Guidelines for Establishing a Reciprocal Student Semester Exchange Program

The establishment of student exchange programs is an exciting area that promotes important values of internationalization and shared learning across borders. Typically, one or more faculty are involved at the start-up phase to explore and then initiate a student exchange agreement that aims to result in a flow of students to and from the partner institutions.

Exchanges offer the benefits of (1) careful assessment of curricular and academic compatibility for sending and receiving students, (2) promotion of ongoing and long-term academic connections between faculty and students, (3) tuition maintenance at the home/sending institutions that creates economical study abroad opportunity for students, and (4) diversity of international students within the student population.

If you are interested in establishing a new Exchange Agreement, the promotion of exchange balances is vitally important in ensuring a successful exchange. Achieving a balanced number of students sent and students received is a perpetual challenge at USF as in most US universities; in short, more students are eager to attend a US college for a term or two than US students are eager to venture abroad. Therefore, we encourage carefully considered exchanges, preferably driven by student desire and/or study abroad trends. We encourage you to speak with USF’s Education Abroad Office about building successful exchange partnerships and trends in study abroad for US students.

The following criteria should be explored:

Address academic benefits to USF and identify the home and partner institutions' strengths relative to the proposed exchange. The exchange should fit within the mission of USF and offer a comparative advantage in relationship to other exchange programs. Consider whether there are existing exchanges in force in the same country or region ([http://global.usf.edu/intl_agreements.php](http://global.usf.edu/intl_agreements.php)) and the relationship of the proposed exchange to ongoing relationships.

1. Consider Safety of Location: identify any risks associated with region in relation to personal safety and health concerns. Please note that USF does not send students to any countries for which there exists a U.S. State Department Warning ([http://travel.state.gov/](http://travel.state.gov/)). Since reciprocity is
a key component to any exchange, the Education Abroad Office cannot endorse the establishment of an exchange in a country for which there exists a Warning.

2. Determine required academic qualifications of participants. Determine how the academic program/courses offered by the foreign university mesh with USF’s, and vice versa, what courses would, on a regular basis, be open to exchange students.

3. Consider level of language proficiency required. If your College (or the University) does not have a significant number of students who can speak the language spoken at the foreign institution, then perhaps another form of cooperation involving faculty or scholars could be developed.

4. Consider academic calendar of foreign University; possible overlap with USF Calendar. Southern hemisphere calendars and even several European calendars will preclude a student from returning to USF in the following semester. (e.g. in France and Spain the fall semesters often end only at the end of January/early February.

5. Consider attraction of Location for students: safe/reliable transportation, cultural aspects, living environment.

6. Student Life – room & board options, student activities, support structure, etc.

7. Consider the overall appeal of the Exchange Program to USF Students, and also the anticipated successfulness of the program.

In regard to receiving international students, please consider the following:

1) In certain disciplines, it is imperative that each of the host institutions understands the foreign curriculum. It is common that incoming exchange students may not have had the necessary pre-requisites to be successful in the foreign institution.

2) Increasingly class size is a growing problem at USF -- so much so that upper-level degree-seeking students cannot take required courses. If international exchange students will not have access to needed classes, their time at USF will not be fruitful and will ultimately be detrimental to the institutional exchange relationships.
3) There should be someone within the department, college or system office who is the point person for incoming and outgoing exchange students. This will be important for the facilitation of incoming exchange students, advertising the program to outgoing students, as well as serving as a “home” to international students who may have significant cultural and other adjustment issues.

It is important that the host USF entity is very familiar with the deadlines, processes and information listed on USF’s Incoming Exchange pages: http://global.usf.edu/educationabroad/in-howtoapply.php

Departments and individual faculty who are interested in pursuing a new exchange agreement will reply upon the following documents as guidance: http://global.usf.edu/intl_agreements.php