**Travel Toolkit**

**Activities & Resources for**

**Faculty Leaders**

**1. Orientation**

The first stage of any group program course is like a student’s first school experience – students need tools to make the most of their program. Forming or orientation is the stage when the group first meets through the first days of the program. As an instructor, during this stage you set the tone for the rest of the program. Seize the opportunity to create a positive course culture and set clear expectations. Perhaps more importantly, teach your students to ask for help and directions when they need it. Make yourself accessible as you are their greatest resource at this stage. Create a positive group atmosphere where listening is sacred and trust grows.

You can do all the right activities and still miss the tone if you yourself are not inspired and energized. Positive tone setting is an expression of attitude, a communication of wonder, compassion and excitement, we infuse our students with these values, first by enlivening them with in ourselves. Ideally, plan to hold your orientation in a special place, grab your students’ attention. Blow their minds with beauty or cultural difference. Balance cultural immersion with lots of group time, intentionally separate your group from the hustle and bustle to effectively transfer tools, information and place the infrastructure for increasing empowerment.

Section 3 on “Container Building” is also pertinent to this time of the course, as orientation is the most essential for establishing a solid container for the experience.

**Activity 1.A:** Scavenger Hunt

**Learning Objectives:** Students must work as a team and use their newly acquired knowledge of the local language, health and safety and cultural do’s and don’ts to navigate around a new city. They must work as a team to complete a list of tasks and organize a thirty minute presentation of their findings where all team members’ voices are equally heard.

Material

Scavenger Hunt list

Notebook and pen

Eater

Sun protection

Camera

Money

Contact Card

Time Needed 1-4 hours

Procedure

Each student group receives a sealed envelope that contains their group’s task list, money and the hotel business card.

The leaders brief students on the activity and the rules

No one should ever be alone completing a task

Review health and safety

Speak about culturally sensitive photography

Speak about begging and bargaining

Each group has 30 minutes to present their findings and their experience of the day.

**Resource 1.B:** Icebreakers and Initiatives

*All educators should have a bag tricks including icebreakers and other activities to do with a group that is first coming together. Below are a few fun ones to use during the orientation period of the trip.*

Disclosure Line

Objective: To learn more about each person in the group in a somewhat entertaining and silly way

Split the group up into 2 groups and have them stand in 3 lines facing each other. An instructor can begin the facilitation of the activity and then, after a few rounds, students can begin facilitating it as well.

This game plan is lie the game “I’ve never.” One person begins by saying something that they have done before or that is unique about them. Then everyone who shares that thing walks across the lie to the other side. Encourage students to be creative and have fun, but make sure the game stays appropriate and doesn’t begin to isolate anyone.

Inside/Outside Circle

Split the group up into 2 groups and have them make 2 circles; one inside of the other, have the inside group turn out to face the outside group so that each student on the inside is paired up with a student on the outside.

A leader should stand on the outside of the circle to be able to facilitate the activity. The leader tells everyone that they will be given 1 minute to talk about something with the person they are facing (some examples of topics: name, age, where you are from, why are you here, how many people are in your family, where have you travelled before, what are you excited about, what will be the hardest thing about this program, etc.) the questions should be interesting, but not too personally uncomfortable to answer. Using a watch tell the group when they can begin. After one minute, tell them to stop and have the outside circle rotate 2 people to their right.

Begin the time again. Keep doing this, but as you do increase the time of each rotation by a little amount with our telling the group. In general, students will enjoy talking about themselves with some else so much and will not really notice that suddenly they have been talking for closer to 5 minutes.

Fears, Goals, Hopes in a Hat

At the beginning of your program – at your departure airport or at an airport that you might have a layover in, but before you arrive in country – give students 3 scraps of paper each. Have each student anonymously write down on each piece of paper”

1) Their greatest fear about the up-coming program

2) Their desired personal outcome (i.e. what they personally want to accomplish)

3) Their desired group outcome (i.e. what they want the group to accomplish as a whole).

Although writing these different things down may stir up some anxiety, it is best to avoid doing any processing right away. It’s okay for student to sit with these emotions for a little while. Then throughout the program revisit the pieces of paper. For example: Upon arrival in the country, and maybe after a day in a comfortable place, take out the envelope with the fears. Pass it around and have each student take piece of paper (it doesn’t matter whose fear they get). Then have each person read, out load, the fear that they got. After everyone had read their fear (and some may be the same), facilitate a group discussion about these fears. Even after one day in country students may begin to see that some of their fears aren’t such a big deal after all. Also, students will find comfort in knowing that other students share some of their same anxieties, they are all in the same boat after all. The idea behind this processing should be to both allay students’ fears, but also to let them know that they are well supported.

After sometime in country, perhaps when the group is at a low point in terms of working together, have the same type of group meeting, but this time pull out the envelope with the desired group outcome. Again, have everyone take a piece of paper and read it out loud. Process it in the same way. Have they met their group goals? What do they need to do for the rest of the program to meet them?

The 3rd envelope can really be opened at any time during the program. Do the same thing and have the student discuss whether or not they met their goals. Often times they did, sometimes they did not, sometimes they realize that their initial goal was way off mark and that’s okay too.

Yurt Circle

In a circle, have everyone join hands. Every other person leans in or out of the circle on the count of three. The circle should support everyone if done slowly. Do this in conjuncture with going over course expectation and group goals, pointing out to students how we all depend upon each other and that each individual’s choices affect the group at large.

Blindfold Walk

Have the group get into pairs. One person in each pair is blindfolded and the other person leads them around. This is another good introduction to trust. Switch roles after a while.

Wind in the Willows

Group gets into a tight circle in the spotters position. One volunteer stands in the middle of the circle. They cross arms and close their eyes. Body stiff as a board, they lean and the circle passes them around. Emphasize safety and trust here, as the person in the middle is very vulnerable.

Five Minutes of Fame

One at a time students sit on the hot spot in front of the others and have 5 minutes to introduce themselves. This could be structured with questions agreed upon by the group or could be done open-ended with no specific questions to address. The game gets more interesting as students get to know one another better and puts one person in the spotlight. Leaders will need to lay out guidelines beforehand (no questions pertaining to sex, drugs, emotionally sensitive topics, etc.) Make sure leaders take a turn too.

First 24 hours Observations/Last 24 Hours Reflections

During the first 24 hours of the course have student record everything they observe that is new and different from what they know at home. This might include architecture dress, food, language, sounds, driving methods, money, anything! At the end of this period, discuss what people found, but have them save these lists.

At the end of the program, reflect again on the lists. Discuss the relative strangeness of these things ten day later. Project what might be strange upon return home.

**2. Container Building**

*The container defines the opportunities and imitations of a participant’s engagement with the other. Within a travel study program there are numerous overlapping layers of structure and integrity, i.e. numerous containers that work together to shape the parameter of the experience. These containers are:*

The individual container

At its simplest form, the identity of the individual and the frames of references that an individual brings with him or her that ground the person in who s/he is. It is not our task to construct an individual’s container. Nonetheless, at times of personal crisis such as emotional or physical trauma, our job may be to prop up the individual’s personal container with references to familiar comforts, and direct emotional support.

The student group container

Beginning during pre-course, and especially when together, the student group creates a container of its own. The student group container forms organically as students bond and can trend towards healthy and integrated or unhealthy and exclusive. Leaders can affect the outcome of this dynamic by tone setting and enforcing limitations on exclusive/alienating behaviors and promoting inclusive barriers**.**

The leader-team container

Within a Travel Study program, there are identities of Leader’s and the container that defines you and your work. The Leader container is defined through building strong relationships and made more resilient through care and maintenance. Sharing of goals and expectations, positive reinforcement, norms of professionalism and timeliness, and a culture of open communication and feedback all bolster the Leader container.

The travel study course container

The integrity and structure of each program, with its unique itinerary, goals, activities, participants, norms and behavior has its own identity. Otis College has a clear set of norms, expectations, and protocols that give definition to an Otis Travel Study experience. It is our responsibility to create a space that allows for student growth, and willing and able to be present in an authentic reality.

**Activity 2.A:** Setting Goals & Expectations

Once a safe atmosphere has been established within your group, students will be much more comfortable discussing their goals as well as their fears. Give them a platform to release built anxieties, so that they can move on to more constructive thoughts.

Most travel study programs are both a group and individual experience, and therefore goal setting is important on both levels. The order you address individual and group foals is up to you, as are the activities you choose. Some leader feels that individual goals should precede group goals; others feel that establish group goals help students clarify their own goals.

However, you choose to introduce goal setting, make sure you have established a tone that supports open discussion. Students will need direction for seeing group and individual goals, and oftentimes, introducing your trips learning objectives is a good way to introduce goals. Here are some other suggestions and thoughts on goal setting.

Individual Goals

Give students the time to take a step back and ask themselves questions to help instill a tone of introspection and self-awareness:

* **How did I get here?**
* **Why am I here**
* **What do I want to get out of this experience?**
* **What are my goals/hopes? How can I achieve them? What will stand in the way of achieving them?**

Group Goals, Mission Statement, and Contract

There are 2 essential things to consider in group goal setting. First, what are the group goals? Second, what are the methods for reaching those goals? You want your student to begin goal setting for themselves and to begin thinking about how they can achieve their goals within the first 72 hours.

It is encourage that leader initiate the group goal setting process by asking the group to create both a mission statement and contract. **A mission statement tackles the questions “What hopes and goals do we have, and how do we plan to get there?”** Writing the mission statement can be a very creative and fun process for students.

**A contract on the other hand is a code of conduct.** The contract should be a well-articulated statement that holds the group to certain standards of behavior – patterns that are to be nurtured as well as patterns that all agree to be counter-productive. The contract should of course, clearly reference the Otis Code of Conduct, and can also reference rules as defined by the students themselves.

Follow the S.M.A.R.T guide

**Specific –** A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you much answer the six “W” questions:

**Who**: Who is involved?

**What:** What do I want to accomplish?

**Where:** Identify a location.

**When:** Establish a time frame

**Which:** Identify requirements and constraints

**Why:** Specific reason, purpose or benefits of accomplishing he goal.

**Measurable –** Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal set. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as…how much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

**Attainable –** When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them you begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

**Realistic** – to be realistic, goals must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide hust how high yur goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress.

**Timely** – A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there’s no sense of urgency.

**Resource 2.B:** Group Care and Inclusion

*Below is a laundry list of activities and routines that help build a sage and inclusive group culture.*

Table Topics

You may find mid-trip that there are discussion you would like the group to have or lessons you would like to teach that lie outside of the lessons you present in a formal setting. Or you may finds that time is limited and you haven’t yet gotten to all of the discussions you had hoped to have. Table topics are a great way to get students engaged in important discussion in small group settings over meals. Identify a theme and brainstorm with co-leaders before the meal about the kinds of questions you might ask to prompt discussion and the overall goals of what you would like students to take away from the discussion.

Building Appreciation

This is a great activity to do after a few weeks in country, after students have experienced some accomplishments and perhaps even during the storming stage when students are forgetting to look at each other’s value as a person. Gather students in a circle, you will need an object that represents the “hot spot” stick (a feather, scarf, etc.) and a watch with a second hand. Invite a student to volunteer to go first and give that student the hotspot object. Instruct the students that they will each take one minute to speak about their accomplishments during the past week (or since they’ve been in country), things they are proud of, moments where they felt they shone, etc. after the minute is up, devote 2 minutes to the hotspot student remaining silent while the other “throw” him/her compliments in a popcorn style sequence. Give each student a chance to be on the hotspot and let students know that they don’t need to feel that they need to compliment everyone.

Gratitude Lists

Invite students to free-write a list in their journals of everything they’re grateful for. Encourage them to full at least one page.

**Resource 2.C:** Roles of the Day

Leader of the Day

The person who is responsible for ensuring that all the other folks do their jobs, and pick slack when needed. S/he in turn works to “lead from behind.” It works well when the Leader of the Day is involved in the day planning and decision making, meeting with Leaders, the evening before. The Leader of the day can also serve as a liaison between students and Leaders.

Dispatcher

Person who assists with the group’s transportation needs.

Historiographer

The person who is responsible for reading and otherwise learning about places to be visited; gives academic talks to other participants or finds people who can speak on points of interest.

Sage

Person who shares a quote of interest or a something about the local religion/ culture, etc.

Group(ie)

Person who leads group meetings/ discussions/ debriefs/ morning meeting or evening meeting.

Linguist

Person responsible for teaching others three new words in the local language.

Joker

Responsible for one GOOD joke each day.

Ambassador

Person who is responsible for ensuring that the group travels with a minimum of cultural and physical impact: ensuring that the group cleans up after itself, thanks people appropriately, tips appropriately, etc.

Safety Czar

The person keeps an eye on safety all day.

Savior

Person responsible for sharing with group one glorious indulgence each day: local sweets, great art, etc.

Foodie

Person responsible for assisting with group food needs.

Alarm Clock

Person responsible for getting the group together ON TIME

**Resource 2.D:** Sacred Spaces & Ceremony

*A human being is a part of the whole called by us ”the universe” a part limited in time and space. He or she experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest - a kind of optical delusions of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our tasks must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening the circle of all understanding and compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.* –Albert Einstein

The Ceremony

Ceremonies are used in all cultures to assign a particular significance to an action, or to express gratitude for something. They are the means by which we create meaning in our daily lives. They are commonly employed during orientation or integration/reentry, but can also be effective tools for acknowledging milestones or alleviating stress during the storming phase. Ceremonies should be creative and organic, fitting the personality of the group and playing to the natural environment in which you are travelling. There are however a few themes that are reoccurring throughout the world and tend to have a strong impact on participants.

Give Thanks

Verbally acknowledging gratitude and respect for the opportunity to partake in this adventure, to be alive, to have food, water and community, recognize and give thanks to those that brought us here, such as our parents or friends afar.

Recognizing Greater Forces

Travel Study offers a powerful opportunity for individuals to discover the greatness of the world around them, they are often, in effect spiritual journeys-spirituality being nothing more than the recognition of a force greater than the personal ego.

Let every voice speak

Every individual brings a unique and powerful energy and identity to the group experience, make sure to create a space where every voice is heard. One useful tool is the “talking stick”, an object that, when held, wields power of speech. The stick helps avoid interruptions and allows students to take time with their sharing.

Cultivate Community

Get people to look each other in the eyes, and engage in comfortable touch. Have a student gift something to another. Let participants know that they are safe and have the support of the group.

Materials

Fire (visual): In many cultures fire acts as a vehicle to transport worldly things (material) in to the spiritual real (air). It is thought that breath, wind or air is the “stuff” of the spirit and when we create smoke we can see the gods.

Incense (smell)

Copal, sage, nag champa, Frankincense, Myrrh and an array of other herbs and resin are burned thought the world in ceremonial practice. These week smelling substances have different symbolism attached to them, but are like fire, associated with the spiritual real, and often the smoke is understood as a cleansing mechanism.

Ceremonial objects (touch)

Objects imbued with meaning (touch/symbolism), powerful words and quotes (hear) communal drink or food (taste).

Location

Perhaps the most important component of a good ceremony is the energy provides by the place you are in. under the star, at dawn, on a mountain top, next to a river or somewhere inspirational is appropriate. Assure the space is away from human activity, intimate, and inspiring. Make sure students are comfortable and able to be completely present.

**3. Reentry**

Just as essential as setting the tone at your program start is steering your students to reflect and assess upon their experiences in location during their final days. For many participants, the program end is really the beginning of an extensive journey of personal transformation. As a Leader, it is essential to be available to students during this stage. Students may be experiencing intense feelings of anxiety and/or excitement as they look forward to their journeys home and as they ponder their new roles in that environment. These last few days in location is a great time to slow down, find a beautiful spot and allow participants the time and space to really reflect upon their experiences.

On one of your final program days, gather your students together for a closing ceremony. You may like to include your students in the planning for this activity. Students often contribute in poignant ways that would have been deemed “cheesy” if prepared by a Leader.

Facilitate discussions on how new perspectives will be adapted in home-life, and any ideas for continued growth and awareness.

**Resource 3.A**: Toolbox of Integration Activities.

Passing Notes

Give each student a piece of paper and have them write their names on top, Explain to the students that you will be passing the papers around among the group and each student will anonymously write something positive about the person whose name is on top. Encourage students to write in-depth observances that transcend the more surface, “Your Nice” comments. After each person writes, fold the paper so as not to be able to see what was written and pass it along to the next person. After everyone has written remarks for each student in the group, collect the paper and hand them out on the plane ride home (or mail it a few months after the program’s end).

Wearable Objects

As you are gathered for a closing ceremony, give students something they can wear to remind them of their experience. Encourage students to use this object in the future as a reminder that there are 15 other people in the world who have shared this experience with them and who are walking this earth wearing the same item.

Back Strokes

Tape a piece of paper to everyone’s backs. Mingle around the room writing complimnets on each other’s backd. This is an anonymous way of sharing…put parameters on what is written or guide students in a spectic direction.

Note to Self

In this activity, student write a letter to themselves in the future (6months, 1 year, end of trip) to spell out their feelings in the moment or wishes for their future. Ideas for letter topics include: specific things in country people have taught them, write ways in which they’ve grown, include poignant memories, explore future goals and expectations, etc.

Fondest Memories

Have each student in a circle and have some object for each students (bead, stone, little ceramic, etc.) and take a moment foe ac student to share their fondest memory of every other student. Anyone can pick up the object an shoes the student to praise. Then they say their fondest memory and pass it to the person at their side. Each person puts their energy into the object and shares their memory in turn. Once everyone has had their turn to share, they pass it to the student receiving it. Then the next student (or leader) can receive praise until everyone has had everyone else share their fondest memory of them.

How to use your journal

Have student brainstorm future uses for their journals and invite them to set a concrete date for re-reading their journal once they are stateside. It may even be fun to have each student pick a short passage from his/her journal to read to the group.

Thank you Circle

The night before departure, have the group sit down together. It is nice to set a limit on the ceremony by buying candles, one for each student. Set up the candles in a circle in front of each student. The ceremony will end when the candles are burnt out. Give the students a change to thank each other, for a particular moment, a string of moments, a certain presence, or anything. This is a good way to have the student recognize each other’s gifts along their journey, and rehash some meaningful moments.

Remember to…

Give students the tools to go home and share. Discuss the responsibilities of sharing even though it may be difficult or complicated. Explore the concept of what they thought about the place before they arrived (romantic concepts) and what romantic concepts were clarified or destroyed all together. Is that a bad thing? Was the experience good anyway? Why do we create romantic concepts of places?