose. Later, we referred to this health event as 'The silent confession.'

In an apprehensive tone, Heather began:

"Dr. P., Olivia has something to tell you."

With my trepidation mounting, initiated by Heather's tone and the body language of the two students, I calmly responded:

"Sure. Olivia?"

"It's better if I show you, Dr. P.," rasped Olivia.

Heather rushed in:

“She should have shown you three days ago but was afraid you’d send her home!”

The ‘silent confession’ came next...

Olivia picked up the table candle, held it up to her face, opened her mouth, and said: “Ahhhhh.”

Stephan and I, both descendants of Italian immigrants and parents of grown children, nearly swooned when Olivia’s throat came into our extended view. We saw tonsils interwoven with thick red veins threaded throughout. We saw tonsils swollen to such extreme, they were smack up against her uvula. Needless to say, we packed up and headed straight to the all-night pharmacy. In Italy, pharmacists are allowed to dispense antibiotics if they see a looming disaster.

Back at the apartments, I took Olivia’s temperature –104 degrees– called her mom and in a tempered tone, described the situation. With Olivia’s input, we decided that I would administer analgesics and antibiotics that I had just procured at the pharmacy, settle her into my apartment for the night, and call the designated program physician in the morning.

The next day at 6AM, Olivia was continuing to run a high fever and her overnight labored, raspy breathing was now dragon-like. For the first time, I found myself in a mild panic. We were, after all, responsible for this 19-year-old student. While we waited for an appropriate time to call the program physician, Stephan and I divided up the day’s events. I would ask the doctor for a home visit, and depending upon the diagnosis, Stephan would stay with Olivia during the day while I would lead the other fifteen students on our walking classroom slated for 8 AM that very day.

First! Call the doctor!

I remember the scene perfectly. Stephan, who speaks fluent Italian, was standing in the foyer of my apartment as I faced him, phone in hand. When the telephone connected to the physician, even though I was quite confident in my ability to explain the symptoms, when I began to unfold the situation in measured Italian, I mixed up the proper wording

for UVULA with UTERUS. As my co-worker stood there with his hand-to-neck making the gesture for CUT, I heard the physician snorting in laughter over my blunder.

Within 45 minutes, Dr. Mendocino arrived and diagnosed Olivia with acute strep throat and injected her with the first dose of rapid acting antibiotics to relieve the infection. Stephan stayed with her for the day, and I, humbled from my Italian misstep and worn-out from fitful sleep on the uncomfortable couch, accompanied the other 15 students three hours away to Agrigento, the Valley of the Temples, to teach pagan mythological worship practices. Olivia? Due to the swift actions of our program physician, she rejoined the group in two days.

My Experience with Faculty-led Study Abroad Programs

Since 2006, I have conducted faculty-led study abroad programs in Sicily and Rome. As Huxley (1942) suggested: *The more you know, the more you see*,¹ I envision study abroad programs to first and foremost be knowledge building. A few years ago in Rome, one astute student remarked: “Oh, look, there is a sculpture of Michael, the Archangel, sheathing his sword after ridding Rome of the plague.” When I asked her how she knew this beloved Roman story, she quoted Huxley’s adage, and told her peers that she had been reading well beyond the books and articles selected as program texts. Learning from an astute student, I have relied on Huxley’s principle, as my students and I walk through the streets of Italy only ‘seeing’ when we have the knowledge base to aid our understanding of:

...an intricately carved Roman mythological creature adorning a building;

...a deer with a black iron cross thrust in its head embellishing the spire of a church; or

1. Although Huxley is widely quoted for saying, ‘The more you know, the more you see,’ I was not able to find this direct quote in Huxley (1942). Instead, on page 19, Huxley implies these words when, among other examples, he describes how a naturalist’s knowledge provides him with the opportunity to see more in a forest than a layperson is capable of seeing.

... a cultural custom enforced by a disbelieving waiter, “You would like a cappuccino? In Italy, we do not drink cappuccino in the afternoon. Milk after lunch is very bad for the digestion.”

Most study abroad experts agree that a faculty-led study abroad program curriculum needs to be grounded in knowledge building, which includes learning the content of the domain being studied as well as the *relevant* historical, philosophical, political, sociological, and most importantly, the cultural aspects of the intended site; however, this article is not about rigorous curriculum development. As my opening anecdote suggests, it is about everything that happens before, during, and after one delivers the promised curriculum. In this article, I make every effort to answer the following questions:

- What can a faculty member expect from students while abroad?
- How does one prepare for inevitable site interruptions to the perfectly planned program?
- What personal dispositions does a faculty member need to be successful teaching abroad?

In 2018, with two co-editors and many authors, I published a book entitled, *Passport to Change: Designing Academically Sound, Culturally Relevant Short-Term Faculty-Led Programs* (Pasquarelli, Cole & Tyson, 2018). Chapter 11 of that volume contains some of the information I am relating here, but includes more extensive advice to assure a safe, productive program.

Ask faculty members who have just returned from leading college students abroad about their experiences and they will probably tell you everything but the realization of student learning outcomes. I know that when I return, my colleagues, family, and friends are eager to hear my wayward stories, such as lizards coming in from the cold exterior walls of ancient buildings to the warm interior padding of students’ beds, and the subsequent SCREAMS echoing through thin walls in the middle of the night.

Following are my stories. Stories that may help you prepare for the unexpected that occurs during every faculty-led study abroad program no matter how diligent you are to take preventative measures. I end each story with advice that I hope you find helpful.

Navigating Student Dilemmas

The Small Matters

As I mentioned before, be prepared for the unexpected. A few years ago, in a rented Rome apartment building, after telling students repeatedly, NOT to leave their apartment doors wide open while visiting their friends' apartments, the inevitable happened. No, thankfully not a robbery. Rather, "Lo Scirocco," the Italian wind, blew one group's outside apartment door shut, locking out three women in their pajamas at midnight. Frantic calls to us only yielded our pitiful response: "Oh, well. You must wait until the housekeeper comes at 11 AM tomorrow to have access to your apartment. We do not have a spare set of keys." Fortunately, they were able to sleep in their friends' apartment. Unfortunately, they could not attend the next day's walking classroom in their pajamas and had to stay behind to wait for the housekeeper.

Advice: Be flexible when holding students accountable for the small stuff.

For your students, in this new context, the concurrence of the 'familiar' and the 'strange' is well beyond their comprehension, especially for those on a first trip abroad. In this scenario, three students missed a major learning opportunity and had no material to fulfill the course assignment connected to the day's walking classroom. Instead, we designed a different assignment to assure the students' grades were not affected.

The Big Matters

One could only hope for unfavorable student behavior to begin and end with being locked out of apartments. A few years ago, in Sicily, I received a call at 2 AM from an Italian friend who was at a bar observing several of our students. What she had to relate was not a pretty sight and

required us to get dressed and rush down to the bar. There we heard the tale that two students were allegedly lying on tables while others in the bar were plying them with shots of liquor. Our students were inebriated and did not recognize us, nor their surroundings. We called a cab, ushered them back to our apartments, and the next morning, called them in for 'the reckoning.' We would have sent them home that very day, but since the program was over in 36 hours, we decided to allow them to stay with an evening curfew in place until departure. Upon returning state-side, we reported the incident to the university and the students endured the university's judicial consequences.

Advice: Hold students accountable for infractions that put them or their peers in danger.

The Life-or-Death Matters

There is a middle ground with student dilemmas. In this section, I focus on the medical because, as a first-time faculty-leader, you will discover that most of the student issues are health-related. Beyond swollen tonsils, there are a myriad of health issues that require faculty attention. I have accompanied or sent students to pharmacies and emergency services for antibiotics and analgesics. For rash creams. For cooling pads to ease 105 fevers derived from sunstroke. For gauze, ointments, and bandages to relieve blistered feet and elastic wraps to protect twisted ankles and knees. Common ailments aside, the most important preparation faculty must attend to pre-departure is the dreaded FOOD ALLERGY.

One time in Ortygia, Sicily, a region known for its seafood cuisine, a frantic student called the faculty phone around 2 AM. He managed to bark out the message that his roommate was in anaphylaxis from eating shellfish, and he was afraid to inject the roommate's EPI PEN. I dropped the phone and ran to their apartment where I was indeed greeted by a very distressed young woman and equally distressed room-mate. Since I had kept careful medical records on a clipboard, I knew this student had a shellfish allergy. I also had her spare EPI PEN in a bag attached to the clipboard.

My first action was to break open the EPI PEN. My second was to

pause, breathe, and ask questions:

Me: "When did you eat?"

Room-mate: "7 PM."

Me: "Did she eat anything since supper?"

Room-mate: "Vanilla gelato from an outdoor window."

I determined in under three seconds that this student was not going into anaphylactic shock but was hyperventilating. I put away the EPI PEN, grabbed a paper bag from the table, and whispered: "Just breathe. In and out. Just breathe." Panic subsided and the student was back to normal within two hours, telling the story about how she woke up in a cold sweat and thought she was having a shellfish reaction, so she worked herself into a full panic attack.

Making a life-or-death judgment call is one of the most terrifying events faculty must make while abroad. Inject the pen and then spend the next 24 hours in an unfamiliar hospital? Call the paramedics? Take the 105-degree fevered sun-stroke student to the emergency room or treat it yourself? Call the parent for advice even though the student is an adult? Call the study abroad office to go on record that you are troubleshooting a serious medical issue? (YES!) Have students handle the medical issue on their own even if they can't speak the language? (NO!) These are the types of questions one must be prepared to answer or act upon.

Advice: Gather your own evidence after students report a health incident.

Advice: Be prepared! Have students' medical information on a clipboard for easy reference. Know the local medical emergency phone numbers. If possible, identify and place on stand-by a local physician for house calls.

Advice: If you are not comfortable making the medical judgment-call, seek expert opinion even if the program must be disrupted.

Advice: For students with life-or-death food allergies, before leaving home, prepare laminated cards written in the local language that describe the food allergy. Students can then show the card to waiters while ordering.

During one program, six students had food allergies – that was SIX

students with EPI PENS in their pockets and SIX spares in my apartment! The laminated cards describing the food allergy in Italian gave us all peace of mind.

Navigating Site Dilemmas

Terrorist Attacks

June 2, *La Festa Della Repubblica*, is a national holiday in Italy, commemorating the day the Italian people voted to form a republic. Since my study abroad programs fall between late May- mid June, I usually schedule the holiday as a free day or plan a relaxing field trip into the program schedule.

On one particular Italian holiday, the participants of our mythology/travel writing program, *Rome: Art and Culture Through a Traveler's Eye*², were eagerly anticipating a much-needed day off, leaving the stifling hot city for a day playing in and around the countryside. We were headed to the UNESCO World Heritage site--Villa d'Este in Tivoli --to feel the relief from the 500 gravity fountains built in the 16th century as well as to view mythological statuary paying homage to pagan gods. Even on a day off, I chose a venue that focused on the mythological program content, knowing that we would see the elaborately decorated villa décor, such as one wall depicting the Garden of the Hesperides, as well as another depicting the 11th labor of Hercules. Hydras, griffins, and Sirens abound in statuary, window shutters, and concrete fountains. All in all, we were looking forward to eating boxed lunches and having a day where *study* was not the main menu item. We left the apartments at 7AM in a parade of private vans to the smaller of the two main train stations, *Stazione Tiburtina*, where we would board an east-north-east train and spend the holiday away from the rigors of our studies.

When the vans arrived right in front of the station, we disembarked

2. I would like to acknowledge my Roger Williams University writing studies, travel writing professor and brilliant colleague, Dr. Kate Mele, co-curriculum developer of the study abroad program, *Rome: Art and Culture Through a Traveler's Eye*.

and took attendance. As is my custom, we had arrived an hour before our scheduled train to accommodate students' personal needs before boarding. I remember noting that the group was relaxed and enthusiastic about the promise of a day of discoveries.

All was well, and then it wasn't.

Just as we were about to enter the station, we heard the familiar ear-splitting sound of Italian rescue vehicles before we spotted at least 20 blue and white imposing vans headed our way. All came to a skidding halt right where we were standing and 50 *poliziotti* descended upon us, Uzis out and ready.

My faculty colleague and I made a quick decision. She would move students away from the fray and soothe their panic as I approached a solitary policeman. In simple Italian, I inquired about the disturbance. In response, the Armani-clad *poliziotto*, voiced a long story about the Pope and his retinue and an anonymous tip of a terrorist attack on the very train line for which we had tickets.

Walking classroom canceled! Fortunately for us, my colleague and I had a perfect day's replacement, held as an alternative in case of cancellation of the main event. Instead of a walk through glorious gardens, our little band took a walk among the hills of Rome, visiting one artisan studio after another. While viewing the artists in the act of creation, students purchased leather purses & pen cases, hand-made bracelets & necklaces, water-colors of Rome, and miles of marbled paper & hand-crafted journals. A fine holiday was had by all.

Advice: Have a substitute activity planned in case of forced cancellation.

Demonstrations

One of my favorite stories about interrupted programs included a walk to a museum in Rome on an auspiciously beautiful day. As we emerged from our apartments near the Pantheon and approached a major intersection, we heard bullhorns, loud applause, and the steady hum of raised voices. We turned the corner, and there it was! A large float covering the flatbed of a Mercedes truck sporting a colossal, intricately

painted world globe with a water faucet jutting from the middle of the Indian Ocean as if it were about to dispense water. Banners flew overhead screaming in every language: CLEAN WATER FOR ALL.

My students and I paused to observe and take in the sights and sounds. I love a good demonstration to impart cultural experiences of place and time. This one, however, was on a scale that was beyond my usual experience. Try as I might, I could not move students around the chaos of crowd-masses and crowd-control vehicles to enter the small museum at the appointed hour of our tickets. Another walking classroom changed. One opportunity lost, but another gained!

Transportation Strikes

On my first faculty-led study abroad program, I relearned the term, *lo sciopero*, which means a strike or temporary work stoppage. A transportation strike in Italy might be announced in advance, or not announced until the moment it occurs; most commonly, it lasts for 2 hours, 4 hours or a day. These unannounced transportation strikes are guaranteed to bungle your planned curriculum and possibly throw your syllabus into a deep spin, especially if your program centers around an experiential approach and you are building student knowledge step-by-step. This is further complicated in short program designs of two-three weeks.

One day in Siracusa, Sicily, the students set their alarms for 4 AM, hastily dressed in the clothes they had laid out the night before, wolfed down *cornetti* and *cappuccini* that I had pre-arranged for that hour, and bleary-eyed, met fellow travelers in front of our apartment house for a walk to the bus parking lot. In Ortygia, the old town of Siracusa, most of the roads were built for horse and carriage and are juxtaposed in between and among the maze of stone-connected homes and businesses. A favored photoshoot of my students is to stand in the middle of one of the impossibly narrow streets and touch adjacent walls with both hands.

The large pullman I had rented to take us across Sicily had to park outside the city, which meant a 2.5 kilometer walk to the rendezvous point. If you ever had to rouse college students out of their precious slum-

ber at that hour of the morning, you might be able to predict their reactions when we arrived at the rendezvous and viewed an empty parking lot. After a few unanswered calls to the bus company, I walked to the local petrol station, the only business awake at that hour, and learned from the sleepy owner that there was a province-wide sciopero for public transportation, but the private drivers were ‘sympathy striking.’

Stranded!! with 16 college students expecting to view the mosaics at *Villa Romana del Casale*, in the Sicilian town of *Piazza Armerina*. The villa, built in the 4th century, is thought to have been the hunting lodge of a wealthy Roman patrician and is known for the exquisite mosaic floors and walls.

The tricky part of canceling this particular field trip? If the students did not have the experience plus a lecture on the great art of mosaics, they would be ill prepared for tomorrow’s walking classroom, designed to build on that knowledge. Our only solution was to change the student learning outcome as well as the course assignment designed to evaluate that outcome.

Advice: Don’t chase buses or trains (Cole, 2020) and maintain a ‘live’ syllabus.

Live Syllabus

Go with the flow (!) is the best advice I was given before embarking on my first faculty-led study abroad program and it remains my advice to all new study-abroad faculty. Transportation woes, terrorist attacks in Europe, museums and venues closed without notice, student illness, injury, or just plain fatigue, call for a change in the syllabus or even the curriculum if necessary.

Prior to setting off abroad, we put our syllabus in a Google drive and label it: LIVE SYLLABUS. Every night, my colleague and I adjust the syllabus and course assignments to fit the latest change.

Advice: Be prepared to alter the syllabus to fit reality, even if it means changing student learning outcomes to match the experiences they are having.

Serendipity

A few years ago, at the end of a Rome program, my colleague and I found ourselves with extra money because the euro-dollar exchange dipped significantly from the time we submitted our budget to the university finance office to the time we went abroad. Because our end-of-the-program daily schedule was not as tight as the beginning, we found a half day where we could arrange an additional walking classroom. The students were interested in visiting the ruins of an ancient Roman seaport town, Ostia Antica, about which we faculty leaders knew not a thing. We explained to the students that we were willing to learn with them, and after buying a local guidebook to the ancient seaport, we set off on public transportation, paid our entrance fees, and entered the still standing gates marked by a headless statue of Minerva.

The minute we stepped beyond the gates, it was clear that this was an in-tact ancient town, albeit in various levels of ruin. After walking a few minutes down a dusty pathway, one student turned to the group and suggested: "Let's try to determine the purpose of each area. For example, this area on the left has a mosaic of Neptune on the floor and it is sunken lower than the rest of this area. I predict this was the communal baths, evident by the god of the sea mosaic." Following his lead, we played this inquiry game in the light rain for three hours, only consulting the guidebook after we decided that this area was perhaps the fish market, and this area was perhaps where the laundry was done. Upon reflection and discussion on the train ride back, every single student was able to make connections between the culture of Rome today with the culture of Rome yesteryear. We faculty also learned a valuable lesson that day: we do not have to choose our abroad sites by what we know, rather we *can* learn alongside our students.

Advice: Grab the teachable moment!

Faculty Hidden Roles

In 2005, I traveled to Siracusa, Sicily on a pre-site visit to investigate whether the old town of Ortygia, known for its meandering medie-

val streets and Greek origins, was a suitable site for my first faculty-led program focused on pagan mythology. After meeting with the Dean and Social Science faculty at the close-by University of Catania, surveying the UNESCO world heritage sites, including museums displaying the distinctive orange and black pottery that vividly depicts mythological stories, and the renowned Greek temples and amphitheaters, I knew it was the right place to situate my first short-term, faculty-led program.

My gracious Sicilian hosts helped plan for faculty and student residences, classroom space, guest professors from the local university, and English language translators for the part of the program that would be delivered in the Italian language. While there on this pre-site visit, I also charted the walking classrooms associated with my developing curriculum and attempted to predict what was needed to hit the ground running upon arrival with students. I returned home eight days later with my luggage stuffed with maps, UNESCO flyers, applications for students to volunteer in local schools, Italian contracts, Italian contacts, and stacks of other useful ephemera to prepare the university faculty-led program proposal and to make the logistical arrangements to teach in Sicily the following summer.

Ten months later, I arrived back in the old town with 13 students and one faculty colleague who had never visited Sicily. Following are factors I did not even begin to think about before setting off with college students who were strangers in a strange land. It addresses the skills and dispositions one must have in order to lead a band of 18–21-year-old students through the familiar and the strange.

First Aider

Because this topic was discussed at length in other sections, I will merely reiterate here that faculty must be prepared to handle any medical emergency.

Advice: Before taking students abroad, engage in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), First Aid, and EPI PEN injection training.

Mentor

No matter how hard we try by setting the tone of the program as one which fosters independence with orientation wording such as this:

“Just as we are on our home campus, we oversee your academic lives. Think of us as professors, not your care-takers.”

“This is a study abroad program. The operative word is STUDY.”

“We don’t involve ourselves in personal drama between and among people.”

I have learned that we do indeed have to handle student personal issues. No matter how hard we try to have students maintain their own independence, something emerges that just cannot be ignored. For example:

- The parents who call and ask us to tell their daughter that her dog must be euthanized in her absence;
- The parents who call to inform their child that her/his/their grandfather passed away;
- The students who are homesick and cannot face two more weeks away;
- The student who knocks on the faculty apartment door at 1AM and says: “My boyfriend just broke up with me and I think I should fly home tomorrow to fix things between us;”
- The students who pretend they are not hungover and try to stay in ‘sick bay’ to nurse their aching heads instead of participating in class. (As if we can’t tell the difference between hung-over and ill).
- The students who have sudden epiphanies about their own identities, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, and more.

Advice: Depending upon the issue, there is always a choice of how much faculty engage in students’ personal agendas.

Innkeeper and Problem-solver

Depending upon your living situation, there is opportunity to engage in a very practical way. We rent apartments that are not as well stocked as a typical Airbnb. In Sicily and Rome, one of our first errands is shopping for paper products, dishwashing and handwashing soaps, kitchen cooking utensils, and other articles to prepare apartments for students' arrival. The cost of these items is built into the budget because we know they are needed for both sites.

When students arrive, my colleague and I split up and go from apartment to apartment to orient students to the unfamiliar kitchens and baths.

- We explain what a bidet is and what it's not (someplace to wash your feet).
- We demonstrate how to turn on the propane tank to supply hot water and to fuel the stoves.
- We help them manage their electronic devices with unfamiliar plug adapters and converters.
- We teach them how to use a fire extinguisher to put out the little fires caused when they forget to use a converter and blow up their 115-watt appliances in the 220-watt outlet. This phenomenon is always preceded with a loud pop resounding throughout the building, followed by a complete shut-down of electricity to all apartments.
- We teach them how to make coffee in a Moka pot.

Students usually learn these adjustments quickly and only need fleeting demonstrations. This is the easy part of practical considerations. The hard part is when expected household conveniences, like toilets, are not functional. Americans are used to speedy fix-ups to life's minor problems. For Europeans, wait time is expected.

I have had to:

- Fix WI-FI connections, crawling up ladders to repair splin-

tered wiring;

- Fix toilets that just won't flush even after the plumber comes and suggests all is well even though there is obvious visible sludge build-up;
- Rehang shower doors that fall off hinges;
- Replace lost apartment keys;
- Bail out bathrooms because students just do not understand how to work the unusual showers;
- Etcetera, etcetera.

Recently I returned to Sicily with my immediate family. When we went to the local hardware store, the shop-keeper, Massimo, greeted me as if I were a long-lost friend. When we exited, my son-in-law asked why the shopkeeper knew me so well and I began the tale:

“Well, there was a time when two of the student apartments had toilets that wouldn't flush, and the plumber told me they were fixed, and they weren't, so I decided to evaluate the situation myself. That led me to purchase new parts from Massimo, who also drew me a diagram of the proper engagement of the parts. Oh! And I fixed the shower in one apartment so it would actually deliver water to the person within as opposed to out the adjacent window.”

Advice: Leave the plumbing to professionals.

Guardian

Unlike the previous topic, this one is very serious. Upon arrival in Rome with 14 students for our first study abroad program in the eternal city, the owner of our rental apartments, asked a friend, who spoke fluent English, to explain the recent death of a college student studying abroad in Rome. The story was short. The young man was too inebriated to notice he was crossing train tracks on his way back to his dormitory. After the sad story was told, we sat down with our students to discuss alcohol con-

sumption and had honest conversations about how much is enough. We reminded them that that includes being sober enough to remain aware of their surroundings.

Situational awareness, in general, whether alcohol is involved or not, is a training that must occur before leaving state-side and reiterated again upon arrival at the abroad site. In busy cities, like Rome, that includes paying attention before stepping off the curb to cross to the other side of a four-lane avenue even though they are beholding the Colosseum for the very first time.

I have already related the story about a potential terrorist attack while the students were with us, but what happens if there is a terrorist attack or other city-wide emergency, such as an earthquake, and our students are out enjoying independent time?

Although student safety regulations are highlighted in our pre-departure seminars, it is judicious to review them again at the beginning of the abroad phase of the program. I find students are more apt to pay attention once they are immersed in the unfamiliar environment.

Advice: Arrival at the abroad destination is an opportune time to hold community engagement forums to develop additional safety protocols.

These protocols range in topic from what to do when room-mates do not return to the residence as expected to what to do in case of a city-

ICE
In Case of Emergency
ROME PROGRAM
COMMUNITY STANDARDS

1. Set up an emergency group text thread that faculty and staff can access from American cell phones. This thread can ONLY be used in case of a city-wide emergency.
2. Keep USA cell phone always charged fully.
3. Carry USA cell phone and ID card (with apartment address) at all times.
4. In case of emergency, turn on cellular data and send location through the group text.
5. Head back to the apartments immediately.
6. If a group cannot get back to the apartments, seek safe haven, and send new location to group text.
7. If no cell service is available and you are not able to move through the streets, seek safe haven, and follow the directions of city or national emergency service personnel. As soon as possible, contact faculty and your family.

(Pasquarelli, 2018)

wide emergency. Following is a facsimile of community standards we developed during one Rome program in case of city-wide emergency.

See Pasquarelli, (2018) for more safety prototypes such as: Student Identification Cards, Parent Refrigerator Magnets with emergency contact information, Allergy cards written in the local language, and more.

Final Thoughts: A Professor Professes

A few years ago, I was leading a group of students through *Villa Farnesina*, a Renaissance suburban villa in the hamlet of Trastevere located on one of the hills of Rome. Villa Farnesina is noted for its Raphael frescoes, depicting the myth of Cupid and Psyche, in addition to several other frescoes painted by Raphael's contemporaries. Students have marveled over the frieze decorating the circumference of a room, depicting a breath-taking visual of Hercules' 12 labors, as well as another depicting the sad Polyphemus, mourning his love for Galatea. My custom is to have students stand in the room with the Cupid and Psyche ceiling and ask them to observe and interpret the artist's depiction of the myth while comparing it with their own visual interpretation summoned when they read the myth state-side. We usually complete the walking classroom in the garden with an all-group discussion of our reflections.

It was during one of these discussions that a family approached our group in a friendly manner and spoke directly to me: "We listened to you in the museum, and you know SO much more about mythology than the guide we had today. We would like to hire you to be our tour guide for the rest of our travels in Rome." I smiled in response to the compliment and asked students to explain our study abroad program to this eager family.

That night I reflected upon my euphoria of standing in an important museum imparting knowledge while learning more and more about mythology at every turn of my head. First and foremost, I am indeed a fortunate professor to have the opportunity to teach my craft, off campus in a European city, far from previous expectations conceived long ago during my doctoral program.

I end with one final story and a piece of advice.

It is our custom during the Rome Program to include a one-day round trip to Florence on the 1.5-hour high speed ferry to view the mythological wonders in the world-class museums as well as in outdoor settings. The night before, I typically conduct a special seminar on the origin and artists of the paintings and sculptures the students will view. I also orient them to Florence and suggest activities for their free half day, such as climbing to the top of the Duomo or pausing at cafés to compare daily life in Florence tourist areas versus in Oltrarno, where the Florentine locals live.

I remember one field excursion to Florence, the train was late, making us behind schedule for a walking classroom I had arranged with an art historian, museum lines were longer, crowds were thicker, museum guards more impatient. I recall thinking that I was looking forward to completing the formal part of the program, and, with my colleague, after our student luncheon, savor some down time.

I had reserved my favorite restaurant, *Trattoria Anita*, where many local business owners and workers gather for midday sustenance. Because this was an early event in the program, students still needed a hand with ordering Italian food. This often becomes a taxing experience as students deliberate their choices as if it were their last meal.

Dr. P! Ask them if we can share a small plate of spaghetti.

Dr. P! Do you think they make their tomato sauce with onions? I hate onions!

Dr. P! Do you think the focaccia has gluten?

Add food allergies to the mix and I'll leave the rest of my haggard state to your imagination.

When one student called me over to help him order roast chicken, white-meat only, in my exhaustion, I informed the waiter that this student would like “seno di pollo.” If you are unfamiliar with the Italian language, then you may not know that words describing human and animal body parts are distinctly different. When I heard the chuckles of the

local people at surrounding tables as well as watched the waiter's face crumple, I realized my error. I had just ordered a human breast for my student's lunch entrée. "Petto di pollo" is the proper term.

Advice: Be humble and allow students to see you laugh at your own mistakes to model how to laugh at their own cultural blunders.

Yes, faculty-led study abroad is a rewarding vocation, but requires personal resilience and flexibility. At the end of every program, when my faculty colleague and I watch the airport vans pull away from the apartment building with teary-eyed students safely aboard, we breathe a sigh of relief. Later, over a well-deserved Negroni in that year's favorite haunt, we remind each other that we successfully imparted cultural knowledge and an irreplaceable experience for our students to connect to a world beyond themselves. Perhaps for some of them, the strange had become familiar enough to invoke their desire for further world travel and cultural learning.

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