

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

INITIATIVES AT AIFS ABROAD

AIFS Study Abroad continues to elevate our commitment to creating an inclusive, supportive environment for program participants through extensive analysis of our program sites and resources, expanding inclusive practices, creating additional resources for students and their families, and increasing funding for opportunities abroad to make our programs as equitable as possible. Like our program participants, we continue to successfully navigate expected and unforeseen challenges in this journey to equity and inclusion, and to learn from these opportunities while growing as individuals and as an organization. We continue to strengthen this work through our Access, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) Plan. A strong foundation was set last year, and we are committed to continually building on that as we move ahead. As always, we welcome the opportunity to connect with you and learn how we might better serve your students and assist you and your institutions.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

In 2021 AIFS Abroad produced its inaugural Plan of Action for Diversity & Inclusion, a living document which serves as a framework to guide our organizational focus on inclusivity. All AIFS Study Abroad employees, our Board of Academic Advisors, and Alumni Ambassadors were asked for feedback on what our organizational priorities should be for this first iteration. We have begun to prioritize the following six themes based on the feedback received: Communications, Policies, Processes, Programs, Resources, and Staff Training. AIFS Abroad's employees have each made a commitment to the plan and have made taking action a priority. As we continue to move throughout this year, we are committed to integrating ADIE into the core functions of everyone's position to foster greater buy-in and a greater sense of collective commitment and individual accomplishments.



SITE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON SOCIAL IDENTITIES

We have added a site-specific social identity tab on the individual program pages of our website. This will help prospective participants to make informed decisions based on which resources and accommodations are available in each location and how their social identities might be received in country. We highlight the following identities: Access & Mobility, Adult Students, Emotional Support and Service Animals, First Generation, LGBTQIA+, Non-Binary Students, Neurological Diversity and Mental Health, Race and Ethnicity, Religion, Students on a Budget, Veterans, Health and Wellness, Women Abroad, and Safety. This was a huge endeavor, so we want to thank our AIFS Abroad colleagues who were instrumental in making this happen.

AIFS ABROAD LAUNCHED A NEW GRANTS INITIATIVE IN 2022

In efforts to make study abroad more financially equitable and to create greater access for everyone to participate, we have launched a new grants initiative that awards automatic grants to underserved students in global education. This will allow students to see what grants they are eligible for before they apply. This will assist them in making the best financial decision as they will have a more accurate understanding of the grant funding they will receive. Eligible students include those that attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), attend a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), receive a Pell Grant, receive the Boren Scholarship, Veterans who receive the GI Bill, and/or participants that receive a Fund for Education Abroad Scholarship. Students who meet any of the criteria are automatically eligible and no additional application is needed. Students may receive multiple grants, up to a maximum of \$2,500 for a semester study abroad program or \$1,500 for a summer, J-term, or internship program.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN SPANISH

To reach more students in traditionally underserved populations, we are working to have more key information available in Spanish. This includes details on the application and study abroad process and insurance coverage.

ON-GOING TRAINING WITH AIFS STAFF & HIRING PRACTICES

We are committed to ensuring all our staff have access to opportunities to develop professionally and gain knowledge that will better equip them to assist students from all backgrounds. Several AIFS Study Abroad staff around the globe were able to take part in AIDE related training & workshops to begin to think critically about how AIDE affects the roles that we have as well as the students and institutions we serve. Previous sessions included:

- » First generation college students
- » Supporting mental health on-site
- » An overview of Black Lives Matter in Costa Rica
- » Intercultural workshop
- » Accommodating learning needs on-site
- » Inclusive housing policies and best practice
- » How to be inclusive in cultural excursions
- » Social identity & privilege
- » Inclusive language
- » Understanding racism in the U.S.
- » Transgender student support
- » Helping Heritage seeking students integrate into host location
- » Supporting students with autism and ADHD

In addition to training and workshops, AIFS Abroad recognizes the importance of diversifying our staff to better represent and support the communities we are striving to serve. In hiring for existing and new positions, we have made a concerted effort to diversify our staff so that our organization is aligned with our AIDE initiatives and values. During the Interview process we have intentionally added questions to learn about each candidates' values on diversity and inclusion as we share our commitment and actions as well.

To learn more about our AIDE work scan the QR code that will take to the AIDE section of our website. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to partner we welcome you to reach out to Kory Saunders, ksaunders@aifs.com.

