Goal-Setting and your Off-Campus Experience

In his book, All The Places To Go: How Will You Know*?,* John Ortberg begins chapter one with the following question: *If you had to summarize your life in six words, what would they be?*

Wow. Great question. But what would you say? The challenge in describing your life with a six-word limitation is that it demands that you focus on what matters most, to capture briefly something of significance.1 It also demands some serious self-reflection and soul searching. I also think it is an interesting question as you are about to embark on a semester-long adventure to study off-campus because your upcoming experience has the potential to change your six-word narrative in many exciting ways – particularly if you are open and intentional about seeking opportunities for growth.

One way you can be intentional about shaping your adventures is to develop some written goals for your experience. Research tells us that individuals who write down their goals are significantly more likely to accomplish these goals than individuals who don’t.2 The purpose of this worksheet is to help you develop goals for your time off-campus and to integrate these goals with the overarching goals of Calvin’s off-campus programs (as listed on the back of this sheet).

In helping students strive to achieve these overarching goals, off-campus programs employ a variety of strategies. These strategies include: formal learning (classes), informal learning (experiential), independent travel, group excursions, service-learning, becoming involved in a local congregation, and building relationships with each other and others from the places you are studying. As you reflect and write your answers to the following questions, think how these strategies might impact your personal goals or how your personal goals might impact your involvement in these strategies:

1. Right now, if you had to summarize your life in six words, what would they be? What would you like these six words to be after your off-campus semester experience?

Some examples: Not quite what I was planning – Not a good Christian, but trying – Cursed with cancer, blessed with friends – Adventures, God’s plan, not done yet.

1. What are some specific goals for your off-campus experience? Academically? Spiritually? Emotionally? Culturally? How do these goals relate to or reflect the overarching goals of Calvin’s semester programs? How do these goals relate to specific program goals in Honduras, Hungary, and Peru? What are these specific program goals?
2. Do you have any specific goals related to strategies (listed above) to accomplish your goals?
3. Go to the Futureme.org website and write a letter to yourself regarding your goals and what you hope for during your semester off-campus. Have it delivered to yourself while you are away, or whenever you think would be beneficial.
4. Ortberg, J. (2015). *All the places to go: How will you know?* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.
5. Matthews, G. Study focuses on strategies for achieving goals, resolutions. <http://www.dominican.edu/dominicannews/study-highlights-strategies-for-achieving-goals> (accessed April 22, 2016).

CALVIN’S OFF-CAMPUS SEMESTER PROGRAM GOALS:

**PROMOTE Disciplinary/Interdisciplinary Knowledge.**

*Calvin’s Off-Campus programs will provide quality educational opportunities that take advantage of the experiential nature of off-campus study and the unique context of each program. Specifically, our programs will promote:*

* Promote greater knowledge and understanding of the general historical, political, social, environmental, and economic status of the world in general;
* Provide discipline-specific knowledge whereby students can gain an international perspective on their major/career/discipline;
* Encourage interdisciplinary synergy, seeing connections across a wide range of subjects;
* Encourage language acquisition where pertinent, improving student’s language competency in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and culture.

**Promote Intercultural Competence**.

*The complexity of today’s world demands that we have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live and work well in a diverse world. Acquisition of intercultural competence includes developing the capacity to communicate and behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations as well as the capacity to be open to learn from each other in a variety of settings and situations. Calvin’s off-campus programs will strive to create opportunities that promote cross-cultural engagement whereby students can gain the knowledge, skills and virtues needed for intercultural competence.*

**PROMOTE Social/Emotional Growth**.

*Calvin’s Off-Campus Programs will create experiences for students to learn and grow holistically through their off-campus experience. An integral part of this goal is to assist students in developing the skills and attitudes needed to build relationships in an increasingly diverse world. Specifically, our programs will:*

* Build independence and maturity in students, while showing students the intra-dependence of all things;
* Assist students in gaining self-confidence and self awareness;
* Encourage students to develop empathy; if people are to be energized to struggle to undo injustice, it is important that they see first hand injustice and listen to the voices and see the faces of victims so that empathy can be developed.

**PROMOTE Spiritual/Faith Development**.

*Calvin’s Off-Campus Programs will work to integrate Christian faith into all aspects of the experience. Specifically, our programs will provide opportunities for students to:*

* Explore the role of faith in the places where students study. Reflect on and articulate how Christian worldview and faith commitment affect interaction with “the Other” as well as how encounters with “the Other” help one to recognize one’s own cultural perspective;
* Create an environment where students can practice responsible freedom;
* Explore a Reformed Worldview in the context of international learning with the goal of connecting doing and believing.