

# DIS ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

with DIS response

MAY 2015

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The review team is pleased to present the following report on the DIS program in Copenhagen, Denmark. The information in this report was gathered in cooperation with the onsite staff and faculty and the DIS North American office. We wish to thank them for their extraordinary efforts, without which this report would not have been possible in such a short period of time.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS) in Copenhagen, Denmark operates a quality educational program for American undergraduate students from a wide range of colleges and universities. DIS offers 23 academic programs with over 200 upper-level elective courses. The academic programs cover a wide range of disciplines and domains that appeal to a broad spectrum of students. The curriculum is taught with academic rigor by instructors with experience, expertise, and passion. The new leadership model is poised to implement the sustainable enrollment strategy and to expand to open a new program in Stockholm, Sweden. The review team was impressed with the extraordinary level of positive support for DIS among students, staff and faculty, who also identified DIS as a dynamic place to study and work.

The curriculum of DIS is centered on the experience of living for a summer, semester, or full academic year in Copenhagen. The courses are embedded in the language, culture, society, research environment, commerce, and history of Denmark. Over the past 10 years the curriculum has increasingly been cast within a broader continental context, with study tours to different European locations forming a central component of all its academic programs.

Student enrollment has grown dramatically over the past decade. Part of this is undoubtedly related to the quality of the program that is transmitted to prospective students both through publicity materials and by word of mouth. A second factor is surely the increased prominence and attractiveness of Copenhagen as a destination for travel.

Recommendations from the previous review have been implemented and have contributed to further enhancing the quality of the DIS program. DIS continues to be a leader in providing a comprehensive support structure that facilitates a holistic student experience.

The review team offers a number of recommendations. The recommendations are presented within each section so that their context can be fully appreciated. These recommendations are intended as tweaks to enhance an already high quality program. The current program is largely in rude health and thus no wholesale changes are suggested.

## METHODOLOGY

The evaluation site visit team was composed of:

- Jonathan Gewirtz, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Minnesota
- Kim Hindbjorgen, Assistant Director, Learning Abroad Center, University of Minnesota
- Derek Lackaff, Assistant Professor, Department of Communications, Elon University
- June Nobbe, Assistant Vice Provost, Student Affairs, University of Minnesota

The four members of the site review team reviewed the history, annual reports, and past reviews. They studied the course listings and reviewed course syllabi for program courses; they reviewed statistical information on the participants (numbers, gender, ethnicity statistics, major, sending institutions, etc.), staff and instructor curriculum vitae, the pre-departure handbook, and the on-site orientation schedule. In preparation for the site visit, DIS informed its faculty, key administrative staff, and students of the review team visit.

The schedule of the review is attached. During the six-day visit, team members:

- Met with the DIS program directors, academic staff, student affairs staff, and study tours staff
- Visited housing options
- Observed classes across the curriculum
- Observed practicum sessions and course excursions
- Met with the DIS faculty representatives
- Spoke with a wide variety of individual instructors
- Met with University of Minnesota students as well as students from other institutions
- Attended informal activities organized for students during the semester including a Climate Seminar and an event with the Culinary and Entrepreneurship Living and Learning Communities.

Prior to the team visit, Derek Lackaff participated in the “core course week” for the New Media and Changing Communities course, which included travel with the course to southern Sweden.

The site review team jointly drafted and agreed on recommendations that are made part of this report.

### **\*Recommendation**

1. For the next review we recommend reviewers individually visiting classes to solicit feedback on the program. This could be conducted over 30 minutes at the end of a class. It may be best to schedule this session towards the end of the visit so that the team can first develop a common list of questions to ask the students in each class.

## MISSION OF THE PROGRAM

DIS is a Danish non-profit study abroad institution in Copenhagen with semester, academic year, and summer programs taught in English. Established in 1959, DIS offers American students engaging and challenging coursework enriched by field studies, hands-on learning opportunities, and study tours in Denmark and across Europe. Cultural engagement opportunities integrate students into Danish culture and students gain academic knowledge and intercultural skills to prepare themselves for a globalized world. DIS students are usually undergraduate juniors or seniors from highly selective U.S. universities.

The program objectives are achieved through:

### Study Tours: Europe as your Classroom

- Two program study tours with core cohort
- Optional tours & adventure trips during 2-week travel break

### Field Study: Copenhagen as your Classroom

- Field study incorporated into every course
- Multiple courses with practicum

### Danish Faculty: Learn from Experts

- Practitioners in their fields
- Minimum educational level: master's degree

### Immersion & Engagement

- Six diverse housing options including Living & Learning Community (LLC), Homestay, Kollegium, Danish Roommate, Folkehøjskole, DIS Residential Community
- Multiple innovative immersion programs and opportunities
- A holistic approach to meeting the Danes

## ACADEMICS

The review team was impressed with the overall academic program of DIS. As on previous site visits, the team concluded that the academic rigor of the courses was on a par with those housed at first-order US institutions. The two study tours in each core course are a unique and highly valuable experiential learning experience for students. These go beyond what can be offered in US university-based courses and have lasting impacts on students' intellectual development and cultural perspective. The faculty are committed and engaged with teaching and learning and qualified in their areas of expertise. Faculty are selected on the basis of demonstrated ability to teach - rather than simply to lecture - students. They also seem to be selected in part based on their energy and enthusiasm; the unbridled passion of many of the instructors towards the courses' subject matter was apparent during class visits. DIS continues to seek to improve their student evaluation and assessment efforts.

### Faculty

DIS employs 20 full-time faculty, 209 part-time faculty, and a number of administrators who also have some (or even substantial) classroom teaching roles. There has been a trend towards increasing the proportion of full-time faculty in most programs, although DIS suggests that the optimal proportion of full-time faculty will likely vary among the different programs. Full-time faculty can provide a measure of stability and increased opportunities for planning and student interaction, particularly in the core courses. Part-time faculty who are active in their professions bring students a critically important connection to real-world practice. The faculty are experts in their fields, with most having terminal degrees and extensive professional experience. We observed a commendable synergy of professional experience and teaching in DIS courses. As teachers, the faculty's knowledge and enthusiasm generally afforded a unique and highly engaging classroom learning environment.

New faculty attend a 2-day orientation program that introduces concepts and practices that are specific to DIS educational programs, including expectations of US students, challenges to teaching in an international program, the student-instructor relationship at DIS, and the DIS teaching philosophy of engagement and experiential learning.

Further faculty training and faculty evaluation is conducted basis during the semester. There are regular Departmental meetings in which new ideas and best practices are shared among the faculty. Workshops are also offered on specific teaching practices. For instance, in spring 2015 workshops have/will be conducted on: Developing a meaningful evaluation process, wrapping up courses (aka, "ending the semester with a bang"), and stimulating and managing classroom discussion. All faculty are encouraged to attend workshops, but participation of part-time faculty is generally limited. Beyond those open to all faculty, there are additional workshops for full-time faculty. Each year there is a Danish Educators Workshop in Minneapolis attended by a cross-section of approximately 25 faculty. In alternate years there is also a faculty weekend retreat, focusing on pedagogical issues.

All programs conduct classroom evaluations of new faculty early in their DIS teaching career. Evaluation of classroom learning is occasionally carried out by senior staff. Evaluation is more frequently conducted through a peer-to-peer mechanism. The culture of evaluation is constructive and supportive, and class observations are broadly understood as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

The faculty feel well-supported by DIS, and are taking advantage of the increasing opportunities for professional development. Multiple faculty members confided that “DIS is the first place I have loved working.” The Danish Educators Workshop (DEW), the flagship development opportunity offered by DIS to selected faculty, provides Danish instructors with an invaluable understanding of their American students. The DEW curriculum is responsive to changing instructor needs and student contexts.

DIS has also allocated significant resources to supporting a Strategic Initiatives Push. The purpose of the push is to encourage and sponsor a range of initiatives proposed by faculty to promote DIS’s strategic priorities. Faculty are making use of these resources in innovative ways that will benefit students and the organization. Faculty generally feel empowered to utilize their skills and experience in the classroom as they choose, and to communicate with the administration about classes and curriculum.

#### **\*Recommendations**

1. The Academic Director conveyed her goal of introducing a formalized mechanism for mentorship of junior faculty by faculty with greater experience. The team concurs that this would be a valuable program to implement.
2. Additional incentives should be considered for encouraging participation of part-time faculty in DIS training opportunities, such as workshops. For example, they could be paid for attendance at workshops, much as faculty are currently rewarded for participating in peer-to-peer evaluations.

#### **Curriculum**

DIS offers 23 programs focused on specific academic fields or topics that generally align with U.S. majors and/or minors. The programs consist of a core course, a 3-credit course with two faculty-led course-integrated program study tours – a short study tour in Denmark and a longer study tour to a European destination(s). In addition to the core course, students also select up to 4 elective courses. Students have the option of selecting from over 200 electives from the entire DIS curricular offering. Students also have the opportunity to sign up for optional short-term study tour courses that carry one academic credit.

The academic rigor of core and elective courses is appropriate to upper division coursework with adequate classroom contact hours, with the exception of Danish Language and Culture, which is an introductory course. The academic content of the study tours is integrated into the pedagogy of the course. It is a top priority of DIS that the credits received for DIS courses transfer for major and/or minor credit or to fulfill liberal education or general education requirements to the students’ home institution.

One inevitable and unavoidable issue in the curriculum is the diversity in levels of prior background and area-specific expertise of students in each class. In courses where this is an issue faculty seek to use the initial classes in the semester productively to review background content to bring less accomplished students to a level where they can successfully negotiate the remainder of the course. Program directors have considered whether disparities in foundational knowledge can be at least partially addressed by setting more stringent prerequisites for relatively high-level courses. The utility of this approach is limited, however, by the desire to minimize exclusion of students from courses they may wish to take.



## **Experiential Learning**

DIS's approach to experiential learning is captured by their motto, "Copenhagen as your home; Europe as your classroom." The incorporation of experiential learning into coursework is one of DIS's unique strengths and traditions.

Courses are oriented around the physical, geographic, social, and societal setting in which DIS is situated. Core courses include a week-long study tour to a European destination and a Core Course Week, comprised of a two-day seminar in Copenhagen and three-day study tour in the region. Both study tours are led by faculty, who ensure the course learning objectives are integrated into the study tour experience.

One team member participated in the Core Course Week for the New Media and Changing Communities core course. The class spent two days visiting media-related companies and organizations in Copenhagen, speaking with experts and practitioners. Later in the week, the class spent two days in Malmø and one in rural Sweden participating in academic, professional and class activities. These included sessions with high-level media professionals, interaction with Swedish faculty and students, and professional site visits. The impact of the Core Course Week was palpable: the students completed the week with a new understanding of themselves and each other, a deeper understanding of course themes and content, and a new enthusiasm for their learning. Significantly, their increased comfort levels seem to translate directly into a more profound engagement with their academics. Participation in the core course week provides a vital launchpad for the remainder of the course.

Study tours have become a quintessential hallmark of the DIS learning experience. The tours are led jointly by the course instructor and a tour coordinator. DIS targets groups to be of a manageable size (20-25 students). Study tours often engage local professionals or experts, such as practitioners in relevant fields. Students consistently commented that the study tours were a highlight of their study abroad experience because they learned so much more than they would have as a tourist.

Study tours are planned by faculty in conjunction with a dedicated support staff. Faculty and staff are given training sessions in preparation for the tours and are involved in all aspects of planning. This approach is intentional and designed to gain buy-in, ownership, and commitment on the part of faculty towards the tours that they will lead.

A number of core courses require participation in practica, which are directly related to the content of the course. These exist in Architecture and Child Development & Diversity. In Child Development, over 50 students participate in daycare, kindergarten, and K-12 public school settings in the Copenhagen area. Many of the institutions serve diverse populations. A member of our team visited a practicum site where the teacher was attuned to the concept of accommodating practicum students and provided ample opportunities for the two students' engagement and involvement in the classroom. The program director has successfully identified sites and teachers with a similar level of commitment to the practicum program.

Optional practica are available in business entrepreneurship, psychology, and the sciences. The Science Research Practicum provides opportunities for study in research environments. Fields of study include biomedical research (e.g., neuroscience, cardiology), chemistry, and physics.

All DIS courses are also required to incorporate two local, field-study activities into their semester course. The team observed several of these including a watercolor painting class at the Town Hall, a visit to the Carlsberg headquarters focused on international marketing, a tour of the Statens Museum focused on portrayals of women, and a visit to the Blue Planet Aquarium to observe educational activities for children. The tours were uniformly excellent and demonstrated DIS commitment to using Copenhagen as the canvas upon which the curriculum is constructed.

Experiential learning is very much a part of the daily classroom experience. Perhaps the best example of this is the wide use of case studies in the curriculum to illustrate or concretize the broader principles of the courses. Classes are also frequently structured to include small-group discussion or other participatory techniques to encourage active engagement with course materials.

Through these experiences, DIS prepares students to carry what they learn into their academic and professional futures. By integrating holistic learning into learning outcomes, DIS continues to be a leader in connecting experience abroad into the career and life planning of students. For example, some instructors are assisting students in articulating the learning abroad experience on their resumes.

#### **\*Recommendations**

1. Although the Study Tour office has developed successful systems for organizing the study tours, there is some sense that the office has outgrown the available IT infrastructure. Assembling, revising, and printing the 2,400 study tour guidebooks per semester has become exceptionally labor-intensive and somewhat “fragile.” A digital development and publication system that centralized the process -- e.g. a digital content/ document management system (CMS/DMS) -- could reduce time devoted to data entry and updating across multiple spreadsheets and word docs. Content should be managed and updated in a single location and published as necessary (as guidebooks, to Blackboard/web, etc.)
2. The Study Tour support staff have accumulated encyclopedic expertise in many of the tour destinations. This information should be systematized in a database. Such a system would provide flexibility for staff in their roles within the Study Tour office. For example, part of the portfolios of individual staff members would be somewhat more interchangeable. This would be helpful for providing cover during periods where a faculty member is on a study tour or absent from the office for other reasons. It may also provide a vehicle for involving faculty more extensively in tour planning. Finally, it would ensure continuity of function if new staff are brought in or if current members of staff leave.
3. There has been an expansion in the responsibility of Study Tour staff. One role that appears to be becoming more prevalent is in planning faculty-led tours for external (i.e., non-DIS) programs. These can place unusual demands on staff resources, at least in part because of variability in the knowledge and preparedness of the faculty to plan and organize the tours.

There should be a process whereby different demands on this office are evaluated so that core components of the Study Tour office's list of responsibilities can be preserved in alignment with the priorities of DIS.

4. The Study Tour office staff are concerned about gaps in the level of knowledge of DIS's US operation regarding the nature and running of Study Tours. This is important in terms of communicating accurately with prospective students. More frequent (e.g., annual) visits to the US by a Study Tour staff member to brief the US office and/or other DIS partners should be considered in this regard.
5. Participants are given impressive guidebooks at the start of each Study Tour that outline the itinerary and other salient details. Some students reported that they received almost no information in advance of booklet distribution and that they would have liked to receive some details of the tour at an earlier point in time. The kinds of information that would be helpful include flights, hotels, and recommended packing lists. This information could be disseminated through the core course Blackboard website well in advance of the start of the tour.
6. If practicable, DIS should seek to expand placements in Science Research Practicum (SRP) so that more students can avail themselves of these opportunities and so that the range of research options is broadened.
7. In planning future optional study tours, priority should be placed on adding to those within the scientific disciplines. Relative to the humanities, these are currently underrepresented in the overall package of study tour opportunities.

### **Language Course**

The Danish Language and Culture course is a foundational component of cultural engagement at DIS. The majority of students (70%) take the 3-credit course, which provides an introduction to the language and culture of Denmark. The structure of the course is unique: it is not a traditional intensive language course, but combines a deep, English-language cultural investigation of Danishness along with a practical introduction to the spoken and written language. The course is also unique in the DIS curriculum in that it has far more sections (44) and instructors (15) than any other single course. Academic consistency is maintained via a common, internally produced textbook and course evaluations by the program director. Individual instructors are encouraged to integrate their unique cultural knowledge and perspectives into the class. An intensive language course for six credits and a course tailored for Child Diversity and Development students (who complete a practicum with Danish children) are regularly offered, and the program provides intermediate and advanced language courses as requested by students.

DIS's language and culture education efforts are likely among the most innovative in Denmark, providing a more effective learning experience than even local language schools (where one member of the team is a student). In the classroom, learning is facilitated through substantial class participation, oral and written engagement, and field studies that facilitate first-hand cultural experiences in Copenhagen. The program's attention to detail and context is impressive -- for example, DIS offers different "editions" of

the textbook to fall and spring students that emphasize timely content such as holidays. DIS has also generated a podcast series that enables students to complete audio-based homework on their own time and schedule. Student evaluations of the course tend to be very high, and the course appears to have a positive impact on the overall DIS experience for students that take it.

#### **\*Recommendation**

1. Although the program has some activity in this area -- e.g. podcasts -- there are significant opportunities for further digital engagement. Language games/simulations, digital quizzing and testing, and digital voice analysis are all areas of interest for the program. Supporting IT innovation and development in this program could have a significant impact on a large number of students.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

DIS continues to have high expectations for student achievement and seriously considers student evaluations. The team supports DIS in their ongoing efforts to conduct comprehensive quantitative and qualitative assessment of student learning and faculty teaching. The team notes that syllabi include course objectives, but the description of how the objectives will be assessed is inconsistent.

This review was conducted at mid-semester and we heard from some students that they had not received any feedback/grades at this point which created a level of anxiety. The team acknowledges cultural differences that might be present given the self-directed nature of the Danish education system compared to U.S. student concern and anxiety over performance and grades.

#### **\*Recommendations**

1. Include a more detailed description (1 - 2 sentences) for each assignment and the corresponding percentage of the total grade in the syllabus.
2. Some courses have moved towards inclusion of assignments at intermediate points in the semester. Nevertheless, this is not universally the case and we recommend that evaluation is included earlier in the semester. For example, students could turn in drafts or outlines for instructor feedback prior to the deadline for the assignment.
3. For classes that include papers, instructors could provide a sample rubric that differentiates the grade levels. For exams, instructors could provide one or two sample questions in advance.

#### **Syllabi**

The team was provided with syllabi prior to the site visit and received additional copies for individual class observations. The number of classroom contact hours and out-of-classroom readings and assignments met or exceeded average US standards in most disciplines. Assigned readings and supplemental materials appeared to be academically rigorous and appropriate. The team observed that some standard elements such as the disability statement and attendance policy were missing in some syllabi. All syllabi we reviewed have instructor contact information, course objectives, and a course calendar. To what extent the remaining elements listed on the DIS "model syllabus" varies from course to course.

### **\*Recommendation**

1. The model syllabus should distinguish between what is desirable and what is indispensable. In addition to the three components already contained in all syllabi and listed above, the team recommends that the following also be included:
  - A statement from the instructor about how students contact them to set up individual appointments.
  - Contact information for questions related to academic advising
  - Description of each assignment and % of total grade
  - Attendance policy
  - Instructor policy on use of laptops and phones during class and field studies
  - Disability and resource statement
  - Statement on academic honesty
  - Description of class representatives

### **Evaluation of Instruction/Classes**

The team had the opportunity to observe 40+ courses from across the DIS curriculum. The quality of classroom instruction was generally high, and instructors were effective at engaging students in an active learning process. The best instructors made the process look effortless, combining information presentation with classroom activities. We observed a range of effective activities, including small group discussions, team strategy planning, short student presentations, debates, a “fishbowl” exercise, and an interactive quiz.

### **\*Recommendation**

1. Active learning was not universally observed in all classes. Several team members observed classes that consisted of lectures with no student interaction. Some of these lectures were very informative and entertaining, whereas other instructors struggled to maintain students’ interest and attention. While all instructors will develop their own teaching styles, students expect to contribute to the classroom learning process, and their learning strongly benefits.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **Pre-departure Services and Materials**

Student services and support begins in the U.S. and continues in Copenhagen. The North American staff assists students with program and housing selection, course registration and academic advising and enrollment support. It is also worth noting that students reported having chosen DIS for the features that DIS has sought to promote, such as academic rigor and study tours. The wide course selection at DIS allows students plentiful options for finding a range of courses that best suit their needs and interests.

All students register for courses and study tours prior to leaving the US. This process allows students to confirm credit transfer with their home institution. The home university receives a copy of their students’ registration ensuring that the student is registered for the appropriate number for the home university’s requirements.

Approximately 1-2 months prior to the student's departure date, DIS sends a comprehensive pre-departure packet. This helps students prepare for their time in Denmark and answers many of the questions that they and their parents will have. Additional services are clearly delivered in logical, easily-navigated set of web pages. Housing assignments are sent to students roughly two weeks prior to departure.

### **On-site Orientation and On-site Support**

The on-site Arrival Workshop (orientation) is a multiple step process spanning three days with varying components depending on the housing option. The first day includes pick-up from the airport, transportation to housing, and familiarization with the surroundings. The second day starts with a mandatory welcoming ceremony and is followed by various optional and mandatory meetings that span information from housing, to transportation, to health and safety. The remainder of orientation includes textbook pick-up, a facilities tour, culture talks, and "Discover Copenhagen" -- a scavenger hunt to find faculty members stationed throughout the city center that introduces students to their new home. The Arrival Workshop is topped off with an activities and immersion fair.

Some students expressed slight discontent with various components of the orientation. However, complaints were inconsistent and the team was unable to identify any large gaps in the programming DIS provides.

Although students are not assigned a specific academic adviser in DIS, each student has advising contact with the Program Directors in their core course program. The Academic Counselor and Director of Academic Support are also available onsite to assist students and provide guidance with academic difficulties such as time-management, study skills, or paper writing. The Academic Counselor also coordinates accommodations for students who have a registered learning disability.

The Director of Academic Support handles the planning, design and implementation of registrar-related inquiries for DIS faculty and staff, in addition to US sending institutions. He oversees academic policies, disciplinary issues, and liaises with housing, student affairs and the CARE team when student issues arise.

The team commends DIS on its continued commitment to supporting student development through the student affairs staff and resources.

### **\*Recommendation**

1. The academic support office is currently working at capacity, especially during testing periods. DIS should consider cross-training additional staff to ensure transfer of knowledge and additional workload support. Furthermore, accessibility of academic support could be improved to match the level already in effect for student services.

### **Housing**

Excellence and diversity in housing options continues to serve as a key feature of the DIS program. The department's commitment to continued success is evidenced by their intentional programming and the

high levels of satisfaction amongst students. Since the last review, Living and Learning Communities (LLCs) have seen the largest growth, expanding to eight different communities.

The team was impressed with the diversity of academic disciplines found within the LLCs (i.e. only three students in the Entrepreneurship LLC were business students). Training for live-in Student Residential Advisors (SRAs) appears comprehensive, and the smaller SRA support networks were said to be appreciated by staff. Weekly meetings and events arranged by LLC Coordinators appeared thoughtful and at times collaborative between LLCs.

Differentiation between Kollegium room/kitchen varieties on the website appears to have been improved in explaining housing resources. Videos, blogs, FAQs, etc. on the semester housing webpages also help clarify and differentiate the different housing options. Students reported consistency between their expectations and the realities of the various housing options.

Moving forward, DIS housing staff expressed the organization's desire to acquire additional buildings and/or land to construct new. A new construction would likely include housing for local Danish students to live alongside DIS students. The review team found this to be a favorable strategy for growth.

#### **\*Recommendations**

1. While the semester housing website is comprehensive, the summer housing website is quite sparse, limited to two paragraphs of text for each option. The team suggests expanding this resource to be as robust as the semester pages to better inform a student's decision making while also setting more realistic expectations.
2. The homestay webpage explains that commute times can vary between 30-60 minutes during the week (longer at night/on weekends). Several students shared that their commute to DIS was longer than 60 minutes (in one instance, 90 minutes) on a weekday. The longer travel time often prevented these students from participating in evening events at DIS, because they were simply unable to make it home for dinner and back into town. Additionally, the team encountered two students who had recently moved from their homestays to be closer to the city because the distance of their homestay made it difficult to be spontaneous with their time. The recommendations for these situations is three-fold. First, the team believes DIS should adhere more closely to the travel time promise made on the website. Secondly, the team suggests using more direct language on the homestay webpage that explains how the commute will impact a student's experience. Using examples of tradeoffs students may need to make to be successful in the option will ensure better informed housing decisions, and could prevent some dissatisfaction and mid-semester moves. Finally, DIS should consider providing alternative meal options to make this option more attractive to students to allow them to attend the occasional DIS associated evening event who would typically be fed dinner at their homestay (this recommendation might also apply to Folkehøjskole). For example: meal vouchers, cash, or a punchcard for meals at the Studentarhuset.
3. While DIS always tries to honor a student's first housing preference, the team is concerned that on occasion a student is being matched in an apartment or homestay with a single member of the opposite gender. While this practice may be appropriate in a Danish context, it is

inconsistent with US cultural norms and presents a potential liability issue. We recommend this practice be discontinued, or that DIS allow students to indicate within their housing preferences if they would be comfortable with such an arrangement.

## **Diversity**

DIS describes its commitment to diversity as follows:

*At DIS, we are an inclusive and pluralistic, diverse institution that aims to create a learning experience and environment where you can reach your full potential and have a transformative semester while studying abroad.*

*Navigating intercultural exchange is becoming more and more important in our world today, and we aim to give you this experience inside and outside the classroom. Our students, faculty, and staff are diverse in perspectives, backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, and skills, which is integral to our overall goal of academic excellence.*

The team met with staff representatives involved with DIS diversity affairs and the summary of current approaches to diversity is as follows:

Efforts to attract a diverse student body

- DIS seeks to promote a diverse student body by providing need-based financial support to academically excellent students from populations traditionally underrepresented in study abroad. Such students may have diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, sexual orientation, and educational backgrounds and experiences.
- First generation college student scholarships are also available.
- Latino, Deaf, African-American, and LGBTQ student resources are available online.

Staff development issues of diversity & multiculturalism

- In 2012 DIS ran workshops on diversity for relevant DIS staff and faculty including the social and residential advisors facilitated by Thuy M. Doan, Associate Advising Director and Bradley J. Titus, Institutional Relations Director, Learning Abroad Center. These workshops focused on the differences between the Danish and US discourse around diversity to better understand the students' experience coming to Denmark.
- Academic program directors are responsible for addressing diversity in the classroom through faculty trainings and orientations.
- Staff discussed with the team issues that arise when working with students with multiple identities and had the skills and knowledge to effectively work with these students.
- All administrative staff in Housing and Student Affairs have undergone training in topics relating to diversity and it has become a part of the training of Student Residential Advisor (SRA).

Services/programs available on-site for students

- DIS courses are available that focus on multiculturalism and diverse identities. In spring 2015, over 19 courses were offered.
- Diverse Identities Social Club (D.I.S. Club) is comprised of students from a range of cultural backgrounds that meets periodically. The mission is to create an open, safe space for



international students to discuss and reflect on personal experience with diversity, identity, and intercultural interactions while studying abroad. The club meets periodically.

- DIS hires student diversity bloggers to reflect on personal experiences.
- DIS added a buddy network for LGBTQ students (Fall 2011), a diversity club (Spring 2012) and optional 'culture talks' during the Arrival workshop (Spring 2013). Students of color can also attend a session on diversity during the Arrival workshop.
- DIS pays for the membership of BLUS (the local LGBT student organization) for interested students.

In summary, DIS is doing an exemplary job in nurturing an inclusive and pluralistic student community.

#### **\*Recommendation**

1. Male students are in a minority in Learning Abroad programs in general and DIS is no exception. This imbalance is exacerbated in certain classes where males are either entirely absent or there is a single male on the roster. Although many of these imbalances reflect broader trends that cannot be easily addressed (e.g., the preponderance of females in Psychology and males in Business Studies), DIS may wish to explore ways to encourage greater participation rates in gender-atypical classes. If, as a result of the proposed sustained enrollment policy, more students apply to the program than can be accommodated, an appropriate gender balance could serve as one of the criteria used in student selection.

#### **Health, Safety and Wellness Issues**

DIS continues to be a true leader in the field in terms of holistic student support, in and out of the classroom.

Copenhagen and Denmark often top international surveys of quality of life, personal safety, and even the happiness of its citizens. Denmark has again been named the happiest country in the world by a report published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Columbia University Earth Institute. However, Copenhagen is a city, and health and safety of students are primary concerns.

DIS has an excellent set of plans and protocols for evacuation and crisis management and it is to be commended for the thoroughness of the materials. DIS maintains a good relationship with local authorities and the US embassy staff in Copenhagen. Local crime and safety issues are minimal and students feel very comfortable in Copenhagen.

- DIS sends all students a handbook with important information for them to review.
- DIS has a well-trained Housing and Student Affairs team on-site along with a 24-hour emergency contact.
- Helpful resources are found on the website concerning contingency plans, insurance information, medication information, emergency medical services, safety tips, etc.
- Faculty and staff receive emergency response training during orientation

DIS is reviewing current vulnerabilities such as terrorist threats in their emergency plans. They are focusing on how they communicate and mobilize staff when a situation arises and how they communicate with students. Recently, when two airlines went on strike, they were able to find

alternative arrangements for student travel. DIS also consulted with Stacey Tsantir, Director of Health and Safety, University of Minnesota to obtain additional legal advice. DIS also has lawyers on retainer to address issues as they arise.

Students provided feedback on the communication they received from DIS during the terrorist attack on February 14-15, which killed two civilians and wounded five police officers in Copenhagen. Students in an LLC highlighted that the response was prompt and clear, and that parents and host institutions were also notified. One student in a DRC indicated the response was delayed and included conflicting messages on Facebook that ranged in tone from calm to alarm. The alarming message came from the SRA.

DIS acknowledged that they learned from the situation and are exploring more efficient systems such as MailChimp for sending out messages to all students. In addition, they are working towards all members of the Emergency Response Team being cross-trained on emergency procedures and having access to the DIS website to make updates.

**\*Recommendation**

1. Add this information to the health and safety section of the On-Site & Pre-Departure Handbook

In the area of wellness, faculty and SRA's are often instrumental in proactively identifying students who might need assistance in areas such as mental health, student misconduct, inability to succeed in the classroom, or isolation. The Student Care Team provides cross-functional support in developing a response strategy for individual cases. Given their reputation of comprehensive support, DIS is receiving a growing number of students with complex emotional and mental needs. Therefore, DIS is in the process of hiring a "Student Care Officer" that will be a case manager to handle the management of an increased number of cases.

**\*Recommendation**

1. Ensure SRAs are adequately trained on protocol for emergency communications.

**Cultural Engagement**

We met with the Cultural Learning Facilitator the Housing and Student Affairs Assistant. DIS is rebranding cultural "immersion" and "encounter," to cultural "engagement" and "exchange." The team observed that DIS has worked extensively to employ innovative strategies to foster intercultural exchanges and engagement including but not limited to:

- Homestays
- Visiting Family program
- Sports clubs
- Volunteer opportunities
- DIS Buddy and Ambassador Programs
- Immersion Fair
- Student organizations through Copenhagen student union

The staff are attentive to the fact that students often have multiple identities and keep this in mind when planning activities and programs.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM**

### **DIS Governance**

DIS is a Danish non-profit educational foundation governed by an external Board of Directors working closely with an Executive Director. The DIS Board of Directors appoints the Executive Director. The Executive Director establishes and leads the Executive team, which is the leadership group for the organization. An elected DIS faculty committee includes representation from the University of Minnesota, the DIS school of record, and oversees consistency of quality, content, and structure of the curriculum. (from <http://www.disabroad.org/study-abroad-dis/governance/>)

### **School of Record**

The University of Minnesota is the DIS school of record. The University of Minnesota works closely with DIS regarding curriculum and program quality through representation on the DIS Curriculum committee and through program reviews every fourth year. (from <http://www.disabroad.org/study-abroad-dis/governance/>)

### **Executive Director**

DIS has experienced leadership transition in recent years. Malene Torp, who started at DIS as a Program Director in 2001 became Executive Director in January 2014. She demonstrates authentic commitment to the vision of DIS, an empowering leadership style for staff and faculty, full engagement in decision-making, and skills in strategic management. The review team observed, and heard about an extremely high level of staff and faculty satisfaction. A common response was *“DIS is very dynamic place to work.”*

### **Administrative Structure**

The Executive team prepares strategic plans, handles significant or fundamental operational matters, and ensures effective communication channels at DIS. The Executive team handles, in particular, the organization's strategy and action plan process, budget, major procurements and projects, DIS structure and organizational development, as well as major policies of administration and HR policy issues. (from <http://www.disabroad.org/study-abroad-dis/governance/>)

### **Organizational Structure**

The DIS Director has streamlined the organization to make the structure “flatter” and less hierarchical. Essentially, what remains are three levels of responsibility: The Executive and Deputy Executive Directors’ offices, divisions (e.g., academics, finance) and departments (e.g., academics, study tours, etc.).

### **External Collaboration**

While most DIS courses are hosted by DIS and developed by DIS Program Directors in collaboration with the Academic Director, there is also a selection of courses available for students at the University of Copenhagen, Roskilde University, Denmark's Technical University, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Copenhagen Business School. (from <http://www.disabroad.org/study-abroad-dis/governance/>)

## **FACILITIES**

The DIS offices and classrooms are distributed within several buildings located close to one another in the heart of the old section of Copenhagen. The distributed space works well to not only accommodate 1200 students, but to create the sense of a “campus.” The classrooms and offices are bright and fresh, with plentiful access to daylight. The newer studio space provides the architecture and design program generous space and “atmosphere” for this important aspect of the program.

At times, awkward classroom space can be somewhat problematic. Given the historical buildings that house DIS, rooms are often oddly shaped, split by support poles, etc. DIS has done their best to compensate for these limiting factors with multiple whiteboards and projection screens, flexible furniture, and wheeled podiums.

Given their rapid growth over the last decade, the team commends DIS’s efforts to create more study and lounge space for students throughout their buildings. The diversity of new spaces and amenities includes signature classrooms, additional computer stations, small group work stations with access to a shared monitor, and wireless printing.

### **Library**

The DIS library collection provides good support for the DIS programs, and appropriately emphasizes materials related to Europe and Denmark. The collection also includes an extensive video collection that may be viewed individually in a quiet room or viewed by a group of up to twenty-five in a theatre-style room associated with the library. Faculty may request that materials be purchased for the collection, and funding for acquisition seems adequate. Students also have access to several significant libraries in the Copenhagen area and multiple online periodicals and databases. During our review, the Library was in the midst of a semester-long external review with a report expected in May 2015.

### **Computer Labs**

The number and distribution of computer labs and printers, available software and access to computer kiosks are all of a high standard. The quality of wireless networking and support for integration of student laptops at both DIS facilities and student housing is also commendable. Specialized software for design students is also accessible, as are proper printers for plotting larger projects. The team especially commends the friendly and outgoing nature of the IT support staff and the timely support given for any IT related problems.

While the design labs will remain critical for their expansive and expensive software, the team encourages DIS to closely monitor the usage of computer labs and carefully consider how money is spent on upgrades moving forward, as laptops continue to shrink in size and grow in prevalence.

#### **\*Recommendation:**

1. Part-time faculty members at DIS do not have offices at the school. Smaller offices or common spaces that are easily reserved and designated for student appointments would help facilitate better interaction between students and professors.

2. Through conversations with faculty and the Director of Academic Support, testing space for students with disabilities is lacking, especially during exams near the end of the semester. A solution could be combined with the previous recommendation.
3. With the growth of DIS, staff split amongst several buildings, and with Stockholm on the horizon, a sense of community and connectedness could be at risk. Thus, the team recommends developing some sort of intranet website, Facebook group, etc. for staff to share news, updates, anecdotal stories, etc. This would not necessarily serve as the source for formal announcements, but rather a more informal space to keep the camaraderie of staff members high as DIS continues to grow and change.

### **PERCEIVED SATISFACTION OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS**

The team spoke at length to a small number of students at a prearranged dinner. We also had multiple interactions with students before and after classes. The primary goals of these interactions were to assess student satisfaction with the program as a whole and with its various components, as well as to ascertain whether there were specific areas of concern or in need of refinement. By and large, the team was taken with the overwhelmingly positive views of the students towards the DIS program. For a program of this size, this degree of enthusiasm is considered striking and exceptional.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

DIS has grown rapidly since the previous review, both in size and complexity. The team observed several challenges of communication and information management across the organization, and we suggest that DIS has outgrown its IT infrastructure. In many cases, *ad hoc* systems that were adequate for managing a smaller program now represent significant (and possibly avoidable) drains on time, labor, and/or resources. We detail a few specific examples in previous sections of this report:

- Study Tours utilizes a manual and labor-intensive system for organizing the documentation for study tours
- the Language and Culture Program seeks innovative ways to promote language learning
- the changing role of student (and faculty) computer labs

In some ways, these challenges are already being addressed. In particular, the hiring of an Educational Technology Consultant should facilitate more effective technology use in the classroom. The development of a Computer Science program will also potentially open new opportunities for innovation.

However, other opportunities for IT development might include:

- smartphone app (could provide alerts, calendars, tour schedules, maps, etc.)
- faculty/staff intranet and content management system
- student intranet or information portal (or broader use of a course management system like Blackboard)
- examination of more flexible (and possibly cost effective) alternatives to Blackboard
- an application portal/system that tracks both students admitted by DIS with those from their “direct-admit” partners - the current process is disjointed and will only be further exacerbated by enrollment caps

**\*Recommendation**

1. An external and transparent IT audit of every program and department would help identify opportunities for investment and exploration of new processes.

**COMPLIANCE WITH LAC POLICIES**

DIS and LAC have a good working relationship and there are no issues in this area. DIS follows academic, finance and cancellation policies, health and safety policies, and student rights and responsibilities policies.

**FUTURE PROJECTS AND PLANS**

Following the leadership change in January 2014, a strategic plan which includes Ambition 2018 was written by the Executive Team to set a new direction and organizational priority for DIS. Ambition 2018 outlines the overall direction and aspirations 4 to 5 years out and ensures an alignment between top-level goals and prioritization in the functional areas of the organization.

The team supports the enrollment strategy as an effort to sustain quality in Copenhagen, and to prepare for the timely program expansion to Stockholm, Sweden in 2016.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The review team expresses its sincere and genuine admiration for the outstanding dedication of the entire DIS staff. In particular, we would like to thank Jamie Cathell, DIS for her thorough and detailed organization of the review materials and schedule. We would also like to acknowledge Ben Tully, Learning Abroad Center, University of Minnesota for his guidance and thoughtful feedback as a first contact for UofM students interested in DIS and as a past DIS participant. The review team also deeply appreciates DIS's transparency and openness, which enabled the review team to commit an open and thorough evaluation. The review team wishes the DIS administration, faculty and staff continued growth and much success as a unique organization among US study abroad offerings.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH DIS RESPONSE

1. The Academic Director conveyed her goal of introducing a formalized mechanism for mentorship of junior faculty by faculty with greater experience. The team concurs that this would be a valuable program to implement.

*DIS Response:*

*We are happy that the review team also finds this initiative worthwhile. We are piloting mentor relations in a few programs already this semester and a group of Program Directors are working on a formalized mentorship program for all junior faculty at DIS. We have budgeted for such a program in this year's budget already (2015) so we are hoping to roll it out from fall 2015.*

2. Additional incentives should be considered for encouraging participation of part-time faculty in DIS training opportunities, such as workshops. For example, they could be paid for attendance at workshops, much as faculty are currently rewarded for participating in peer-to-peer evaluations.

*DIS Response:*

*It is part of our 2014-16 academic strategy to offer an array of professional development incentives for faculty and to tailor the range of incentives so that they appeal to both part-time and full-time faculty. Because of the very different relations our faculty has with DIS (some teach one course, some work full time for DIS), we are sure that a "one size fits all" model will not work for our faculty. This year, we have revised and expanded our professional development offerings and, as mentioned, the Strategic Initiatives Push is also a part of this effort. We are absolutely considering if we should pay part-time faculty for participation in workshops (we already do for all mandatory workshops such as the intro seminar for new teachers), but we are in dialogue with our faculty about what would be the best way of spending the resources we have. It might be worth mentioning that even the workshops that are not mandatory are very well attended.*

3. Although the Study Tour office has developed successful systems for organizing the study tours, there is some sense that the office has outgrown the available IT infrastructure. Assembling, revising, and printing the 2,400 study tour guidebooks per semester has become exceptionally labor-intensive and somewhat "fragile." A digital development and publication system that centralized the process -- e.g. a digital content/ document management system (CMS/DMS) -- could reduce time devoted to data entry and updating across multiple spreadsheets and word docs. Content should be managed and updated in a single location and published as necessary (as guidebooks, to Blackboard/web, etc.)

*DIS Response:*

*A new IT system is already planned. Discovery will occur in summer 2015 with develop in fall 2015 for late fall / early winter launch.*

4. The Study Tour support staff have accumulated encyclopedic expertise in many of the tour destinations. This information should be systematized in a database. Such a system would provide flexibility for staff in their roles within the Study Tour office. For example, part of the portfolios of

individual staff members would be somewhat more interchangeable. This would be helpful for providing cover during periods where a faculty member is on a study tour or absent from the office for other reasons. It may also provide a vehicle for involving faculty more extensively in tour planning. Finally, it would ensure continuity of function if new staff are brought in or if current members of staff leave.

*DIS Response:*

*As above, a new IT system is already planned. Discovery will occur in summer 2015 with development in fall 2015 for late fall / early winter launch.*

5. There has been an expansion in the responsibility of Study Tour staff. One role that appears to be becoming more prevalent is in planning faculty-led tours for external (i.e., non-DIS) programs. These can place unusual demands on staff resources, at least in part because of variability in the knowledge and preparedness of the faculty to plan and organize the tours. There should be a process whereby different demands on this office are evaluated so that core components of the Study Tour office's list of responsibilities can be preserved in alignment with the priorities of DIS.

*DIS Response:*

*The Study Tours department assumed leadership of faculty-led programs in late 2014. This was done after an analysis of the types of faculty-led programs requested, i.e., they have many characteristics of study tours that the department already plans for DIS programs. The idea is to leverage the already existing planning relationship between study tours and academic programs in order to deliver high quality faculty-led programs to DIS partner institutions. The assessment of the expanded study tour department will be assessed through the already existing action plan process in place at DIS.*

6. The Study Tour office staff are concerned about gaps in the level of knowledge of DIS's US operation regarding the nature and running of Study Tours. This is important in terms of communicating accurately with prospective students. More frequent (e.g., annual) visits to the US by a Study Tour staff member to brief the US office and/or other DIS partners should be considered in this regard.

*DIS Response:*

*This suggestion will be considered as part of Institutional Relations outreach planning.*

7. Participants are given impressive guidebooks at the start of each Study Tour that outline the itinerary and other salient details. Some students reported that they received almost no information in advance of booklet distribution and that they would have liked to receive some details of the tour at an earlier point in time. The kinds of information that would be helpful include flights, hotels, and recommended packing lists. This information could be disseminated through the core course Blackboard website well in advance of the start of the tour.



*DIS Response:*

*Given the complexity of the study tour process, experience has shown that some activities change right up to the last minute of departure. That said, study tours will explore the possibility of letting students know some information prior to departure.*

8. If practicable, DIS should seek to expand placements in Science Research Practicum (SRP) so that more students can avail themselves of these opportunities and so that the range of research options is broadened.

*DIS Response:*

*We are looking into expanding the number placements as well as the range of research options, although we don't expect to be able to or want to offer more than 20-25 placements at a time, due to the structure and uniqueness of the SRP format. From SP14 to SP15 we did expand from 10 to 15 placements. We would like to be able to offer a few placements for environmental science student too, as well as an even wider choice within the biosciences.*

9. In planning future optional study tours, priority should be placed on adding to those within the scientific disciplines. Relative to the humanities, these are currently underrepresented in the overall package of study tour opportunities.

*DIS Response:*

*Optional study tours are discussed during the annual curriculum development process. The need for additional tours to focus on science is noted and will be considered.*

10. Although the program (Danish Language) has some activity in this area -- e.g. podcasts -- there are significant opportunities for further digital engagement. Language games/simulations, digital quizzing and testing, and digital voice analysis are all areas of interest for the program. Supporting IT innovation and development in this program could have a significant impact on a large number of students.

*DIS Response:*

*DIS agrees that although the DLC program is quite innovative in its teaching methods, the next step in developing the program lies in developing and using new IT technology in the teaching. Through for instance digital voice analysis, students would have a new and unique possibility of improving their pronunciation – this seems to be their largest obstacle and what blocks the communication and accordingly immersion. In addition, IT based language quizzes; games, role-plays etc. would be beneficial. As close to 70% of DIS students are enrolled in a DLC class, DIS agrees that any improvement would have an impact on a large number of students. We are currently in the process of hiring an education technologist consultant who can help DIS faculty identify and implement relevant technologies in the classroom.*

11. Include a more detailed description (1 - 2 sentences) for each assignment and the corresponding percentage of the total grade in the syllabus.

*DIS Response:*

*We agree that it might be beneficial to look at best practices with regards to descriptions of how learning objectives are achieved in different courses, and the information should clearly be available for all courses. However, some faculty members prefer to only describe the assignment briefly in the syllabus and instead have a lengthier description in a separate assignment on our LMS (Blackboard). The longer description - often with a clear purpose, "how to begin" and formal guidelines, etc. - is often handed in hard copy in class on top of being available electronically). We are not convinced that we all need to include all that information in the syllabus - though many do - as long as all courses have clear learning objectives and it is clear how they will be assessed.*

12. Some courses have moved towards inclusion of assignments at intermediate points in the semester. Nevertheless, this is not universally the case and we recommend that evaluation is included earlier in the semester. For example, students could turn in drafts or outlines for instructor feedback prior to the deadline for the assignment.

*DIS Response:*

*We absolutely agree that assessments should happen throughout the semester and we also absolutely agree that drafts or outlines are great pedagogical tools. We do not mandate that faculty members ask for drafts but we strongly encourage it. It is a part of DIS' pedagogical mission to have ongoing assessments and we have a system in place where the Office of Academic Support reports to Program Directors if a faculty member has not submitted any grades midway through the semester. We will look into where the review team has found deviations from ongoing assessments and make sure our commitment to this is clear.*

13. For classes that include papers, instructors could provide a sample rubric that differentiates the grade levels. For exams, instructors could provide one or two sample questions in advance.

*DIS Response:*

*Rubrics can be a great tool for students to understand how they are assessed and in some classes, students and the faculty member come up with the rubric together which can also be a very helpful exercise. Not all faculty appreciate working with a rubric, however, and in that case, other tools - such as sample questions, which are recommended by the review team - can work in helping to alleviate students' anxieties around how they are assessed. As is the case on US campuses as well, some faculty members work hard to put their students' minds at ease with regards to assessments while others worry about "spoon feeding" the students instead of allowing them to independently figure out what is expected of them. In our faculty workshops, we distinguish between "necessary" and "unnecessary" struggles to initiate a conversation about how to strike the balance between offering students guidance (and peace of mind) without making it "easy" for them. DIS believes that sample questions, rubrics, sample papers, etc. are useful tools for clarifying how learning objectives are assessed and that there are other ways of ensuring that students go through the "necessary struggles" in academia.*

14. The model syllabus should distinguish between what is desirable and what is indispensable. In addition to the three components already contained in all syllabi and listed above, the team recommends that the following also be included:

- A statement from the instructor about how students contact them to set up individual appointments
- Contact information for questions related to academic advising
- Description of each assignment and % of total grade
- Attendance policy
- Instructor policy on use of laptops and phones during class and field studies
- Disability and resource statement
- Statement on academic honesty
- Description of class representatives

*DIS Response:*

*We should absolutely look at this to make sure that all our syllabi contain information about disabilities and resources, academic honesty, class representatives, description of each assignment and % of total grade, and attendance policies. As for contact information, we do include the email and often the phone number of the faculty member in all syllabi and we are not aware of any complaints from students that they cannot get ahold of their faculty. Most faculty members are available right after class, some hold official office hours and most make themselves available on an ad hoc basis depending on the needs of the class (for example right before assignments are due). We pay all faculty members for 30 minutes of out-of-class contact with each student but we do not monitor whether the time contact happens via email, in person or via Skype or FaceTime. Since it has not been an issue for students, we have no plans to change this as much of our part-time faculty appreciate the flexibility this affords them. As for policy on laptops and phones, many faculty members list their policy in their syllabi but some prefer to adjust the policy to the behavior of the class (for some classes, laptop use is not a disturbance, but for next semester's class it might be) and DIS supports that flexibility by not mandating that they have decided on a policy in advance.*

15. Active learning was not universally observed in all classes. Several team members observed classes that consisted of lectures with no student interaction. Some of these lectures were very informative and entertaining, whereas other instructors struggled to maintain students' interest and attention. While all instructors will develop their own teaching styles, students expect to contribute to the classroom learning process, and their learning strongly benefits.

*DIS Response:*

*As the review team has observed, some of our faculty members are able to lecture and maintain a high level of student attention but DIS is committed to an interactive, student-centered, experiential, hands-on pedagogy and this commitment plays out in most of our classrooms - and informs all discussions of curriculum and pedagogy, from the introductory seminar for new faculty to faculty meetings with Program Directors, faculty seminars, Danish Educators Workshop, etc.*

*For faculty struggling to maintain attention and interest, we are increasingly offering opportunities for faculty to inspire each other through the sharing of best practices and peer-to-peer mentoring,*

*just as we offer classroom observations and pedagogy conversations. For inspiration, we also model our own pedagogy in most big meetings with faculty.*

16. The academic support office is currently working at capacity, especially during testing periods. DIS should consider cross-training additional staff to ensure transfer of knowledge and additional workload support. Furthermore, accessibility of academic support could be improved to match the level already in effect for student services.

*DIS Response:*

*We pride ourselves of the high level of support we offer to our students and it is correct that students can get support from various places depending on their issue and need. Aside from the faculty, all programs have a Program Director and an Assistant Program Director or Coordinator ready to support students with academic issues, and students also turn to the Office of Academic Support for assistance on issues mentioned above. Some programs, such as the Danish Language and Culture Program, also have four hours per week of general office hours for students seeking help with their work.*

*Last year, we revised the job functions of the Office of Academic Support and moved most faculty professional development to the Academic Director but during peak times, typically midterms and finals, the Office of Academic Support is busy with testing accommodations and this semester, we are trying out a new system where testing can take place every night from 16-20. The Office of Academic Support has trained assistants to administer the tests and this takes off some of the pressure from their office while maintaining the high level of support for students and faculty.*

*And as this review has been finalized, we have hired a Student Care Officer in the Housing and Student Affairs office who will add to the already existing support team. This, too, should relieve the workload in the Office of Academic Support and offer even better service to students.*

17. While the semester housing website is comprehensive, the summer housing website is quite sparse, limited to two paragraphs of text for each option. The team suggests expanding this resource to be as robust as the semester pages to better inform a student's decision making while also setting more realistic expectations.

*DIS Response:*

*This will be added in this next round of web edits, before the new website is launched in August 2015.*

18. The homestay webpage explains that commute times can vary between 30-60 minutes during the week (longer at night/on weekends). Several students shared that their commute to DIS was longer than 60 minutes (in one instance, 90 minutes) on a weekday. The longer travel time often prevented these students from participating in evening events at DIS, because they were simply unable to make it home for dinner and back into town. Additionally, the team encountered two students who had recently moved from their homestays to be closer to the city because the distance of their homestay made it difficult to be spontaneous with their time. The recommendations for these situations is three-fold. First, the team believes DIS should adhere

more closely to the travel time promise made on the website. Secondly, the team suggests using more direct language on the homestay webpage that explains how the commute will impact a student's experience. Using examples of tradeoffs students may need to make to be successful in the option will ensure better informed housing decisions, and could prevent some dissatisfaction and mid-semester moves. Finally, DIS should consider providing alternative meal options to make this option more attractive to students to allow them to attend the occasional DIS associated evening event who would typically be fed dinner at their homestay (this recommendation might also apply to Folkehøjskole). For example: meal vouchers, cash, or a punchcard for meals at the Studenterhuset.

*DIS Response:*

*DIS has existing plans to develop the website, so that it includes information for students more generally about what commuting in Denmark looks like and how it will impact their study abroad experience. This is something that we also see as important for all students. However, much of the experience of living in another cultural context (of which commuting can be) simply has to 'be lived' as part of the experience. We also think having materials/assistance on-site is an important aspect to be able to support students in adjusting to this aspect of Danish lifestyle.*

*Currently, we do 'adhere' to our own standards of transportation time under 60 minutes for each of our housing options and all homestay addresses. This is calculated during daytime rush hour, where there are most connections. Students traveling to and from DIS outside of working hours, can therefore expect possibly longer commutes. We will be sure to include this in our current rounds of webpage edits happening this spring. Finally, there are trade-offs with all choices students make for their study abroad experience. DIS has not made any decisions to offer alternative meal plans for students unable to make it home sometimes. Our online materials and arrival workshop presentations could be better about informing students how to manage their finances while abroad, by giving them tips about planning for some meals outside of the home for all of our housing options. For the 2016-17 catalog we will consider our food stipend strategy carefully, as part of the configuration of tuition, fees, and stipends.*

19. While DIS always tries to honor a student's first housing preference, the team is concerned that on occasion a student is being matched in an apartment or homestay with a single member of the opposite gender. While this practice may be appropriate in a Danish context, it is inconsistent with US cultural norms and presents a potential liability issue. We recommend this practice be discontinued, or that DIS allow students to indicate within their housing preferences if they would be comfortable with such an arrangement.

*DIS Response:*

*DIS appreciates the insight into this potential liability issue for the organization. The practice of placing students in mixed-gendered housing currently happens on a small scale, approx. 10-15 out of 1200 students per semester. And while there have never been any reported conflicts or issues for parties involved with this practice, DIS will have the issue on our radar in the coming year and will examine the many different perspectives (cultural and otherwise) involved.*

*Currently DIS does have a formal practice of informing homestay students if their primary hosts will exclusively be of the opposite gender (such as with single parents). If students (or parents) are uncomfortable for any reason with this set-up, students are offered an alternative housing option. And DIS will look into whether this is a work process that should be applied to the other housing options in the future.*

20. Male students are in a minority in Learning Abroad programs in general and DIS is no exception. This imbalance is exacerbated in certain classes where males are either entirely absent or there is a single male on the roster. Although many of these imbalances reflect broader trends that cannot be easily addressed (e.g., the preponderance of females in Psychology and males in Business Studies), DIS may wish to explore ways to encourage greater participation rates in gender-atypical classes. If, as a result of the proposed sustained enrollment policy, more students apply to the program than can be accommodated, an appropriate gender balance could serve as one of the criteria used in student selection.

*DIS Response:*

*This is also something we are exploring through various housing options (new LLC themes, etc.), as well as in what manner we market our various housing options in our materials (videos, blogs, websites, etc.).*

*We are very aware of the gender imbalance in academics and in the past two curriculum rounds, we have had it as a focus when deciding on new courses and revising existing ones. In the fall of 2015, we will launch a computer science program, which already has a different gender make up than most of our classes (65% males) and we have developed courses in our new site in Stockholm, which should appeal to all genders. We are also revising our 2016/17 catalog for both Stockholm and Copenhagen with the gender imbalance in mind.*

21. Add emergency response plan information to the health and safety section of the On-Site & Pre-Departure Handbook

*DIS Response:*

*This information will be added to the On-Site & Pre-Departure Handbook for fall 2015.*

22. Ensure SRAs are adequately trained on protocol for emergency communications.

*DIS Response:*

*As DIS finalizes its Contingency Plan, there are plans to inform SRAs of the protocol for emergency communications. In addition, specific training in general first aid as well as 'psychological first aid' will be covered in upcoming training workshops in 2015/2016.*

23. Part-time faculty members at DIS do not have offices at the school. Smaller offices or common spaces that are easily reserved and designated for student appointments would help facilitate better interaction between students and professors.

*DIS Response:*

*DIS will consider this as part of the 2016 action plan process which begins in summer 2015.*

24. Through conversations with faculty and the Director of Academic Support, testing space for students with disabilities is lacking, especially during exams near the end of the semester. A solution could be combined with the previous recommendation.

*DIS Response:*

*As above, DIS will consider this as part of the 2016 action plan process which begins in summer 2015.*

25. With the growth of DIS, staff split amongst several buildings, and with Stockholm on the horizon, a sense of community and connectedness could be at risk. Thus, the team recommends developing some sort of intranet website, Facebook group, etc. for staff to share news, updates, anecdotal stories, etc. This would not necessarily serve as the source for formal announcements, but rather a more informal space to keep the camaraderie of staff members high as DIS continues to grow and change.

*DIS Response:*

*An intranet is on the technology development list and is scheduled for discovery as part of the 2016 action plan process.*

26. An external and transparent IT audit of every program and department would help identify opportunities for investment and exploration of new processes.

*DIS Response:*

*DIS will consider an external IT audit of organizational IT needs. It is unfortunate that the review committee did not meet with the executive in charge of IT or with department heads in IT development and IT operations during the review. IT development is managed through a process whereby the executive team sets project priorities and IT development schedules discovery and project development in alignment with departments during the yearly action plan process. In addition, departments interact with IT development through an ongoing product owner forum, composed of key stakeholders and tech pioneers throughout the organization.*