

**Read more about the research process from KAHAL staff members, Becca Flyer (pictured left) and Joey Leskin (pictured right). Becca, KAHAL's Chief Operations Officer, has been on the KAHAL team since 2016, and traveled the world while solving operational challenges. Since 2018, Joey, Director of Abroad Experiences, has put his 10+ years of experience living and traveling abroad, and his love for acting as a tour guide, to good use by executing programs and creating meaningful experiences for students globally.**



## What's happening with the Research and Strategic Planning Process so far?

**Becca** We started with a lengthy internal process before even beginning to work with our research consultants, ThirdPlateau. Starting in May 2020, our staff team crafted a central research question and began to explore all the things we wanted to learn. The staff, Board of Directors, and Associate Board were involved in this process and you could tell excitement was building! We brought in ThirdPlateau in November 2020, after spending the fall focusing on how to lay a foundation for a successful engagement with them. Joey, do you want to talk about our work so far with ThirdPlateau?

**Joey** Sure! At the end of last year, ThirdPlateau laid out a timeline for the entire process. The whole plan is very specific so that way we, as staff, know when each phase is starting and when we will have related results. This way, we can plan and implement new projects and ideas utilizing the research in real-time. Third Plateau has also taken the lead on desk research.

In the last few weeks, we've worked with ThirdPlateau to begin the interview process - creating interview questions, designing interview protocols, and training KAHAL staff on best interview practices. Our staff and ThirdPlateau have recently started interviewing partners and stakeholders on their KAHAL experiences.

## Who's a part of the KAHAL Research team?

**Joey** We have participants from both sides of the Atlantic! Both KAHAL and KAHAL UK are well represented.

**Becca** There are so many different people involved and excited to do this work with us! In May 2020, we started with a research team of 5 KAHAL staff members. Now, our core internal team is Joey, myself, and our three lead consultants from Third Plateau. We also meet regularly with our Research Council, composed of the core team and 4 board members, including representation from our US, UK, and Associate Boards. The Research Council works together to shape the research process and think strategically about the implications for our mission. Lastly, this month we created an internal task force with two additional staff members to assist with analysis and coding interviews.

## How has it been working with ThirdPlateau? What are they like?

**Becca** This is my first experience working with a consulting firm and it's been wonderful. I think they really understand our workplace culture, as well as the attitude and ethos KAHAL staff bring to everything we do. They also have told us from the start that they want us to view them as an extension of our team. They think of us as teammates, not just clients which, to me, shows that they are really invested in the success of the project.

**Joey** And I think they are really enthusiastic to make the change with us. They've told us that they believe in KAHAL's mission, the values we bring, and impact that can be made. It's great to feel like they are working with us, not just because it's their job, but also because they believe in the importance of our mission and values.

**Becca** So true. And they are also great at finding the perfect balance of letting us put our spin on things and sharing their guidance as consultants.

## Has anything surprised you so far?

**Joey** I've been pleasantly surprised by how enthusiastic our partners have been to contribute to the research and how responsive they have been, especially given how difficult of a time it is and how busy everyone is. From conversations, it's clear that our partners believe in our mission and want to help us make the most of it!

**Becca** Not a surprise, but I wasn't sure what to expect from the research council. I typically don't work with the board as closely as other members of the staff and I didn't know how the individual board members would come together as a cohesive unit. It's so enjoyable to work with each of them and I love seeing them get more excited about this process.

## What are you most looking forward to in the research process?

**Joey** I'm really looking forward to starting to iterate on the research to begin to figure out how KAHAL can design new programs and plan based on the findings of the research.

**Becca** I'm really curious about the final research report that ThirdPlateau is writing. I'm also extremely excited for the strategic planning component. I've never had the opportunity to be involved in this way. I was part of the conversation KAHAL had 3 years ago when we're thinking about growth, but this is a much bigger deal and I feel so excited to be a part of it.