



CSUSB work experience with ARAMFO Educational Foundation
Professor Vipin Gupta

In 2014, we were fortunate to find ARAMFO – a foundation committed to promoting affordable and engaging short-term study abroad experiences. ARAMFO is able to do so because of the range of partnerships they have formed with local partners in nations around the world; the partners who understand the nuances of their local markets and are able to find high value lodging, transportation, and program manager gems. After a thorough vetting process, we decided to run a pilot of conducting all our study abroad programs for a year through ARAMFO.

During the year, ARAMFO staff worked closely with our faculty and staff to consider our specific needs – our learning objectives, our academic calendar, and our faculty expertise. They worked flexibly and professionally, with an eye towards the highest levels of academic standards. They gave shape to the ideas of our faculty across disciplines by arranging valuable field visits, expert dialogs, and course-related cultural excursions that met faculty vision of a high-quality, transformative student experience. ARAMFO responded quickly when faculty asked for changes. They also offered valuable support in recruiting and advertising the program.

From an administrative perspective, it was very refreshing that we could depend on ARAMFO for arranging all the logistics, and pay for the entire program using a single invoice, instead of dealing with cash advances or reimbursement for numerous receipts.

As we worked through our relationship, our faculty recognized that it will be best if they worked as collaborators. We wanted our faculty to be able to use their expertise and outreach to make special connections with chambers of commerce, universities and local experts, to complement the efforts of ARAMFO. ARAMFO respected our decision and accommodated our requests and meeting schedules. We learnt that this works best when the faculty acted and communicated early with ARAMFO, as it was difficult to make significant adjustments at the last minute. ARAMFO helped faculty realize that last minute changes can impede student experience, while also making it difficult for the local logistics partners who meticulously plan each and every moment of the experience striving to make it a lifetime experience. At the same time, students also came to recognize that despite all the best planning, all events may not go entirely as planned. Gauging the student and faculty interest, local partners added beautiful surprising touches, and adeptly made adjustments when local conditions so demanded.

We found our summer programs with ARAMFO last year quite successful one. Students reported excitement and enthusiasm. They achieved great academic outcomes with terrific value for money. Local partners were fun and genuinely concerned about student learning, safety and welfare. Students told us that the programs were the “best experience of their lives”. They came to recognize how they could change the world through their decisions and their touches.

The entire team at ARAMFO showed great kindness and was quick to make right anything that was wrong, wanting nothing more than for our faculty and students to have the best experience possible.

After the success of this pilot, this year, we decided to expand our relationship with ARAMFO. We have faculty from both our college and outside our college who are offering their study abroad programs through ARAMFO. ARAMFO has committed to strive their best to make the programs even more affordable, without compromising on the quality. The costs of the programs now are lower than what we could achieve ourselves, while the quality is top notch. This has allowed us to rely more on our faculty to work with ARAMFO in developing custom travel agendas, while administratively, we are able to focus on partnering with our faculty to educate widest group of our students about the tremendous lifetime value of study abroad.

I thank ARAMFO for their support, and encourage you to also consider ARAMFO as a partner if you are serious about moving the needle on raising study abroad participation on your campus.

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