

## Season One

### Episode One

Hannah (H): Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah!

Zoë (Z): And I'm Zoë! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

H: FSU International Programs has been sending students abroad for over 60 years, and is consistently ranked in the top 15 study abroad programs in the nation. We have four study centers that operate year-round. They are located in London, England; Florence, Italy; Panama City in Republic of Panama; and in Valencia, Spain. We also offer spring break and summer programs in over 20 other locations around the world!

Z: We have a dedicated staff of over 30 people who handle everything from financial aid and marketing to immigration and risk management. We can't wait to talk more about who we are, and what we do on this podcast!

On this episode you'll hear from our Director, Dr. Jim Pitts about the growth of International Programs over time. But first, as your hosts, Hannah and I wanted to take some time to introduce ourselves and talk about our own journeys in study abroad. So Hannah, why don't you start us off? How did you get into study abroad?

H: I actually didn't study abroad in undergrad which is kind of interesting. I feel like I have a little bit different perspective on study abroad. I did not have the opportunity to study abroad until I actually started graduate school at Florida State. My program at Florida State, I got my masters in Higher Education with a concentration in Student Affairs, so my program has a study abroad program built in between year one and year two of your grad program. So I participated in the Insights of Higher Education program in London, England. We start off with a practicum trip in a local, a city local in Florida so we actually went to Orlando for my trip and visited some higher education institutions in the Orlando area and then that following week we traveled to London, England to do a comparative study of those higher education institutions in Orlando to London, England. It was so cool to have that opportunity to take a really critical look at the field that I was interested in going into and having a chance to really do like a first hand study on what education is in these different places and how higher education treats different things and operates in these different locations. So after having that very short, it was only one week I wish it was longer, but after having that study abroad experience and gaining experience with

working with students throughout my graduate program, I really was able to see the benefits of studying abroad and for my other student affairs folks, I can absolutely see why it is a high impact practice, and I decided that I really wanted to be in this field it was a great opportunity to work with students to be a part of something that has such a lasting impact on so many students and what they go on to do with the rest of their lives that I really just wanted to be a part of it. So fast forward a little bit now I am the Event Coordinator or more officially the Program Coordinator for Events & Training, in the FSU International Programs office so I spend my time working with our IP Ambassador staff as well as planning departmental events whether that is the study abroad fair, alumni social events, coordinating with other universities, high schools, local organizations to inform them how they can get involved in our programs. It is a really great time, I love getting to share my experience but also just share the experiences of students who have studied abroad.

Z: I don't think I have ever actually asked you this before but I'm curious, what is your favorite part of your job?

H: That is such an easy question, hands down my favorite part is working with my IP Ambassador staff. They are incredible. The IP Ambassadors are undergraduate students who have studied abroad before and then apply to work in our office so they are all around ambassadors for all things IP. They present on campus in classrooms, in the Visitor's Center, at Orientation in front of huge crowds. They work in our office, they work in our passport office at our front desk, they are answering phones, taking payments, they are all around in our office. They are just an awesome group of students, they definitely connect to my higher education background and why I wanted to work in this field so without a doubt working with my IP Ambassadors is my favorite part of my job. So Zoë, it's your turn. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how you got started in study abroad?

Z: Sure, so I studied abroad in Costa Rica in 2013 and had the most incredible experience. I lived with a host family while I was there. I was able to practice my Spanish language skills and because of my study abroad experience I actually ended up majoring in Spanish because I just loved it so much so Costa Rica definitely impacted my academics a lot. And then the following Spring I actually applied to be an IP Ambassador on campus like what you were talking about and it was incredible to just have that job during my undergrad and really just get to talk about study abroad all the time and just get to see other students get excited about it so I loved that job. And then after I graduated I started working at IP full time. So I applied to an open position that just happened to come up right at the perfect time for me and I worked as a program coordinator, just coordinating study abroad programs for about four years and then I sort of switched gears and a couple years ago joined the marketing team as the social media coordinator. So I love it and it's a really great, it's been a great journey going from studying abroad to working as a student and then sort of just seeing how we operate full time.

H: So you have some really interesting experience, I'm sure seeing a lot of different perspectives in study abroad from being a student to being a student worker, being a program coordinator and now on marketing. What has all of that perspective given you, like how do you view study abroad given your perspective?

Z: That's such a good question. I think that there's just so much that you don't see as a student that goes into study abroad and now I have been able to see that side of things of you know, really the value of international education because I feel like when you're a student it is so raw and you're just experiencing it as its coming at you and it is so wonderful because that is the experience that becomes a part of you but then turning around and working on the behind the scenes of study abroad you get to see all of the thought process that goes into it and all of the work and effort and I think that that's really cool too because its you know it's not just this same raw experience that you're having its more thought out and methodical and I think that's really neat to really see how everyone works together to really make these dream experiences come true.

H: Absolutely, I think that is why I am so excited about this podcast because we get to share that with people. It's no longer going to be this big secret of what is happening behind the scenes. We are going to share a little bit about our history, we're going to talk about our programs, we're going to hear from the people that lead our programs. I'm just really really excited to share with people what it is that we do.

Z: Me too! Can't wait!

Now that you have met me and Hannah, we want to introduce you to our director, Dr. Jim Pitts. Let's jump into our conversation with him. So first of all would you mind introducing yourself to our listeners?

Jim (J): Yes, I'm Jim Pitts, Director of International Programs at Florida State University.

Z: Wonderful, and can you tell us about your role at FSU IP and what led you here?

J: My role is essentially overseeing the International Programs operations, it was something I never thought I'd be doing but when I was vice president of the university for university advancement, President Sliger asked me if I would go to London and purchase a campus and after telling him I would be happy to do whatever he wanted me to do but I'd have to get a passport first so that launched my career in International Programs.

H: That's amazing that you didn't yet have a passport and now here you are leading our international programs office.

J: Yes I didn't have a passport because at that time you didn't need it to go to Canada or Mexico or the Carribean but now I have my fifth extended page passport.

H: I'm sure you have filled plenty of passport pages at this point in your career. Our study centers and programs abroad have experienced a lot of growth over the years but could you talk about the growth of IP in Tallahassee?

J: Well, the initial study abroad office which dealt with London and Florence study abroad programs had probably four or five individuals and those programs were essentially faculty led programs to London and to Florence. Interestingly enough it was, in the first year that both programs operated the university actually chartered a plane that took students to London, dropped them off and then continued to Florence and then went back and picked them up at the end of the program. The university when we purchased the London property, we created a DSO and issued bonds to purchase the property and as a result I was asked in 1995 to become the director of International Programs and we totally reorganized the structure of the program. Up until that time we had two study abroad programs in London and Florence and all the other international efforts within the university were decentralized. with the development of international programs they become centralized in 95. And then the Republic of Panama program was added to that mix in 2000 with the reversion of the canal.

Z: So you've certainly seen International programs grow quite a bit in your time here.

J: Yes, as I say we had about 4 or 5 employees in study abroad early on. Then by 2000 we had approximately 16 employees and then today we have about 32 so it's been a significant growth. In the initial years the study abroad programs in London and Florence typically had about 100-125 each per year and of course now, last year we had well over 2,000 participants in study abroad. And the other interesting aspect of this is that in 2004 President TK Wetherell authorized the First Year Abroad program and that has really helped stabilize the enrollment between Fall, Spring and Summer and so that has been very instrumental in our growth.

H: How do you see that growth continuing? This is kind of an extra bonus question. What do you see the future of IP being from where we've come from?

J: Well, we were on the path to having a record year this year until COVID-19 hit and I think that obviously has really set back international travel as well as international experiences but I think

once the pandemic has finished the growth will really rebound. We still have a lot of student interest in going. Many of those who weren't able to go this summer actually transferred their fees to a future term and I think there is still a lot of interest in going abroad and I see the growth continuing although it will be under a different scale I think.

Z: Wonderful, well thank you so much for talking with us and just giving us that history of IP and your role!

J: Well I mean you know, I always enjoy talking with both of you.

Z: Thank you, it's been our pleasure!

H: Thanks Dr. Pitts!

H: At the end of each episode, we'll be doing a section we're calling "before we disembark" to bring you fun tidbits of history, arts, and culture from our study abroad locations around the globe. We'll also bring you IP Tips with helpful information about study abroad, from financial aid to what to pack.

Z: Since it's our first episode, here's our first IP Tip: there are lots of ways to connect with us! You can check out our blog - which will be easy to find as it has the same name as our podcast - Noles Abroad. We're also on social media @fsuip, on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Spotify. Follow us for photos, stories, music, and more! You can also chat with us on our website or simply give us a call!

### **Outro:**

H: Thanks for listening and be sure to subscribe! In our next four episodes we will hear from each of the directors of FSU's international locations. They'll share a bit about themselves and the history of IP's study centers!

In the next episode, Dr. Carlos Langoni, Director of FSU Panama, will tell us all about his favorite local foods and the diversity in Panama.

Carlos: As far as you know, the human presence it's a very diverse country which brings with that all the diversity as far as their culture, as far as their food and their folklore, all of that, you can see that in Panama.

Z: Special thanks to our guest today, Dr. Jim Pitts, and to all of you, our wonderful listeners.

This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Zoe Crook and Hannah Meister.