A modified travel career ladder model for understanding academic travel behaviors

Jacqueline A. Williams
North Carolina A & T State University

Kimberly R. McNeil
North Carolina A & T State University

ABSTRACT

When faculty and students travel on behalf of their institutions, domestically and abroad, such as to participate in conferences and competitions, travel support is summarily granted based on cited benefits of experiential learning, networking opportunities, and an overall broadening and development experience to augment campus life. However, based on a substantial body of travel research, the motivations or underlying reasons for any travel endeavor are often covert in that they usually reflect a complex array of individual needs and wants. Although there is wholesome agreement about the fundamental importance of academic travel, there is no common theoretical or conceptual framework to understand and/or assess travel choices, behavior, and learning outcomes, especially for faculty-student joint travel venues. The present research concentrates on the modification of one of the existing theories of travel motivation – the travel career ladder as a way of understanding and assessing the faculty-student joint travel behaviors.

Keywords: Travel Career Ladder, University Travel Assessment

INTRODUCTION

There is a rapidly growing, world-wide increase in travel influencing faculty, students, and their respective educational institutions. A report by the World Tourism Organization (http://unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm) indicates that during 1998 more than 600 million people traveled internationally, a figure that is expected to soar to 1.6 billion by 2020. The World Youth Student & Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation (www.aboutwysetc.org/) reports that 20 percent of international tourist arrivals are young and youth travelers and the global youth travel market has been growing almost 5 percent annually for several years.   Additionally, in the May 2007 edition of the Curriculum Review, it is noted that many Americans, young and old, are choosing vacations that incorporate learning experiences. The objective of this research is to conceptually explore the motivation and assessment of education-related travel sponsored by Colleges and Universities for the benefit of their faculty and students.

University faculty and students are an important segment of the travel population (Kim, Jogaratnam, and Noh 2006; Staats, Panek, and Cosmar 2006). Travel is becoming commonplace and even expected for faculty and students in public and private institutions of higher education. Government agencies, professional/trade associations, corporate business partners, and other types of organizations such as honorary societies and alumni associations are developing accessible, effective education-related venues. These events are not only hosted off the college campus, but also require travel to a place that is a significant distance away from campus, resulting in the need for overnight accommodations. Whereas, a plethora of descriptive essays and research reports exists on the value of educational related travel such as the value of study abroad programs (e.g., Black and Duhon, 2006), limited theoretical attention has been paid to developing a robust model of the travel motivations and assurance of learning for the joint travel endeavors of university faculty and students.

Faculty-student joint travel is undertaken for a variety of obvious reasons such as gaining experience through learning in a competitive atmosphere, learning in a high pressure environment, showcasing students in a different environment, and building team camaraderie. However accumulated travel research clearly indicates that the motivations or underlying reasons for any travel endeavor are often covert in that they reflect an individual's needs and wants (Pearce 1988, 1991, 1993, 2005). Although there is wholesome agreement about the fundamental importance of travel, there is no common theoretical or conceptual framework to understand and/or assess travel choices/motives, behavior, and learning outcomes for faculty-student joint travel venues.

The primary goal of this research concentrates on the modification of one of the existing theories of travel motivation – the travel career ladder (TCL) (Pearce 1988, 1991, 1993, 2005), as a way of enhancing our understanding of and assessment of faculty-student joint travel behaviors. The explicit value of pursuing the travel career ladder approach lies in the fact that the work has been developed and sustained throughout some period of time. It has been used in both academic and applied studies. The travel career ladder theory has also attracted some detail commentary suggesting the need to improve the approach (Ryan 1998, Todd 1999). Thus, the primary goal of this research is to propose how adapting the travel career ladder theory makes it possible to not only describe who, when, where, and how of faculty-student joint travel but also to answer the more difficult subtle aspects of why and to what end. Secondly, the authors suggest methods of assessing the learning outcomes of faculty-student joint travel choice and behaviors.

University-sponsored travel for faculty and students is an action that recognizes the value and significance of participating in venues off-campus. As part of the educational mission of academic institutions, faculty and students travel on behalf of their institutions, domestically and abroad, with support summarily granted based on cited benefits of experiential learning, networking opportunities, and an overall broadening and development experience to augment campus life. Assurance of learning standards related to assessment underscore the idea that faculty members must demonstrate that their students have competence in the skills they must master to be successful in the jobs they attain post-graduation (Allen 2004).   Travel experiences are cited as a means to attain mastery of some learning goals (Black and Duhon, 2006). Thus, travel is deemed as a contribution to both student learning outcomes in addition to being an aspect of faculty development programs.

One aspect of academic life in which most university faculty and students have received limited training is how to relate travel with students to effectively achieve professional development learning goals as well as goals related to content knowledge in their chosen academic areas of study. The Travel Industry Association of America (URL: http://www.tia.org) defines a person-trip as one person on one trip traveling 50 miles or more from home, one way. Many university students traveling for the first time on business person-trips (which we can also refer to as academic person-trips) are in need of travel advice prior to departure. Faculty should not assume that students are prepared to travel without incidence. Many accidents have occurred during university travel over the years (American Council on Education 2006, URL: http://www.acenet.edu). In addition, little attention has been paid to how to assess the learning outcomes of academic travel of faculty and student teams related in and of itself to travelling. To remedy this situation, the next section of this paper will 1) identify a broad range of travel motive items for faculty and student joint travel in general, 2) propose a scheme of underlying factors defining these academic travel motivations and behaviors, and 3) adapt Pearce's TCL model into a framework more applicable to a comprehensive academic travel assessment practice.

TRAVEL CAREER LADDER (TCL) THEORY

The notion of the travel career ladder (TCL) was introduced by Pearce in his 1988 book, The Ulysses Factor, and updated in his 2005 publication, Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes. Today it is widely cited in both academic journals and practitioner reports resulting in wide use by the commercial tourism sector. The TCL model is based upon the well-known Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs Model of psychological growth. Like Maslow, Pearce's model specifies five different hierarchical steps affecting tourist behavior.

Pearce proposed and empirically tested his model that emphasizes the tourist's patterns and motives rather than a single motive for traveling. The levels described in his model are (1) concern with biological needs (specifically relaxation), (2) safety and security needs (or levels of stimulation), (3) relationship development and extension needs, (4) special interest and self-development needs, and (5) fulfillment or deep involvement needs akin to self-actualization. In addition, he advocates that these travel goals may be self-directed or other-directed given that travel may be a solo or group experience.

As per careers in general and the TCL model specifically, people may start at different levels and the path may be variable with some individuals ascending the ladder while others are descending it. Additionally, some people will move along the self-directed side of the ladder while others may pursue the other-directed or both the self- and other-directed goals of the

ladder. This illustrates that, like the evolution and critique of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there is agreement that the theoretical framework is developmental and dynamic in that as people acquire experiences (a career), their motivations change (Ryan 1998). For example, as Ryan (1998) notes, those going abroad for the first time may prefer the security of a package tour but in time will opt for a more independent travel itinerary.

FACULTY AND STUDENT TRAVEL CAREER LADDER (FAST-CL) MODEL

The Faculty and Student Travel Career Ladder (FAST-CL) presented in Figure 1 displays a broad range of travel motive items for faculty and student joint travel in general and the underlying factors defining these academic travel motivations. Following Pearce (2005), the FAST-CL describes motivations for faculty and student joint travel as consisting of five different levels: 1) survival needs as it relates to meeting off-campus teaching and learning professional expectations, 2) safety/security needs via safe travel competency and administration, 3) relationship needs via social development and building relationships, 4) self-esteem needs via leadership development, and 5) self-actualization or fulfillment needs. The needs are organized in a ladder with highest level needs being that of fulfillment and multiple needs may be operating simultaneous; however, one set of needs in the ladder may be dominant at any given point in time.

The FAST-CL ladder models faculty-student joint travel behaviors as series of stages and in most cases, in an ascending pattern. It is acknowledged however that some faculty-student joint travel may remain at a particular level depending on contingency or limiting factors such as financial considerations of the academic institution. In addition, there are distinct travel goals for faculty that can be linked to faculty development and the business school's assurance of learning assessments (Legorreta, Kelley, and Sablynski 2006), even though the travel is a joint experience. These travel motivation patterns can be integrated into academic learning goals and assessments.

Survival (Meeting off-campus Teaching and Learning Expectations)

At the foundation of the FAST-CL is the motivation to demonstrate currency and relevance of knowledge (teaching and learning) including undertaking targeted professional development as appropriate. In today's environment of learning assurance, it is assumed that learning outcomes should be evidenced not only when a student is on campus but also when one is out in the world (Allen 2004). To survive as an educated person both student and faculty must meet the expectations of demonstrated competency on and off campus. This foundational travel motive provides a basic sense of surviving in terms of resume building (for students) and maintaining academic qualifications (for faculty).

The goal of meeting off-campus teaching and learning expectations can be assessed via one's participation in business person-trips that are industry validated activities that ensure reliability and validity of on-campus program delivery. This learning/travel goal can also be assessed by evaluating if one has adopted off-campus instructional and delivery strategies to respond to a range of learning needs (faculty) and participated in off-campus experiential learning (student) where appropriate. Thus, both students and faculty can be asked if this goal of off-campus (at the business person-trip distance) teaching and learning has been achieved, if it is in progress, or if it has not been achieved.

Safe Travel Competency and Administration

The second level of the FAST-CL model is the motivation to demonstrate safe travel competency and administration (Coffey 2004). After one acknowledges that one should travel, the next step is to execute the travel in a manner consistent with the policies and procedures of the university. Learning goals associated with safe travel competency and administration include 1) punctuality in completing and submitting travel forms, 2) maintaining accurate travel records in accordance with policy and procedure, 3) applying university travel protocols in accordance to university policies and procedures, 4) attending and participating in team/program activities and meetings, and 5) contributing information and ideas at pre- and post- travel meetings and during the event as required.

Faculty members are undoubtedly motivated to secure safe passage for student travelers. This goal can be assessed by the level to which one handles their responsibility of fulfilling a duty of care obligation for students, in general, and specifically being available for student consultation at clearly indicated times, responding to student enquiries in a timely manner (such as 2-3 working days), and observing other applicable legal requirements. Both faculty and students should, of course, notify the appropriate university contact of absences, unscheduled departures, or problems in accordance with travel policies and procedures. These actions can be assessed by asking both students and faculty if this goal of safe travel competence and administration has been achieved, if it is in progress, or if it has not been achieved.

Social Development and Building Relationships

At the mid-level position of the FAST-CL model is the motivation to build relationships. Travel can be viewed as a privilege to engage in social development through meeting and interacting with an assortment of people to whom you may not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise (Black and Duhon 2006). This privilege translates into a social development motive and learning outcome that can be assessed by how one treats students, colleagues, clients, and others with respect, courtesy, responsiveness, and otherwise acts in accordance with the university code of conduct.

Faculty and students' social interactions can be appraised as to how one maintains a cooperative and collaborative approach to working relationships when on a trip, how one recognizes the contributions and efforts of others, and how one provides constructive feedback focused on solutions. Faculty and students can also be evaluated in terms of how one promotes a positive image in all forums through profession/industry appropriate standards of documentation, audio-visual presentation and dress. Student and faculty travelers can be assessed regarding their social and relationship building interactions transpired in regards to host community groups, professional associations, faculty colleagues, and peer students.

Leadership Development

At the fourth level of the FAST-CL model is the motivation of leadership development. Leadership development is a prominent theme and objective in higher education (Thompson 2006). One of the core functions of education has been to prepare individuals to assume leadership roles. Colleges and Universities are formatting and delivering leadership programs to

provide performance ready students to the workplace with credible leadership skills. Clark (2001) in his review of student leadership and higher education notes that leadership traditionally refers to the ability or process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facility activities and relations in a group or organization (what we refer to as group-leadership). However more contemporary applications of leadership suggest that it can refer to the capacity and commitment both to take full responsibility for one's own responses to life (what we refer to as self-leadership), creating a life that is personally meaningful and fruitful. In both views, leadership is the antithesis of shifting responsibility to circumstances.

Clark (2001) notes that the literature is limited in the area of instruments designed to measure student leadership. However, he reports on one such effort to empirically assess student leadership behaviors. He notes that five categories were empirically assessed with a measure of student leadership focusing on behaviors labeled as Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. In the FAST-CL model we also note that role modeling and mentoring is an aspect of leadership in action and can serve as a travel motive.

Faculty and students can be mentors and role models, although the concepts are not quite the same. A role model is a person whose behaviors in a particular role are imitated by others whereas a mentor is a trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. A role model is chosen (for example, a faculty person may be chosen by a student and a "freshman" student may choose a "senior" student as a role model.) However, as a good role model you must be cognizant of your own behaviors because you are being observed. Mentoring is a way to take role modeling to a higher level by teaching a less experienced person (a mentee) the details of who you are, how you think, what you have done, and why. A good faculty mentor seeks to help optimize an educational experience, assists with socialization into a disciplinary culture or venue, and nurtures (versus supervise or oversee) a mentee.

Martinez-Saenz (2006) writes an essay called "Leading by Example" that indicates how one of the ways faculty and staff can foster mentoring relationships and serving as role models is by creating ongoing relationships with students beyond course selection, delivery, or troubleshooting.

> When advisers embody the idea of global citizenship by traveling abroad, learning and becoming adept at second and third languages, and by committing themselves to learning about others and how others perceive the world, students will learn to value and respect "the other." It becomes easier to guide someone down a path if the leader has already traveled down that same path. If faculty and staff strive to become good citizens, serve the common good, and celebrate diversity in their personal and professional lives, students will not only recognize it, but also embrace it through their own actions (Published in The Mentor on October 1, 2006, url: www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/).

Both faculty and students can be evaluated in terms of one's leadership abilities. Faculty leadership can be evaluated via measures of influence, conflict management, and coaching using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed and refined by Kouzes and Posner (Kouzes

and Posner 1987, 1995). In turn, the Student-LPI could be promising for assessing and developing effective college student leaders (Posner and Brodsky 1992). Both students and faculty can be queried as to if this goal has been achieved, if it is in progress, or if it has not been achieved.

Fulfillment

At the top of the FAST-CL model is the fulfillment motivation. Both students and faculty may be motivated to achieve "frequent" or "seasoned" traveler status. However, as per the International Herald Tribune's headline of May 31, 2006, the glamour is just about gone out of business travel. The story reads as follows:

> Business travel is perceived more as a tedious chore than a fulfilling experience. Thanks to increasingly crowded planes, delays, hassles with airport security, vended late-night dinners and unpredictable Internet connectivity, there are more stresses and strains than perks… The survey indicates that nearly one half (47 percent) of travelers do not get enough sleep on business trips, with nearly 3 in 10 (29 percent) saying that they don't sleep well when traveling. Nearly 4 in 10 (37 percent) agree that new airport security measures make business travel a big hassle; while one in six flies less on business because of this. One out of four "feel more stressed out on business trips;" only half (49 percent) believe "the quality of service in hotels is improving" (down from 72 percent in 2000) and 60 percent feel that "airline seating is generally uncomfortable except in business or first class."

So what is the highest level of travel motive -- the self-actualization impetus related to travel? Self-actualized people tend to have needs such as Truth, Justice, Wisdom, or Meaning via peak experiences. Travel motives, then, in their highest form is a means to an end for such peak experiences.

Blichfeldt (2007) focuses on travel as a form of experience aspirations. She explores how at different stages of life one prefers different kinds of travel and aspires for different type of experiences. In her research she found, for example, a teenager may want to travel to detach oneself from family or to do something they could not do at home. On the other side, more experienced travelers may in fact be less awed by the thought of travel, especially after a highly complex travel career, and as a result is truly "pulled" by an event or place in order to be motivated to travel. Thus, students are likely to reach a level of travel as fulfillment for very different reasons then would a faculty person. However, for both, the motive would be one of reaching a peak experience at a given point in their lives. Like Polyson (1985) who asked students to describe a personal peak experience to apply Maslow's construct of peak experience, this travel motive can be assessed by asking travelers to keep a journal of events or evaluate the intensity of the travel experience.

IMPLICATIONS

We theoretically readjust the TCL theory into a more comprehensive academic travel motivation theory and relate these travel motivation patterns to academic learning goals and assessments. For example, Black and Duhan's (2006) report on the mission of the British

Studies program offered by the University of Southern Mississippi is to provide students and faculty with the opportunity to live and learn in London, England. The intended education outcomes are that students are (1) more cross-culturally tolerant and empathic - a social development motive for travel as per the third tier of the FAST-CL Model, (2) more self confident and independent – a fourth tier FAST-CL leadership development aspect of travel and (3) more knowledgeable in their chosen academic areas of British Studies – meeting basic survival goals of off-campus teaching and learning expectations as indicated on the bottom tier of the FAST-CL model.

The goal of this paper was to take the first step toward a more comprehensive academic travel motivation theory and relate these travel motivation patterns to faculty development and student learning goals and assessments. Travel is considered a common contributor to both personal and professional enhancement. University-sponsored travel for faculty and students is an action that recognizes the value and significance of participating in venues off-campus. Assurance of learning standards related to assessment underscore the idea that faculty members must demonstrate that their students have competence in the skills they must master to be successful in the jobs they attain post-graduation. Travel experiences are cited as a means to attain mastery of various learning goals. Thus, travel is deemed here as a contribution to both student learning outcomes in addition to being an aspect of faculty development programs.

REFERENCES

Allen, J. (2004). The Impact of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment on Technical and Professional Communication Programs. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 13 (1), 93-108.

American Council on Education (2006), Safety in Student Transportation: A Resource Guide for Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from www.acenet.edu.

Black, H. Tyrone, and David L. Duhon (2006). Assessing the Impact of Business Study Abroad Programs on Cultural Awareness and Personal Development. *Journal of Education for Business*, Jan/Feb, 81, 3, 140–144.

Blichfeldt, Bodil Stilling (2007). A nice vacation: Variations in experience aspirations and travel careers. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13, 2, 149-164.

Clark, Greg ((2001). Student Leadership and Higher Education: A Review of the Literature. Academic Exchange – Extra, February/March, Retrieved online at http://asstudents.unco.edu/students/AE-Extra/2001/2/index.html.

Coffey, William R. (2004). Elements of a Travel Safety Program: Tips for Crossing Distance safely. *Professional Safety*, January 41-45.

Curriculum Review, May 2007, Vol. 46, Issue 9, 14.

Kim, K., Giri Jogaratnam, and Joenghee Noh (2006). Travel decisions of students at a US university: Segmenting the international market. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Oct, 12 (4), 345- 357.

Kouzes, J. and B. Posner (1987). *The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations.* San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kouzes, J. and B. Posner (1995). *The leadership challenge: How to keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations*. San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass.

Legorreta, L., Craig A. Kelley, and Chris J. Sablynski (2006). Linking faculty Development to the Business School's Mission. *Journal of Education for Business*, Sep/Oct, 82 (1), 3-10.

Martinez-Saenz, Miguel (2006). Leading by Example. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, Volume 8, Number 4 (October-December), retrieved online from www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/archives.htm.

Pearce, P. L. (1988). *The Ulysses Factor: Evaluating Visitors in Tourist Settings*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Pearce, P. L. (1991). Analyzing Tourist Attractions. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(1), 46-52.

Pearce, P. L. (1993). *Fundamentals of Tourist Motivation*. In Tourism Research: Critiques and challenges, D. Pearce, R. Butler, eds., 113-134. London: Routledge.

Pearce, P. L. (2005). Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes. Channel View Publications.

Polyson, James (1985). Student's Peak Experiences: Yes, Psychology Deals with Happiness, Too. *Teaching of Psychology*, Volume 12 (4), 211-213.

Posner, B. and B. Brosdsky (1992). A leadership development instrument for college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33 (3), 231-237.

The Travel Industry Association of America (URL: http://www.tia.org)

The World Tourism Organization (URL: http://unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm)

The World Youth Student & Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation (URL: www.aboutwysetc.org/)

Todd, S. (1999). Examining Tourist Motivation Methodologies. *Annals of Tourism Research* (26), 4, 1022-24.

Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and Personality* (2nd edition). New York: Harper and Row.

Ryan, C. (1998). The Travel Career Ladder: An Appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 25 (4), 936-957.

Staats, Sara, Paul E. Panek, and David Cosmar (2006). Predicting Travel Attitudes Among University Faculty After 9/11. *The Journal of Psychology*, 140 (2), 121-132.

Thompson, Michael D. (2006). Student Leadership Process Development: An Assessment of Contributing College Resources. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47 (3), 343-350.

Fulfillment

(Faculty and Student)
Achieve Travel Experience Aspirations

Leadership Development

(Faculty)   (Student)
Mentor and Model for Others   Student Role Model

Group Leadership   Self-Leadership
Provide Guidance, Coaching   Receive Direction,
                                       Feedback

Social Development and Building Relationships

(Faculty)   (Student)
Maintain Teambuilding Relationships   Develop Team
Supervision of Group   Relationships
Promote Teamwork   Group Belonging
                                       Active Membership

Safe Travel Competency and Administration

(Faculty)   (Student)
A Concern for Others Safety   A Concern for Own Safety
Domestic/ International   Domestic /International
   Travel Coordination   Travel Readiness

Survival (Meeting off-campus Teaching and Learning Expectations)

(Faculty)   (Students)
Maintain Academic Qualification Status Entry level "Business" Travel
Off-campus Academic Service   Experience
                                       Off-campus Learning Resume
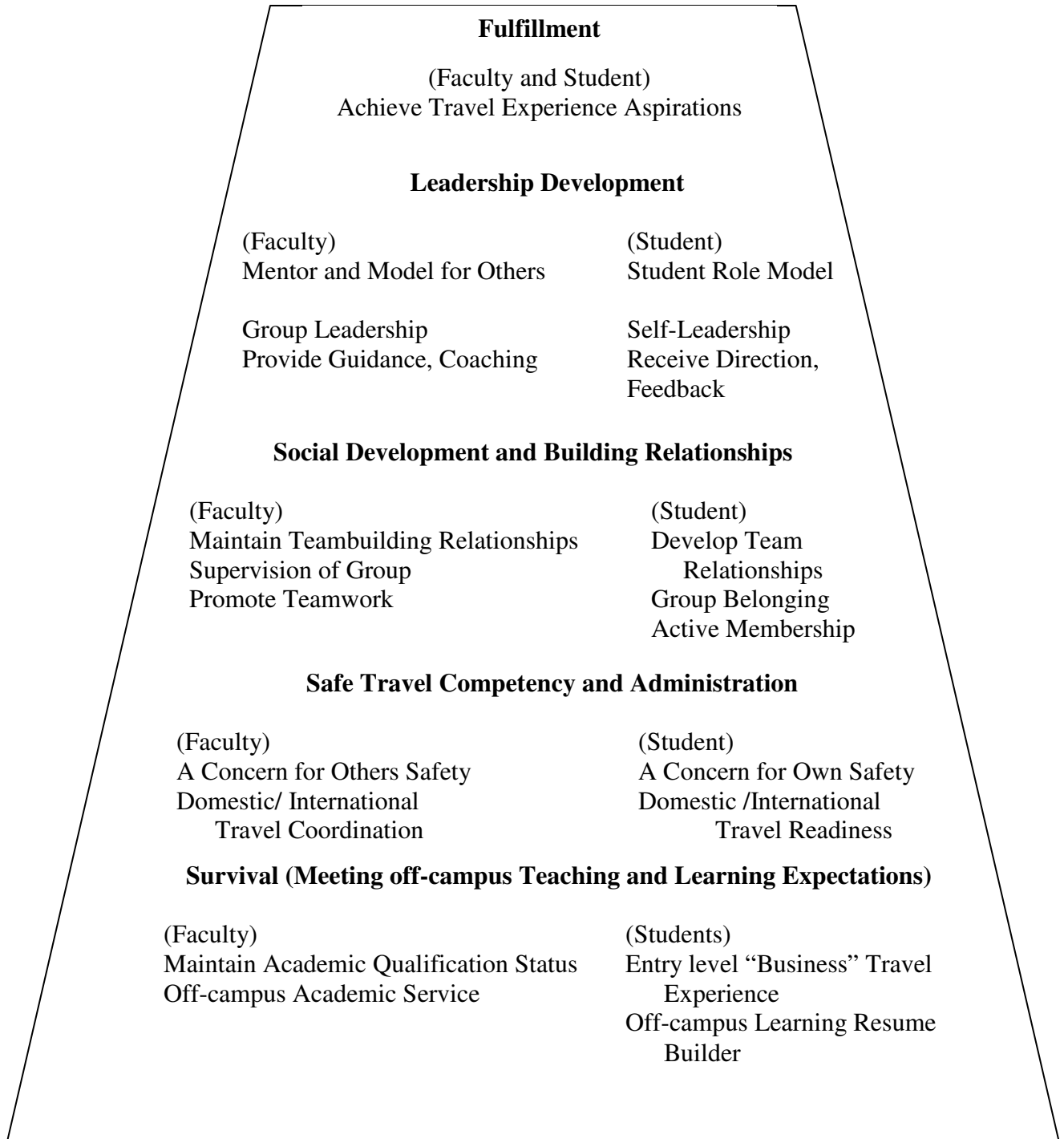   Builder

Figure 1. The Faculty and Student Travel Career Ladder (FAST-CL)