

## TITLE VI 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

### **Round Table Discussion on Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad: Lessons Learned, Innovative Approaches and Future Directions**

Washington, D.C., March 21, 2009  
8:30 - 11:40 am

#### **Panel Description:**

The Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) program was created almost fifty years ago within the context of an increasingly changing, global context and concerns that U.S. educators and students may not be prepared for such a changing world. The GPA program was developed to strengthen the expertise of US K-12 and post-secondary educators and students in the areas of foreign language, area studies and international studies through study abroad. GPAs continue to be an important part of Title VI centers' (and other institutions/organizations) outreach activities and one of the few international-related professional development opportunities available to K-12 and post-secondary educators. This round table will focus on lessons learned, innovative approaches, key issues and future directions for GPAs and includes leaders of GPAs to diverse world regions, from institutions across the US. We will address five questions and encourage GPA leaders (past and potential) to participate in this collective discussion.

#### **Discussion Topics and Questions:**

1. Budget and Recruitment Issues and Challenges: How do you deal with issues of logistics effectively, especially budget and recruitment?
2. Beyond Tourism, Preparation and Planning: How does one go about preparing participants and planning an itinerary that goes beyond the "tourist" experience and provides meaningful field study experiences for educators (K-12 and post-secondary)?
3. Possibilities for Evaluation and Assessing Impact: What are the effects or impact of GPAs on teachers and students and how can we know? What are effective ways to evaluate GPAs in particular, foreign language participants and overall GPAs?
4. Implementation and Follow-up: What kind of support is needed to help teachers complete and implement their curriculum projects?
5. Fostering Collaboration with Colleges of Education: How can GPAs foster collaboration between Colleges of Education and area studies centers or departments/faculty who tend to be more social science or humanities oriented?

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#### Contact Information

##### Chairs:

Kristin Janka Millar  
Michigan State University  
K-12 Outreach & Undergraduate Coordinator  
Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies  
Phone: 517-353-1690  
Fax: 517-432-7471  
E-mail: kristin@msu.edu

Michelle Guilfoil  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Post-secondary Education  
Group Projects Abroad Program Officer  
E-mail: Michelle.Guilfoil@ed.gov

##### Panelists:

Maxwell Amoh  
Yale University  
Director  
African Studies Center & PIER Manager  
E-mail: maxwell.amoh@yale.edu  
GPAs: 2007 Ghana, 2004 Ghana, 2000 Ghana

John Caldwell  
Duke University  
Outreach Director  
North Carolina Center for South Asia Studies  
E-mail: caldwell@unity.ncsu.edu  
GPAs: 2008 India

Elaine Linn  
University of Pittsburgh  
Assistant Director  
Global Studies Program  
University Center for International Studies  
E-mail: eel58@pitt.edu  
GPAs: 2007 Egypt

Kate Mackay, University of Arizona  
University of Arizona  
Associate Director  
Center for Educational Resources in Culture,  
Language & Literacy  
E-mail: kmackay@u.arizona.edu  
GPAs: 2007 Cyprus, 2005 Turkey, 2004 Cyprus

John Metzler  
Michigan State University  
Outreach Coordinator  
African Studies Center  
E-mail: metzler@msu.edu  
GPAs: 2007 S. Africa, 2005 Ghana

Diane Ruonavaara,  
Michigan State University  
Project Manager  
Tanzania Partnership  
Center for Advanced Study of International  
Development  
E-mail: ruonavaa@isp.msu.edu  
GPAs: 2007 Ecuador, 2005 Belize, 2003 Mexico

Theo Sypris  
Director  
Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural  
Education  
E-mail: tsypris@kvcc.edu  
GPAs: 2006 Russia, 2005, China, 2003  
Swaziland

Rachel Weiss  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Assistant Director  
Center for South Asia  
E-mail: rweiss@wisc.edu  
GPAs: 2005 India, 2003 India

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#### **Recommended Best Practices and Issues for Fulbright-Hays Short-term GPAs**

##### **PLANNING**

###### **Program Design and Logistics**

- Plan ahead; start planning early
- Read other GPA proposals and talk to previous GPA leaders
- Have in-country coordinators, and make sure they understand program goals/objectives clearly
- Built the GPA on/around one's personal relationships
- Hire a back-up driver and crew
- Structure the program so there is time for curriculum work, and also time to debrief, especially after a day of difficult/sensitive activity
- Build in/organize opportunities to hear different political perspectives
- Try to have a briefing at the US embassy when arrive
- GPAs should NOT be completely free. Requiring participants to pay some kind of fee may be an incentive to take the GPA more seriously (and complete curriculum etc.)
- Build in an incentive for participants who complete curriculum (or other products). For example, return part of the funds contributed by participants after/if they complete their curriculum (or other products)
- Use part of the funds participants contribute to pay for orientation and follow-up support after returning from the GPA
- Build in free-time (down-time)
- Share rooms to reduce costs – 2-3/room
- Draw on educational theory as a basis for design of program, i.e. transformational learning theory, experiential learning, pedagogical development theory
- Begin recruitment early before awards are announced, “Contingent upon or pending funding”

###### **Collaboration and Partnering**

- International Baccalaureate (IB) schools
- Partner with colleges of education, consortiums of colleges and universities
- Diverse pool (from various institutions) builds in divergent views
- Use GPA as collaborative outreach (e.g., with community colleges, historically black colleges, historically Hispanic colleges, Council for Opportunity in education TRIO programs for first generation students).

###### **Recruitment and Selection of Participants**

- Requiring letters of recommendation for participants increases quality of the pool
- Select participants who are in a stable place in their lives
- Select participants from different stages in teaching careers
- Select participants with little international experience
- Start early recruiting participants (e.g., summer institutes, conferences, workshops)
- Interview potential participants (phone or face-to-face, email questionnaire)
- Keep a data base of interested individuals with contact information and send out recruitment announcements to this group. This is especially helpful when doing multiple GPAs over time

## **PRE-DEPARTURE**

### **Preparing Participants**

- Include orientation(s)
- Be clear about goals, objectives and expectations for participants at orientation
  
- Include people from host culture in orientation
- Make use of embassy/consulate(s) in host country and embassy/consulates in US for pre-departure orientation
- Cultural sensitivity training
- Briefing on politics and sensitive issues (in host country and U.S.); not to project personal perspective of the host country and U.S. politics
- Connect participants with each other in advance for group bonding (e.g., online, pre-departure meetings, group work, workshop)
- Make goals and expectations explicit/clear including “deliverables”

## **PROGRAMMING ABROAD**

### **Going beyond tourism - meaningful field study experiences**

- Balance travel, tourism and academic content
- Use all tourism type activities as learning experiences to problematize tourism and reflect on it
- Include experiential activities
- Partner with local NGOs and/or colleges/universities
- Keep programming locally-based
- Include everyone (including driver, translator, guide) in group meetings and debriefings
- Debrief after each activity (or as much as possible)
- Don't plan too many activities for one day; avoid jam-packed itinerary
- Include homestays
- Include some language study as a window into culture and to point to the importance of knowing more than one language (at least one week)
- Expect that participants devote time/energy to study rudimentary (host) language on their own, in the months prior to the trip
- Build in structured opportunities for discussion and reflection
- Have participants sign a contract pre-departure (related to appropriate behavior)
- Develop a handbook of policies and expectations for the group pre-departure (to review expectations while abroad)
- Use cognitive dissonance as a teaching opportunity
- Pair U.S. educators with host country educators
- Pair new teachers with veteran teachers
- Program visits with schools and students
- Be intentional about itinerary going from the familiar to the less familiar to the unknown, ending in a place that is conducive for final reflection.
- Build in time for curriculum development work during the trip

## **EVALUATION**

### **Effective ways of evaluating and assessing impact**

- Develop a survey to send to all GPA alumni
- Group journal as ongoing evaluation during programming
- The product/deliverable is a way to benchmark success (e.g., presentations, curriculum) that can be quantified (multiply by how many each would reach)
- Require a report on outreach presentation(s)
- Count the number of hits on websites with online lessons

- Conduct follow-up phone interviews and/or online evaluation questionnaire
- Hold a reunion conference/meeting with GPA returnees and present (document) best practices
- Provide funds for teachers to attend conferences to present
- Make master teacher fellows – teachers lead parts of summer institutes

### **SUCCESSFUL POST-TRIP/FOLLOW-UP**

- Have participants sign a contract pre-departure (including deliverables post-trip)
- Develop a handbook of policies and expectations for the group pre-departure (including deliverables post-trip)
- Build into the GPA that participants will be reported (“told on”) to the GPA program officer and participation in future GPAs may be jeopardized for not completing curriculum (or other products)
- Partner with an NGO to handle disseminating the products and follow up, etc.
- Build into agreement/contract (in advance) that schools will agree to cost share to fund follow-up activities

### **Curriculum Development**

- Offer graduate or continuing education credit for participation and curriculum development
- Structure the program so there is time for curriculum work
- Build in required post-trip curriculum workshops
- Partner post-secondary and K-12 educators for post-trip curriculum work
- Opportunities to work with specialists during and after programming abroad
- Include a curriculum development specialist as an assistant to the GPA. This person begins work with participants during orientation and continues working with them until units are submitted
- Provide opportunities for GPA as a group to share thinking and evolution of their curriculum development during the trip

### **ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **For the GPA Program**

- Funds can be expended in-country only
- Difficult to find funding to cover pre & post-trip activities
- ½ federal per diem limiting especially in areas that are tourist locations and/or during summer peak travel season
- Late notification makes it difficult to make reservations or commitments to GPA, especially given that these are groups of 15 people
- Importance of framing proposals and itineraries in an academic context
- How to show the educational benefits and multiplier effects of GPAs
- Evaluation and assessment tools to show effects and impacts (in U.S. and host country)
- Problem with compliance after the trip: Include the requirement that if participants don’t produce the product could jeopardize their future GPA opportunities
- Advocate for the inclusion of sciences and math – (in particular for community colleges and colleges of education)
- Disconnect between mandate of Fulbright and the projects
- Help GPA project directors connect with embassies/consulates
- Make cost sharing a required component of the proposal. However, cost sharing – triggers administrative issues – accounts, difficulty leveraging other funds – maybe better to describe the types of activities required (not cost share explicitly)
- There is a need for some type of a manual of best practices
- Develop a common template for curriculum
- Connect curriculum from GPAs with the new Title VI portal
- The impact of the GPA is often demonstrated much later, the end of trip evaluation can not capture this

### **For Project Directors/Future GPA Proposals**

- Frame proposals and itineraries in an academic context - when including “tourist” activities
- Include evaluation and assessments that show effects and impacts (in U.S. and host country) - need quantitative data (more than anecdotal).
- Given the late notification and no funds to make early reservations, a director has to convince people I am working with to make reservations on my good word - Have to use my own social capital

### **Questions**

- How can the evaluation system be modified?
- How to track the multiplier effect of GPAs?
- How to track and maintain accurate data and who could do this?
- How to evaluate lesson plans?
- What kinds of questions might help select quality (serious) participants?
- What is the difference between tourism and visits to cultural/historical sites?
- How can those of us who have received GPAs and hope to apply again build a learning community to improve the over all quality and impacts of GPAs?