

Task Force: Academic Travel Program Proposal

SUBMITTED TO:

Dr. Terry Dixon, Provost

SUBMITTED BY:

Jamie Gauthier, Professor for the College of Safety and Emergency Services
Robert Finger, History Lead Faculty for the College of Arts and Sciences
Renee Reynolds, English Lead Faculty for the College of Arts and Sciences
David Edmond, Academic Advisor for the College of Safety and Emergency Services
Jennifer Stowell, Curriculum Development Instructional Designer
Karen Pritchett, Admissions Department, Military Admissions
Tammy Comalander, Office of Financial Aid Manager
Jack Lorenz, Partnership Articulation with Marketing and Outreach
Patricia Pigott, Executive Assistant for Academic Services and Colleges
Nichole Gotschall, Dean of Undergraduate Programs
Traci Frees (Chair), Program Director for General Studies

Date:

April 30, 2012

Table of Contents

A. Task Force Objectives

- I. Introduction/Program Philosophy/Outcomes
- II. Academic Travel Program Overview
- III. Calendar of Travel
- IV. Travel Policies
- V. Faculty Course Proposals
- VI. Trip Projects & Destinations
- VII. Budget & Funding Considerations
- VIII. Summary & Conclusions

B. Support Documents

- I. Faculty Survey Results
- II. Benchmark Report
- III. Meeting Minutes
 - February 29, 2012
 - March 14, 2012
 - March 28, 2012
 - April 25, 2012

I. Introduction/Program Philosophy/Outcomes

Introduction

The CSU Academic Travel Program Task Force was tasked with establishing a Columbia Southern University Academic Travel Program Proposal. The members of this task force convened with one purpose: Dream Big! Included in this proposal are the purpose, vision, policies and procedures for the program's operation, and considerations for future research and review. Recommendations found in this proposal were provided by members of the task force, undergraduate and graduate faculty, College of Arts and Sciences Advisory council, and CSU staff.

Program Philosophy

Exposure to the world's cultures plays an important role in fostering global understanding and cultural awareness. Columbia Southern University's commitment to the non-traditional student seeks new ways to bring the world to its non-traditional student population through travel courses designed to fit busy schedules. Students will have the opportunity to explore innovative ways of learning by experiencing various cultures to gain new perspectives on the world.

Outcomes

Upon completion of an Academic Travel Course students will:

- Develop a global perspective and cultural appreciation in both foreign and domestic settings
- Expand understanding of the subject(s) matter, meet new people, and become more flexible and adaptable
- Demonstrate experience they gain in these courses to their professional and course portfolios.

Courses offered with a travel component will align to the General Education Outcomes:

- Students will be able to communicate effectively through a variety of media.
- Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking.
- Students will be able to analyze various cultures.
- Students will be able to apply processes, procedures, data, or evidence to solve problems and make decisions in a variety of contexts.
- Students will be able to access, evaluate, and utilize information.
- Students will be able to apply career planning skills.

II. Academic Travel Program Overview

International and domestic academic travel courses need to be an option in of every student's program of study. These experiences can equip students for 21st century careers which will rely heavily on a global perspective. The CSU Academic Travel Program will be an avenue through which faculty members will have the opportunity to enhance student engagement by developing and facilitating courses with a travel component in various fields of study. Courses will be composed of online assignments prior to the trip, assignments to be completed on location, and a portfolio demonstrating the projects completed to be submitted by the course end date. Students will be able to utilize travel courses to fulfill degree requirements or electives. This program could evolve into a means by which students could compete internship requirements or earn community service hours.

The Academic Travel Program will be operated through the General Studies Program. The purpose of General Education courses is to provide foundational knowledge to help students succeed in their degree programs and professional careers. This curriculum is an integral part of the overall educational experience where students learn to think critically, solve problems, communicate ideas effectively through variety of mediums, and develop a global perspective.

The Academic Travel Program Committee will be made up of faculty and staff within General Studies as well as staff from other departments throughout CSU. Faculty in all degree programs will have the opportunity to participate in these travel experiences by submitting proposals for courses in their degree programs aligned to the destinations.

III. Calendar of Travel

Term vs. Open Enrollment: The Task Force members discussed many variables related to scheduling enrollment for term and open enrollment courses with separate end dates. Further research is needed to investigate the functional side of start and end dates for term and open enrollment occurs with a travel component. The recommendation is to pilot the travel course in the continental United States by introducing it in open enrollment model first.

Program Launch Dates: The first travel course could launch in Spring 2013 to a domestic location with a follow up trip to the same or different location in the Fall/Winter 2013. Once the program has been active for 1-2 years, then international travel should be explored. This would allow time to work out any issues before going abroad. Bi-annual trips will be scheduled to specific locations and planned up to three years in advance. This will provide time for participants to plan and prepare for upcoming trips.

Trip Length: Trip length will range from three days to two weeks with domestic and international destinations. Trip selection will be based on time of year and climate of chosen destinations. Two trips a year would build a solid foundation to launch the program. As the program grows, exploring travel courses with service learning components would be advantageous.

Student Survey: If approved, students need to be surveyed to determine the best time of year, destination, and range of cost acceptable for travel. The Academic Travel Program Committee will need to review the survey results before making a decision on destinations for the next few years and setting up additional items and deadlines on the calendar.

Sample Timeline: A sample calendar/timeline for one late fall trip is provided below. Further investigation needs to be conducted to ensure all considerations for program are included.

Timeline	Task
July/August	Academic Travel Program is staffed and committee formed. Build website for program.
September	Announce locations for trips to be held in Spring 2013 to faculty. Begin Marketing strategies. Highlight general program to students.
October	Applications accepted from faculty to submit Travel Course Proposal Form to committee
November	Committee reviews proposals and chooses faculty and courses who will participate in trip. Announcement goes out to students of specific upcoming travel opportunities.
December	Deadline for students to submit applications to be accepted to travel courses. Students are provided with literature to raise funds for the trip.
January	Committee convenes and reviews courses that have registered students, approves students. Provide approved course proposals to Curriculum Development to begin securing course writers and reviewers.
February-April	Travel Courses are written and reviewed. Course Itineraries are submitted. Continued preparations for travel course are finalized (Blackboard Travel Safety Course, etc.)
May	Travel Course Runs

IV.Travel Policies

Eligibility Requirements: To be considered, student must meet the minimum requirements

- Student must be meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements
- Owe no balance toward the institute
- Eligible to all active CSU students enrolled into a degree program
- Course must meet degree program requirement or elective
- Submit application for approval to participate in travel course

Release Form: To ensure the university is protected, all participants will be required to sign a release form before traveling (*Attachment - A. Harvard University Release Form*).

Student Responsibilities for Course: Students will be required to complete work in the travel course within Blackboard before embarking on the trip, complete course work on the trip, and submit final assignments upon returning home by course end date. Students will make arrangements to meet at a specified location and return home independently of CSU intervention. The cost of course and fee will only lodging and transportation during each trip (see section VII for Budget Considerations).

Unable to Travel: Students who may register for the course but are not able to travel after enrolling will be given the opportunity to drop the course or submit an equivalent assignment(s). A policy needs to be drafted to offer a contingency plan that students are aware of before enrolling in course.

Academic Travel Program Guide: If program approved, the Academic Travel Program Committee will development an Academic Travel Program Guide that will communicate the program to the broader CSU community. This guide would include why student should travel to the specific destination, outline of expenses covered in the cost of the trip, how to obtain passport and travel insurance, how to enroll in an Academic Travel Course, include policies and contingency plans if unable to travel, and include release forms to sign. The guide would also include extensive information regarding student responsibilities while traveling.

Academic Travel Program Website: In order to effectively communicate the details about the program, market the trips, and provide updated information a website would need to be launched to house information related to this program.

V. Faculty Course Proposals

Faculty who desire to participate in the program can submit a proposal for approval to the Academic Travel Course Program Committee by a predetermined deadline. If approved, the committee will need to further investigate a form/guide to use so that all major degree programs at all levels can propose 3-credit hour courses that aligns with destination of choice. Assignments will be composed of units to complete before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip (*Attachment - B. Easter Rising Course Sample*).

Courses that are selected to participate in the program will be existing courses if possible, meet a degree requirement or elective for students in a degree program, will not add to students' total number of hours, and will meet the existing objectives of the degree program and course. Some considerations will need to be made for courses such as history or literature, which may need a special topics course devoted to the destination.

Faculty will collaborate with the Curriculum Development Department to create projects and assignments that are relevant to the travel location, align to the current course objectives, and relate to the General Education Outcomes. The Academic Travel Program Committee will review all proposals to ensure that courses meet the previously listed guidelines. The committee would then submit to the Office of the Provost for final approval.

VI. Trip Projects & Destinations

Trip Projects: This program lends itself to creative assignments. Examples of projects for travel courses include the following: Daily reflection journal, interviews with subsequent summary/paper, PowerPoint project, present a proposal to solve problem/issue in current professional environment from concepts learned from trip, portfolio, portfolio on the CSU website of all student works from trip, student/faculty video diary – post student works in CSU foyer book case, research paper, list student experiences in the CSU Communicator, group work/project, submit paper about trip for consideration for publication, video/picture presentation, group video diary, go on tours or attend seminars during trip and submit reaction paper.

Possible Destinations: Guidelines for destination selection will be based on marketing potential, safety, and economic/political conditions. More research will need to be conducted to choose specific locations. Faculty members were surveyed in March 2012 to provide possible destinations based on their connections in their various fields of study for travel courses. Below is a section of the survey results regarding possible locations. Below are the results of this survey.

Domestic: Popular recommendations include:

- Visit to the CSU campus in Orange Beach, AL. Bring faculty in to teach the courses, go to local destinations. This could also serve as a residency component to programs
- New York, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, Washington, DC, Grand Canyon, Native American Reservations, and other historic sites.
- Travel throughout a city or visit various destinations by using train system such as the Northeast, Appalachian Trail, Philadelphia, Gettysburg, Oregon Trail, Mississippi River, and Civil War Trail.
- Visit corporations around the country such as JC Penny to study Corporate Security or visit the FBI headquarters in Quantico, Virginia.
- The Boston Police Department in Boston, MA is one of the most forward progressing law enforcement agencies in the nation and would be a valuable resource for students to visit.
- Regional courses could held with trips around the U.S. where there is a high concentration of CSU students to get more involvement. There is a live report in Omega that you can pull called “Students by State and Program.” The top five states of highest student enrollment are as follows:
Florida = 2,019 Alabama = 1,431 Georgia = 1,365 California = 1,135 Texas = 1,103

International: When considering international destinations the currency fluctuations is a factor, for this could impact cost of the trip adversely. Popular recommendations include:

- Germany, Norway, Sweden, France, Italy, England, Ireland, and Greece.
- Academic Cruise - Grand Circle Cruise Line is available in various destinations around the world. The cost of this type of trip allow for lodging, meals, and internet access. Faculty member, Mary Jane O'Brien will be participating in this type of cruise in the summer of 2012 and will report her findings to the committee.
- Other destinations recommended included the Caribbean, China, Australia, and Vietnam.
- Members of the Academic Travel Program Committee could need to schedule scouting trips to ensure locations are feasible for students and faculty.

VII. Budget and Funding Considerations

Financial Aid: Research into Title IV and other financial aid requirements indicated that if a course is required within the degree program then funding could be available for tuition. More research is needed to establish specific guidelines for the term course models. The task force recommends piloting travel courses in per course model first to maintain simplicity with scheduling and financial aid requirements.

Fund Raising: There are exciting opportunities to expand this component to highlight student and faculty contributions to the program. To help students prepare to pay for travel courses following are some options:

- Create assignments in a business courses at undergraduate and/or graduate levels on fundraising techniques. Post the results on the Academic Travel Course website for fundraising ideas and included in the brochures/literature.
- Offer a one credit hour course on fundraising for students who are considering taking a travel course that aligns to an area within the General Education program.
- Provide free Blackboard course with fundraising ideas in lieu of a one-credit hour course
- Program staff research and apply for national grants for travel programs
- Offer incentives to students or learning partners for trip discounts

Budget /Cost Considerations: The committee will need further research into submitting an official budget. This budget will help determine how many students must enroll in course to allow faculty to travel at no cost. The recommendation is to keep the arrangements for each trip in-house, rather than working with a 3rd party travel agency to keep costs down for each trip. There are creative ways to keep costs down for lodging – stay in college dorms, utilize faculty connections, book block rooms or flights with CSU partners (i.e. Delta, hotel chains, etc.). If program approved, students would need to be surveyed to gauge level of interest and range of financial needs for such a program to determine destinations and specific costs of each trip. Following is a list of items to include when creating a budget/cost analysis for the Academic Travel Program:

CSU Costs	Expense
CSU Course Fee	TBD
Travel Fee	TBD
Lodging, Transportation while at destination, Meeting rooms, Teaching materials, Internet Fees	
Faculty Course Compensation/Stipend (Consider aligning to current travel stipend for full-time faculty)	TBD
Curriculum Development	TBD
Course Designer, Course Writer/Course Reviewer	
Campus Staffing for Program	TBD
Brochures of Program	TBD
Advertising/Marketing of Program	TBD
Scholarship Funds for students/ contests for CSU Grant (Creative Writing Contest, , etc.)	TBD
Student Costs	Cost
Passport, Travel insurance, Transportation (to and from destination), Meals, Taxes/tips	TBD

VIII. Summary and Conclusions

The Task Force members respectfully submit this proposal for consideration. The committee recommends the establishment of an Academic Travel Program to improve CSU's ability to connect our students and faculty with the global community. This is an unparalleled initiative that would bring CSU to the forefront of academic learning by enhancing student and professor engagement at home and abroad. This program could be both academically and intellectually lucrative, for the CSU faculty and staff have demonstrated great interest in such a program. Through a program such as this, CSU would make a reputation for itself as an innovative institution of higher learning. Launching such a program will help CSU stay competitive as a forward thinking online university.

Support Documents

I. Faculty Survey Results *(see attachment C)*

II. Benchmark Report *(see attachment D)*

III. Minutes *(see attachment E)*