My Trip Design Process

Step #1: Connect the dots between teaching philosophy,   
objectives, and student needs

Draw up a mission statement for your trip by answering the following questions:

Why are you planning this sojourn?

I am planning this sojourn because…

What are your objectives for your students?

My objectives are…

What are your department’s objectives for your students?

My department’s objectives are…

How will you help students achieve these objectives?

I will help my students by…

How will you assess student learning?

I will assess student learning by…

Read this sample mission statement inspired by Brett Fischer:

I believe students learn best during study abroad when they can engage in authentic interactions with local populations. During the sojourn to India, students will attend English classes focused on oral and written communication and participate in excursions and activities on various aspects of Indian culture. These activities will be coordinated in collaboration with host country partners and will stimulate cross-cultural exchange while promoting English language learning in real-life situations. Students will also be volunteering at a local orphanage in the afternoons and will prepare and lead recreational and educational activities with children who are living in often difficult life situations. At the end of their stay, the students will have to complete an evaluation in the form of a project based on their learning in English language, Indian culture, and international cooperation (volunteering).

Write your own mission statement by answering these questions:

Why are you planning this sojourn?   
(In other words, why do you want to travel with your students to this country?)

Your answer…

What are your objectives for your students?   
(In other words, what do you want your students to learn from this sojourn?)

Your answer…

What are your department’s objectives for your students?   
(In other words, what does your department and/or language program want students to learn?)

Your answer…

How will you help your students achieve these objectives?   
(In other words, what types of activity do you think will help your students learn?)

Your answer…

How will you assess student learning?   
(In other words, how will you know if your students have achieved the trip’s objectives?)

Your answer…

Step #2: Recognize gravity problems and problems  
that can be worked around

Step 2a: There are some problems related to planning your FSA that may seem impossible to overcome at first but you can find a way to solve them. However, there are also some gravity problems related to FSA that you won’t be able to solve. (For example, you can’t create a new academic calendar to accommodate your trip dates!)

List at least three gravity problems you are faced with at your college. Remember, gravity problems are problems that you can’t solve and need to find a way to work around.

* Problem 1
* Problem 2
* Problem 3

List at least two problems that you think you could solve given your time and workload constraints.

* Problem 1
* Problem 2
* Problem 3

Step 2b: After examining your gravity problems, you may realize that study abroad is not the right choice for you at this time. If that is the case, consult the website section on considering alternatives to study abroad.

Step #3: Brainstorm trip ideas and make three different plans

Brainstorm ideas for three different versions of your sojourn.

Sojourn #1: The FSA version that considers your current reality (your time constraints, your workload, etc.)

Your ideas…

Sojourn #2: The FSA version that is your contingency plan (in case version #1 doesn’t work out).

Your ideas…

Sojourn #3: The wild card version of your FSA if you had no constraints.

Your ideas…

Step #4: Build some prototypes

Remember that building some prototypes may include:

* Having a conversation about your plans with a teacher in another department or at another college who has already planned sojourns
* Investigating and comparing alternatives to study abroad if you realize that planning a trip right now would be too complicated

List at least one person to consult and at least one alternative to study abroad

* Contact person:

List at least one alternative FSA.

* Alternative to study abroad:

Step #5: Choose well

Take the time to consider the alternatives, build prototypes, and make pro-con lists. As you do this, you should also pay attention to your gut feelings (Burnett, 2021). After consulting with colleagues and exploring alternatives, answer the following questions:

Which sojourn decision feels right to you?

Your answer…

Which version of the sojourn fills you with excitement, not dread?

Your answer…