

Spring 2014

Pushing Forward: The Climate for LGBTQ Student Advising in Study Abroad of South Carolina

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Seay, Alexandra, "Pushing Forward: The Climate for LGBTQ Student Advising in Study Abroad of South Carolina" (2014). *Capstone Collection*. Paper 2674.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses quantitative and qualitative analysis to examine issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) minority undergraduate student inclusivity within the 32 study abroad programs offered within the 51 of the institutions of higher education in the state of South Carolina. Findings in this study suggest that study abroad programs are delivered to students in 1 of 3 ways: Direct Exchange, 3rd Party Provider, and Faculty-Led. Findings in this study also indicate that faculty and study abroad advisers view study abroad as a useful and transformative experience for all students and that these programs should be open and inclusive of everyone. However, the attitudes, policies, and actions of the study abroad programs do not necessarily reflect this professed importance when looking at the specific ways that LGBTQ students are invited, encouraged, prepared, and debriefed throughout their study abroad experience. The issues surrounding the LGBTQ community become particularly important when considering study abroad in countries where suspected homosexuality has been criminalized by imprisonment and in some instances, death. Most advisers were found to see the importance of LGBTQ issues to the study abroad experience, but most programs and policies have not found ways to particularly respond to the study abroad needs of the LGBTQ minority community on campuses. This study looks both the private and public attitudes and policies of particular study abroad programs at all of the institutions of higher education in South Carolina; it does not seek to discover the multiple factors that are causes of this disparity in attitudes and policies.