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Intercultural Competence Abroad: Creating an ICC Track at the Umbra Institute

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Intercultural competence is becoming an essential component of higher education in today's increasingly globalized world, and applicability is a key focus of an effective cross-cultural education (McCaffery, 1993). In formal education and education abroad, curriculum is of critical importance (Paige & Goode, 2009). The Umbra Institute in Perugia, Italy is an independent school for American study abroad students with a mission to deepen cultural awareness through community engagement. An Intercultural Competence Track is being designed in an effort to use community engagement and reflective practice to address a need for applicability in intercultural competency work. Umbra's "ICC Track" will be an optional, credit-bearing concentration with a focus on intercultural competence to be implemented in Fall 2016.

This capstone paper offers a plan for the ICC Track's design, including a foundational "Intercultural Competency in Practice" course. This design incorporates best practices in international education abroad, experiential education, and community-based interaction to give Italy-based American college students a structured opportunity to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences from pre-departure to reentry. Internship and volunteering components will bring students into the community, addressing the needs of Umbra's partners in Perugia and creating a mutual understanding across cultures. As two forms of holistic assessment, students will create portfolios of their work and apply their new skills and learning through a substantial research project. The ICC Track's overall aim is to emphasize to students the multidimensional nature of intercultural competency, making it relevant and applicable to their future lives as global citizens.

