
US Hegemony in Study Abroad

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Examples of US-dominated thinking in study abroad

- NAFSA recent volume 'Guide to Education Abroad, 5th Edition' has 26 chapters and with 27 authors, only two of whom are based outside the US. Only one chapter deals exclusively with what happens on-site.
- An external review of abroad campuses and programs at one large U.S. university in which the reviewer was given access to all US-based international office staff, but did not speak to any of the staff at any of their 6 abroad campuses.
- Recent survey sent out to the SECUSS listserv, aimed at those responsible for health, safety, and security abroad, there is no mention at all of on-site staff being involved or a part of the equation. It is all study abroad offices, risk management offices, home campus students life etc. No mention of those of us on the ground who do this work daily.
- Only 6 - 8% of jobs listed on NAFSA and Forum job boards are for positions based outside the U.S.
- The incorrect application of US regulations and norms when dealing with staff who are resident abroad, especially in terms of HR.

Do on-site staff get the same benefits as US-based staff?

Employment Benefits	% Resident Directors Receiving n=182
Health and medical insurance (including national benefit)	73 %
Pension (over and above national benefit)	47 %
Professional Development Funds	42 %
Disability Insurance	20 %
Life Insurance	20 %
Tuition Reimbursement	13 %
Employee Assistance Program	8 %

Some comments from Europe-based Resident Directors, from a 2020 survey study, when asked to describe the 'biggest challenge to being a resident director'.

- *Main campus' point of view is "US-centric". The biggest challenge is to make them understand that things need to work differently in another country.*
- *There are many cultural differences with the US that we need to understand but that sometimes is not understood from our main offices in the US. We have to adjust to the US way of things but I have seen in many conferences that they never address the issue from the other side, from the European side. Everything is US centered.*

Some comments from Europe-based Resident Directors, from a 2020 survey study, when asked to describe the 'biggest challenge to being a resident director'.

- *Gaining the respect of my faculty colleagues back in the US for the academic experience we offer abroad.*
- *In a sense, no matter how experienced one is, how many years one has been teaching, how many publications one has, you are still considered a B-series employee, and as a faculty member you are not recognized for your value. Students, administrators and staff in the U.S. think that you are having fun abroad and that you are there to assure customer service satisfaction.*

Some comments from Europe-based Resident Directors, from a 2020 survey study, when asked to describe the 'biggest challenge to being a resident director'.

- *Things are quite different in Europe: from the lifestyle, to the use of language, history, academic culture.... The biggest challenge comes with faculty-led programs, in many cases US faculty show lack of knowledge and can easily misinterpret our way of doing things, they are not open to learning about the new surroundings or environment and in general, they think they know more than anyone else. I find it easy to adjust to their needs and plan successful programs, but I think they are missing a lot by not being receptive.*

Some comments from Europe-based Resident Directors, from a 2020 survey study, when asked to describe the 'biggest challenge to being a resident director'.

- *The distance from decision makers at home, the 'out of sight, out of mind' syndrome that can affect the program, the inability to be my own best advocate at the institution as I am not present in the US....There is a perception that this is a cushy job, living in a desirable location. Yes, it's nice, but it is a lot of hard work and massive amounts of responsibility. I also do not believe that in general Resident Directors and on-site staff get credit within the study abroad world for all that they do. They make it happen on the ground. You can schmooze at NAFSA all you like, but a program is only as good as the resources (staff, facilities, residence, location etc.) on the ground. I think the study abroad world has forgotten that.*

Some comments from Europe-based Resident Directors, from a 2020 survey study, when asked to describe the 'biggest challenge to being a resident director'.

- *I don't think my institutional leaders really know the challenges of operating on the ground. They make promises that we cannot always keep, and we on the ground look bad, or are pressured to deliver what they promised. It has become too much of a business and not so much an academic pursuit anymore. Faculty led programs are a nightmare to host compared to semester programs, and are often superficial academic tourism, not in depth exploration or immersion. But that's where the field is heading unfortunately*

Positives

- Success of the Forum's EMEA Conferences
- Upcoming European Institute, a joint effort of EUASA and the Forum on Education Abroad, to be held in Strasbourg, November 16-17, 2023
- Strong country associations across Europe (e.g. APUNE, AACUPI, APUAF).
- Country associations coming together under the umbrella of EUASA for workshops, sharing of best practices, networking, and events such as this virtual conference.