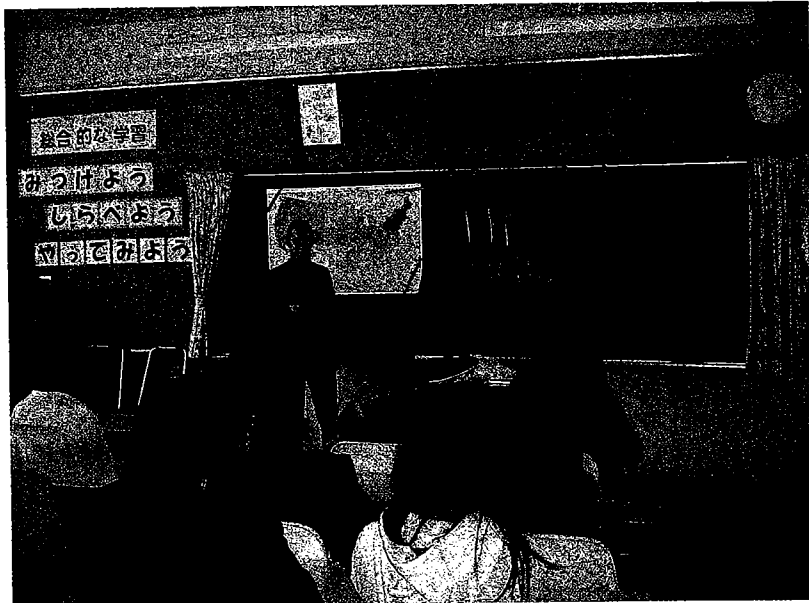


career impact

WHAT CAREER PATH ARE YOU PURSUING AND where will your career take you? If you were to answer these questions before and after you study abroad, there is a very good chance that your answers would not match. Studying abroad opens a new world of professional opportunities, helps you acquire new skill sets for the workplace, and often leads you on an exciting career path that you may not have considered.

Studying abroad can also enhance your chances for job success. More and more employers are seeking out culturally aware and experienced employees who can work effectively in an increasingly global workplace. Having a study abroad experience on your resume not only highlights attractive academic achievements, such as language skills and knowledge of international trends and markets, but can also indicate desired personality traits like

IES students report that interning helped them to acquire new skill sets and led to diverse professional opportunities.



cultural sensitivity, ambition, determination and a sense of adventure.

To help quantitatively determine the impact of study abroad on the career path of its participants, the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) conducted the largest known survey of study abroad alumni during the summer of 2002. The IES 50-year alumni survey collected responses from more than 3,700 alumni who studied abroad

between 1950 and 1999 and represented all IES programs, regions of the U.S. and more than 500 U.S. colleges and universities.

The following findings offer personal perspectives and statistical information illustrating the profound and long-lasting difference that study abroad has had on the careers of its participants.

STUDY ABROAD AND CAREER IMPACT

"My time in Europe was the best year of my university life and turned me in the direction of my career," said Tim Eckenfels (IES Madrid 1986-1987 and 1988), the director of marketing for an English language school in Australia.

More than half of survey respondents agreed with Eckenfels: 62 percent of alumni stated that studying abroad ignited interest in a career direction, 12 percent said that study abroad caused a change in their career plans, and 17 percent said that the experience motivated them to get a job overseas.

"Studying in Madrid was one of the best experiences of my life [It] gave me the desire to pursue international opportunities after finishing my studies, and I am so glad I did! I now work for Telefutura, a Spanish-language television station, and I use Spanish on a daily basis," said Nicole Kinsler (IES Madrid 1998).

In all, 48 percent of respondents have engaged in international work or volunteerism since studying abroad. Of those who work in the U.S., 14 percent reported that studying abroad influenced their decisions to work for multinational organizations. It is also notable that 76 percent of respondents acquired skill sets while abroad that influenced their career paths, and 65 percent said that studying abroad enhanced their abilities to speak the foreign language they utilize in the work place.

Julie Hoesterey (IES Vienna 1991) said, "Since [studying abroad], I have worked in many roles in international education, intercultural consulting and now in global human resources...I travel extensively for work in my current role and have received no better training for relating and interacting with other cultures than those early experiences [studying abroad]."

career impact at a glance

Another study abroad alumna, Jennifer Stoltz (IES London 1997–1998), stated, “Classes abroad opened my eyes to political and economic conditions in Western Europe, and this knowledge has been invaluable in my post-college career [working as a recruiter].”

TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS HELD

So what types of positions did survey respondents who worked or volunteered in an international capacity have? The top two positions reported were “a paid employee in a private industry” (21 percent) and “a teacher or educator” (14 percent). The next two most popular positions were “a volunteer for a non-profit agency” and “working for the U.S. government” (both claiming 8 percent). Other categories reported include: “working as a consultant” (4 percent) and “a paid employee for any other government” (2 percent).

Only 5 percent of total respondents reported working as “a paid employee of the U.S. government.” Within this category, the percentage of people who have worked for the U.S. government has steadily decreased over the decades. Of respondents who studied abroad from 1950 to 1969, 11 percent had worked for the U.S. government, compared to only 4 percent who had studied abroad from 1990–1999. This decline is noteworthy since the U.S. government is in increasing need of employees with foreign language skills and international experience.

INTERNSHIPS AND CAREER IMPACT

IES statistics show that the influence of study abroad on future career goals and choices is even more profound for those students who participated in an internship for academic credit while abroad. These students were more likely to pursue international careers, obtain jobs overseas, and develop international business contacts.

Seventy percent of internship respondents reported that study abroad had ignited interest in a career direction, compared to 60 percent of non-internship respondents. In addition, 83 percent said that their experiences provided skill sets that influenced their career paths, compared to 75 percent who did not participate in internships.

“An entire range of professional opportunities has opened up to me in recent years, partly due to the skills and internship

48%
stated that they have engaged in international work/volunteerism since studying abroad

76%
said they acquired skill sets that influenced career path

5%
indicated that they established relationships abroad that became professional contacts

62%
said that studying abroad ignited an interest in a career direction

65%
reported that it enhanced their ability to speak a foreign language in the workplace

17%
stated that it motivated them to get a job overseas

14%
said that it influenced their decision to work for a multinational organization in the U.S.

12%
reported that studying abroad altered their career plans

experiences I gained,” said Joydeep Sengupta (IES Madrid 1998), who does outreach and communications for an international advocacy organization.

Kathleen Turaski (IES London 1992) added that her internship at The National Portrait Gallery in London was “the impetus to return [to London] in 1995 to attend St. Martins for a master’s in communication design. The international experiences have been a driving force in my design—and career.”

INTERNSHIPS AND HIGHER LEVELS OF INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Another benefit of interning while abroad is reaching higher levels of intercultural understanding. Compared to students who had not interned, students with internships were 8 percent more likely to continue contact with host country friends and 6 percent more likely to explore other cultures.

Through her business internship, Mary Forquer (IES London 1999) said that she “learned a great deal about the way the British conduct their business matters and was also provided with the opportunity to get to know the British people on a personal level.”

BEGIN BUILDING YOUR INTERNATIONAL RESUME

Regardless of where survey respondents studied abroad and the type of internship in which they participated, the career benefits are statistically significant, positive and enduring. You should carefully consider making an internship or international job a part of your study abroad experience, as it can significantly impact your future career path and increase your chances for success. **AV**

COURTNEY PETERS is the Communications and Media Relations Coordinator at IES. Contact Courtney at cpeters@IESabroad.org or visit www.IESabroad.org.

IES is a 53-year-old, not-for-profit, academic study abroad program provider with a consortium of over 155 prestigious U.S. colleges and universities. Currently, IES offers 25 study abroad programs in 14 countries for more than 3,500 U.S. undergraduates each year.