

Episode 6: Monica Malhotra and Andrew Gordon on Making Study Abroad Accessible for All

[Music]

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> You're listening to Making Global Learning Universal, conversations about engaging diverse perspectives, collaboration and complex problem solving in higher education. On campus, online, in local communities and abroad. I'm your host, Stephanie Doscher, Director of Global Learning Initiatives at Florida International University.

ANDREW GORDON >> Access is important, but at the end of the day, we don't celebrate just students having access to colleges and universities. We celebrate the graduates. So similar we don't just celebrate, hey, we increased the number of students that are going abroad, how we actually position these students to truly benefit from this experience in a way that we as professionals in the field talk about. And we talk about the learning benefits, the interpersonal benefits, the career benefits. If we really want our students to take advantage of that, we also need to be honest that students need to be supported in the different ways, because we're all different people as our students are.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> That was Andrew Gordon, Founder and CEO of Diversity Abroad. I sat down with Andrew and our colleague Monica Malhotra of the National Clearing House on Disability and Exchange to talk about ways we can make international study, work, and travel accessible for all.

Monica and Andrew are field builders. They're organizations support a broad array of individuals, educational institutions, and for-profit, nonprofit and governmental entities committed to making study abroad more diverse, accessible, equitable and inclusive.

This conversation is full of information and resources. I've put links in the show notes, but do pay particular attention to what Andrew and Monica say about provider mindset, and striking a balance between progress and perfection. I think you're going to want to talk about this some more with your colleagues, so remember to download the discussion guide on the podcast website.

Now, here's my conversation with Monica and Andrew.

Maybe we could start by talking about the basics, because some of our listeners may not be familiar with your organizations and I think it would be good to set the stage with a little bit about your particular organizations missions and also how you, the role that you play within your organizations.

So, I think maybe we'll start with Monica, because Monica, I think your organization might be a little bit older, so, yeah, so we will, we'll did he ever to the elder. (Laughter). In the room.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> I will take that as a compliment.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> I know, I'm sorry. In this room. I know I am, I'm speaking organizationally.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Thanks, of course. So the national clearinghouse on disability and exchange is a project with a mission of increasing the number of people in disabilities participating in all types of international exchange programs.

Looking at Americans with disabilities as well as international students with disabilities. We do this two fold, so we're looking at one part of addressing and making sure people of disabilities know about these opportunities and on the other side advising practitioners, change practitioners on how to do it, how to plan for it, how to recruit people with disabilities. Those could be UCA programs, Department of State, community colleges, English programs, four-year universities, advising third party providers.

And together we've been doing this from the state department's burrow of educational and cultural affairs has been funding it for 25 years this year and has given mobility international USA the role of managing the grants. Mobility international USA, their mission is to advance the ability of rights globally. So as a whole we're looking at advancing disBill rights internationally by inviting disability advocates in different countries to come to where we're based in Eugene, Oregon, to learn about advocacy, disability rights, the US experience, what the Americans with Disabilities Act, training them to go back to their country to train more people with disabilities.

We see this with international exchanges, international development. The importance of people of disabilities being included and international development opportunities and international exchange. So that's where the clearinghouse comes in, is to focus on exchange and the importance of people of disabilities to be included to make the changes in the world, looking at disability rights as a whole all across the line.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Fantastic. So Monica, what role do you play in your organization.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> So I've been the project manager with the clearinghouse for five years. And so looking at different initiatives, working with our grant officer at the state department, doing trainings. Looking at, communicating with exchange practitioners to see, as you've mentioned how the field is changing and growing and people are wanting more of this information. So seeing how we can produce the trainings and our resources to talk more to exchange practitioners and to people of disabilities on how to act with the information, what information to we need.

So, through our clearinghouse, we're pretty much, it's a long title, National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange. (Laughter). But it is a clearinghouse because we really have a clearinghouse of information. It out reaches pretty much the world. We have to create a lot of online resources that are accessible for everyone to be able to access stories of people of disabilities who have done it from the US all across the globe as well as best practices, sharing what practitioners are doing in the field. So sharing stories of recruiting, funding, budgeting, getting data of people of disabilities who are participating and partners.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Okay. When you say accessible, do you also mean accessible in different languages? Like are you, do you have a multi lingual resource list?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Good question. We don't really have, we have some information in American Sign Language, and in international sign, as well as different, through a different projects, we have more resources in Spanish and Vietnamese, but our clearinghouse information is mainly in English.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Okay.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> And usually simple language. Accessible meaning, accessible for people who are blind, so they can access an accessible PDF. Videos are always captioned. We have word documents, meaning accessible for people with different disabilities.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Understood. Okay. Great. Thank you.

And Andrew, it is your turn. (Laughter).

ANDREW GORDON >> Well let me start out by saying happy 25th anniversary.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Thanks Andrew.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Oh, yeah, right on.

ANDREW GORDON >> What we have here, we're only 14 years old, so still that early teenage years. But no, as I said it's a pleasure to chat with everyone this morning. Morning for me. And so I'm CEO, founder of Diversity Abroad. And Diversity Abroad is consortium of over 300 colleges and universities, private organizations, nonprofit, government agencies around the world who share our mission, which is essentially that we want to create equitable act to the benefits of global education by empowering educators engaging with stakeholders and connecting students to resources and opportunity.

And really the heart of what we do, I would say the last word, opportunity, that's really the heart of what we're looking at as an organization. We know the power and the impact that global learning educational opportunities can have on young people both from an academic standpoint, interpersonal standpoint and increasing we're seeing the career benefits or career readiness benefits of an education can.

That all comes down to opportunity. So, how do we make sure that all young people regardless of their background have access to these type of opportunities. And are able to be successful as they're pursuing that.

Our name is Diversity Abroad and definitely the heart of or general assist of how we started was with traditional study abroad, but as you saw and I mentioned in our mission statement, really we're looking at is global learning, global education. So we're looking at what is diversity equity and inclusion mean both from out bond study abroad standpoint as well as from inbound international students.

And inbound international students, international students coming to a US campus or it could be a international student coming to campus to study outside of the US.

So looking at those two aspects of diversity inclusion in our field but also the third aspect which is one I think often we don't talk enough about is what is diversity equity inclusion actually mean for the profession itself. Who we hire, how we retain, advance professionals from all backgrounds to be successful in the field of international education.

So, ultimately the work that we do both engaging students and working professionals, is to reach our vision, that's the next generation of young people from diverse and traditional and diverse backgrounds are equipped with the skills, the knowledge and the global acumen ultimately deprived in the 21st century which we know is increasingly connected. And these kinds of opportunities are critical to the growth and development of young people.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> So, I think our listeners, having heard about the missions of your particular organizations, will really get why we're having this conversation today much -- today. And why we're having it together. In terms of our perspective that global learning, whether it's on campus which has been kind of the focus of you know my work at FIU for the last ten years or so, or if it's in the community online, or abroad, that global learning should be universally available and baked in, if you will, into all students education.

So, we share this kind of value, I think, in the missions of our organizations and our work, but I think it would be really helpful to go a little bit deeper into your personal connection to this mission. I'm curious, how did your consciousness, how did your perspective evolve that brought you into this work? And maybe it would be good to start with this question, with Andrew, because as you said, you're the founder and CEO of Diversity Abroad.

Share with us, if you would, the story of how Diversity Abroad came to be.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah. Absolutely. I mean I would like to say there is a deep consciousness that I had when founding Diversity Abroad. I was 24. (Laughter). And.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Right around the time that Monica's organization was being born.

ANDREW GORDON >> Around that time, absolutely. (Laughter).

No, it was interesting. So I had studied abroad several times. Studied abroad in Mexico, I spent a semester in southern Spain and also interned abroad once I graduated from college. And during my internship abroad, when I finished that, I came back to work. I was working at a consulting, accounting consulting firm for several years and in a boutique corporate real estate consulting firm. So nothing really connected to international education.

But at that point in my life, I was looking at what my next steps were and I was thinking through some of the experiences I had a tremendous impact on me. How I viewed myself, how I viewed the world and how I viewed opportunity. And things kept circling back to my experiences of studying abroad. And particularly what, I think was part of the general assist of diversity for -- genesis of diversity for us, was specifically thinking of the experience in Spain. I was on a fairly large term, I would say over a hundred students. And the program I was on, there was a handful of black and brown kids. And so I still have a tremendous experience. It was probably one of the most exciting six, seven months of my undergraduate career.

And so I knew the experience I had. I could see how it was impacting me several years later on. But then wondered why students like me weren't participating. So I had been involved in a variety of different diversity organizations, the firm that I was working at.

And so I start doing research on diversity and study abroad and this is 2005 when I started doing the research. And you know, it was interesting that there is, honestly, great organizations now, IDA, and IDE and so forth. They were tackling diversity, I'm sorry, tackling international education

as a whole, but there wasn't a central organization that was looking at diversity equity and inclusion abroad.

And at that time, I would say I was thinking broadly. There weren't organizations that were looking specifically at students color, how they were engaging with international opportunities.

So, again, I was, I would say kind of in the bay area, 2005, there is a problem. What you do, is you start a website.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Totally. (Laughter).

ANDREW GORDON >> That's really the genesis of Diversity Abroad or our platform of Diversity Abroad.

At the time I tell people we were definitely looking at diversity from a more narrow perspective; we were looking at just from the standpoint of students Colors. We weren't talking about students with disabilities or future college students or LGBTQ students, there were students with religious backgrounds. The six kind of groups we talk about as organization, we weren't really looking at all those groups at that time.

And so, yeah, that's the genesis. I would like to say this is my life's work that I knew from an early age. That wasn't the case. It really was right time, right place. And I think a passion that I have, I had and continue to have for young, people that don't have access to opportunity. Whatever the opportunity might be. I think that's part of the driving force of Diversity Abroad (indiscernible) making sure that regardless of ones background they have access to the different kind of opportunities that should be important to them as a student.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Got it. So you saw a problem. You wanted to solve it.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Monica, I think you've had kind of a different pathway.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Kind of similar and different.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Yeah.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> When I graduated high school in 97, I had no idea that international education was a field. (Laughter). I studied, I didn't study abroad during my undergraduate degree program, but I did my Masters degree in England. It was one of the most amazing years that I've had. It really shifted my career objectives and just personally confidence and building relationships with people from so many different backgrounds.

Came back to the US and learned about international education, worked at the University of Texas Austin for ten years and pretty early on, similar to Andrew was, you know, why are there not more international students with disabilities coming to study here.

And this is an amazing city, very accessible campus. I don't know why disability stuck out for me. You know, I worked with disability groups in like high school and just did some work, but I was very

aware of it. And built relationships with our disability office and then confirmed that, yeah, there is not that many international students of disability studying here at a campus with 55,000 students. Why was this not happening.

So, then I started to do some trainings and building liaisons with, liaison activities with our disability office, doing trainings with our ESL teachers to get more students with disabilities entering DSL programs. Are learned about the clearinghouse and knew after probably five, six years that I was always integrating disability into my work, that this is what I wanted to do full time.

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis right after grad school. And I think sometimes with that question, people want to know the disability background. Like you must have a disability, that's why you do what you do. But you don't have to have a disability to know that this work is important.

My disability never impacted my exchange program or my travels. You know, I had MS now for over 15 years, and I live with it. It is what it is, but it doesn't impact my work, because people with maybe significant disabilities that do impact their lives on a daily basis, you know those are the lot of the students that we have to do more work to share how they can be included in these opportunities.

You know, I want to put emphasis on our founder Susan Sygall and she has a lot of the same experiences as Andrew with founding Ability International USA in 1981. So the Clearinghouse was established 25 years ago but the organization as a whole was established in 1981. She's a wheelchair rider. She was, received a rotary scholarship. Went to Australia and same thing, where is all the disabled people on this program? They are not here. Why are they not here?

She went hiking. She did all types of activities as a wheelchair rider. And we want more people with disabilities to access these opportunities. For so many reasons with employment, with confidence, with public speaking, so many things that it gives you, why should we limit this opportunity to, you know, it's not exclusive, it's not an exclusive program.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> So, this is very interesting to me how each of you are talking about how you connected from somewhat, even though it might be a little bit more of a looser or more tangential connection for you Monica, but you're talking about connecting in some way in order to enable others to have an experience, right?

So, is that also kind of the work that you are doing as your organization to connect with faculty, administrators, funders, who may not have any kind of a disability, who may or may not be a person of color themselves or a part of whatever kind of group of students that we're trying to do better by, right?

How do you help your constituencies to make these connections so that programs are more inclusive, accessible to all?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> It's a great question. And just, you know, within the five years, I want to just kind of stay within the five years I've been at my (indiscernible). Early on the conversations with administrators and practitioners in the field were, do we have to do this?

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Okay. There we go.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> To visit the law, do I have to do it. Probably in the last two years, the conversation has shifted to how I want to do it, how do I do it, let me know disability language, how to budget for this, how, how do I include people who are deaf or blind, how do I make this happen? Because they're seeing that people with disabilities want it and they're doing it.

The number of people with disabilities participating in exchange programs are significantly increasing, according to IIE Open Doors Report. We continually see the numbers increasing. You know, we also call this generation ADA generation, who grew up with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Those are the students that are in the schools, that are milling about studying abroad and all types of exchange programs, if it's Peace Corps, whatever type of exchange it is. They're saying I want it. That is my right and we want to make sure, you know, faculty members, administrators at schools know that, hey, get ready, you know. This is their right.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Yeah.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> It's not your choice based on your preconceived notions if a person of disability can or cannot go or participate in these programs, in kinder terms. But pretty much showing that we have these resources to support practitioners and administrators to make these things happen, to make these programs more inclusive.

You know, we're a tiny organization based in Eugene, Oregon but we have a number of resources and it's free. That's our ultimate goal to say, we know that you're not disability experts. We have to acknowledge that a hundred percent. You don't have to be. Just make sure that students know this is an opportunity for them and the student and we will help make it happen, support you on those strategies to include people of disabilities.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> I think you kinds of answered a follow-up question that I was going to ask you. I was curious about what led to that shift from do we have to, to how. I think you answered it in that, I'm not sure exactly how to describe it, but it's a wave of demand borne of the Americans with Disabilities Act, right?

So, we have a generation of students who have been empowered, who have lived in a world in which they've been told, yes you can, right? And so, what I hear you saying, correct me if I'm wrong, is that one of the ways that you help institutions, administrators, faculty connect to the resources that you have available is by helping them connect to the demand. Helping them to see that there are students that want this. It's not about, do we want to provide this as an institution, but how do we satisfy the demands of our students, whose tuition we're taking, right?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Yeah. Yeah. And it's going to conferences and every professional has experience. So you know, I taught history. To a person who was wheelchair user or a had a student who was blind that wanted to go abroad. But everyone is having their stories now.

Before, because the students weren't coming in, but more students, just like you said, are empowered and want to take advantage of these opportunities. And so, a lot of staff and administrators through these programs are saying, what do I do?

And of course, the exchange programs and exchange advisors want to see it happen, but they may not have those answers immediately.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Right.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> So we, at conferences doing these type of presentation creating focused workshops or trainings to those advisors and just creating more awareness of what we do and strategies that other programs have done. That's really great to see finally that it's more of the how.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Beautiful.

Andrew.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah, I would say for less based on, so as Monica was saying with ADA that students have grown up with that and so on and oh so forth for participation. I would say something similar, that the population of students we see coming into our colleges, universities now are a much more diverse population, ethnically, socioeconomically, more pursuits of being first in their families to go to college and students that are aware and identify closer with other aspects of their identity.

So, similarly, that's just coming on our campuses. And I think with international education what's interesting is that you had, I think you've always had those that have had a real passion for this work, for making sure that young people regardless of their background have access to this opportunity. Like professionals who we all truly believe in the power of global learning opportunities and saying, you know, we don't want to, we don't want to say this is a phenomenal experience, we want students to have access to it. So you always have those with a passion.

But I think as the demographics has changed I think as higher education as a whole has embraced diversity equity inclusion not as kind of a check the boxes is a nice thing to do, but more so, this is an integral act, this is an integral part of our operation, this is an integral part of how we as an institution or as an organization will be successful. And as you all properly stated, serving these students who we are taking their tuition dollars from in the first place.

So, that happened, I think what's really positive is that, I don't think begrudgingly, but I think professionals in international education, professionals to work in other aspects of higher education and student success and diversity inclusion, and so on and so forth are saying, yeah, diversity inclusion also matters for international education, whether that's how we're supporting international students coming to our campus and supporting them engaged in the variety of American students. Or even helping them to think about how their identity has impact to experience, how we're not just recruiting more diverse students to go abroad but also thinking how do we support their success when they're received.

So really kind of moving away from, I think when we first started so much of the conversation was about access, access. Don't get my wrong, access is important, but at the end of the day, we don't celebrate just students having access to college and universities, we celebrate them graduating. So simply, we don't just celebrate, hey, we increase the number of students that are going abroad. How we actually position these students to really benefit from this experience in a way that we as professionals in the field talk about and talk about the learning benefits and the interpersonal benefits the career benefits.

If we really want our students to take advantage of that, we have to be honest that students need to be supported in different ways, because we're all different people as our students are. So what's been really exciting to see I think at the higher education community, exclusive international education community, take on this challenge and say, you know, we know how phenomenal these

opportunities are, we know the impact they have on young people. How can we as professionals be more effective in our job so that we're serving all of our students in a way that they actually benefit from these opportunities the way we know they should.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Okay. First of all, I wish the whole world could see the fire in our eyes right now. (Laughter). Because it's really exciting to me. And I'm feeding off of it. And I'm also so glad that you just said what you did, because I think what you're opening the door for us to talk about now is design.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Okay. The design of the study abroad experience. And I'm delighted that you brought that up. And let me see if I can connect a couple things here. One has to do with the fact that in international education, there is, and with multicultural or our DEI offices, there are those of us who say, oh, my gosh, like there is so much overlap in our work. And there are others of us who say, well we do two different things.

Your organizations really sit at the meeting point of that work, right?

ANDREW GORDON >> Um-hmm.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> And in terms of how we define global learning at FIU, so we define it as this process. It's not what you learn or where you learn, but how you learn. Right? And the with whom you learn matters.

So, it's this process that even gauges diverse people with diverse perspectives, diverse knowledge, diverse skills, diverse in all the different ways of defining diversity including cognitive diversity, right? We can look the same, we can be like twins, but we may think about the world in very different ways.

So it's a process that even gauges diverse people in collaborative efforts to understand and address complex problems that transcend our borders of difference, right?

And so, at FIU, we think of any course that is a global learning course no matter if it takes place on campus, online, in the community or abroad. We need to capitalize. We need to make use of as a resource the diversity of those with whom we're learning, and bring all of our different perspectives and skill sets to this common space of understanding and experience, a problem, an article, an observation, some kind of common.

So, when you talk about, Andrew, how do we make sure that all of our students are benefiting, what are those design attributes of a study abroad experience that is going to enable all of our students to will get something out of the study abroad experience, but also bring something to the study abroad experience, right?

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah. I mean, interesting. I want to back-track a little to what you were saying about sometimes that tension between what's happening.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Please.

ANDREW GORDON >> The (indiscernible) offices and international education or global learning really at the core. This is why these organizations talk so much about equitable access to opportunity. Because at the core that's what everybody wants, right? We want our students to be successful. Whether you're a faculty member, whether you're a provost, whether you work in the diversity office, student success program, whatever it might be, as a whole, I'm going out on a limb and say most folks working in the Higher Ed space are working there because at some level they want to see young people be successful. Maybe not young people, they want to see students be successful. I don't want to be ageist here.

So, that really is, I think the organization where Weaver seen our success is being able to focus on that. When we talk about folks in the diversity inclusion office, it's almost less about global learning itself, study abroad itself an more so about the output of opportunity. How are we making sure our students are positioned to have opportunity. These are ways they can be better positioned to take advantage of a variety of options, we talked about before.

And that's something that we can all rally behind as a whole. I think there is, messages resonated very much, not just about folks in diversity offices, but I think in higher education as whole, when we're talking about the upper administrators and otherwise being able to say, that this is about access to opportunity. This is about student success. That is ultimately the playground that we're all kind of playing in. So how do we make that connection. And you know, doing so seeing how we're able to bring people to the table who may sure (indiscernible). And global learning is not for me. Or diversity inclusion is not really, not diversity conclusion thing, not international thing.

So I want to start out by saying that, and I think once we have that mindset and then we come to the table and looking at design. Is looking at design from a holistic of standpoint. Diversity Abroad has a set of diversity inclusion guidelines. It's called the aide group. AIDE is acronym for access, inclusion, diversity, equity. And the whole idea behind or the genesis behind the AIDE roadmap was to say how can an international education office, particularly education abroad office from point A to point Z implement diversity, equity inclusion practices, policies that are one, going to help increase participation of students from a variety of different backgrounds, but B from operational standpoint support those students' success while they're on program.

What does that look like from a program design standpoint? Where are we running programs? What is the curriculum look like? What are the pro curricular activities? Our program leaders, are they thinking about the overall experience in an inclusive lens. What is going to be like for a student with disabilities? What is it going to be like going to, going to an afternoon can country with African American students, that's going to be a unique experience, what does that look like?

So all these different components that go into the experience, are really thinking from point A through point Z. We think about students coming back, reentry acts kind of things.

How are we leveraging students experience once they get home to continue that learning in a way that empowers the students to go back into their communities and talk about the power, the impact of global learning, global educational experiences on that.

So, I think when we look at a design standpoint, we're really looking at it not just from the transactional aspect of how we deliver a program, but really what is it that we're doing. It's just transactional, I say this often and I truly believe it, if it's just transactional, particularly from an education abroad standpoint, they're more just glorified travel agents. We're moving Monica from point A to point B.

I don't think any of us feel that. I think we know what we're doing is so much more than that. It's so much more than that because of the experience we're giving to students. It's something that is well thought out and thought out through an inclusive lens of how is this going to be for students who are coming to us with a variety of different backgrounds as a whole. Both the challenges we need to think about that they may face but also I think something I'm really glad you brought this up, the opportunity or the strengths that they bring because of their diverse backgrounds to a program, to help enrich that overall learning experience for all students, regardless, like Monica you were saying, doesn't make a difference if sometimes it's a disability or not, (indiscernible) everyone can learn from each other in the unique perspective that we bring based on our individuals.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Fantastic. Are those kind of stories that Andrew was just talking about, of how curriculum is designed, the co-curricular activities, with that lens of serving our students with disabilities but also what do our students with disability bring to the exchange or abroad experience for others. Is that the sort of thing that one can find in the clearinghouse?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Yes. I think it's important like Andrew addressed, it's holistically, not looking at those numbers, but looking at what the organization is doing from the very beginning, from recruitment to really make sure the student with disability feels included, accepted, in the program and not just like maybe a side, we're going to make this happen, but it's not the student isn't fully integrated in the program.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Right.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Through different accommodations, we don't, we want to student to be fully integrated, so they can share and be part of that student experience with their peers and benefit from the same opportunities.

When we look at practitioners asking about wanting students of disabilities to disclose so they themselves can modify the program, we don't want it to be the emphasis of the program necessarily, but being able to leave a lot of the information about the program open and transparent so that the student with the disability is empowered to make their own decisions.

So, you know from the beginning starting with recruitment, we have a lot of resources through our clearinghouse on, from recruitment and as Andrew mentioned reentry. What are these experiences that we're providing and leaving open for all students with and without disabilities, without the student with the disability feeling isolated from the design of the program. You know and looking at the universal design from the application stage, from the recruitment stage and offering opportunities through reentry to be a mentor, to share their story, and to maybe been as intern or advocate for other students with disabilities.

Many program providers want that information for the disability to be on that application stage. But if we are asking the question up front for a student even to apply if they have a disability, what are we saying? What's our message? There is no reason to know that information if the student wants to join the program.

If the student is accepted based on their merit or whatever other requirements are there, then at that stage, what opportunities and what information as an organization are we providing to show that everybody is included in these programs.

So, at that point, then the student with disability will probably feel more open, confident and comfortable to share what their unique needs are. So at that design stage we can look at how to integrate the students based on what their unique needs are.

It's difficult to design a program, you know, universal design is one thing but it's difficult looking at the success and integration of all students if we don't know what those unique needs might be. We start at universal design but then we still have to leave it open to have conversations with students, with and without disabilities of what those needs might be.

Entering a different disability culture, having resources or connections and having that conversation, you know, what does a student with a disability want to meet other people with disabilities or disability organizations in different country. Personally I think it's a great opportunity, but that's me. Maybe other people of disabilities want to be on the program and just experience what that disability culture is like, but not have to identify with it or have to go to the organizations based on what the program thinks will be best.

So, we want to try to make it open for the students to be able to communicate what they would want in that program.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> So I'm going to ask you if you wouldn't mind taking a moment to tell us just a little bit or summarize what you're talking about what you talk about universal design. We have listeners of season one of the podcast in 30 countries so far and six continents. An not all of us may be familiar with what you mean when you say it. Because you're talking about something specific, universal design.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Um-hmm. Yeah. Especially I think connected to more exchange programs. Usually programs will look at a person with disability or plan for a person with disability and make those unique accommodations. If it's to provide interpreters or housing accommodations, but how can we design the program for people of disabilities from the very beginning? Do we already have housing options set up?

So it's inclusive of people who are deaf, who are blind, who are wheelchair users, for people with all types of disabilities. So it's a shared experience for everybody, looking at housing options, looking at the academic course work, looking at the materials, how are we providing materials. If it's videos, if it's handwritten activities. If there is a person who is blind and there is handwritten activities, what are different accommodations or how can you make it more universal where that's not an accommodation that has to be needed because everything is kind of open and using the term universal at that point.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Um-hmm.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Yeah. Including people of disabilities at every stage of it. Of course there is going to be unique needs for different students, but then still having it already prepared and integrated into the design of the program, looking at different activities, if you have different hikes or you know what other outside of academic course work what other activities you have that could be inclusive of people with all types of disabilities.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Um-hmm.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Looking at, you know, it's not about designing, thinking what people with disabilities in mind. That's what it really is.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Thank you. And you know what, we'll also link to resources on universal design in the show notes.

One question I have for both of you has to do with obstacles to both accessing the program and then within the program. Most of us, we can see certain obstacles, they're visible. We know that it's expensive to study abroad. It's more expensive if you need an interpreter, or if you need another kind of an aide of some sort. It's expensive for all students.

We know it's also expensive in terms of time that we have so much pressure on our students to, for completion, to complete more quickly. Part of that is us doing right by our students that we're taking their tuition, but it's also in certain states and in public institutions in particular, you know, our funding dollars depends on how quickly we can get students through, so it suppresses actually supporting students in study abroad.

So we can see expense, we can see some of the physical limitations. But are there some obstacles that are less obvious that you might kind of open our eyes to?

ANDREW GORDON >> I think part of the challenge we've had in our field is that normally when we think about object attack he is, we have thought about it through a deficit model. Our students don't have enough money. Our students have disabilities, they can't do this. Their families don't know. So we put the onus on the student.

So we're saying that hey, we have like the best thing going on in town with global programs, but these students just, they can't access it. And so I think that, that mindset in itself has been probably one of the broader obstacles. And I know from the perspective of Diversity Abroad and the work that we're doing, Monica you all said it likewise, is really kind of flipping the table and saying, no, you know what, the students are coming to us. We know, we know who they are. We know how they're coming to us. That's not going to necessarily change.

So, how do we change our practices, our policies, our operation the way we engage with students, the way we develop these opportunities, the way we put support systems in place to meet the needs of the students who are coming to us.

We can't say, hey, we've been doing it this way for X amount of years, we can keep doing it this way. It's like, no, we have to be able to change and adapt as the different student populations come about. So really that's, kind of mentioned the AIDE roadmap earlier. We really go back to that often because the focus of looking at this thing. How do we structurally change what we're going to be able to support our students. Not just say, hey, you know we need more money and need more scholarships, yes.

More scholarships would be great, but I often add, show me a problem in society that we just throw money at it, and we fix the problem. That's when the hands go up. Because that's usually just throwing money at a problem doesn't work. We ask how does the structural change work that we're doing.

So, we as professionals, it's us, our ability to continue to, one, I think push ourselves. Monica that really resonated with success. We adopt know who we're working with, how can we be successful.

That's really resonating with me. Because I think back to, that question how are we as professionals continuing to develop ourselves to deal with better support students who are coming to our ourselves to support them. And the other aspect of it being, you know, how are we building structures so that we're also able to support the students who we're talking about.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Oh man. I am so glad that you said that. You did what I asked, which is to open our eyes to what we're not seeing. And we're not seeing ourselves. Right? Right, we're not so much looking at, again, the process. What is the process, the structure that we're setting up. That makes me ask the question of have you noticed any unintended kind of beneficial consequences or kind of overflow of this work that you do with institutions to look at ourselves, right, and how we are enabling opportunities for all, how we are providing pipe lines and on ramps for all.

Have you heard any stories of this having an impact on other aspects of the institution?

ANDREW GORDON >> I'll jump in. Absolutely yes. Really I think it's interesting, you start going down this road, particularly if you look, as we look at ourselves and develop ourselves. And in so much of diversity, equity inclusion work is our own experiences our own biases, all these things we bring to the table as professionals and being able to impact that and address that. And what we see is yes, that absolutely helps with the work that we do engaging with students. But it also helps as we're starting to hire new people to come to our offices. It helps as we can empathize with our colleagues across campus and different units that we're trying to engage with, and so on and so forth.

Honestly, it makes us better human beings. Really the easiest way of saying it, the more that we are able to be aware of that. Just like the, the bias that we may bring, the things that we might be doing to hinder others from having access to opportunity or from us being able to engage with someone who might be different than us. That is the beauty of this work is that whereas yes, everything we're doing as a whole is focused on global education, but the principles that we're learning, you know, through the work that (indiscernible) is doing, through the work of Diversity Abroad, otherwise are principles that we can take with us as we engage with different aspects of the campus, not just our specific role within international education.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> The two of you are field builders, right? Or I'm telling you, you're field builders. (Laughter).

Right? I mean that's the space that you occupy as national, as international organizations.

I am curious, do you work with third party providers? Do you work with, what other organizations do you work with? I know that you work with colleges and universities, but are there other organizations that you partner with in order to, to reach your mission?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> This is Monica, I, we partner with a lot of third party providers and then doing trainings. We've also partnered with CIEE for instance, and they, through our partnership with them, they created 25 scholarships for students with disabilities for the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Each career at their conference they invite MIUSA to come and do a session on disability just to ensure that disability is always represented at their conference and they also invite an alumni

voice, so we always get an alumni out of CIEE or another international exchange program to come and present with us and share their experience and tips with the audience.

And Diversity Abroad as well as the CIEE and a number of other organizations leading exchange programs are part of our round table consortium. So the clearinghouse has 25 organizations of leading exchange and disability organizations come together to kinds of build the bridge between disability and exchange. We meet once a year in the DC and continuously engage on how we can collaborate more and build that connection stronger.

We're invited by different you know, (indiscernible) ID. I accept different organization to do more customized trainings to what their resources and questions and experiences are.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah. I would say likewise Diversity Abroad you look at our consortium, it's a interesting mix of colleges and universities. You know, the US, everywhere from like community colleges through Ivy leagues. A growing number of institutions outside the US; college and universities as well. And then we work with a number of providers organizations from a few different perspectives. I think one of the perspective I have training and development both of their teams here in the US as well as their teams outside the US for out reach. Diversity Abroad has extensive out reach to the student communities, the different diversity back grounds that we talk about, so they'll invite organizations to connect their opportunities, their scholarships their programs for universities outside the US. Or graduate parameters. It's also to connect those to the students and the families that we work with.

An then with governments, both working with ECA, but also governments outside the US. Recently started working with a education Ireland. We had a longstanding relationship with the DAAD. And in other governments to really promote education in their countries, to the students and professionals that we engage with. But also to show that their countries are open. And are open to students from a variety of different backgrounds.

Like I use the DAAD as a case study with that and the work that we've done with them. Sometimes people think of Germany, they may not think diversity, but Germany is an extremely diverse country from a variety of different perspectives. So working with them to show our community that this is a welcoming destination for students whether they want to study abroad, do a full degree, do a full bright, whatever it might be.

So, those, those areas. I think when we talk about our mission statement, when we say empowering educators engaging stakeholders and connecting students resources and opportunities is all that. Hiring educators meeting through education, approximate natural development an access to resources. Engaging our stakeholders, whether that be government agencies, universities outside the US providers. Or even increasingly corporations that are looking to hire young people with international experience.

And connecting students to resources and opportunities. Those resources can be learning resource and opportunities can be everything from internship opportunity once they get back from studying abroad to a scholarship to help them go over seas, like a gill man or something along those lines.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Okay. So, this is mine, I want to address that obstacle question again and how that obstacles coincides with looking at ourselves. With a lot of staff that run programs, we always hear kind of the need to have everything a hundred percent before including people of

disabilities. So having that expectation to be a hundred percent, to have a red carpet ready to layout kind of prevents a lot of conversations in practices and steps from actually happening.

And connecting with ourselves, when I've had a lot of conversations, more on a one-on-one with advisors, it's, I remember being an advisor for ten years with international students, and never felt that maternal instinct come out so strong, (Laughter), until that point. But it was like, I was very protective with the students and wanted their success, wanted their nurture. And a lot of advisors have that.

The intention, there is nothing wrong with that intention to protect all students, but then also to be aware of how that's preventing the students success.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> You're taking it upon yourself to actually not include people of disabilities because you don't feel like you're a hundred percent ready. But that's not the students situation, so it's taking away from the students abilities and strength and from the very beginning. You know, you put the resources out there, create that conversation, create a safe space for students to feel comfortable and confident speak, disclosing information with you, so then you can work towards being inclusive. And unfortunately we're not going to be a hundred percent probably in our lifetime, and that's okay. We just have to take those steps without that red carpet to make sure we're working towards an inclusive program.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah. Can I just jump in?

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Please.

ANDREW GORDON >> I want to clap, because if I had a mic drop I would do that. (Laughter). But I'm serious. Everything Monica says, it's like check, check, check, the motion that we're going to be perfect in anything in life, like who is perfect? None of our office people are perfect but we still do the work. It's the notion that people with disabilities are just Diversity Abroad or just (indiscernible) being perfect to do it. It's like, no, you're kind of just saying it's not going to happen. Because you're never going to be perfect.

So, that dual kind of that dual path that Monica has mentioned, yeah, we have to be better ourselves as professionals in our offices and our operations and how we help ourselves and so on and so forth. But also realize we're not dealing with broken birds here. These are young people, young adults. We need to give them the tools and resources to help them navigate these experiences, help prepare them.

That's one of the things that we hear from students who have had a variety of challenges broth. It's never, I shouldn't have gone. It's I wish I would have known. So given the tools and resources to help will them navigate while we're at the same time being more connective in our work, and we'll make progress. It's never going to be perfect because we're imperfect individuals. So it's never perfect. But we can continue to make really good progress.

The only, I say the only failure is the notion, is that notion like hey we have to be perfect and then we'll do it. It's not going to happen, because you're never going to be perfect.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> So, if I hear you correctly, you're saying what you're contributing to the field is we're not here to make study abroad easy, we're just here to make it possible.

ANDREW GORDON >> Yeah, (indiscernible) yeah.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> No, not exactly. It's not, you know, I think programs might have that expectation to say, give me the answer. And Stephanie, we talked about this in our initial conversation, I can't give you an answer. I can give you many resources and give you some tips and advice to see if that would work with your program, but I can't give you the answer. There is no answer, because every situation and every person is different.

And just like Andrew said, you give and make sure that you share the resources and all the tools for students to be successful. And share it openly and inclusively with the students, and give them that confidence that you want them in the programs. And that, you know, freedom to fail as well.

You know, we can talk about success but they also have the freedom to fail in the programs. And we can't put expectations on students with disabilities or students from other diverse backgrounds. We want you to know about these opportunities but it's not for everybody realistically. We hope it is because we might have our own experiences but not to put that type of pressure on the students to succeed as well.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> I mean if study abroad were easy it wouldn't be transformational.

ANDREW GORDON >> Exactly. Yeah. It is that balance between, you know, we want to push students. You know, there are things that happen based on their identity, that's just like hey, that's wrong, that's not something you should have to deal with. How can we support you in this situation. How do you get tools and resources. Navigate and so on and so forth.

But the notion that this is just, we're trying to make this easy, I would say the opposite. I think to your point. Try to make it possible. And then have the, have a structure so that student can actually really benefit from, from the opportunities.

But as, as Monica has said, it's not going to be for everybody. 330,000 students go abroad. Out of what, 16 million, 18 million. It's not, everyone is not doing it. So I don't think the idea is that it's supposed to be for everyone. But we want to increase numbers, absolutely, we want to support students success through study abroad, but I think that's kind of circles back to what we started talking about in the beginning. When we talk about global education, it just can't be study abroad. Because every student is not going to study abroad. That's okay. I don't think, that's why kind of waving the white flag of failure or surrender, I think it's not realistic for a variety of reasons every student wants to study abroad. It doesn't mean every student should have access to global learning opportunities that should be part of a well rounded 21st century higher education experience so. It's also looking at how do we leverage the international students that are coming to campus to their own benefit, but also to the benefit of domestic students. How are we looking at what global learning, what global education means on a campus as a whole. And study abroad being an important part of the that but not the only thing. Because if it was the only thing, then from a statistical standpoint we're not being successful right now.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> So glad you said that.

So, when we started, we talked about your missions as an organization. We talked a little bit, we've hinted at some of the resources that you have available for people.

So, our listeners out there, they may be wondering how do I connect to these organizations, right? Is there something there for me? And in fact some may be thinking, well I may have nothing to do with study abroad, but these organizations seem to overlap with what my interests and my mission and my own personal mission is.

So, what kind of resources do you have available for people to connect with you?

MONICA MALHOTRA >> I would encourage anybody to sign up for our E-News just to start getting information about what type of resources we produce and share. What types of events that we attend. How our activities are multi dimensional so we have done publications, videos, trainings, online resources, podcasts, social media campaigns. So that platform our E-News is a really great way to stay engaged in what we are doing and producing.

One of our key accommodation forms to know exactly what type of resources we produce is knowing what accommodation questions to ask. And as I mentioned before, a lot of our exchange practitioners are not disability experts and you're not expected to be. And many times students with disabilities that are going abroad this could be their first time going abroad. So how do you ask those questions. What questions do you ask. And so we've got forms for different disabilities and they can go through and kind of advise and know what questions to ask or engage with the student. And then it's two parts. So there is kind of like if they answer yes to this question, this is what it means.

So, that has been really helpful and many schools have adapted it internally based on what their internal practices are. So that's a really great resource.

And our web resource library it's filtered search to people can search from their role as a person with disability, an American with disability and international participant with a disability, an exchange professional disability type, look at different countries, destination countries. So those are great stories or tip sheets and practices that individuals can access. And just to review our over 500 online resources.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> That's fantastic, I can even imagine faculty that are traveling abroad. They may not be leading a study abroad program but they could go to your website, they could find out information. Or just anyone who is listening, a family member who wants to go to a destination they can use your resources.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Absolutely.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> It's very open access, very applicable to different things. I'm thinking about institutes and events that I have for domestic and international participants. I will probably go to your website for that checklist so that I can make sure that I'm designing for accessibility. Awesome. That's helpful.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Okay.

ANDREW GORDON >> And, also Diversity Abroad, so one, we maintain two platforms. Our professional website, diversity network DOT org. and they be our student website Diversity Abroad.com.

An then really the resources that we have on the professional side are split into a few categories. First is our AIDE roadmap that I mentioned earlier. This is really a set of guidelines for diversity inclusion practices. So if you're saying to yourself, hey, whether you're faculty member, administrator or advisor, whatever role you maybe in. You say to yourself, hey, you know what, I want to be more effective in this work, what do I do. And the AIDE roadmap is really that, what do I do. It's a guide. We use the word roadmap, because it is a roadmap for how you can get to assess and then develop and implement diversity included in your practices in the work that you're doing as international educators.

So, that's one of the resources that we have. A tremendous amount of professional development learning opportunities. Everything from a diversity inclusion certificate program for those that work in international education, whether inbound or outbound, to online short courses. Obviously our annual conference that we run every year, in other institutes and workshops and training that we do to really help develop professionals and empower them to take this work on at their institution but in the organizations, in order to change both who have access to global programs and how we're supporting success of young people, our students in doing that.

The third resource for professionals that kind of category, is just advising resources. Everything from advising guides to updates on the diversity inclusion climate in different countries for professionals to help keep folks abreast as far as what's going on in different places. That's where we're looking at how we support students. And whether that's supporting international students, supporting study abroad students, domestic study abroad students, whatever way it maybe.

On the student side, on our student web side diversity.com, really the three things we do there is we say, connection, community, and then opportunity. So really connecting students to resources like scholarships or programs and so on and so forth. In the community, providing space for young people to connect with each other. Who are going abroad and connect with mentors and so on and so forth.

Then the third area is content, I spoke areas of content. That's highly specialized content geared toward the student populations we were talking about. And very exciting in January, we're launching a new advising platform it's called a broad 360. And it is digital live platform that is geared towards students from diverse and unrepresented backgrounds and is meant to be able to be an extension of the work that advisors are already doing, supporting the students.

So, very excited about the work we do, the resources we have. Some resources are behind the firewall. We also have a tremendous amount of resources that are open access.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Fantastic, so that's January 2020 that 360 is coming out. Woo. Congratulations, so celebrating the old, celebrating the new. Something borrowed, something blue. You're wearing a blue shirt. Andrew. I borrowed this jacket. (Laughter). So, we have it all going on.

I just want to thank both of you for joining this conversation today. I think it was all the richer because it was this dialogue between us. We're all in this work together to make global learning accessible and high quality for all of our students, whatever the modality. I really look forward to collaborating more with both of you in the future. Thank you so much.

ANDREW GORDON >> Not at all.

MONICA MALHOTRA >> Thank you, Stephanie.

ANDREW GORDON >> Thank you, Stephanie.

And Monica, any time you get a chance, to do this, it's great. So thank you. You're welcome.

.

STEPHANIE DOSCHER >> Thanks for listening to this episode of Making Global Learning Universal. This podcast is brought to you by FIU's Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Media Technology Services and our Disability Resource Center. You can find all our episodes, show notes, transcripts and discussion guides on our web page, globallearningpodcast.FIU.edu. And if this episode was meaningful to you, please share it with colleagues, friends and students. You can even give it a rating on iTunes. Thanks again for tuning in and for all you do to make Global Learning Universal.