

Talking Points for Engaging with Potential Community Engaged Global Learners

When a student asks about community-based experiential education abroad, try to get more information before offering options or resources.

Some possible questions to ask:

- What interests you most in the idea of a study abroad program? Do you have any goals for what you want to learn or experience?
- Do you have a preference of going with a group from IU, an independent group, or are you looking for individual opportunities?
- Do you have a preference for a certain length of a program (a few weeks or a semester long)?
- Are you looking to engage in any type of work in particular (are they looking for opportunities to teach English, engage with health programs or are they looking for an internship or to do research)? If so, do you have relevant experience or training from your home community that you can bring to this experience abroad?
- Have you traveled or volunteered abroad before? If so, what type of organization did you go with and what sort of work did you do and/or where did you go?

This will help you navigate what resources they need, give you a sense of their volunteering and/or travel experience is, and maybe a little about their expectations. This can also give some clues as to how to steer the conversation. By asking if they have experience in the area they want to work in, you are prompting them to question that aspect a little deeper.

If they have **not** volunteered or traveled abroad, you can casually weave in some language about how ethical travel and engagement is an important part of what OIA does.

“Direct community engagement is a strong focus for our global service learning programs. We do our best to make a positive impact on the community and encourage program leaders to discuss potential ethical issues with the class before they leave. Did you know that, if you aren’t careful, volunteering abroad can do harm? Here is a tip sheet from our office of what to look for and what to avoid. Here are some options for campus sponsored or affiliated programs. If you are interested in other programs, our staff would love to help you with that/advise you.”

You want to make them aware that volunteering is not automatically a good thing, give them a resource so they can engage with it further, and make sure they know about resources to help them make good choices.

If they **have** volunteered abroad and talk about what they did in terms of “changing/transforming lives”, brought a lot of donations to distribute, or did work that they were clearly not qualified to do (like a student performing medical procedures) these are all red flags. Proceed carefully because you don’t want to offend them or turn them off of your conversation. People usually don’t want to hear that they “did it wrong” so you have to warm

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up to that. Give them an overview of the opportunities offered through IU and stress that the role of participants is not to be all-knowing but to learn.

“An important element to our service learning programs is the balance between the serving and the learning. That’s why they aren’t purely volunteer programs. Our programs take the stance of participants not being experts of everything while we are in the country and taking the opportunity to learn from the community as much as we can. We can often gain new perspectives when we are exposed to a new culture or even a new way of doing things. If you look into non-IU sponsored or affiliated programs, our staff would love to help you with that/advise you. Here is a tip sheet to guide you while looking at options.

Tips:

- Encourage them to utilize OIA as a resource, consider their options, and ask specific questions about what sort of work or projects they will engage in. They should leave the table being made aware and have the tools to take the next steps towards engaging ethically. They should feel it’s possible to find an ethical option not scared off.
- Don’t be outwardly judgmental about prior experiences. This can shut down a conversation and can also result in someone digging their heels in and becoming defensive about their prior experiences.
- Don’t go immediately to extreme cases of harm for many reasons. These extreme cases are rarer than what most students will encounter; it makes the smaller, more commonplace examples seem more acceptable; and it is difficult for students to see themselves doing those things extreme or outrageous things.
- The way you talk about these programs can often prompt people to see a new perspective. See the chart below:

Say This	Not This
Engage, partner, support	Help, serve
Program	Trip
Demonyms (Latino, Asian, Mexican) *be familiar with the proper usage of Hispanic	Any other name for a large group, obviously not derogatory terms (Oriental)
Global north/global south or developing/developed	Third-world
Experiencing poverty, homelessness, etc.	The poor, the homeless (their circumstances are not who they are)