



Section 8 - Further Open Comments

Resident Directors answering the survey were given an opportunity at the end to provide any further comment they wish. Below is a selection of those comments, allowing individual voices to complement the survey. Some comments have been edited to remove identifying information.

- *I am deeply concerned with the trend of treating Higher Education as a commodity. I see myself as an academic and not a service provider, yet studying abroad implies dealing with many non-academic aspects of students' lives. How to maintain our integrity professionally and still push back at current students' sense of privilege.*
- *My students often tell me that I have their dream job. Many days, I would agree with them. But when in the middle of a crisis or in the crunch of a busy time, it can be a very lonely and exhausting job where the weight of our seemingly unlimited responsibility is heavy.*
- *Having worked for many different institutions/organizations & overseen multiple program models, the experience of being a RD varies greatly according to program type, student profile (single vs. multiple institutions), location & availability of resources (major capital vs. smaller town), enrollments, degree of institutional support and management structure on the U.S. side. Being part of a large worldwide organization with clear policies & procedures, major resources & infrastructure and separate divisions/staff to deal with aspects such as marketing & recruitment, safety & risk management, legal issues, etc. is VERY different from working for a small institution that may have a 1- or 2-person study abroad office, few programs abroad & small on-site operations run almost single-handedly by a RD who must wear all the hats. RDs today are asked and indeed expected to do way too much - notably in areas in which they are not experts (e.g., mental health) - and to assume more responsibility than any individual on a normal U.S. campus. The potential for liability issues has never been greater, and it increases every year. If this survey succeeds in sounding an alarm, it will have served a purpose.*
- *I think it could be a very good position under the right circumstances- if roles were clearly defined and properly compensated, if the position and the program were truly valued by the academic institution, and if work/life balance and employee support were given some priority. It is difficult to properly support the students and maintain a good atmosphere for employees when so much responsibility is put on one person,*

with very little training or support given so that person can perform the role to the best of his/her ability.

- *The main problem is related to the total underestimation of the amount of work and responsibilities we have, but we don't have a voice because we are not faculty, therefore they place us at the lower level of the academic hierarchy. The second problem is a real risk of burnout, totally underestimated by the US. They don't consider the fact that we are on call 24/7 and alone (without a campus around us) many months a year. Last but not least students come to Europe more and more in order to travel, not to study. So they are not committed to study, and this is a terrible frustration for someone who is committed in the field of EDUCATION abroad-*
- *In spite of the occasional craziness, I do sometimes believe I have the best job in the world. Sometimes.*
- *I would like to better understand if it is legal to have directors on call 24/7 all year round and make sure that this type of pressure does not just receive adequate compensation, but also adequate support. I am also interested in exploring if there is a possibility for titles for abroad faculty who have served the institution for years but are called "instructors". Without mining the tenure track system, I feel that undermining faculty abroad, but asking them at the same time to teach U.S students is not just contradictory but gives room to unequal treatment. I cannot accept that because a faculty member teaches abroad he/she is for some reasons considered as less qualified and less worthy of promotion and of the title of professor.*
- *We need to have more frequent opportunities to collaborate as Resident Directors in particular countries or regions. We face similar challenges and could act as mentors and give guidance to one another. I don't feel like that important face-to-face collaboration is happening often enough.*
- *Rewarding emotionally, but not financially.*
- *I was interested to see some of the questions about synergies between on-site staff and headquartered staff. I found that to be the biggest adjustment when taking on this role. It often feels as though headquarters is trying to "educate" us and get us in line with standardized procedures that simply cannot work across the board in several different global destinations. I would love for on-site staff's expertise to be trusted more and for our voice to be heard above whatever headquarters might think is the best for overall program growth and enrollment. I would feel much more satisfied in my job if I felt more aligned with the folks on the US side.*
- *I wish I had time to elaborate, but I am a Resident Director...*
- *This survey was geared to American institutions, not surprisingly, and many of the terms are unfamiliar to Canadians and many of the situations do not apply to the structure of Canadian programs. That having been said, the fact that I am retired*

and working part time mitigates a great number of the questions, especially in terms of career advancement, university inclusion, etc.

Project Lead Author's Note: Sincere apologies to our Canadian colleagues....a massive oversight especially considering the lead researcher on this study is himself a Canadian.

- *Being a RD is an amazing experience. It offers numerous professional and personal opportunities. For example, it is my first time being primarily in an administrative role at my college and it has given me new avenues of research. Also, being an RD allows you to share a transformative experience with your students. Overall, this is a positive 'stretching' experience.*
- *I think one of our biggest challenges is to manage interaction with students who mostly come from a traditional US academic background and are not prepared to fully explore and experience a different academic setting.*
- *My largest regret is that the financial, administrative, and legal responsibilities are preventing me from doing any kind of academic or scholarly work.*
- *Love the varied nature of the position. Also being somewhat autonomous. Supportive supervisor is crucial. Unfortunately other parts of the college (esp. finance, hr) in the US do not really understand what the role is, or what it is to run programs in other countries.*
- *Love it!*
- *Dynamics in my institution has changed a lot. Moving from being able to share ideas, comments, thoughts to improve the program quality towards students to not being able to give any opinion but when I'm asked and sometimes I'm asked because my institution needs to follow the protocols. Number of students has decreased by more than 75% and that means enjoying my work less. Not happy with my institution but loving the work of being a resident director.*
- *It is a difficult role sometimes as you have to deal with many issues and sometimes alone. We should have more accessibility to training regarding mental health issues, and I believe as part of our job we should have health insurance that covers therapy and counsellor hours. In some cases, we have to deal with many stressful situations regarding students' health and we manage it ourselves, so it would be beneficial to be able to talk about it with someone.*
- *I think I've said it all above. I do strongly object to the title RD, as I've stated. There is no other director of my program, yet the title suggests that I am the on-site director, the one who lives here, and the other director must be somewhere else. The word "resident" contributes to the lack of understanding by our home institutions about the breadth and depth of our knowledge, experience and skill set, and also diminishes understanding about the intense and unrelenting responsibility that we face. Not only*

for the health, safety and security of our students, but we also carry legal and fiscal liability that would crush the average mortal. In my country, I can be personally fined, my bank account frozen or even incarcerated if the program violates laws and legislation. I tremble when I get a notification from the Tax Authority. This is another invisible weight that many of us carry, as is the 24/7 responsibility for our students. This lack of understanding is particularly threatening because as universities centralize their global endeavors, as is happening at this time at my university, new players step in with ideas about making sweeping changes without thinking even consulting us to find out if they are putting the university, or US, at risk. When you have little to no institutional credibility, it makes it nearly impossible to have your voice heard. We are siloed. And when we do get recognition, it is usually from a superior who is also somewhat isolated by the nature of her work. This is the part of the work that causes stress and headaches. We know how to do our jobs, with all of its myriad challenges, and we are happy to do it; in fact we are the happiest when the home institution just leaves us alone and doesn't interfere in letting us get the job done the way we know how to. It's like when you need them to provide for you, like establishing a coherent and effective emergency response protocol, or to supply support in a real student emergency, they fail you. But then they want to intervene to mess up a perfectly functioning system or protocol you have going because some new person in the new global department wants "consistency" across their programs (not consistency on best practices for inclusive excellence, things like consistency on payroll..., without taking into account local laws and legislation, and how this new system will affect the RD). It's very frustrating. I hope my comments have been helpful!

- *It seems to me that the number of students I am asked to care for (close to 300 in a semester) as a one person team on a part time contract is a lot to ask. But then, I don't really handle the academic side. It would be good to have a clearer notion of how unusual my situation is.*
- *Amazing job with such a diverse range of roles and responsibility. Can be very very stressful being on call for nearly 10 years now 50-51 weeks out of the year requires significant mental strength and resilience.*
- *I am ultimately leaving the sector due to lack of career progression and feeling "burnt out."*
- *The multi-faceted nature of the job is both rewarding - one rarely has the same day twice - but also challenging - one is expected to have knowledge of so many different areas of operation.*