Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals

Juanita Lillie
SIT Study Abroad

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Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: 
A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals
Juanita Lillie
Program in Intercultural Management Group 75
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Advisor: Alla Korzh, Ed.D.
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List of Abbreviations

ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act
AWD: Abroad With Disabilities
DAKC: Disability Advocates of Kent County
IIE: The Institute of International Education
ISA: International Studies Abroad
MIUSA: Mobility International USA
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
OCR: Office of Civil Rights
PWD: Person With Disabilities
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Math
SWD: Student With Disabilities
UD: Universal Design
UDA: Universal Design Associate
UDF: Universal Design Facilitator
UDI: Universal Design for Instruction
UDL: Universal Design for Learning
Abstract

In 2015–2016, 8.8 percent of students with disabilities studied abroad, a significant increase from the academic year of 2014–2015 where 5.3 percent of students with disabilities studied abroad. Despite the small percentage, several organizations are working to increase access within international education. The initiative Generation Study Abroad aims to double the number of students who study abroad by 2020. Students and professionals are creating resources, offering scholarships, and more to increase student participation in study abroad. As a person with a disability, and a professional who works closely with universities and students around access, I designed a program on behalf of Abroad With Disabilities (AWD) introducing Universal Design for Learning (UDL). International Studies Abroad (ISA, third-party provider) will provide support with the design and implementation. The program is four weeks total—two weeks online and two weeks in person in Costa Rica. The purpose of the program is to develop Education Abroad professionals’ awareness of UDL for purposes of increasing access within study abroad. UDL is meant to be used in conjunction with a curriculum to increase access for multiple individuals.

The proposed program Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals will invite 8-18 individuals to participate online and abroad. During the program participants will observe how UDL can be modeled and develop tools, skills, and knowledge, to increase access at their workplaces. After completing all program requirements, participants will receive a certificate of completion emphasizing their knowledge, skills, awareness, and work with UDL within Education Abroad. This capstone paper demonstrates how this program will be designed, and introduces methods on how to increase access during the program design phase for professionals to reference in their work.
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Introduction

“Open Doors,” an annual report published by the Institute of International Education (2017), states that during the 2015–2016 academic year 8.8% of undergraduate students with disabilities\(^1\) studied abroad (education outside of the United States; outbound) compared to 2.6% in 2006–2007. Though nearly quadrupled, this is still a small percentage compared to the overall number of students who have studied abroad. Therefore, opportunities to increase access (the ability to reach and work towards program objectives) needs to be present in Education Abroad to break down barriers within study abroad. As a person with a disability (PWD), I faced and observed multiple access barriers when I studied abroad e.g. alternate formats, attitude, and physical environments. Although the staff at my study abroad program were supportive, I had to direct much of the conversation on how to overcome the barriers such as putting printed materials in an alternative format or thinking of creative ways to participate in program excursions. I felt that these access barriers could have been reduced if only people had more awareness, whether that awareness was about disability, screen readers, document design, or assistive technology. I wished that I could have connected with others who have studied abroad with a disability to learn about resources, such as Mobility International USA, an organization that focuses on international disability rights and inclusion through exchange. I wanted people to openly discuss topics relevant to going abroad with a disability to empower persons with disabilities to go abroad, which led me to found Abroad with Disabilities (AWD) in 2015. The initial purpose of AWD was to create a space for anyone to openly discuss topics relevant to going abroad with a disability. Although the purpose of the organization was to involve

\(^1\) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) defines a person with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one (1) or more major life activities; has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment” (sec. 3. p. 7).
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international education professionals and students with disabilities in this discussion, anyone was encouraged to ask questions and discuss topics relevant to going abroad. While this original mission remains, AWD has expanded to facilitate opportunities to work with professionals on how to be more inclusive with frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL); additionally, AWD advises students through the pre-departure phase of the abroad experience.

As a professional who wants to connect with other professionals interested in accessibility, I chose to design a program where professionals learn how to increase access within Education Abroad for students, including students with disabilities (SWDs). The purpose of this capstone paper is to design a program for study abroad professionals to gain an understanding of how to increase access for SWDs in their programs. This can be accomplished, in part, by using the framework Universal Design for Learning (UDL)—a Three-principle approach to increase access for multiple individuals simultaneously when designing curricula and improving learning environments. It is important to note that, although UDL increases access to multiple individuals at once, it is not meant to be a stand-alone framework.

Theoretically speaking, any program can employ UDL, e.g. language learning, STEM programs, or numerous other types of programs. For instance, a backward design or a flipped classroom design can also use UDL to support the accessibility of the curriculum—a curriculum should not be created only by employing this framework. The program I will propose to AWD’s board of directors will be designed using the Experiential Learning Cycle developed by David Kolb supplemented with the framework of UDL.

The program’s goal is to increase participants’ awareness of UDL through participation in a two-week, online course and a two-week, on-the-ground training in Costa Rica. AWD will oversee the course materials while International Studies Abroad (ISA) will provide support with logistics, such as coordinating travel and housing, as well as supporting students’ health and
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safety, such as gathering medical information or providing information about safety in Costa Rica. Program participants will learn about available resources and steps that they can take to increase access for students with disabilities in education abroad. AWD’s experiential learning approach will allow participants to experience Universal Design for Learning firsthand while learning about UDL within international education. Participants will collaborate with AWD team members who have experience going abroad with a disability and who have an educational background in international education and/or disability services/studies. Participants will be in a collaborative learning environment with other professionals who are in the field seeking to increase access in their own programs. AWD will facilitate dialogue and utilize participant perspectives to learn about current concerns and trends in international education. These perspectives will enhance and advance trainings that AWD facilitates virtually and in-person. Furthermore, the experiences of participants will allow them to transfer their knowledge and skills to their respective organizations. Participants will be encouraged to stay in touch throughout and beyond the program via AWD’s social media platforms and email to ask questions and consult one another to increase access for persons with disabilities within their programs.

**Personal Contributions to the Field**

My study abroad experience with International Studies Abroad (ISA) and an independent study course with Dr. Natalia Gomez at my alma matter, Grand Valley State University, led me to found Abroad with Disabilities (AWD), a nonprofit organization that empowers persons with disabilities to go abroad. My work with AWD has allowed me to connect with students from around the world and those opportunities have opened pathways to collaborate to increase opportunities for people with disabilities (PWDs) with leading organizations in the field. These organizations include Mobility International USA (MIUSA), Disability Advocates of Kent
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County (DAKC) in Michigan, NAFSA: Association of International Educators (NAFSA), and the Forum of Education Abroad.

My contributions to the field of international education have included developing professionals’ understanding of the function of assistive technology and the multiple ways to increase access—equal and equitable opportunities—for SWDs during the pre-, during, and post-stages of studying abroad. My motivation to contribute to the field came from the barriers I faced when I studied abroad and the barriers that I heard about from other students with disabilities. I have noticed that SWDs experience attitudinal barriers, such as individuals not knowing how to speak with them and making assumptions about their abilities. When working with professionals (faculty, advisors, administrators, and others) who support students within international education, I have heard them remark that they do not receive training on how to support SWDs in the learning environment. Some professionals also have voiced that there are economic barriers to accessing training and professional development opportunities that would provide skills related to inclusive design. Others expressed barriers that include the lack of procedure and policy when working with SWDs, colleagues’ attitudes towards disability, and lack of awareness about existing resources and organizations that support SWDs and professionals in the international education field.

In 2015, I began my studies at SIT Graduate Institute to receive a master’s degree in international education. I chose to attend SIT Graduate Institute because of its experiential learning approach and its requirement for a hands-on practicum. During my nine-month practicum, I was the Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator at International Studies Abroad (ISA), a third-party education abroad provider. This was an opportunity to look at ISA from a professional viewpoint; previously, I had participated in an ISA undergraduate study abroad program in Costa Rica. I feel that I have come full circle with the program that captured my
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interest in study abroad. While at ISA, I collaborated with the diversity team and worked on materials to increase the number of resources for ISA staff and for applicants with diverse identities. Some resources included videos, web content, and internal documentation for staff related to LGBT, heritage speakers, race, ethnicity, generation, ability, and religious elements of identity.

In the fall of 2016, in conjunction with my work at ISA, Abroad with Disabilities implemented a course titled Introduction to Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Experiential Learning. This course was created during an independent study class at SIT Graduate Institute with Dr. Sora Friedman. The online course provides tools, skills, and resources that individuals can use every day to create accessible environments. It also connects them to other professionals who are thinking about everyday access in their offices. I developed this course, because I had not found any professional programs that focused on universal design and provided space for professionals to increase awareness of accessibility through experiential learning in education abroad. Furthermore, I believe individual actions can be taken to increase accessibility, despite bureaucracy being a possible barrier to some institutions and organizations (e.g., the ability to use descriptive language).

Imagine a web page with a blue button on the upper-right of the screen. The blue button has words that read “Apply now,” along with text instructions (print or electronically) indicating to click on the blue button. The lack of details could be a barrier for many individuals. Not only would descriptive language support blind and visually impaired individuals, but also individuals with learning differences, as well as individuals whose primary language is not the one being used during instruction or discussion. Therefore, it would be more beneficial if the in-text instruction read: Click the blue button that reads “Apply now” in the upper right side of the screen. Another example of increased accessibility would be allowing space for breaks during
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classes, seminars, and internship sites, among others, as individuals may require breaks for medical reasons, religious practices, or to communicate with others in different time zones. In the two semesters that AWD has offered the course, more than 25 participants joined from within the United States and abroad. My co-facilitators and participants have taught me an incredible amount by introducing tools, resources, and actions AWD can take to increase access during facilitation. For instance, inserting Dyslexie font (a font designed specifically for individuals with dyslexia) in presentations and informing participants of upcoming noises/quick visual movements can reduce barriers for multiple individuals at once.

**Contextual Background**

**Abroad with Disabilities Background**

Abroad with Disabilities (AWD) was founded in 2015 with the goal of promoting the belief that persons with disabilities can and should go abroad. Having conducted research and reflected on my own experiences, I wanted to connect with individuals who had disabilities to openly discuss topics relevant to going abroad. This led me to founding AWD, based in Michigan, with the support of four founding board members—Erinn Snoeyink, Kelsey Schoenborn, Teneisha Ellis, and Dr. Natalia Gomez.

AWD shares resources, professional advice, and guidance related to going abroad, such as navigating through airports, requesting accommodations in the classroom, service animal requirements abroad, or discussing the complexity of their intersecting identities. More recently, organizations and individuals have requested seminars and small online chats to facilitate discussion with persons with disabilities who wish to go abroad. The first seminar intended for students with disabilities will be in Michigan next year, 2018. AWD also works with professionals and organizations to increase accessibility within their work for SWDs. AWD has
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offered the Introduction to Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Experiential Learning course to graduate students, higher education professionals, and those who are interested in increasing access for persons with disabilities. As the course length (initially fifteen weeks, but now eight weeks) can be a barrier to some, AWD aims to offer other professional development opportunities for universities, students, conference attendees, and others who request shorter presentations. For instance, AWD has presented at universities and conferences across the United States covering topics such as Universal Design for Learning, identity vs. person-first language, assistive technology, as well as other components of access within study abroad, all of which derive from AWD’s courses and team experiences.

ISA Practicum Background

International Studies Abroad (ISA), founded in 1987, offers study abroad programs across the world. Through ISA programs, high school and college students can earn credits and complete service learning projects. Students can also participate in ISA study abroad programs during the gap year between high school and college. Although ISA’s headquarters is in Texas, it also maintains offices in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Kentucky (World Strides, 2017).

During the spring of 2016, when I was considering practicum opportunities, I spoke with Gustavo Artaza, the founder of ISA. This conversation took the form of an interview about the organization’s evolving culture and practices around accessibility and diversity. Gustavo asked me to write about my experiences as an ISA alum and current professional. I completed an exercise similar to a strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT) analysis of my former experiences studying abroad through ISA. The analysis encouraged me to brainstorm ways in which an organization could increase access for PWDs. When we re-connected, Gustavo showed enthusiasm and was interested in learning more about accessibility abroad for PWDs. We agreed
that I would complete a practicum with ISA, focusing on issues of accessibility and diversity through Universal Design and UDL. As an ISA supervisor explained to me, ISA had a diversity team and an accessibility team, which recently had been merged, providing me with flexibility to design and create materials. Between August 2016 and May 2017, I primarily worked for ISA remotely from Michigan. Meetings and conferences were conducted via WebEx, a virtual conferencing platform. There are hundreds of individuals all over the world working for ISA, and WebEx allows these employees to meet virtually. My direct supervisor was based in Colorado, and we worked closely with the rest of the diversity team via document sharing platforms such as Google Drive. The team provided immense support and feedback, which facilitated the development of my skills in a welcoming atmosphere. I appreciated how the diversity team included people with multiple identities. ISA has a diverse workforce with employees from different regions of the United States, who also have different identities based on generation, sexual orientation, race, language, etc. Because of the diversity in our team, I challenged myself to observe how some ISA staff members intersected best practices for a variety of students.

**Needs Assessment and Program Rationale**

By 2020, the Institute of International Education (IIE) would like to see approximately 600,000 students study abroad as part of its Generation Study Abroad initiative (IIE, 2015). The initiative is to double the number of students who study abroad over a decade. Organizations such as MIUSA, educational institutions, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) have made efforts to increase access for students with disabilities (SWDs) to participate in study abroad programs as part of the Generation Study Abroad initiative. Individuals and organizations can make commitments to work towards the goal of doubling the number of students who study abroad
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directly with the Institute of International Education (IIE). I have observed some organizations offer scholarships specifically for students with disabilities, students share their experiences abroad, and both former students and professionals present at conferences on the topic of disability within study abroad to increase the number of students with disabilities who go abroad.

I have attended several professional development opportunities, including state, regional, and annual conferences and workshops, where I had access barriers that I had to overcome. Some barriers included receiving materials in an inaccessible format. The most challenging barrier was the attitudes of people and the lack of awareness on how to work with persons with disabilities (PWDs) within the leading organizations of International Education. A wider discussion and more work are needed to increase the number of SWDs who study abroad.

MIUSA (2016) and Link (2016) advocate that international educators have to consider and include SWDs in the program design and outreach.

In my work with individuals and organizations, I have found several international education programs that encourage students and participants with disabilities to participate in their programs. These programs are actively looking for support and strategies to increase access for participants with disabilities. Some encouragement for programs comes from alumni with disabilities who work as peer advisors or ambassadors, share testimonials through program and personal blogs, showcase photos of participants with disabilities that are shared in promotional materials, and demonstrate collaboration with individuals and/or organizations that work with PWDs. Some support and strategies come from individuals and organizations attending sessions and workshops at conferences that focus on SWDs, receiving feedback and working directly with SWDs, and requesting personalized trainings around accessibility related to disability. The mentioned efforts and strategies could be reasons why there has been an increase in requests for reasonable accommodations across programs within international education.
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number of organizations are receiving varied requests including interpreters, the ability to bring emotional support animals, and extended time on assignments.

Although there is an increase in the percentage of SWDs studying abroad, it is important to note that not all students disclose information immediately, nor do students disclose at all. Reasons for this include SWDs fear that they may be denied, organizations are not encouraging discussion around disability due to a lack of contact information or inclusive language, or applicants may not think about potential access barriers at the time of applying. From my observation and research, I have noticed there are not many third-party providers and university programs that directly recruit students with disabilities. Organizations do not offer information about disability immediately in terms of outreach and communication, which then requires these students to take several steps to see if the programs can be inclusive. Marketing is rarely intentional in referencing accessibility information to students. For example, many programs will include information about cost but not about site accessibility and students typically need to connect with the program or organization staff to gather this information. Students with disabilities often need to find other internal and external resources for support, such as diversity-focused institutional webpages or external organizations such as MIUSA and Abroad with Disabilities (AWD).

Organizations and/or individuals that target specific disability populations are more likely to have the awareness and knowledge to work with SWDs, which can decrease multiple barriers for their participants. In the case of Landmark College, a four-year institution founded to support students with learning differences, faculty work directly with SWDs. On the other hand, there are programs that allow participants, whether they are students or volunteers, to work with specific disability populations or communities abroad. So how are professionals working to increase access for SWDs? Professionals who work within education abroad in higher education have
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to internal and external resources such as MIUSA, Diversity Abroad, their institution’s Disability Services department, and/or AWD. It is crucial to note that not all professionals working for third party providers and institutions have a department that focuses on access for persons with disabilities or they may not collaborate with disability services. There are multiple resources available that have lists and suggestions for increasing access in a study abroad program. Those resources include Diversity Abroad, University of Minnesota, MIUSA, and AWD.

To intersect components of UDL and Education Abroad, an experiential learning opportunity needs to be made available. Individuals who are learning about ways to increase access should be encouraged to practice real-life situations and adapt their approaches, which the experiential learning cycle allows learners to do. Furthermore, the experiential learning cycle recognizes that there are multiple styles of learners, similar to Universal Design for Learning. I recognize that program designers are unable to make all programs 100% accessible for all individuals at once, as needs of each group, program, and time period vary. Additionally, not all students disclose their disability to their program, and people with multiple disabilities may not disclose all disabilities. Furthermore, not all individuals identify as having a disability. There are steps one can take to decrease barriers through UDL proactively. Although UDL will not remove all barriers, it will increase access. Therefore, I will propose to AWD’s board of directors a program that will model UDL within education abroad, including the pre-, during, and post-phases abroad for professionals or participants of the proposed program to experience.

The program would be a total of four weeks. The first two weeks would be online utilizing Zoom, a conferencing platform. The reason Zoom was chosen is not only because it is cost effective for AWD, but also Zoom has accessibility contacts who are responsive. Zoom has supporting resources on their website around accessibility and they understand Universal Design.
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The other two weeks will take place in person in Costa Rica. Costa Rica was chosen because ISA has staff available in/near San Pedro, Costa Rica. The University of Ulatina has an accessibility department and accessible spaces. Furthermore, I have visited the program site which can support the design and planning. Also, both AWD and ISA have local contacts to check in on accessibility updates in the San Pedro area which allows both parties to collaborate and ask questions to work towards the needs of the participants.

In the program’s design, AWD will lead program content and instruction, while utilizing ISA’s customized programs department for logistical support. ISA will support with areas such as marketing, selecting host families, etc. AWD will communicate with ISA staff regularly.

I used the IEO concept—input, environment, and outcomes—to help determine which services and support AWD would be able to provide and which ISA would have to provide. AWD has the staff to provide the contextual training, while ISA has program logistic and design experience. Utilizing the strengths of each organization would provide a greater outcome for participants as each organization can use current resources, staff, and awareness of its environment. Furthermore, both organizations would be able to exchange ideas and concepts to increase access across their organizations. For example, AWD could share access barriers within logistics around public transportation, while ISA could share transportation options and/or provide contacts in the host country.

**Literature Review**

The following section will situate the key legal frameworks and examine the obligations for entities to provide reasonable accommodations abroad to PWDs. UD and UDL will be introduced, and their implementation will be examined to support understanding of the proposed program design framework. Though not meant to be used alone, UDL’s purpose is to help
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students master learning, i.e. to become expert learners (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014). I have chosen to employ the experiential learning cycle in the program design and implementation in conjunction with UDL.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Abroad**

Many practitioners in education abroad are not aware of the obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) abroad. Some international educators would say universities in the United States are not required to provide disability-related accommodations in study abroad (Dean & Probst, 2010). From my experiences, professionals would mention that the laws are not the same in the United States and/or that it is the responsibility of the student and/or the home institution. According to Section 504, subpart E of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990), title 2, no student in the United States should be discriminated against based on disability by post-secondary schools that receive federal funding (ADA, Section 504, 1990). Both pieces of legislation permit students to receive reasonable accommodations, such as qualified readers (individuals who could read printed materials), interpreters, auxiliary aids, and tape-recording to ensure equal access. Students who feel they are not receiving reasonable accommodations can work with their institution to resolve the complaint and/or file a grievance with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Some OCR cases relevant to study abroad indicated there was a need for reasonable accommodations abroad, while others demonstrated that accommodations provided were indeed reasonable; however, each case was different as each incident depended on the type of education abroad program and the laws of the state (OCR Complaints). It is vital to know that country laws vary, but so do state laws in the United States around access for persons with disabilities. As an alumna of several exchange programs, I participated in one program where the ADA was not applied and another one where it was
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present. During the pre-departure phase of both programs, I was unaware of whether the ADA would apply abroad; however, I was encouraged by both programs to communicate my access needs related to disability accommodations. My experience is reflective of how many U.S. colleges and universities approach accommodations abroad. Since there is no clear-cut legal agreement that the ADA applies or does not apply abroad, several individuals and organizations have instead created best practices to include SWDs (Katz, 2007; McCarthy, 2016; National Association of College and University Attorneys, 2012). Having procedures and policies in place that show the actions taken to increase access allows some organizations to demonstrate that they are working towards accessibility should they get an OCR complaint. Furthermore, these policies and procedures allow organizations to market programs to PWDs.

What Are Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning?

Initially in the 1950s, UD was an approach to remove obstacles for individuals with physical disabilities to increase access within physical structures such as buildings or parks (Meyer & Rose, 2002; Moore, 2007). The concept was well-known within the United States, Europe, and Japan. In the 1970s, US architect Michael Bednar described the benefits of universal design for multiple individuals at once—curb cuts benefit those who use strollers and runners, as well as individuals who use wheelchairs (Moore, 2007). Ron Mace coined the term “universal design” in 1987, when he mentioned that universal design was not a new science or style, but instead a useful means of making products and designs usable by everyone to the greatest extent possible (Moore, 2007). Greater support to make environments accessible for individuals with disabilities came with the advent of legislative laws, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its amendments, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 (Moore, 2007).

Architects, environmental designers, engineers, and other professionals came together at the Center for Universal Design to define and establish the seven principles of universal design
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(The Center for Universal Design, 1997). Please see Appendix A for a description of the universal design principles. UD is used across multiple disciplines, including educational areas such as websites, textbooks, software, dormitories, libraries, and distance education (Burgstahler, 2015). The existing research shows that physical environments such as educational facilities are considered more when planning events and activities. While important, this implies short-term accommodations instead of those adaptations that come to be a permanent staple of a particular place. Unfortunately, access barriers remain in terms of curriculum and/or classroom instruction and design (Meyer & Rose, 2002; Moore, 2007). For example, universal design focused on buildings will address the following questions: Are there ramps or curve cuts to access the buildings? Are there elevators to get to the second or upper floors? Universal design for learning, on the other hand, focuses on how students take in information and demonstrate their learning.

The limited research related to universal design for learning is principally focused on primary and secondary levels, though universal design for instruction (to increase access for multiple students with diverse identities and backgrounds) is being employed in higher education (Burgstahler, 2015b). Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is based on the ideas of UD and UDL; however, the latter focuses more broadly on instruction and its delivery as well as the environment of participants. For example, UDI encourages instructors to include accessibility statements on their syllabi, provide feedback on larger assignments in chunks, check in on students, and look for ways to create a welcoming environment for students (Burgstahler, 2015). Overall, there needs to be more research on the strategies of applying UD and UDL to determine positive and negative impacts on students, as well as to identify professional development for faculty and professionals to support SWDs (Roberts, Park, Brown, & Cook, 2011). In fact, the National Center on Universal Design for Learning encourages researchers in the field to
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contribute in the areas of promising practices, including evaluation of outcomes of the implementation of UDL in the classroom (2011).

The foundational research and principle level of UDL has more support within research than ever before. Foundational research draws from areas within modern neurosciences, while the principle levels build from the knowledge that there are three networks within the brain (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2010). Please see Appendix B to review the three networks: recognition, strategic, and affective. The three networks make up the three principles of universal design for learning. The three UDL principles are: multiple means of representation (the “what” of learning), multiple means of action and expression (the “how” of learning), and multiple means of engagement (the “why” of learning) (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2010).

UDL’s purpose is to reduce barriers in the learning environment; it is not a curriculum design or training framework. In addition to UDL, I will use the experiential learning cycle because, in addition to ensuring that the learner develops an awareness of knowledge and facts, it requires one to experience learning (Kolb, 2014). There are four core components and four learning styles that encourage one to experience learning, reflect on the experience, and develop an awareness of knowledge, language, and skills that can be applied to new experiences (Kolb, 2014). Please see Appendix C for the experiential learning cycle and its four learning styles.

The intent of the experiential learning cycle is for learners and facilitators to go around the cycle, not leaning towards one learning style, but instead adapting individual learning to the environment (Kolb & Passarelli, 2011). Universal design for learning has the same goal—to offer multiple means of learning, multiple ways for students to express what they are learning, and multiple means of interaction or engagement. Therefore, participants of the program

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*Education Abroad Professionals* will learn about the framework of Universal Design for Learning with supplemented material such as disability-related accommodations.

**Program Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of *Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals* is to increase awareness of Universal Design for Learning and how it can be used as a tool by professionals in practice in the field of education abroad.

*Program Goals*

- To model Universal Design for Learning into the education abroad context through participation in a two-week online course and two-week on-the-ground training in Costa Rica.
- To introduce Universal Design and accommodations for persons with disabilities in the education abroad context.

*Program Objectives*

- To demonstrate Universal Design for Learning through site visits, dialogue, group projects, and reflections.
- To incorporate cultural perspectives of disability through in-country excursions and residency with host families.

*Participant Goals*

- To expand professional development competency in the area of increasing access within education abroad.
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- To implement components of Universal Design for Learning and disability-related accommodations in their own program design and development as well as facilitation.

**Participant Objectives**

- To incorporate Universal Design for Learning within group projects and presentations.
- To identify cross-cultural differences and similarities of disability in the United States and Costa Rica through dialogue and reflection.
- To analyze and describe strategies to increase access for persons with disabilities within the Education Abroad context through case studies, group projects, and cross-cultural experiences.
- To describe the framework Universal Design for Learning through a portfolio.

**Program Description**

*Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals* is a program for up to eighteen professionals who are affiliated with any education abroad provider, organization, or institution within the United States. Participants are individuals who are interested in the opportunity to increase access, equity, and diversity for students, including students with disabilities, within Education Abroad. Participants will receive training around technology, curriculum, and other components of education abroad in order to increase access for students, including students with disabilities in their programs. Therefore, the social action is not meant to be at a macro level, but instead, at the individual and organizational level to increase participation of persons with disabilities within the local context of education abroad.
Curriculum

Course and Training Plan

The program will consist of two sections. The first section will be conducted online; the second section will be in the field in Costa Rica. The first section, a two-week online course, will include a course booklet and pre-recorded webinars with interactive transcripts and audio descriptions available to support learning. There will also be two three-hour, mandatory sessions—one session per week—via Zoom. The last two weeks will be in-person training at Universidad Latina de Costa Rica.

Participants will be expected to meet in person five hours a day for five days each week. It is important to note that during the two weeks in-country training, there will be a three-hour break from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time. The break will allow for self-care and contact with host family, fellow participants and instructors. Finally, once participants return to their home country, they will be expected to submit their final two projects the following Friday to receive a certificate of completion.

Course and Training Content

The main topic of the course will be Universal Design for Learning; however, disability culture, Universal Design, assistive technology, and Universal Design of Instruction will be woven in as supplementary material. Participants will be given the option to complete their work in any format (media, text, dictation) that they wish to increase the retention and interest of their learning. Below is a sample of content from each week of the program, informed by the independent study course with Dr. Sora Friedman (Spring 2016), conversations with colleagues.
Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad within Disability Services, and my participation in the Universal Design for Learning conference in Tennessee (October 2017).

**Week 1**

Participants will be asked to reflect on their own professional and personal education abroad experiences. They will examine the components of the program and look at how they could reframe the learning while increasing access. By the end of the week participants will be able to identify the three principles of Universal Design for Learning and 10 to 15 assistive technologies (e.g. tape, paper, screen readers, word prediction software, puff paint, string, etc.).

**Week 2**

Participants will be introduced to the UDL guidelines. They will also practice presenting information through the lens of Universal Design for Learning. By the end of the week participants will be able to use visual aids, take 5-10 new actions to increase access while presenting (e.g. descriptive language, representation, font styles, color contrast, engagement, headers, alternative text, etc.).

**Week 3**

Participants will explore disability culture in Costa Rica through excursions and communication with locals. Some excursions include a weekend get-away to La Fortuna to go canyoning, to visit the hot springs, and to explore the La Fortuna area. They will also go to a local school and engage with locals in conversations to learn how the buildings and resources may vary in terms of accessibility in the United States and Costa Rica. The excursions will give participants an opportunity to examine the frameworks of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning in practice. At this time participants will also begin working on their portfolios. They will reflect on the travel experience to Costa Rica and their former education abroad experience so that they can provide ways on how to increase access through the lens of the Universal Design for Learning principles, guidelines, and checkpoints. By the end of the
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Week 4

Participants will observe and reflect on a local English speaking class to analyze the ways in which UDL could be applied. Finally, participants will meet with locals to discuss the cultural differences around disability access, and accommodations between the United States and Costa Rica. By the end of the week participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the framework of Universal Design for Learning.

Students’ learning will extend beyond the daily five-hour instruction, as participants will live with host families. Participants will be asked to evaluate and observe the activities of daily living, routines, and other cultural aspects to assess components of universal design. This host family experience will grant another opportunity to learn about the local culture and to learn Spanish. It is not required for participants to have former Spanish experience. The goal is for participants to continue learning about the culture around disability and social identities (race, religion, family roles).

Methods of Instruction

The two instructors from Abroad with Disabilities will employ backwards design and the experiential learning cycle. Backwards design is meant to look at the large picture or topic first and then work backwards. The instructors will demonstrate components of all three principles of UDL throughout the course. For instance, they will receive both a rich text document and Word document, as not everyone owns Microsoft Word. Participants will also be able to complete projects in multiple ways. For example, participants could write a brief description or dictate their reactions in a voice memo on a personal recording device e.g. Android or Apple product.
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The instructors will give participants the opportunity to complete and show work through multiple means of representation which will support and increase participants’ engagement and retention of the course content.

Course and Training Requirements

The program Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals is not a required program; the opportunity to participate is competitive. Upon completion of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion from Abroad With Disabilities, indicating that they have demonstrated components of Universal Design for Learning within Education Abroad. As participants might have unexpected events arise, it is vital for them to communicate their needs and requests with the primary instructor, the Universal Design Facilitator (UDF). Requirements may be altered or prepared in another way to meet the participants’ learning needs as well as their goals and objectives. The following assessment will be employed to evaluate participants’ understanding and mastery of the content:

- Participation—25%. This includes discussions, excursions, professional feedback, and effective communication with fellow participants and primary instructor.
- Program journal—25%. This includes 10 journal entries highlighting observations, case study scenarios, and reflections related to Universal Design for Learning.
- Diversity and cross-cultural reflection—25%. This includes eight self-reflections on local excursions, host families, and classroom observations. Participants will be expected to reflect on the disability culture, learning environment, and share ways on how they would apply any component of the UDL framework from not only a disability standpoint, but also a cultural, language, and multi-identity perspective.
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Participants can present their information in any format that they wish as long as they meet the objective for each entry.

- Final reference portfolio—25%. This includes a collection of tools, resources, notes, tips, and more on how to increase access within education abroad. Participants will demonstrate their knowledge and awareness of UDL by inserting projects, media, resources, and tips of their own on how to apply Universal Design for Learning to take with them back to their programs and/or for future reference.

**Program Evaluation Plan**

**Formative Evaluation**

Participants and instructors will utilize projects, journals, and class activities to assess the progression of UDL incorporation and demonstration. Upon completion of each journal entry, participants will be requested to share general reactions and questions in group discussions, allowing the instructors to observe participants’ articulation and ability to analyze concepts of Universal Design for Learning. Participants will use diversity and cross-cultural reflections to document awareness and knowledge of cultural perspectives in Costa Rica. Finally, instructors will utilize class discussions and observations of group work to evaluate current awareness and developed knowledge and skills on the topics.

**Summative Evaluation**

The participants and instructors will utilize the final reference portfolio to understand the overall objectives of the program. Instructors will be able to review the portfolio to look for participant demonstration of the UDL principles and examine the areas where participants are
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providing feedback when thinking about Universal Design for Learning. The summative evaluation will allow for time for the instructors to review students’ content throughout the course. For example, if participants are not using titled hyperlinks consistently, the instructors will be able to review the content in the course intentionally in the next section. In addition to the portfolio, instructors will observe group presentations that participants will give at the end of weeks two and four. Also, instructors will contact host families and students to gather details of conversation trends around culture at the end of week three and the end of week four to measure the learning objective about cross-cultural experiences. Finally, instructors will use surveys throughout the program to assess the progression of program objectives and participants’ learning (Please see Appendix D for survey questions).

Proposal and Program Timeline

Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals program proposal will be submitted to the board of Abroad With Disabilities in January 2020. The current timeline accounts for securing funding and planning. Upon approval, it will be submitted to the customized programs department of International Studies Abroad in February 2020. After feedback from AWD’s board members and ISA’s staff in the customized programs department, the proposal will be approved by June 2020. July 2020, marketing and recruitment will begin for the program which will start in June 2021. Budgets will be submitted to AWD’s board of directors by September 2020. Participant registration will begin in October 2020; the application deadline will be January 2021. In February 2021 participants will be notified of acceptance, and class will begin in June 2021. During the first two weeks of the course pre-departure orientation will also take place. Finally, in
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early July participants would be required to turn in their portfolios and share their experiences by completing the final survey.

Admissions Process and Requirements

The maximum number of participants allowed in the program is eighteen and the minimum is eight. This number reflects the budget, and provides a learning experience that is individualized. As this program is non-credit and is for candidates who are interested in increasing access within education abroad, participants must have worked within education abroad for at least a year (educational internships are applicable) or participated in a study abroad program. Familiarity with the education process is needed, as the experiential learning cycle will be applied. Participants need firsthand experience through participation or observation.

To ensure participants’ eligibility and commitment, applicants will fill out an application to participate in the program. In the application, participants will share how this professional development opportunity will increase their awareness, skills, and knowledge around disability and access abroad. They may create an audio/video recording or type their response that will be presented to the AWD board of directors. Once in receipt of the application, an AWD team member will inform the participant that they received document/media and will follow up at the end of the application period. Accepted participants will then fill out a form with International Studies Abroad to specify emergency contact information, provide proof of medical insurance, and submit a request for reasonable accommodations. All participants must be at least 18 years old and reside in the United States.
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**Staff Plan**

The team from AWD will ensure effective communication and collaboration with the International Studies Abroad team. AWD will be present and provide support during instruction and host family engagements. Furthermore, AWD will provide support in ensuring reasonable accommodations are met for all participants in the program. AWD will develop the program design utilizing some of ISA tools and staff. ISA staff will support in creating forms and gathering details from participants; marketing programs; and provide support with homestay selection, excursions, etc. ISA is there to support with the planning and implementation; however, AWD will assist with what is necessary to make the program accessible and applicable to the participants.

As mentioned previously, AWD will utilize ISA staff. AWD will fill three positions to meet the needs and safety of all participants. These three staff members will be in contact with appropriate personnel whether it be program managers, site specialists, or in-country staff at ISA. Specific staff members at ISA will be determined once this proposal has been submitted and approved by the customized programs department of ISA.

In the following section, the three AWD positions will be described: Universal Design Facilitator (UDF), Universal Design Associate (UDA), and Resident Study Abroad Advisor (RSAA). Job descriptions, qualifications, and compensation will follow as well as details about accessibility for the three positions.

**Universal Design Facilitator (UDF)**

The Universal Design Facilitator (UDF) will be the primary facilitator for the program, designing and delivering trainings to eight to eighteen education-abroad professionals, depending on the number of participants enrolled. The UDF will work with a Universal Design Associate
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who will offer support in creating materials and the course. There will be a mixture of teaching and training within the course; therefore, familiarity with the experiential learning cycle, the seven principles of universal design, backwards design, and the three principles of universal design for learning are essential for this position. The position duration is six weeks—one week before the program commences, two weeks online, two weeks in San Pedro, Costa Rica (primarily in person), and a week following the program. Zoom and email will be the primary modes of communication throughout the online phase.

*Universal Design Facilitator Required Qualifications*

- Experience working with youth with disabilities either professionally or personally.
- Interest in increasing access within education abroad for persons with disabilities.
- An understanding of the education abroad process through personal or professional experience.
- Experience delivering trainings or classes with Universal Design for Learning and Universal Design in mind.
- Ability and availability to travel to Costa Rica.
- Access to reliable internet connectivity.

*UDF Preferred Qualifications*

- Ability to effectively communicate and collaborate
- Maintains high ethical standards
- Possesses at least 90 hours of co-facilitation or co-teaching.
- Ability to design accessible documents and webpages using universal design.
- Possesses of Intermediate level of Conversational Spanish
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Universal Design Facilitator Compensation

The UDF will receive $2,000 for the six-week position from May 26, 2021 through July 7, 2021. The UDF will also receive $1,500 towards housing accommodations in Costa Rica and a round-trip ticket. The UDF will be responsible for his or her own internet connectivity fees for the duration of the position. The UDF also will be responsible for personal costs, such as meals, gifts, health insurance, excursions, etc. in Costa Rica. The $1500 can be adjusted as per diem values may shift year to year; however, the $1500 intention is to cover all essential costs such as food, housing, flights, etc.

Universal Design Associate (UDA)

The Universal Design Associate (UDA) will work closely with two other team members of Abroad with Disabilities during the program. The UDA will assist with the design and implementation of a course that focuses on UDL within education abroad. It is carried out for two weeks online and then in San Pedro, Costa Rica for two weeks. Outside of the course sessions, the UDA will assist in coordinating excursions and activities to incorporate Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning within programming. It is essential that the UDA either have educational background in international education or Universal Design for Learning. Education background can be non-formal or formal. This position is an opportunity for the UDA to apply Universal Design for Learning in the field of education. The UDA must be available during the program from June 2, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

Universal Design Associate Required Qualifications

- Interest in increasing access for persons with disabilities within education abroad.
- Seeking formal and/or non-formal education in the areas of International Education and/or Universal design.
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- Access to reliable internet connectivity for program duration.
- Intermediate level of Spanish.
- Communicates, collaborates, and ensures honesty.
- Ability and availability to travel to Costa Rica.

**UDA Preferred Qualifications**

- Professional or personal experience working with persons with disabilities.
- Previous participation in an international education experience.

**Universal Design Associate Compensation**

The UDA will receive $500 for the four-week position from June 2, 2021 through June 30, 2021. This position is an opportunity for professional development as the UDA will learn how to apply universal design in education abroad. The UDA will also receive $1,500 towards housing accommodations in Costa Rica and a round-trip ticket. The UDA will be responsible for their own internet connectivity fees for the duration of the position, as well as for personal costs such as meals, gifts, health insurance, and excursions in Costa Rica.

**Resident Study Abroad Advisor (RSAA)**

The RSAA, who will work remotely and will be based in the United States, is a current team member of Abroad With Disabilities. The RSAA is familiar with the goals and objectives of the program, as well as the AWD team culture, Universal Design, Universal Design for Learning, and education abroad program design and implementation. The RSAA will communicate with both International Studies Abroad professionals and the UDF, as well as the UDA, in Costa Rica.

**Resident Study Abroad Advisor Qualifications**
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- Maintain advanced Spanish-speaking skills and familiarity with the geography of Costa Rica from former educational or professional experience in Costa Rica.
- Possesses experience within education abroad in a university or study abroad provider setting.
- Collaborates with colleagues and works professionally with clients and students.

**RSAA Compensation**

It is anticipated that the current RSAA has taken AWD’s Intro to Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Experiential Learning course. Additional compensation is not needed as providing program support is a part of the RSAA’s responsibilities. However, should the RSAA have to travel to ISA for trainings or Costa Rica for emergencies, travel expenses (flights, housing accommodations, and meals) will be covered. The current RSAA will show proof of a valid passport and proof of health insurance.

**AWD Team Accessibility Commitment**

The Abroad with Disabilities team is committed to increasing access for team members with disabilities. They train new and current team members on topics such as person first language vs. identity first language, Universal Design for Learning, assistive technology, alternative format design, and more. AWD also strives to use platforms that are accessible. For example, Zoom is used as the primary form of communication for live, virtual meetings. AWD encourages team members to look at the [Zoom accessibility webpage](#) to view Zoom’s commitment to make its platform universally accessible. Zoom encourages communication to be done in multiple ways through live chat, voice call, or video. When AWD schedules events, it aims to provide a schedule ahead of time with an agenda, so team members can arrange their schedules and ask questions or collaborate on projects. Team members are offered professional
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development opportunities to ensure that AWD team members are striving to model Universal Design, Universal Design for Learning, professionalism, and a welcoming environment.

**Recruitment Plan for Participants**

Initially Abroad With Disabilities will discuss methods and strategies to recruit participants with ISA, but AWD will utilize their resources as well. AWD will use a mixture of social media and in-person events to connect with education abroad professionals and graduate students. The AWD social media platforms will allow candidates to converse via public forms or private messaging. AWD will also send an email to its email list, inviting people to participate in an introductory webinar. The webinar will have live captions; materials will be posted on the AWD website in multiple formats (PowerPoint, PDF, Word); and representatives from ISA and AWD will be present. As the program, *Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals*, will not have former participants for testimonials, AWD will ask former participants of the Intro to Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Experiential Learning course to share their testimonials. Participants from former AWD events will also be invited to share their experiences with AWD. In addition to testimonials, AWD will outline the goals and objectives of the program in the webinar. AWD will also introduce the general schedule. Regarding in-person engagements, AWD will attend career fairs and conferences to recruit professionals and graduate students. AWD acknowledges that a limitation could be that it principally targets professionals from Michigan as AWD has had more in-person events in Michigan. Another opportunity AWD could try is attending study abroad fairs to do outreach to undergraduate and graduate students. This would be an opportunity to network with professionals who are at the front line of recruitment
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and marketing. This strategy could be a way for AWD team members to display and disseminate marketing materials such as brochures, newsletters, social media contact information, etc.

**Marketing Plan**

AWD will work closely with ISA to design a marketing plan. The goals are:

- At events, to have available and display brochures and program details in Braille, large print, and regular print on AWD tables.
- To develop an accessible webpage for application and program details with access features, such as alternative text, titled hyperlinks, headings, color contrast, the ability to navigate using a keyboard, labeled menus, etc.
- To connect with the ISA diversity team to strategize marketing and recruitment actions.
- To use photos of persons with disabilities and/or other identities.
- To gather accessibility details about housing (first floor access, animals, step in showers, thresholds, door mechanics, stairs, cook own meals, single-room, religion, distance from Ulatina, etc.).
- To develop a webpage that describes the program and directs applicants to contact information for AWD. Information about accessibility, location, curriculum, and schedule will be posted. There will also be specific contacts to encourage participants or applicants to ask questions.
Logistics

In this section, details about flights, insurance, visa and travel documents, housing accommodations, meals, transportation, space and supplies will be outlined, as well as who will be responsible for cost and information about accessibility.

Flights

Team members of Abroad with Disabilities flights will be covered by a stipend or emergency funding. Participants will be required to provide their own funding and encouraged to purchase tickets at least three months (90 days) in advance. They also will be introduced to ways to request reasonable accommodations with an airline (See appendix E for a list of some suggestions). Once participants know they are accepted into the program, they must show proof that they have purchased the ticket by Wednesday March 17, 2021 or they will be withdrawn from the course. If purchase cannot be made by March 17, 2021, participants must communicate with AWD to discuss other options by March 17, 2021.

Insurance

Participants are responsible for their own medical and travel insurance. They will be reminded of some crucial factors, such as mental health services, medications, luggage protection, etc. Should participants not have insurance, they will be provided with a list of international insurance that they can research to see which option works best for them. Both the Universal Design Facilitator and Universal Design Associate will be offered insurance at no additional cost to them for the six weeks that they are working with AWD. The Resident Study
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Abroad Advisor will already have their own insurance; however, international insurance will be available for the duration of the program.

**Visa and Travel Documents**

Participants and team members of AWD are responsible for securing participants’ application copies and original documents. No additional costs are needed for visas to Costa Rica as the tourist visa is valid for up to 90 days. Extra funding should be saved or secured should a participant or team member need to leave the country. Also, it is the responsibility of participants and team members to give appropriate copies of travel documents to a trusted family member or friend.

**Housing Accommodations**

AWD will collaborate with ISA to find the best host families to meet participants’ needs. AWD will utilize ISA’s housing questionnaire that already has inclusive language and ways to request reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, AWD will share as many details as possible, including accessibility and meal details, family descriptions, and more. Both participants and team members of AWD can expect to have a single room, linens, two meals, and laundry service twice a week at no additional cost for housing accommodations.

**Meals**

ISA and AWD will ask for allergy and diet restrictions to meet the needs of all participants and team members of Abroad with Disabilities. Host families will be asked to review allergies and diets at the beginning of the program in English with each participant.
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Families will also review the meals with participants the night before so that appropriate changes or adjustments can be made ahead of time for breakfast or supper/dinner. AWD will pay for one meal at a local restaurant and will collaborate to find the best restaurant for participants. Alcohol is optional; however, one beverage is allowed that will be paid by program. Participants are responsible for their lunches and other beverages or snacks they choose to purchase outside of breakfast and supper/dinner meals. Staff will be given a per diem for their daily food suggested by the State Department.

**Transportation**

Participants and team members of AWD will be provided with transportation from the San José airport in Costa Rica on June 17, 2021. A wheelchair accessible van will depart at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 7 p.m. local time from the airport to San Pedro, Costa Rica. Participants and team members who choose to come from the airport will be responsible for their transportation cost. If a flight was delayed, and the participant or team member can provide proof, private accessible transportation will be provided (i.e. if a participant’s flight or other type of transportation is delayed, their costs will be covered). Transportation to site observations and for excursions that are part of the course is included in the program cost. There will be extra spaces available in the vehicle for someone who may require an interpreter, extra space, etc. On June 30, 2021, the last day of the program, transportation will be provided from the host family to the airport. The accessible vehicle will depart in the morning at 5 a.m., 8 a.m., and 1 p.m. local time. Those who wish to depart at different times will be responsible for the cost of transportation; however, if flight is delayed, with proof, participants and team members will receive private transportation at no cost.
**Space and Supplies**

Participants are required to bring paper or an electronic device for journaling and notes. Access to internet in Costa Rica will not be required; however, participants can communicate with the Universal Design Facilitator, the Universal Design Associate, and the Resident Study Abroad Advisor via email. There will be a laptop available onsite and an iPad available for training purposes. Participants will be able to access the technology to explore accessibility features, to access the internet for program purposes, and to contact essential individuals (e.g. families and colleagues). USB flash drives will be available for participants who would like to receive handouts and presentation materials in an accessible format.

Participants will meet the Universal Design Facilitator and Universal Design Associate at Ulatina. The meeting space will be on the main floor of the main building near the earthquake spot for quick access. The earthquake spot is a centrally located space on campus for all on campus to meet up during earthquakes-- similar to fire meet-up locations. Should a room change occur, participants will be informed in text and verbally. The meeting times will be consistent. Participants will be in the meeting space from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. local time and will reunite from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Should a participant request disability-related accommodations, Abroad With Disabilities will look at internal resources. If AWD cannot directly fulfill the request of a participant, they will collaborate with International Studies Abroad. All possible resources that both Abroad With Disabilities and International Studies Abroad know about will be exhausted. All communication will be documented and communicated to the participant. Unless given permission by the participant, ISA and AWD will not disclose identifiable information (name, gender, etc.).
Health and Safety

The priority of Abroad with Disabilities and International Studies Abroad is to support participants and staff in the realm of health and safety. Team members of ISA are already familiar with protocols and actions to take if questions about health and safety arise. AWD team members will be encouraged to get CPR certified and to take the free Mental Health First Aid course. These courses are not meant to instruct individuals on how to fully care for participants, but are designed to provide basic awareness of what could happen. In addition, these CPR and Mental Health First Aid participants will learn about national resources to pay attention to.

Participants will submit details about their health and concerns about safety to ISA. AWD will provide a health and safety handbook for Costa Rica and will collaborate with ISA to find the best resources and information for participants. AWD will also ensure that host families, team members of AWD, and participants have local and international numbers for emergencies.

Crisis Management

As for health and safety, it is important that ISA and AWD have a plan for crisis management. AWD will collaborate with ISA to determine the best way to disseminate the crisis management plan. AWD will create a step-by-step booklet introducing possible crises that could occur and how to overcome them. For instance, suggesting to participants to write a plan should someone need medication or counseling. AWD is collaborating with and utilizing the resources of ISA, it will be vital that onsite contacts as well as local, national, and international emergency contacts are provided. Participants will be encouraged to check with their medical insurance to learn how their insurance could be helpful. In addition, participants and team members of AWD
Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad

will be directed to resources about pickpocketing, earthquake safety, water usage, and other
valuable information to know about.
# Estimated Program Budget

## Fixed/Direct Costs

### Salaries

- Universal Design Facilitator (UDF) $3,000
- Universal Design Associate (UDA) $1,500
- Resident Study Abroad Advisor (RSAA) $855
- Driver/Interpreter $2,000

**Total Salaries =** $7,355

### Staff Expenses

- Flights ($600/per staff) $1,200
- Room and Board ($1000/per staff) $2,000
- Staff Health / Emergency Insurance ($42/per person) $84
- Cell phone (reimbursement, $42/per person) $84
- Staff meals (2 staff for 14 days) $1,120

**Total Staff Travel Expenses =** $4,488

### Other Direct Costs

- Office Supplies (technology) $1,500
- Printing/copying 30 sheets for course booklet (12 booklets) $100
- ISA Fee - health insurance, homestay, meals, marketing $10,000
  (per person, minimum of 8)
- Local Meal $200
- Van $2,800
- Accommodations $5,000

**Total Other Direct Costs =** $19,600

**Total Fixed/Direct Costs =** $31,443

## Revenue

- Individual Participation Fee (minimum of 8, $3500 each) $28,000
- Scholarship $3,000
- Donations $3,000

**Total Revenue =** $34,000

**Total Revenue ($34,000) - Total Fixed/Direct Costs ($31,443) =** $2,557

## Logistics -

- Days in Country = 14 days
- Days at Homestay = 14 days
- Minimum number of participants 8/ Maximum number of participants 18

(See Appendix F for budget notes)
Implications and Conclusions

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a three-principle framework that increases access for multiple individuals simultaneously. The framework is meant to be used in conjunction with curricula design such as backwards design and a flipped classroom model. UDL is not to be used by itself nor is it a framework to break all barriers. The foundational research and principle level of UDL has more support within research than ever before. Foundational research draws from areas within modern neurosciences, making up the three principles of UDL. These principles build from the knowledge that there are three networks within the brain (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2010). However, more research needs to be conducted on the strategies of applying UDL to determine positive and negative impacts on students as well as to identify professional development for faculty and professionals to support SWDs (Roberts, Park, Brown, & Cook, 2011). Although UDL will not remove all barriers, it will increase access to many individuals simultaneously.

Education Abroad professionals and students are exploring the ways to increase access for multiple students. Individuals have made commitments to increase access for students with disabilities through such initiatives as Generation Study Abroad and organizations such as Mobility International USA and Abroad With Disabilities.

The proposed program developed for this capstone paper – Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad Programs: A Best Practices Model for Education Abroad Professionals – offers professionals a space to increase access in their respective programs and organizations. In the proposed program curricula, participants are reminded that it is vital to understand that UDL will not remove all barriers. However, as my program proposes, there exist concrete ways to make reasonable accommodations and to be proactive in the planning phase.
Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad

UDL is meant to provide options and opportunities for self-direction and increase access and student retention on study abroad. Therefore, the proposed program is for individuals who wish to take individual actions within their own programs and organizations to improve access to study abroad for all students. It is my hope that the proposed program will be of use to study abroad professionals committed to equity and social justice in the field of international education.
References


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National Center on UDL. (2011). About UDL. Retrieved from

http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlevidence

National Center on UDL. (2014). What is meant by the term curriculum? Retrieved from:

http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlcurriculum


Appendices

Appendix A: Universal Design Principles and Descriptions

Source: Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/#p4

Principle 1: Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.
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Appendix B: UDL Three Principles and Descriptions

Principle 1: Multiple Means of Representation
Principle 2: Multiple Means of Action and Expression
Principle 3: Multiple Means of Engagement

Source: CAST - What is UDL? (http://www.cast.org/research/udl)
### Appendix B: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universal Design for Learning</th>
<th>Recognition Networks</th>
<th>The “what” of learning</th>
<th>How we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, and read. Identifying letters, words, or an author’s style are recognition tasks.</th>
<th>Present information and content in different ways. More ways to provide Multiple Means of Representation.</th>
<th>More ways to provide Multiple Means of Representation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Networks</td>
<td>The “how” of learning</td>
<td>Planning and Performing tasks. How we organize and express our ideas. Writing an essay or solving a math problem are strategic tasks.</td>
<td>Differentiate the ways that students can express what they know.</td>
<td>More ways to provide multiple means of action and expression.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Networks</td>
<td>The “why” of learning</td>
<td>How learners get engaged and stay motivated. How they are challenged, excited, or interested. These are affective dimensions.</td>
<td>Stimulate interest and motivation for learning.</td>
<td>More ways to provide multiple means of engagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle


Kolb’s experiential learning style theory is typically represented by a four stage learning cycle in which the learner ‘touches all the bases’:

**Concrete Experience**
(design / having an experience)

**Active Experimentation**
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

**Reflective Observation**
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

**Abstract Conceptualisation**
(concluding / learning from the experience)

Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.
Appendix D: Survey of Learning Progression

The mini surveys or check-ins are intended to assess the progression of learning. The goal is for instructors to adjust the course to meet the learning needs of the participants, while the goal for participants is to articulate their learning. Participants will utilize platforms such as Padlet, TodaysMeet, and polling platforms. The following questions will be asked throughout the learning of the program.

**Week 1**
What activities or actions help you learn new information?
What can your instructors do to support your learning?
How would you describe Universal Design for Learning?

**Week 2**
What has helped your learning thus far?
What has hindered your learning thus far?
What should others know about UDL?

**Week 3**
What has been the highlight of the course thus far?
Think about an activity that we have done thus far, how would you have applied UDL in that activity?
Describe the difference between Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning.

**Week 4**
What are the challenges to applying UDL?
Describe briefly what UDL aims to achieve.
Appendix E: Requesting Airline Accommodations

It is important to contact the airline directly to learn about the process and required documentation to receive accommodations for the state/country of travel. Below are some suggestions and these are not an exhausted list.

Before Arriving at The Airport

- Look at parking and available transportation to the airport. Find out the concourse information and the time it takes to arrive to the concourse so that you are able to check in.
- Determine if having a mobile ticket would save money or printing the ticket ahead of time would save dollars.
- Know how much luggage you are allowed on board so that you are not charged extra and so that you can pack lightly.
- Contact airlines immediately after booking to request accommodations or ask how they can best assist you to make your flight more accessible.

Ask Your Airlines

- Are they able to change your seating (bulkhead, moveable arm rests, isle, etc.) for accessibility for you and or your emotional support/service animal?
- Are they able to assist with boarding and deplaning (wheelchair, human guide, giving directions, etc.)?
- Can you request dietary changes?
- What documentation do you need (health certificate, medical certificate, etc.)? Perhaps, in the case of emotional support/service animals, oxygen usage, etc.
- How do I transport my assistive devices? Do I get assistance with reassemble and disassemble?

Checking In

- Ask to make sure that your requested accommodations were inserted into the system.
- Know your accommodations and utilize those requested accommodations.
- Make sure you have everything you need for in flight (medications, documentations, etc.)
- Tell people how they can best assist and not let them dictate what you need.

During flight

- Pay attention to monitors and ask gate agents if there are any changes regarding flight time.
- Check to see if you have priority boarding options and or assistance down the jet bridge to board the plane.
- Tell flight attendants how they can best assist you.
Applying Universal Design for Learning to Study Abroad

- Some flight attendants may check in with you, but if you need assistance or requested assistance to deplane inform those flight attendants.

**Deplaning**
- Know how you are going to deplane and or have a plan with your flight attendants.
- Know what you want to do (luggage, next gate, transportation, etc.).
- If you have an emotional support/service animal look at possible relief areas if possible. Note: not all airports have relief areas.
- How much time do I have to get to my next step (leg of flight, train, bus, etc.)?
### Appendix F: Budget Notes

#### Direct Costs

**Salaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal Design Facilitator (UDF)</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Design Associate (UDA)</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Study Abroad Advisor (RSAA)</td>
<td>$855</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Universal Design Facilitator (UDF)**

This person is responsible for facilitation and is expected to go through the curriculum with participants. They will have direct education/background in UDL and Education Abroad.

**Universal Design Associate (UDA)**

This person will be assisting the UDF and facilitating on the ground excursions in Costa Rica.

**Resident Study Abroad Advisor (RSAA)**

The RSSA will be employed for 20 – 30 hours/week for 6 weeks earning $19/hour. Thirty (30%) of their time will be focused on the program. The dollar amount in the budget reflects this.

**Driver/Interpreter**

This person will interpret for participants and staff when necessary. They will also be responsible to take participants and staff to and from the airport in Costa Rica. Finally, they will be available to participants and staff for excursions and other travel relevant to the program.

Total Salaries = $7,355

**Staff Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flights</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room and Board</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Health / Emergency Insurance</td>
<td>$84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone (reimbursement)</td>
<td>$84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meals (daily per diem)</td>
<td>$1,120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flights**

Two flights will be bought with the $1200 for the UDF and UDA from a major airport to San Jose, Costa Rica.

**Room and Board**

The $2,000 is for the UDF and UDA.

**Staff Health / Emergency Insurance**

For the duration of the program the UDF and UDA will be offered insurance at the cost of AWD $42 per person. iNext was selected as provider of travel insurance due to covering MH services. A comprehensive individual plan costs $21/ per person for 14 days.

**Cell phone (reimbursement)**

This cost is for one staff member during emergency incidences and communication with fellow staff. Staff will be reimbursed 30% for using their own cell phones.

**Staff meals (daily per diem)**

The $1120 will be divided among both staff members for meals that are not provided during the home stay and local dinner.

Total Staff Travel Expenses = $4,488

**Other Direct Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Supplies (technology)</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An iPad and computer will be used to demonstrate the function of assistive technology. Also, these will be available to participants to use during the program.

**Printing/copying 30 sheets for course booklet (12 booklets)**

$100
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Each course booklet will have course content, course materials, and resources for participants to utilize during the program.

Local Meal $200
(This meal is to offer an opportunity for culture, language, and celebration for completion of the program).

Van $2,800
The program will rent two 8-passenger, wheelchair accessible vans with an estimated cost of $100/day per vehicle. Depending on program participant needs only 1 wheelchair accessible van may be needed. Multiple trips will be made should the number of participants exceed the number

Accommodations $5,000
This is for anticipated accessibility/disability related expenses.

ISA Fee (health insurance, homestay, meals, marketing) $10,000
This is an estimation as a conversation would need to happen with ISA and AWD to determine specific costs. However, ISA staff would be available to AWD to support with the design and implementation of the program.

**Total Other Direct Costs** $19,600

**Total Fixed/Direct Costs** $31,443

**Revenue**

Individual Participation Fee (minimum of 8) $28,000
Participants’ program fees include: Home stay, course/training, local meal, three excursions, program support, and transportation.

Scholarship $3,000
There will be three scholarships at the value of 1,000 with the goal of reducing costs for participants. There will be scholarship fund raising and opportunities for organizations/persons to put money towards a scholarship.

Donations $3,000
This will come from general donations with AWD and program fund raising.

**Total Revenue** $34,000

**Total Revenue (34,000) - Total Fixed/Direct Costs (31,443)** $2,557

**Logistics**

Days in Country 14 days
Days at Homestay 14 days
Minimum # of Participants 8
Maximum # of Participants 18