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John Christian is President and CEO of CAPA: The Global Education Network and has a longstanding history in the field of international education that spans over 30 years. He is an active contributing member of the industry through several professional organizations including NAFSA, Diversity Abroad, and the Forum on Education Abroad. He serves on the Board of Trustees for the Fund for Education Abroad. John began his career as a Foreign Student Advisor for The State University of New York, Oswego. Following this, he participated in a post-graduate program in Beijing, China where he was also the Resident Director of SUNY Oswego’s Beijing program. John holds an MA in Area Studies (China) from the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. At CAPA, John continues to evolve and support the field of international education and strives for new and innovative ways to enhance the student experience.

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Noah Goldblatt has served as Director of Study Abroad at Champlain College since 2008. Noah’s passion for international education began after high school when he took a gap year to work and travel independently to Mexico and Central America. In his past 15 years of working in international education, Noah led high school students on international service trips to Honduras and Nicaragua and worked for a study abroad provider. Noah received a BA in Political Science from Plymouth State University. He also holds an MA degree in Globalization Studies from Dartmouth College, and recently completed his Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Vermont. As the world continues to become increasingly interconnected on multiple levels, Noah cherishes the opportunity to work with Champlain College students while fostering career-focused international education and personal growth experiences.
Kimberly (Kim) Hindbjorgen is the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Career Integration at the University of Minnesota where she provides leadership, consultation, and expertise to translate and assist in identifying curriculum and experiential needs for students in relation to international education. She also chairs the Learning Abroad Center Career Integration Partnership Group and the Education Abroad Network whose focus is in the sharing of best practices to foster communication and collaboration across campus. Kim has worked in higher education for more than 20 years and has contributed to articles and workshops relating to education abroad. Kim received both her BS and MLS degrees from the University of Minnesota.

Martha Johnson, PhD, is the Assistant Dean for Learning Abroad at the University of Minnesota and oversees one of the largest education abroad offices in the US, currently sending over 4000 students abroad annually. Dr Johnson has worked in international education since 1991 for organizations and institutions in the US, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Her experience includes on-site program management, teaching of short-term programs, program development and marketing, and management of a large university education abroad office. Martha has presented numerous sessions and workshops at national and international conferences, consults with universities internationally, served in a variety of leadership positions in NAFSA and the Forum on Education Abroad, and authored numerous articles and chapters on topics relating to international education.

Craig Kench is responsible for the direction and implementation of internship programs across all of CAPA’s global locations and is heavily involved in CAPA’s development of frameworks for students’ personal and professional development. Prior to joining CAPA, Craig managed educational facilities around the London area, worked for the UK Government, and spent ten years working and studying in the US. He holds an MA and a BSc in Education from Walsh University. Craig is a former professional football (soccer) player.

Lindsey Lahr is a Program Director at the University of Minnesota - Learning Abroad Center (LAC). She oversees the Instructor-led Seminar Series programs and Summer Internships in Panama program. She has worked at the LAC for 8 years and is deeply involved in intercultural and career integration initiatives. Lindsey has been part of the LAC’s Career
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**Katie Lander** is the London Internships Manager at CAPA: The Global Education Network and has been building her experience within international education for American students for nearly four years. Within this time, she has gone from working closely with London organizations, building opportunities and placing students, to having oversight of all internship and experiential learning programs at CAPA London. After graduating with a degree in English Literature and History, Katie worked within UK Higher Education at the University of Hertfordshire in both Human Resources and then Careers and Employability Services. Prior to joining CAPA she spent a year traveling overseas; as part of this experience she also volunteered in Canada, Cambodia, and Thailand.

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**Mark Lenhart** is the Executive Director of CET Academic Programs, a study abroad provider based in Washington, DC. Mark has worked for CET since 1990, when he began as Resident Director of CET’s Harbin Chinese Language Program. After nearly five years studying and working in China, he became CET’s Director in 1995, and he oversaw CET’s expansion from a small provider of two Chinese language programs to a much larger organization with programs in ten countries. As a student, Mark focused on Asian Studies, Chinese language, and photography, and he has degrees from Bowdoin (BA), Harvard (MA), and the University of Maryland (MBA).

**Beth Lory** has been working to build connections between organizations and the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) students at the University of Minnesota since 2004. Prior to joining CLA Career Services in 2003 in a
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**Erin McHugh** began her undergraduate studies at St. Olaf College in Minnesota where she graduated with high honors in history and education. Among other achievements, Erin was the President of the Blue Key Service Honor Society, History Honor Society, Student Director of the Career Center, and a varsity track athlete. During her undergraduate studies, she published several papers and studied abroad in the UK and Middle East. She has also taught in Hawaii. During the 2016-17 academic year, Erin was awarded a US Fulbright Teaching Scholarship at the University of Osijek in Croatia where she served the US and Croatian governments and universities to build cross cultural understanding and connections. Following the Fulbright award, Erin enrolled in the MS program in Education at the University of Oxford, UK where she took courses in education, business, economics, and played on the women’s soccer team. Currently, Erin serves as a Global Engagement Advisor at Elmhurst College, Illinois following her passion for international education by helping provide cultural support to the international student community and enhancing students’ experiences of studying abroad.

**Ashley Metz** is an Associate Program Director at the University of Minnesota’s Learning Abroad Center. Prior to working at the University of Minnesota, she was the Program Support Specialist in the Study Abroad and Global Experiences Office at Valencia College, in Orlando, Florida. Her seven years in international education include advising, event coordination, marketing and promotion, orientations, program coordination, re-entry initiatives, and scholarship review. She has studied, worked, and volunteered abroad in various capacities. She has presented at local, regional, and national conferences on a variety of topics, including professional de-
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Lisa Novack is the Associate Director of Student Services at the University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management’s Undergraduate Business Career Center. In this role, Lisa leads a team that supports the career development of students through individual coaching, career skills courses, and programming. As all Carlson School of Management undergraduate students pursue an international experience, Lisa frequently coaches students on connecting learning abroad experience to career goals. She has served as an instructor of various leadership, internship reflection, and career development courses. Lisa has created and led short-term learning abroad programs in Costa Rica and Panama and has served as a site coordinator for a short-term Human Resources course in Australia. Lisa holds an MA in Educational Psychology and a BSc in Business, both from the University of Minnesota.

Jill Reister works at the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center where she currently is the Assistant Director of Programming, overseeing affiliate programs and supervising seven Associate Program Directors. Jill has worked in the field of Education Abroad for 15 years, having spent over ten years at the University of Cincinnati prior to moving to Minnesota. Jill recently completed her PhD in Educational Studies from the University of Cincinnati where her research focused on students who choose to study abroad in non-traditional destinations. She also has a BA in Communication and Spanish from Miami University and an MA in Communication from the University of Cincinnati. Jill is an active member of the Forum on Education Abroad and NAFSA and stays current on best practices and issues impacting this field.

Nannette Ripmeester is Director of Expertise in Labour Mobility, Client Services Director Europe and Atlantic Canada for i-graduate and founder of the educational gamification app CareerProfessor.works, which supports students’ global employability. She started her international career at the European Commission in Brussels, working for 7 years on streamlining labor mobility issues within the European framework. Nannette is part of the NAFSA Trainer Corps and was recently appointed Industry Innovator in Residence for Study Queensland with a focus on employability. With over 25 years of experience working for large corporate clients and higher edu-
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Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. was appointed President and CEO of The Society for Human Resource Management in June 2017. He previously served for seven years as President and CEO of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund which represents the US’s 47 publicly supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He is credited with raising the organization’s stature and funding. In February 2018, Taylor was appointed Chair of the President’s Advisory Board on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Taylor also serves on the Board of Gallup, the Board of Trustees of The Cooper Union, a privately funded college in New York, and was elected to the Board of Trustees of the University of Miami on May 5, 2017. Taylor has a diverse background in leadership and people strategies across various global organizations and industries. He has been described as “a visionary leader and accomplished HR strategist.” He holds a Juris Doctor degree with honors and a MA with honors from Drake University. He obtained a BSc with general university honors from the University of Miami.

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**Maria Wentworth** is the Senior Marketing Specialist at the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center, responsible for executing on-campus outreach initiatives while communicating the value of learning abroad and the many international opportunities available. She has a BA in Sociology, Anthropology and Studio Art, and an MEd in Work and Human Resource Education, with a minor in International Education. With 9 years of experience in international education, Maria has presented at regional and national conferences on a variety of topics related to marketing international programs. Today, she focuses much of her efforts on encouraging a more strategic connection between learning abroad and career development, by utilizing career-minded language and strategies while marketing international programs.

**Guy Woolf** is an actor, director and composer from London. He has written the music for *Sixth Form Romeo*, words by Nigel Williams, and for *Great Again*, words by Isla van Tricht (Tristan Bates and VAULT Festival, winner MIRO magazine pick of the festival). He has acted in various productions across London, Europe and the US. He is also a member of drag band DENIM (Soho Theatre, Glastonbury with Florence Welch, Edinburgh Festival, South Bank Underbelly, sponsored by MAC Cosmetics, Halifax, Latitude, Aldeburgh, Hyde Park Summer Festival). He has directed productions at the Roundhouse, Tristan Bates Theatre and is Creative Director of theatre
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Michael Woolf has spent much of his career in an international context. Prior to working in mainstream international education, he taught American Literature at the universities of Hull, Middlesex, Padova, and Venice, and worked as a researcher-writer for BBC radio. Michael has held leadership roles with FIE, CIEE, and Syracuse University. He has also consulted for New York University, Brethren Colleges Abroad, Warwick University, and is an adviser to the President of Tamagawa University in Tokyo. He serves on a number of boards and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Forum on Education Abroad from 2006 to 2012. Michael holds a PhD in American Studies, an MA in Literature, and a BA in History and Politics. He has written widely and has published extensively on international education and cultural studies. You can read a sample of Michael's short essays in his monthly column Thoughts on Education Abroad at: https://capaworld.capa.org/author/dr-michael-woolf
Acknowledgements

The editors wish to thank all of those who have contributed to this edition with intellect and enthusiasm. It would be invidious to single out too many colleagues at CAPA, CET and the University of Minnesota but we have to record our special thanks to Emma Welter of the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota who combined eagle-eyed accuracy with linguistic judgment in the editing process. We should also note the critical contribution of Shawna Parker and her team at CAPA who oversaw the design and production of this volume.

This work is the product of a unique cooperative endeavor between three institutions. It would not have been possible without the support of the leadership of John Christian at CAPA, Andrea Custodi and Mark Lenhart of CET, and Martha Johnson of the University of Minnesota.

The editors accept responsibility for whatever errors may be evident in these pages. We are also fully aware that there is no conclusion to a discussion that has become critical in the ongoing development of education abroad. The issues clustered around the employability agenda challenge what we teach, how we teach, and the ideologies of higher education. These contributions enrich debates that are timely, important, and contested.

Above all, students are at the center of these concerns.

Our final thanks are to all those students who enrich this field. Ultimately, they are the reason for this work.
These introductory remarks indicate the wide range of issues raised by contributors. Higher education in the US is required to respond to the employability agenda. The question of career integration transcends disciplines, departments, and functions within the university. It also inevitably impacts upon the agenda of education abroad.
Foreword

Martha Johnson and Mark Lenhart

The adage says that “the third time’s a charm...” or perhaps we should use the Chinese adage that “aged ginger is more flavorful.”

In any case, it is our great pleasure to have once again compiled a diverse set of articles and essays, representing perspectives in education abroad, career development, and industry in this third edition publication offered as a companion and follow up to our 2018 conference held in Washington DC. CET Academic Programs joined the Learning Abroad Center for this venture as local co-hosts. The location offered an opportunity to consider the role of government and associations in the career integration dialogue. As governments change and geopolitical forces impact global diplomacy and economic efforts, the imperative to ensure students engaging in experiences abroad, integrate their learning into their career trajectories and lives has never been greater.

We would like to specially thank the presenters, contributors, exhibitors, and the respective staff of CET and the Learning Abroad Center for their effort in making the conference a success. We would also like to thank CAPA for sponsoring this publication.
Introduction

Employability and Universities: Shaping the Agenda

Christine Anderson, Kim Hindbjorgen, Michael Woolf

Pressures and Priorities

The third edition of this journal offers further compelling evidence of the centrality of career preparation and employability in the agenda of education abroad. The discussions here, as in the previous volumes, attest to a pervasive awareness of the responsibility of educators for the lives of students beyond their formal studies. However, there is no untroubled consensus about how to realize this responsibility; it is apparent that the issues around career integration and employability are contested and challenge ideologies and pedagogies in several and various ways.

There is, clearly, an ongoing and intense relationship between higher education and questions of employability within international contexts. These are uneasy times and, if there is such a thing as a zeitgeist, it might be that we seek remnants of security and pockets of stability. That education should lead to employment is just such a proposition; simple in statement but complex in application, as many of these essays demonstrate.

In short, career integration has created sets of pressures upon higher education. In an increasingly competitive environment, institutions are obliged to assert that the education they offer will enhance employment possibilities. It is not, for example, sufficient to understand the discipline of sociology or physics. Students must also be capable of articulating the transferable skills acquired in those studies. Thus, higher education is responsible for teaching the core elements of a specific discipline while also teaching students to describe what that discipline means in terms
of acquired skills. As Beth Lory demonstrates, a personal narrative of intellectual growth needs to be translated into a narrative of potential professional productivity, the impact of learning upon social, economic, and political competencies. In “The Power of Community,” Steve Cisneros describes the process in which the student learns “how to be a pilgrim and not simply a tourist.”

Thus, an essential tenet of faith in education abroad is that the challenges experienced by students are disruptive of parochial assumptions. Furthermore, that disruption empowers students to integrate enhanced learning into their identities not just as markers of personal enlightenment but also as proactive elements in the formation of public profiles. The translation of personal enrichment into a public persona creates the potential for the student to demonstrate how academic knowledge is relevant to their capacity to function effectively in wider social and professional environments. Our students should be able to explain why their ability to successfully and creatively overcome barriers abroad leads to a resilient, flexible employee who can learn and lead on her feet in varied settings with colleagues and clients of diverse backgrounds.

Colleges and universities in the US are subject to intense pressure from several directions to forefront employability within their strategic missions. Heightened competition for students imposes an imperative to offer more services and better provision to attract students (and their parents). In his essay, Craig Kench, citing Don Peppers, relates this to the need to create “a new level of ‘extreme trust’ where there is an expectation not only to provide outstanding quality and ethical services, but to proactively watch out for your clients’ interests.” The word “client” aptly indicates the commodification of higher education within which students are demanding customers. Educational institutions, in response, must offer more than academic excellence. A key aspect of that “customer” demand is that education will be demonstrably related to future employment. Jeremy Friedlein raises the critical importance of location in shaping student choice.

Higher Education institutions are also increasingly subject to political pressures that create similar imperatives to align their endeavors with the commercial and industrial market. Furthermore, in a period of low unemployment, employers are subject to pressures to recruit and retain the best employees in a shrinking labor market. Those demands translate into an expectation that colleges and universities will prepare appropriate
candidates who can bring the necessary skills to the work environment. One consequence for universities is that new alliances and inter-departmental collaborations emerge. Lindsey Lahr, Lisa Novack, and Tricia Todd describe, by way of example, an active interaction: “between the Learning Abroad Center, the University of Minnesota’s central and comprehensive education abroad office, and various career centers focused on building global programs.” Michael J. Stebleton and Jeannie Stumne make a similar point in relation to provision for first generation students.

Career offices need to have a broader responsibility to interact with academic departments so as to understand what students have learned. They also are, therefore, required to enlist faculty as partners within an expanded educational agenda. At the same time, international educators have to reach beyond their specific responsibilities for student mobility to ask questions about how they align the opportunities they create with academic objectives and career preparation.

Erin McHugh’s essay points to the fact that political pressure has also focused unevenly and unreasonably upon the humanities and social sciences as if what they teach is disconnected from the skills required by employers, despite the fact that employers repeatedly tell us that the liberal arts inculcate the broad skills they most value. Parallel universes co-exist within which employers say they need a and b, while politicians tell them they really need x and y.

Education abroad remains, to a large degree, rooted in the philosophies of liberal arts education; these philosophies are entirely relevant to the expressed needs of employers for graduates who are adaptable, flexible, and resilient (see Christine Anderson’s essay). Essays by leading global human resources practitioners, Ben Tucker and Johnny Taylor, enforce this view. There is, therefore, as these arguments suggest, no necessary distinction between the liberal arts and career integration.

A particular benefit of a liberal arts education is the value it places upon the active skills of writing and speaking (and, by implication, the passive skills of reading and listening). Students are taught to articulate and defend opinions based upon an analysis of evidence. Those skills are recognized as increasingly significant within the context of career preparation. It is, as employers have repeatedly insisted, not enough to have studied abroad. Students must also be able to articulate the significance
of their learning in terms that relate to the needs of employers or graduate school admissions officers. Students abroad may have the added benefit of feeling, for the first time, the complexity of whose evidence is dominant or marginalized as the case may be, and they grapple with the moral ambiguity of this situation.

In the broader context, what students learn in classes at home or abroad, in athletics or other activities, in their interactions with peers, through engagement with communities, and so on, needs to translate into a coherent narrative of acquired perspectives and enhanced skills. The student builds “a brand” that will make them an attractive proposition in the marketplace.

As a consequence of these various and insistent pressures, no institution or discipline is immune from the obligation to build employability into their mission, in one way or another. It may be fanciful to suggest that this drives universities back to their early-modern European, origins when they were founded to perform the utilitarian function of training priests; it is clear, nevertheless, that a utilitarian agenda permeates higher education. The walls of the “ivory tower,” if they ever really existed, have become fallen masonry.

**Employability in Education Abroad**

Education abroad is not, of course, immune from these pressures. There is a necessary and productive intimacy between US Higher Education and education abroad. That intimacy enables undergraduates to transfer credits seamlessly back into the domestic context because of an alignment of domestic standards and objectives with those offered abroad. Principles of career integration raise further critical questions about how academic curricula can combine intellectual with practical outcomes.

There are however two particular and somewhat contrary narratives that distinctively impact upon education abroad. The first derives from the view that it is essentially a luxury, an enhancement perhaps, but certainly not as serious as education at home, not, therefore, really necessary. Skepticism about the value of education abroad may be diminishing but it persists in pockets of prejudice throughout academia. The other prevailing narrative derives from the view that, on the contrary, the inculcation of global awareness in an age of globalization (however that is perceived) is an essential element in higher education.
The provision of career preparation has, therefore, been embraced by international educators as, on the one hand, a means of proving the relevance and seriousness of education abroad. In response to implicit or explicit skepticism, the employability agenda asserts that what we do is not simply interesting or pleasurable; what we do is demonstrably useful and as relevant as education in domestic environments. The growth of internship programs, as described by Katie Lander in this volume, is one manifestation of this objective. In the same vein, Ashley Metz describes the impact of service-learning and social justice work abroad.

Another consequence is that a significant body of research has been produced that purports to demonstrate that students who study abroad are more employable than the lumpen majority who stay at home. The credibility of this research is contested: Noah Goldblatt’s essay argues that “An international experience may positively influence your life and career path forever, but it may not provide a near-term comparative advantage in the marketplace.” In contrast Martin Tillman argues that “New research and analysis confirms the correlation between international experience … and employability.” Eric Leinen and Ashley Metz direct attention to the demographics and career motivations of those of us working in the field of international education and explore questions that are rarely asked: “Who are we, collectively? How is it that we all came together to share this common profession?”

However this research is interpreted, the predominance of this academic approach signifies the fact that impact on employability has moved into the center of the discourse of education abroad. As Maria Wentworth argues: “It is more of a necessity than ever to help students understand how study abroad can provide the global experiences and skills employers are looking for.” It is also a necessity to demonstrate the innate value of learning abroad by reference to the advantages it gives individual students in the labor market.

The other dominant narrative derives from the perplexing question of globalization. The idea that the world is more inter-connected than ever before is both true and untrue. Re-emergent nationalism and xenophobia would suggest that international realities are increasingly fractured. However, we are undoubtedly more and more interdependent. Pollution, by way of example, knows no borders. The movement of goods and services across the globe is not constrained by nationalist ideologies. A simple demonstra-
tion of this reality is to ask students to list the countries of origin of the clothes they are wearing. In these paradoxical circumstances, ignorance of other countries, languages, customs, and habits reduces the capacity of an individual to understand and contribute to their environment. Simply, having some knowledge of worlds elsewhere is an important element in what defines an educated, productive person. Education abroad combines knowledge with personal experience. Individuals acquire the breadth and depth of consciousness that enhances their potential contribution to the contemporary workplace.

Thus, career preparation is an essential component in education abroad because, simultaneously and paradoxically, it is a frivolous adornment and a necessary preparation for productive engagement with a globalizing world.

**Worlds Elsewhere**

The US model of engagement in international education abroad is also not typical of global student movement in that it is based upon relatively short-term study rather than matriculation in a foreign university. However, as the essay of Sevi Christoforou and Nannette Ripmeester indicates, the US is not unique in engaging with the challenge of aligning higher education and employability. Comparable pressures impact upon universities throughout the world. There are variations of emphasis. Government pressure on universities is most apparent and insistent in systems in which state universities are dominant as a direct consequence of national funding obligations. The provision of state higher education is an expensive business and governments seek, not unreasonably, a “return on investment.” Other variants include students who study abroad for full degrees and, sometimes, with the aspiration to find employment abroad. However significant these variants may be in practice, the common principle is that universities have an obligation to seek to meet the employment aspirations of their students and, thus, satisfy as best they can the demands of employers, politicians, and consumers. These imperatives are integral to economic health and national growth, particularly so in the developing world.

In the Indian context, for example, Dr Sima Singh, Associate Professor, Delhi School of Professional Studies and Research perceives “a gap between higher education and employability”:
It is very... important for the government to invest in education ... to supply quality manpower in the requisite number to different sectors. At the same time, government must take initiatives to measure and control the institutions providing higher education, training, and skill development programs to control... the quality supply of skilled manpower.

Similarly, Yojana Sharma reports that:

International students from several Asian countries, including India and China, who are looking to choose a university abroad have become more focused on employment prospects in choosing a subject, university, and the country of study abroad. According to a new global comparison report ... published by Australian-based student-university-alumni network platform Cturtle... students from eight Asian countries are prioritising career issues in choosing a university abroad.

The perceived significance of the value of one location over another is also a factor in US education abroad, according to Jill Reister who argues in this volume that “students who chose non-traditional destinations are extrinsically motivated by their future career goals.”

In short, employability may impact on many levels in terms of institutional structure, program models, and locations chosen by participants.

**Situational Learning and Career Preparation**

The purpose and function of education abroad are driven by any number of priorities but the overarching difference from domestic higher education derives from what we sometimes call “situational” learning. What we teach (or what students are learning) is modified by the context of the host-country. Strong education abroad programs have traditionally brought in the political, historical, and social perspective of the host-country. What has not happened in this learning space is to enhance this scholarship with intentional translation to the professional space.

Time and space are equally significant in shaping the parameters of the disciplines; borders between disciplines are artificial constructs that evolve and evaporate over time. An early-modern scholar may have thought that
Alchemy was a topic of great significance. John Dee (1527 – 1608/1609), for example, had an international reputation as a mathematician whose discipline encompassed alchemy as well as other occult and arcane philosophies. He was an adviser to Elizabeth 1st and taught across Europe, notably in Prague. Most of what he taught is of little contemporary relevance except as a signifier of the nature of thought in the Europe of his times.

The factors of time and space that shaped Dee’s teaching are still significant even if we may be only vaguely aware of them as active determinants in the educational agenda. Teaching history in New York in 2019, for example, imposes a number of conditioning factors upon what is considered intellectually critical. For the most part though, those factors are unstated; they are part of the unexamined environment in which we function.

In education abroad, at least one of those governing factors is critical and explicit. The significance of where we teach becomes a critical part of how and what we teach. A distinguishing factor between domestic and international education is that approaches to learning encompass, to one degree or another, the impact of the location on the curriculum. Simply put, students are required to study a given topic through the formative lens of an unfamiliar location. They study x or y, but they study x or y abroad. Our assumption is that context enriches learning and that the conjunction of new ideas in new locations brings greater breadth and depth to learning opportunities. The student is also gaining perspectives beyond the parochial.

In the context of employability, students are then, to some degree or another, gaining skills and sensibilities that will prepare them for trans-national lives and careers. They learn to operate effectively within diverse environments; they learn new languages, perhaps a second or third tongue or, even within English, the nuances of usage that are effective and appropriate within other national or trans-national contexts. In one way or another, the implication is that students are better prepared for “global” careers because they have gained experience in unfamiliar national situations. Discussion of what this means in theory and practice are of particular concern for practitioners and writers represented here.
Limitations and Obligations

Across the world, in one way or another, universities are under increasing pressures to serve the needs of industry, commerce, the young, and the nation by making higher education an agent of individual advancement through employment. This is a comprehensible priority, but it also obscures two realities: a simplistic utilitarianism that prioritizes some disciplines over others; the fact that universities can only do so much and cannot be responsible for conditions that privilege some groups over others. Other factors such as ethnic or racial bias, gender distinctions, the perceived status of one university over another, class distinction, and so on, will condition, to variable but perceptible degrees, the fate of the lucky and unlucky, the privileged and under-privileged (see Michael Woolf’s essay).

Education abroad may have less impact on employability than is commonly suggested. At the same time, the demonstrable benefits may be much wider than those that can be categorized as career preparation. As Christine Anderson argues a critical gain is the acquisition of resilience; they “discover they are stronger than most of them realized.” Jordan Starks describes the impact on her sense of racial identity.

Nevertheless, it is an ethical obligation placed upon educators to seek to even up the uneven playing field, to bring natural justice to those parts of the environment within which we may be agents of change. Despite the limitations within which we all function, preparing our students for creative, productive lives is a profound and necessary responsibility. The question of how best to achieve those objectives is open to interpretation and disagreement. The context in which we function is deeply political whether we recognize it or not. Political environments create opportunities and, more frequently, constraints.

The Politics of Education Abroad

Education abroad is a political action based upon an ideology that privileges internationalism over parochialism and embraces difference as well as valuing the ineffable richness of a common humanity. These essays are offered as evidence of our commitment to those ideological propositions.

The editors believe that the absence of a consensus about how best to make these ideals manifest is not evidence of failure but rather of creative
engagement. The Johnson-Lenhart debate on language and education abroad illustrates diverse views of curriculum, while Guy Woolf’s essay, drawing on the UK situation, defends the importance of creativity in any educational agenda. Disagreements and controversies indicate that there is no single path to improvement. No author proposes a reactionary rejection of the aspirations embedded in notions of career preparation. No author calls for a retreat to the mythical ivory tower, nor is there a call to abandon the ideals of education in favor of training programs based on utilitarianism functionalism. Rather, what the reader may deduce is that there is no single or simple way of achieving complex objectives. However, there is a common commitment to educational enrichment and to the creation of pathways that better meet our obligations to enable students to become enlightened and productive citizens.

An educated person open to the complex challenges of values other than those they inherited will, we believe, be more productive, happier perhaps, but certainly more likely to contribute to the future. That is what we wish for our children, our students, their children and grandchildren, and for the generations that will follow. We have a profound responsibility for the lives of those who will come after us. They will define and redefine the worlds in which we live. They will choose to embrace the power of openness to diversity or they will subscribe to the prejudices of closed protectionism. The prevailing ideological divide is no longer between communism and liberalism; it is between open and closed ideologies. The choice is ultimately between perceptions that enrich and enlighten life or attitudes rooted in darkness, moral impoverishment, and a fateful ignorance.
The essays in this section demonstrate that employability and career integration are not simply a matter of applying principles reached by consensus. The variety of voices and perspectives here signal the fact that employability discourse brings into question the role and purpose of higher education. It is also an area in which intellectual insights may coexist with personal emotions. These essays reflect a debate marked by conflicting ideologies and individual commitments.
I’ve been called the N-word two times in my life: once when I was in high school and had to tell a new friend not to address me with derogatory language, and once during my undergraduate study abroad in Australia. I am a recent African-American graduate who studied marketing in the Carlson School of Management, and I’d like to use the course of this short essay to share my cross-cultural experience with that controversial word and the various lessons I learned from it.

Step into a time machine with me and travel backward to spring 2018. It is a cool, clear evening in Brisbane, Australia, and the pink summer sun is just beginning to dip below the horizon. After an exciting day on the Gold Coast, I’ve been invited to attend a small barbecue with two classmates from the University of Minnesota and two Australian students from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Although I didn’t plan to spend the evening at an Australian “sizzler,” I’m excited to play board games and try some new cuisine—some of my favorite things. When we reach the door, however, we’re greeted with hugs, smiles, and the N-word.

I froze as the initial shock trickled through my fingertips. Did she just say what I think she said? I scanned the room suspiciously for signs of similar human discomfort. My radar returned negative, mentally chiming: No signs of anxiety detected, Jordan. As the word repeatedly reverberated off of the walls and the ceilings throughout the night, I felt myself becoming more and more uncomfortable—and then a little bit angry. My gameplay grew distracted and withdrawn as I racked my brain for answers. How can they sit here and say this? Can’t they tell it’s awkward? Don’t they know you’re not supposed to do that? At least not with me right here, right?

But then it hit me: wrong. The N-word as I knew it, with its dark history and hurtful connotations, was not the same N-word that the Australians knew.
It didn’t represent the same ideas. To me, it was a form of abuse; to them, it was something fun they heard in music and something silly they saw online. Even the very literal definition of being “black” in Australia meant something completely different from being “black” in America.

So, in that moment, I had to make a conscious decision to put my instincts and my cultural training aside to understand a new perspective. My QUT peers didn’t mean to offend me. They weren’t using this word as a form of abuse while they laughed at each other’s jokes and fed me chocolate cake. I know that. Rather, their cultural background and their personal experiences had shaped their understanding of a word differently than mine.

While I haven’t run into the same specific incident since then, this method of thinking stays with me to this day. When I’m working in teams, I remind myself to take a step back and think about how my teammate’s background and previous experiences might impact the way he or she interprets my messages or my behavior. I think about how my background might bias my thoughts, behaviors, and opinions. And in marketing, especially, I think about how the messages I craft will be decoded by a diverse audience.

Looking back, I’d like to say that I stopped the party. I’d like to write about how we all held hands, sat in a circle, and sang “Kumbaya” as we discoursed profoundly about race, global politics, and intercultural norms. That would be nice, although it’s not the tale I can tell this time around. In reality, I left the barbecue feeling shocked, deflated, and confused—but more than anything, I left feeling curious. If I could do it all over again, I’d start the conversation. I feel fortunate to have platforms like these to share my learning experience with my peers, but I could have had the chance to leave a lasting impact on my QUT counterparts, as well. I made the effort to mature individually, but I had the opportunity to start a discussion that could have ignited growth globally. Moving forward, I understand how important it is to initiate difficult dialogue for the sake of widespread progress.

More than anything, I have come to understand that personal and professional growth unexpectedly disrupts you in various contexts and lifestyle situations. It’s not simple or pretty, and it’s certainly not always easy. Today, I recognize that development isn’t a golden sticker that will appear on my imaginary report card once I reach a certain age or a specific point in my career. Rather, progress is a series of choices that I will need to
make every day to think differently. I could have chosen to shut myself off for the remainder of my international experience, and I could have chosen to leave Australia with a chip planted firmly on my shoulder and a grudge settled deeply into my chest. I chose otherwise. I made a commitment to dig deeper, to find answers, and to turn what could have been a completely negative experience into a lesson that could be shared and learned from.

Had I not had the opportunity to study abroad, I may have never had the chance to refine my communication skills, my ability to work in a team, or my processing skills in quite the same manner. After graduation I know I won’t have a test question on the use of the N-word and its cross-cultural definitions, but I do know that I will be tested on my ability to pause, to reflect, and to analyze every single day for the rest of my life.
Creativity in Education: A Dying Art?

Guy Woolf

Creativity is suffering from neglect. Its potential is not being recognized, nurtured, or encouraged. This has a profound impact on domestic education and on the agendas of education abroad.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain shifted our national priorities: we recognized the need for a new kind of intelligence in line with the nation’s economic needs. This was the start of mass education and the introduction of so-called “core” subjects. These subjects were math and science, in order to comprehend this burgeoning technology, and languages, to sell them to the rest of the world. A sensible move: standardize the national curriculum to meet the economic demands of the country and produce a generation of skilled individuals capable of existing in a post-industrialist age.

This was two hundred years ago. Now those “core” subjects have not changed. We are told that math, science, (the so-called STEM disciplines), and languages are the foundations of intelligence, the seed of success from which all future genii will flower. It is extraordinary to see how far we have come and yet how little we have grown. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the UK government’s asinine introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)—this is where I would insert the Edvard Munch Scream emoji to convey the sheer extent of my millennial dissatisfaction.

The English Baccalaureate is a qualification that is intended to replace our current General Certificate of Secondary Education qualification. In the UK, at the age of sixteen, you are currently required to take examinations in English, math, and science, and then you have a choice of five or six other subjects ranging from history to art, French, drama, religious studies, politics, business, etc.—the subjects offered depend on the institution you attend. I have major issues with the whole institution of examinations, which I believe suits certain individuals and not others and does not accurately reflect intelligence. However, while the GCSE qualification is by
no means a perfect barometer of achievement, it at least permits some choice and acknowledges the benefits of a diversity of scholarship.

The EBacc, however, has different parameters. It will require students to be graded in English, an additional language, math, science, and history or geography with no provision for creative subjects. Sixteen-year-olds across the country will be graded in the above subjects, fine, but crucially, they will not be graded in creative subjects. The government aims for 90% of pupils to be studying the EBacc by 2025.

Schools, particularly in the state sector (i.e. government funded rather than individually paid for) are having to justify the existence of any creative departments when there is a shortage of funds, teachers, and resources, and then—to add insult to injury—no rewarding of those subjects at Key Stage 4 (age sixteen). The tragic effect of this is that, when the EBacc is formally introduced, the only students who will be able to study the creative subjects are those who can afford to attend private schools. This will of course result in a further socioeconomic divide within the creative industries. In the theatre industry, where I work, the result of a lack of socioeconomic diversity is more homogenized programming: dull, dull, dull. The National Theatre does not need to be programming another *Hamlet* with Benedict Cumberbatch (as much as you love him across the pond!). Privileged people programming work, starring privileged people, for privileged people to watch—it doesn’t accurately reflect how diverse and cosmopolitan the UK is, particularly London. I’ve lived in London my whole life, and everywhere you go there is extraordinary diversity which should be reflected properly in art.

And this is one relatively small industry: the same is abundantly true in advertising, design, arts management, etc. The arts—once the entertainment of the masses, shared by all from opera house to working men’s clubs, circuses, and traveling fairs—are now the preserve of an élite moneyed membership. If you are not represented onstage, onscreen, or in print, you will see the creative world as one that is not for you, not in your cosmos. And, as John Steinbeck wrote in *East of Eden*: “If a story is not about the hearer he will not listen. And I here make a rule—a great and lasting story is about everyone or it will not last” (170).

Now, I am no liberal snowflake arguing that the “core” subjects that are compulsory for the EBacc are not important. Obviously, study English,
study math, study atoms, and potassium. Fantastic. But the danger here is that we validate a false hierarchy of subjects in which the creative arts sit right at the bottom of a ladder. And the sad reality is that climbing that ladder, these days, is solely to get to university. That is the measure of educational success. So when academic ability has come purely to define intelligence, we are left with a whole swathe of creatively intelligent people who don’t fit into the normative mold and who think they are not intelligent because, as Sir Ken Robinson has put it, “the thing they were good at school was either not rewarded or actively stigmatized.”¹

Not only does the EBacc uphold this idea—thereby depriving young people of the many benefits and joys (which, let’s be clear, are not mutually exclusive!) of a creative education—but it is also one of the most economically senseless proposals imaginable.

Here come some facts and figures:²

1. The World Economic Forum in Davos reported that the top skills required in business are creativity, collaboration, and creative thinking.
2. The fastest growing industry is the creative industry: a £92 billion sector growing at twice the rate of the economy. To put this in perspective, the arms industry was worth £9 billion to the UK in 2017. One-tenth.
3. 80% of Google staff studied arts and humanities degrees.
4. The creative industries boast faster job growth and slower job loss than other sectors of the economy.
5. According to statistics from the government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in 2017 the number of people employed within the creative industries stood at just over two million, accounting for 6% of all UK jobs. When taking into account jobs in the wider creative economy, this figure rises to over three million.³
6. The Bazalgette review of the creative industries predicts that the

¹ Ken Robinson “Do Schools Kill Creativity?” TED Talk, February 2006.
² These and similar statistics can be accessed in a number of sources. See for example: Christine Henseler, “A Surprising Success Story: Jobs and the Arts and Humanities,” Amanda Ruggeri, “Why Worthless Humanities Degrees May Set You Up for Life.”
creative industries could be worth £128.4 billion to the UK economy by 2025 and help create a million jobs by 2030.⁴

This shows just how short-sighted we are about the economic potential of creativity, bearing in mind this is one area that can never be countered by Artificial Intelligence. According to a McKinsey Global Institute report, 375 million jobs worldwide will disappear by 2030.⁵ An Oxford study in 2017 predicted job losses of up to 47% within 50 years.⁶ A report by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics says a startling 1.4 million jobs in the US will be gone in just eight years.⁷

No computer could paint the Sistine Chapel, act like Dame Judi Dench, or create world-class advertising campaigns.

Furthermore, this idea that intelligence is rooted in the so-called “core” subjects is farcical. There is wide debate about the number of intelligences—in some cultures, there are considered to be as many as 16—but one example given by Karen Blackett OBE, UK County Manager at WPP, is that emotional intelligence is worth seven times more than IQ. In her industry, academic qualifications and craft or technical skills amount to little, compared to empathy with a target market and understanding of their needs and how to meet them.⁸

In promoting the value of a creative education, we have to be able to speak many languages in its defense. We must speak the language of “It’s great for your soul, your empathy, your mental health, social skills, public speaking,” etc. We must also speak the language of “Look at the economic statistics, look at the facts and figures.” We must acknowledge that the arts are under attack and be bold and brazen in resistance.

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⁸ The Sunday Times, 5 August 2018 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/karen-blackett-obe-country-manager-for-wpp-and-chairwoman-of-mediacom-answers-your-workplace-dilemma-t82wxrv79
It is no utopian vision to imagine a world in which our education system offers proper understanding of the breadth of intelligences there are and rewards them accordingly. I worked at a school in London in their drama department as an actor/director in residence, essentially to bring the professional world of theatre into the school level. This was, as you have no doubt guessed, a private school that had progressive thoughts about the importance of a creative education. Sadly, I still heard students say, “I couldn’t possibly take Theatre Studies A Level, it’s much too fun.” My heart and mouth dropped.

We all have to take responsibility for this, from the government to schools to parents, fellow teachers, and students. If we marginalize the creative subjects, students will miss out on the most diverse, eclectic, and, not to mention, crucial education we have to offer. The encouragement of young people to follow their passions is not just for individual benefit; it is also a commercial and economic imperative. Our students and our futures deserve better. This is a national, international, and global, imperative.
Only the walker who sets out toward ultimate things is a pilgrim. In this lies the difference between tourist and pilgrim. The tourist travels just as far, sometimes with great zeal and courage, gathering up acquisitions and returns the same person as the one who departed. The pilgrim resolves that the one who returns will not be the same person as the one who set out. The pilgrim must be prepared to shed the husk of personality or even the body like a worn-out coat. For the pilgrim the road is home; reaching the destination seems nearly inconsequential. (Andrew Schelling, *Meeting the Buddha*, 1995, np).

I lead the President’s Emerging Scholars (PES) program that supports underserved students in their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. I have worked at the University of Minnesota for seventeen years in many roles, as a financial aid adviser, an academic adviser, and a program director. In addition to my regular director duties I have had the opportunity to serve on a number of search committees, and therefore I have reviewed hundreds of cover letters and resumes. One of the items that always stands out on a candidate’s resume is study abroad experience. Almost always, there is a sense of connection and understanding because I know at least some of what the experience was like, and I know the ways in which studying abroad can truly transform a person.

I spent the spring semester of my junior year studying abroad in Madrid, Spain. Before I left, I remember feeling as if I was more than ready to study abroad for six months because I had traveled to many states and countries with my family. We traveled during nearly every school break, often for a week at a time. I had been on an airplane, I knew how to pack efficiently, and I had learned how to be flexible when things did not go as planned. I had even been to my father’s home country of Guatemala for
ten days without knowing any Spanish. What I soon discovered was my family vacations only served to provide me with a false sense of confidence. I anticipated that studying abroad halfway across the globe for an entire semester was going to be like every other trip I had taken with my family; it was going to be easy—I had much to learn.

I can still remember my dreams prior to departure about what Spain would be like. This was before the internet as we know it, so stories and my imagination combined to form my expectations. A recurring dream was of a heavily traveled road at night with a lot of stores and shops. Everything moved so fast on this road that the lights from cars and businesses were just trails of color, not unlike the exposure effect created by taking a picture of a busy road at night with the shutter open.

That dream turned out to be an accurate way to describe my next six months as I quickly adapted to new customs, people, places, and the Spanish language. Everything seemed to move fast, and I was exhausted at the end of each day from the never-ending newness. Simple tasks like grocery shopping required careful planning and execution, and there were ample opportunities to learn by trial and error in this regard. I remember the excitement of learning and exploring on my own, as well as the exponentially increased success that came from leveraging my community of family, friends, and teachers.

For example, I remember an entire weekend spent looking for a place to live. Armed with the classifieds section, coins for payphones, and a metro map, I journeyed around greater Madrid with absolutely zero success. Yet within a few days of telling a classmate about my dilemma, I was moving into a new pensión just minutes from the Universidad Complutense. Among the many lessons I learned in Spain, my apartment search helped me understand the importance of community. On my own I could have spent a week or more looking for a place to live, but as soon as my friends stepped in, my move was seamless.

Studying abroad can be the perfect environment for an individual to examine the contrast between aloneness and community. In a new and foreign environment, I was able to experience what it felt like to be truly alone without familiar people, places, and culture. During my time alone, I could explore, learn, and reflect; I was able to experience my limitations and the ways in which challenges were removed with the support of community.
This contrast was clearly visible because of my new environment, and I learned the power of community in a way that was unlike any other prior learning experience.

This was one of many lifelong lessons that I still remember from more than twenty years ago, and it is one I am sure many of my fellow pilgrims have also learned. With regard to the poet Andrew Schelling’s comment at the beginning of this article, students who study abroad must inherently resolve to be pilgrims and return from their experiences truly transformed. I left for Madrid confident I had everything I needed to study abroad, but I had only acquired skills necessary to be a tourist up to that point. Studying abroad permanently changed me and how I see the world.

After I returned to Wisconsin from Madrid, I distinctly recall that everything looked strange to me. I remember looking out my kitchen window and staring at my car because it seemed to have such a strange shape. I had never noticed its shape before in this way, but now I could not stop staring at it. My car did not make sense. Yet my car had not changed at all; I had changed, and it was amazing. I had a new lens to see through and I was excited to use it.

A lot in the world has changed since 1998, but when I see a study abroad experience listed on a resume, I am quite confident that the applicant has learned how to be a pilgrim and not simply a tourist. I am almost always eager to discuss their experience and how it applies to a new potential role at the university.

In my role as a program director, I often think about the various life steps that mirror an immersion experience. Whether it be new students coming to campus for the first time, new student staff working for our office, or new professionals adapting to the university, I liken the fast-paced adaptation process to that of my first few weeks in Madrid. Studying abroad is different than these domestic experiences, but the lessons are the same. There is power in having the confidence to start something new, and there is much to gain from a supportive community that can help you once you have arrived.

Today, when I am reviewing resumes for a job on campus, advising current students about studying abroad, or helping someone adapt to a new experience I am thankful for my study abroad experience so many years ago.
My experience taught me early on about confidence, adaptability, personal limits, and the importance of others. These are lessons I have continued to develop over time and still use today; in my own work and in navigating relationships with and between others. It is my hope that our students who study abroad have similarly transformational experiences as I when they embark on their study abroad journeys.

The President’s Emerging Scholars Program: PES Students Who Have Studied Abroad

The President’s Emerging Scholars (PES) is a merit-based scholarship and student success program that supports underserved students in their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

To date, 716 PES students have studied abroad, and ninety-six have received a scholarship to study in more than twenty different countries. Currently, approximately 36% of PES students study abroad each year. One scholarship awardee, Lina, wrote of her fall 2017 experience in London, “I just wanted to send over some pictures I have taken so far from my very quick passing time here. I also just wanted to thank you and PES again for this opportunity. I 100% would not have been able to do this without all of your support.” Lina graduated in spring 2018 and is currently working full time for Ameriprise in Minneapolis.

Participants are selected based on holistic review conducted by the Office of Admissions, and PES students demonstrate achievement in a number of ways, including strong academics, extracurricular excellence, and significant community engagement. Scholars are accomplished, involved, and resilient. PES students are also diverse: Many are the first in their family to attend college, Pell Grant recipients, and students of color.

When PES students arrive on campus they are quickly and regularly invited into what has informally been referred to as “the PES family.” Our staff of more than 40 peer mentors help to make this connection by providing advice, guidance, and sometimes simply a sounding board for our students who are adapting to college life. The PES community and other resources leverage students’ confidence so they might achieve self-determined success.
Philby’s escape from justice was proof of how clubmanship and the old school tie could protect their own. (Macintyre 242)

Kim Philby was born in 1912 into a privileged English elite—born, as the saying goes, with a silver spoon in his mouth. As tradition dictated, he was educated at Eton, one of the most exclusive and expensive boarding schools in England, and then at Cambridge University. His life coincided with the last years of British imperial power, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the Cold War. These were momentous times, and from 1933 onward, Philby was at the heart of the British establishment. He was a talented, charming, influential figure: apparently distinguished from his contemporaries only by his exceptional intelligence and wit.

He was also “the most remarkable spy of modern times” (Macintyre xiv), a Communist with a deep ideological commitment to the Soviet Union. Philby secretly served the interests of the Soviet Union from the early 1930s until his defection to Moscow in 1963. He reached the highest levels of the British Secret Service and, with his compatriots Donald MacLean, Guy Burgess, and Anthony Blunt, was able to ensure that the Soviet Union was fully aware of British policies, and frequently of American activities. At one notable point, Philby was in charge of developing anti-Soviet policies while simultaneously ensuring that Moscow was fully aware of the policies he was developing.

Philby had remarkable longevity in his field, for treason does not usually last undiscovered for thirty years. One of the reasons that Philby could get away with these activities for so long was that nobody in the elite environs of the British Civil Service could really believe that “one of us” could possibly betray values that were embedded in the air they breathed. There are codes that distinguish inherited elitism; Philby knew which codes ensured
security within a privileged elite. These codes are not widely known and are not easily learned. Membership of this elite is by birth and upbringing. One of the benefits of membership is that you are invariably trusted; your loyalty is assumed. Another benefit is that you rarely need to worry about employment.

Another member of this elite is David Cameron, the British prime minister from 2010 to 2016. His path went from Eton to Oxford to the Conservative Party to Parliament and, hence, to becoming an inept prime minister. At no point was he employed outside of the rarefied environment of the Conservative Party. He was not required to enter into the messy, competitive world in which most of us seek to function. In short, he belonged.

Philby and Cameron trod a well-defined and predetermined path toward success and security at the top of British society. That Philby had no loyalty and Cameron little talent was not an impediment to their progress. Success was predetermined by class; that predetermination has nothing to do with God but everything to do with background.

A diametrically opposite experience is described in Ewan MacColl’s 1960 song about a young man destined to be a miner, “Schooldays Over”:

Schooldays over, come on then John
Time to be getting your pit boots on
On with your sack and your moleskin trousers
Time you were on your way
Time you were learning the pitman’s job
And earning a pitman’s pay

This describes another form of predestination: while some are destined for the comfort of a job in politics, the civil service, or the upper echelons of the banking world, others are more likely headed toward mundane, menial jobs in uncomfortable circumstances.

Neither Kim Philby nor David Cameron worried about employability. Their backgrounds ensured profitable employment. Pitman John may also not have worried much about employability, as he had few other options unless he was a great boxer or footballer or wanted to leave his community
to risk his life in the army. In all likelihood, he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather along a path that led underground.¹

**The Silver Spoon and the Glass Ceiling**

No sense carrying dreams of Tahiti in your head if you can’t afford the fare. (Roth 120)

The metaphor of the silver spoon denotes inherited wealth and privilege; the glass ceiling signifies social barriers that are simultaneously real and invisible. The historical examples of Philby, Cameron, and Pitman John demonstrate the manner in which class may determine and define the lives we live. In a fictional form, Thomas Hardy’s 1895 novel *Jude The Obscure* reflects the failure of the protagonist to escape the tyranny of his class, to move from menial labor to scholarship at the university. As Hardy makes clear, the aspiration is doomed and the consequences tragic.

However, we are beyond the times in which class was an absolute determinant of fate. Social mobility is a reality. Below the glass ceiling, there has been discernible development and positive alterations. Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, was the son of a working-class Muslim family of Pakistani origin. In my own history, after World War II my father sold brushes door to door. For some obscure reason, he was particularly fond of knocking on the doors of Cambridge housewives. I used to work every summer selling shirts in the Cambridge market. Both of my children are graduates of the University of Cambridge.

To a generation more fortunate than Jude’s or Pitman John’s, education offers some possibility of upward social mobility, providing you have the intellect to succeed and the ability to negotiate all the stuff you need to know to gain admission and support. In international education, therefore, we justly spend a great deal of effort to facilitate entry into those things that we believe enhance students’ opportunities for enlightenment and employment.

¹ There are no jobs available to John and his compatriots in the mines anymore. They may have even narrower horizons than the pit.
To some degree the barriers of class can be overcome, but only to some degree. In addition to questions of gender discrimination, merit is not necessarily the sole measure of value. In short, there are groups who never need to worry about finding a job, and there are groups who have very little chance of finding anything other than menial work. As educators, we are engaging in political action intended to disrupt the barriers that predetermine opportunities.

An objection to this argument might be that the US does not operate within the same kinds of class constraints. There may be an element of truth in that, and certainly, American myths of the self-made man are pervasive. The novels of Horatio Alger Jr. were highly popular and influential; they exemplify that story through tales of impoverished boys who rise in society through their own efforts and moral qualities. Many immigrant lives also attest to such possibilities. Louis B. Mayer is an example of how certain nontraditional professions created opportunities for dramatic advancement for exceptional individuals. Born into extreme poverty in the Ukraine, Louis, originally Lazar Meir, was the co-founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1925. His partner, Marcus Loew, had a similar childhood, as well as a similar trajectory from poverty to wealth and influence.

These stories—and there are countless other examples—tell of profound achievements. They might suggest that there are few barriers to social advancement and that American society is particularly amenable to transformations from rags to riches; indeed, the idea of the American Dream is built upon such assumptions.

Other factors need to be considered, however. The film industry was relatively new at the time of Mayer’s ascension and had not developed barriers to advancement for newcomer-Jews like Mayer or Loew. Elsewhere, explicit or implicit barriers were being constructed—for example, at many major US universities. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and others operated quotas to limit Jewish student enrollment from the mid-1920s until the early 1960s:

In 1925, Jewish students were over 25% of Harvard. Then the fast-growing Jewish population in America dovetailed with nativist movements, and criteria were introduced that reduced Jewish representation to 15% for the following three decades—with similar unspoken quotas at Yale, Princeton, and elsewhere. (Telushkin).
In contrast, “hereditary enrollment” ensured the perpetuation of privilege within these institutions. The glass ceilings that protected elites from alien intrusion in the US illustrate some of the limits to meritocracy. Alternative histories also reveal the degree to which aspects of US political and economic life, particularly issues of class, have been excluded and minimized in more conventional narratives. American society is, as Nancy Isenberg argues, far from classless:

How does a culture that prizes equality of opportunity explain, or indeed accommodate, its persistently marginalized people? Twenty-first-century Americans need to confront this enduring conundrum. Let us recognize the existence of our underclass. (Isenberg 2)

As Isenberg contends, the ideas of Alger and others represent “fables we forget by, (1)” mechanisms for obscuring social and economic schisms.

Perhaps barriers to social mobility are less visible in the US, but they exist and are shaped by ethnicity, regional identity, wealth, history, and so on. I would argue that it is likely that barriers to social and economic advancement exist in diverse forms—sometimes more visible, sometimes less, and to different extents everywhere. We are engaged in the task of trying to move students into positions of relative privilege where, through education and experience, they may become more employable. As international educators, we believe that the skills students learn abroad help them move up whatever ladder they find themselves on.

A distinction between career education and career preparation could be useful in this context. Career education could be approached in a broader way than is customary so as to consider issues of class and power. Career preparation is an obvious and necessary component of what we want students to gain. However, by asking questions about power and privilege in the context of employment and advancement, we would also better enable students to understand the environments they inhabit. Hierarchical structures are sometimes clearly visible and simultaneously invisible, not necessarily or inevitably built by talent or merit. That is an underlying reality in the social, economic, and political environments in which we all live.
Up the Ladder?

Education is about creating hierarchies based on merit rather than birth. At a very simple level, educational systems create judgments based on perceived achievement. Thus, we say that a GPA of 3.75 is better than a GPA of 2.5; in the UK, the degree classification 2:1 is better than 2:2. Students get marked according to some form of hierarchical system.

The job of higher education is not about creating equality or some form of revolutionary upheaval; it is about adjustment. Education abroad demonstrates this explicitly in the rhetoric of employability. We say that students who study abroad are given access to experiences that enhance their employability, a pathway into a privileged position not open to their contemporaries who stay at home. Our objectives are, for the most part, not focused on eradicating distinctions, but about adjusting them in ways that reflect a greater sense of social justice.

Concerns about creating greater diversity in participation in education abroad are not about equality. Broadening access creates ladders that students may climb; we aim to redefine the elite, not to eradicate it. An objective is to make accidents of birth less significant than intellectual capacities and personal qualities, providing, of course, that the beneficiaries can pay the fare or get it paid for them.

The employability agenda in education abroad is about reform, not revolution. We function in already privileged environments in developed economies. Nothing about our rhetoric addresses global inequality in employment opportunities. We argue that mobility is a precondition for giving students from the US a further advantage beyond that which they already enjoy by virtue of their nationality.

In other parts of the world, however, mobility is also a retreat from danger or traumatic experience, not a movement toward enlightenment. On 19 June 2018, a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted:

We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 68.5 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.4 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.
To give this some form of context, the combined populations of the most populous states in the US, California and Texas, are also around 68.5 million.

This is not to suggest that there is anything wrong in seeking to improve employment prospects for our students; most of us are educationalists and reformers, not utopian revolutionaries. Indeed, we have a responsibility to enhance access to the elite world in which inhabitants enjoy the gift of choice. The objective is to teach our students those codes that will gain them entry into the land of opportunity. We tell them that if they can afford the fare, they will distinguish themselves from the rest; they will become more employable because of what they will learn.

It is misleading and naive, however, to ignore the power of unearned privilege. The best most of us can do is not only limited by our talent or capacities; it is also constrained by barriers that we may not always see or understand, wherever we live. There are many professional and ethical reasons to help students to achieve the best they possibly can, but they ought also to learn that we do not live in an equitable world. Questioning where power and privilege resides is a critical step toward understanding what shapes the lives we live, and the lives lived by others. That is a necessary prerequisite for change.

**Conclusion: What Happened to Philby and Blake?**

Philby’s treatment exemplifies the protection offered by class. Once his treason was suspected, he was not subject to immediate arrest or physical restraint. He was not tortured, beaten, or arrested. Instead, in all probability, Philby was allowed to escape to Moscow to avoid the embarrassment of a trial that might expose the network of privilege that advanced him and protected him for so long. Philby had been appointed and promoted throughout his career without any but the most cursory background checks. After all, his family were well established and ensconced in the British hierarchy.

Another spy of Philby’s era, George Blake, was the son of foreign parents: a Dutch mother and an Egyptian Jewish father. In contrast to Philby, Blake was an outsider, a foreigner, an upstart—not “one of us.” Blake received rather different treatment. He was tried in 1961 and was sentenced to a
draconian forty-two years in prison. Of his decision to become a spy, Blake said, “To betray, you first have to belong. I never belonged.”

Unlike Blake, even after his treason became apparent, Philby retained his membership of a “club” with codes and behaviors that were written nowhere, but understood very well by its members, nevertheless. As a senior figure in the British Secret Intelligence Service said at the time, “Though he might be a traitor, Philby should be treated as a gentleman” (Macintyre 243).
 Employability is Key to the Global Higher Education Agenda

Martin Tillman

For the past fourteen years, I have been addressing the issue of purposefully linking the design of education abroad programs to employability. At first, the research evidence for this linkage appeared scant and limited to small samples of self-selected students who had studied abroad, but there is now an abundance of large, carefully constructed qualitative surveys of both current students and program alumni. These have emerged in tandem with more sophisticated quantitative research from scholars and national programs in many countries (primarily the US, UK, EU, and Australia, but also Japan and Canada). New research and analysis confirm the correlation between international experience (insofar as students strengthen transferable skills and competencies) and employability (for examples of this, see Potts; British Council; Farugia and Sanger; Tillman; and Matherly, Tillman, and Wiers-Jenssen).

The 2011 QS Global Employer Survey, the largest transnational survey of global employers to date, asked hiring managers and CEOs whether or not they “value” international study experience. This report is unique because it is based on responses from 10,000 respondents in 116 nations. It found that 60% of respondents said they do “value an international study experience and the attributes that the experience may confer to mobile students.” Potts’ study presents findings from ten pieces of research conducted in North America, Asia, Australia, and the EU. She is cautious in summarizing research outcomes, stating, “In summary, learning abroad facilitates skills development and provides an environment for applying new and existing skills. Many of these skills are transferable to a work setting, as long as participants are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, identify the skills they have developed and articulate how these skills may be applied in other situations.”
A succinct background piece by Blackmore regarding the topic of this essay appeared in the EAIE “Conversation Starter” available to those attending the 2018 annual conference. In his essay, Blackmore states:

The relevance of an international experience in enhancing a university graduate’s career prospects has never been more scrutinized than it is currently. With stakeholders increasingly demanding that higher education provides enhanced employment prospects for students, the spotlight is more focused on international experiences as a contributor to such impact (25).

To be on common ground when discussing the linkage of international experience to student “career prospects,” we first need to address the meaning of employability. The phrase “employability skills” is most often used to refer to job-seeking skills, such as interview and CV-enhancement techniques, but also refers to the broader abilities and attributes that make an individual a desirable employee—such as teamwork, communication skills, time management, confidence, and self-discipline—as well as additional subject-, sector-, and profession-specific abilities. Yorke and Knight have proposed a detailed list of such attributes: “...a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation” (158). This definition has been adopted by the preponderance of research that focuses on employability.

Campus concerns for preparing graduates to transition successfully into the workforce have not diminished since the global recession of 2008. Campus decision-makers have increasingly acted to foster a new transnational academic narrative linking education abroad programs to employability, seeking to design these programs with more purposeful and integrated academic and career-development outcomes. Brett Berquist, International Director at the University of Auckland, describes the new pragmatism of campus leaders regarding the focus of education abroad as a component of campus internationalization policymaking in this way:

There has always been a focus of return on investment when it comes to moving to another country and investing significant resources in an education far away from home. But our current fascination with rankings and other performance metrics has made it easier for student consumers to compare results and calculate the
potential break-even point on their investment, [thus] universities are increasingly reflecting on their mission and making the case for how the educational experience they offer will equip their students for their changing career over the course of their lifetime (West 20).

However, as pointed out in essays in earlier volumes of this series, the added value of an international education experience to a student’s career development is diminished if students cannot clearly articulate the way that such an experience has strengthened specific intercultural competencies of interest to prospective employers. Institutions must maximize their resources to enhance students’ intercultural competence on the home campus, especially for the majority of students who do not have the opportunity to go abroad, through curriculum, co-curriculum, and community service.

The globalization of the workforce, increased mobility of students, and rising employer demand for global-ready graduates are but a few of the new forces of change impacting the traditional structure of international educational experiences available to students. These forces influence the focus of higher education policy and planning with respect to campus internationalization, particularly the development of partnerships with business and industry to widen opportunities for experiential learning and practical work experience. A country’s economic competitiveness in the future—particularly in developing nations—will be dependent on the educational readiness of its workforce. Thus, it is a mistake to think of workforce development and higher education separately. Campus policy makers and administrators need to take a fresh look at the design and structure of international education programs if these experiences are intended to have a maximum impact on students’ career direction and near- and long-term employability.

The point of intersection for educators and policy makers lies in the nexus linking education with the development of skills required by employers to promote economic growth. However, there are highly divergent interpretations of the issues facing each player—university, the employer, and student—in this triangle. As a study by Karin Fisher (4 March 2013) noted, employers were particularly critical that students graduating with a bachelor’s degree lacked basic workplace proficiencies such as adaptability, communication skills, and the ability to solve complex problems. These
criticisms of graduates’ job readiness have been repeated by employers around the globe, as reported by Tse, Esposito, and Chatzimarkakis (2013).

Industry will need to become a more active and engaged partner in the design and implementation of high-impact domestic and international applied learning experiences for students, for example through internships or cooperative education. Academic institutions also need to close the expectation gap for students by providing them with robust career development support services to assist them in making informed choices about their career options post-graduation. This will define the “employability agenda” that will continue to shape global higher education for the foreseeable future.
Divided by a Common Language?
A Debate on the Role of Language in Career Development Abroad

Martha Johnson, Mark Lenhart, and Michael Woolf

Introduction: The Johnson-Lenhart Debate

I don’t like German. It isn’t at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson (Wilde 15).

Cecily Cardew’s objection to learning German in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* offers a somewhat extreme view of second-language learning. This skepticism was not widely shared by those who attended the powerful debate that marked a high point at the Career Integration Education Abroad Conference, co-hosted by the University of Minnesota and CET in August 2018. It does, however, represent a healthy counterpoint to those who consider language learning to be the acme of objectives in education abroad.

Mark Lenhart and Martha Johnson debated the relationship between language learning abroad and employability, contesting the career benefits derived from second-language learning as opposed to those gained in Anglophone locations. With great rhetorical grace, Lenhart argued that second-language learning abroad is “quite obviously” the best way to acquire workplace skills. Michael Woolf suggested that Lenhart’s central insight could be summarized as follows: students grubbing around in Anglophone playgrounds might pick up something or other that will enable them to function as drones in the mills of capitalism. However, their bosses, having parked the Porsche or Rolls, will be hunched over their Tsingtao, giggling and gossiping in perfect Mandarin. In contrast, Johnson elegantly sought to dismantle Lenhart’s delusions and reveal that the principles to which he has dedicated his life are built on sand, with foundations as solid...
as chicken chow mein. She endeavored to expose his fallacious beliefs and thus reveal the rich learning potential to be found in Anglophone environments (aka the dives of Dublin and estaminets of London).

This was by no means the easiest session to chair. In introducing the speakers, Woolf nervously recalled the words of Hamlet: “Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes between the pass and fell incensed points of mighty opposites.” In Shakespearian mood, he further recalled the more or less unreadable *King John*:

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The cannons have their bowels full of wrath,
And ready mounted are they to spit forth
Their iron indignation 'gainst your walls.
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This highly entertaining debate was marked by a combination of wit and wisdom; it combined humor with serious insights into the relationship between language acquisition and employability. It is, of course, widely recognized that knowing another language is a critical skill; it requires the learner to enter an alternative reality, to shift toward some kind of empathy with other ways of thinking. Whatever else it may signify, the decline of language teaching in the US (and UK) is an expression of the erosion of cosmopolitanism and the prevalence of parochialism.

However, as Johnson demonstrated, we also necessarily teach language even in Anglophone contexts: the use of appropriate registers; the capacity to employ nuanced forms of English; receptive skills of listening and reading; productive skills of speaking and writing. The ability to use many forms of English is a necessary skill not just for employment, but also for living productive, creative, and effective lives.

These presentations have only been lightly edited, as the editors were anxious to represent the pervasive humor and eloquence of the rhetoric while sustaining the innate seriousness of the points presented.
The Case for Language Programs Abroad and Employability

Mark Lenhart

Simply, intensive language programs abroad better prepare students for the twenty-first-century workplace than any other study abroad programs—including internship programs. The focus on language learning has the obvious benefit of teaching the language skills which we all know are valued by twenty-first-century employers. But beyond this benefit, students who are challenged to learn foreign languages abroad typically come out of the experience with more significant gains in key areas. Learning to function in a more disorienting, less familiar place is ultimately more impactful than any other education abroad experience.

Picture, for example, the student who lands in Beijing for a semester-long intensive Chinese language program. The classes are highly structured; she lives with a local roommate, and she abides by a Chinese-only language pledge. Whether in the classroom or her dorm, she is completely barraged by a language she doesn’t understand. She is reduced to childlike communication, and for the first time she starts to imagine what it’s like for international students at her home campus. She has the pervasive feeling that she can’t trust what is communicated or what is happening. As her skills progress, she may start to understand the language, but the cultural norms are still baffling: Why do they say that in this situation? When she gets lost on the Beijing subway, she must use all her creativity and problem-solving skills to conjure up words that will help her get home. She will only start to feel comfortable with this state of being uncomfortable at the end of the term.

Imagine that the very same student chooses instead to attend an internship program in London. The experience is challenging, to be sure. The approach to teaching is different to what she’s accustomed; the flat she lives in is nothing like her dorm at home, and for the first time she must learn to shop, cook, and clean up after herself. She is in a big city for the first time, interacting with a population that is more international and diverse than she ever imagined. Her internship challenges, her time-management skills, her intercultural skills, and her thinking about her career plans. When she gets lost in the London Tube, it is also a daunting experience, and she must also engage her creativity and problem-solving skills. But to me, the difference lies here: she can easily communicate in English to get back
home. She doesn’t face the double problem of being lost and having to speak a foreign language in order to find her way.

Both experiences have value, and we all agree that certain students are better suited or more prepared for one than the other. I’m not arguing that one experience is better than the other. But I am arguing that if the student chooses the first experience, she will have more significant gains in twenty-first-century workplace skills than she would if she had chosen the second experience.

IIE’s 2017 study, *Gaining an Employment Edge*, interrogated the relationship between study abroad and the fifteen particular skills that employers value (Farrugia and Sanger 5). Students who studied abroad in any location reported significant gains in eleven of the fifteen work skills: intercultural skills, curiosity, flexibility and adaptability, confidence, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication, problem-solving, language, tolerance for ambiguity, and course- or major-related knowledge. Like all study abroad students, those enrolled in focused language programs abroad also make significant gains in all of these areas, and it’s easy to imagine why. Learning a foreign language abroad obviously challenges students’ flexibility and adaptability, for instance, and making progress in the target language naturally increases student confidence. Students whose sole focus of study is language are clearly more likely to make significant headway in their language skills. Rather than discuss each of the skills identified by IIE, I’ll focus on those where the gains made by language students may be less obvious: tolerance for ambiguity, problem-solving, and intercultural skills.

First, students who must function in a non-English-speaking environment increase their **tolerance for ambiguity**. Whether they are interacting with a local student or walking on the street, they are confronted by ambiguity in every situation—they simply can’t trust that they completely understand what is happening around them. In the classroom, they are not just confronted with new vocabulary or grammar structures; they must also figure out the task that the teacher is asking them to complete. What are the expectations in this situation? Do I repeat what the teacher is saying or answer her question?

Employers, as we know from many sources, actively seek candidates who demonstrate that they are comfortable with ambiguity. This makes sense
because today’s work environment is often ambiguous, complex, and dynamic. Corporate goals might shift, or management might fail to make them clear. There might be sudden growth, and employee functions might change quickly. Employers need employees who respond well in unstable environments—who can embrace this ambiguity by stepping up and making informed decisions, rather than freezing when things are unclear. They need them to pivot, to reinvent themselves. I feel that students who have lived in a state of constant ambiguity for a semester or year, and who have grown comfortable in this state, are better prepared for workplace ambiguity than anyone else.

Second is problem-solving. There has been a great deal of research on how language learning affects the young brain, and everything I’ve read makes me think I need to speak much more Chinese to our twin babies. At any age, language learners demonstrate better listening skills, more cognitive flexibility, and better memory skills. In the case of the study abroad student, I argue that studying a foreign language in that language environment regularly challenges students’ problem-solving skills. They are forced to get creative with every sentence, as they must talk around unknown words or use gestures to communicate meaning. For example, I remember trying to describe the word for “towel” in Chinese while shopping at a department store during my first weekend in Beijing—I knew the verb “to shower,” and I knew “dry” as an adjective, but I had to rely on hand gestures and simple sentences to explain what I was trying to buy.

It’s this same problem-solving skill, I argue, that employers seek in their candidates. Employees need to deploy keen observational skills in order to identify problems. They then need to think creatively to identify an array of possible solutions, engaging critical thinking skills to assess these and determine the best course of action. Problem-solving is what language students abroad do in every single interaction. Just as they grow comfortable with ambiguity, they also learn actively to flex their observational, creative, and critical-thinking muscles. Nothing better prepares them for solving problems in the workplace.

Finally, there are intercultural and communication skills. Anyone who has learned a foreign language knows that it’s impossible to separate language from culture. You simply cannot achieve proficiency in Chinese, for instance, and not come to understand basic Chinese cultural norms along
the way. This is especially true if you study language *in situ*. You learn honorifics, how to express respect for a teacher, and how to politely ask a stranger for directions—sometimes in indirect, passive ways. No matter how fluent you get in the language, learning that these cultural differences exist, builds an overall ability to communicate effectively across cultures.

It is a humbling experience to land in a place like Amman and discover how challenging it is to navigate basic life. Ordering in a restaurant or seeking medical help in Arabic can be completely daunting. A positive outcome of this experience is that it makes students more aware of what non-native English speakers experience in the US on a regular basis. Not only do students learn to tackle these challenges themselves, they also develop empathy and compassion for people at home who also face these challenges.

I’ve explained that employers seek employees who can be comfortable with ambiguity and who can solve problems in ambiguous environments. In my opinion, advanced intercultural and communication skills are what enable employees to take action—to implement the solution they have identified. These skills enable them to communicate effectively in diverse environments, to mobilize and lead diverse teams. At CET, I see that excellent communication skills are absolutely critical when it comes to employee success; the most effective employees are the ones who can make their meaning understood across a variety of platforms and channels—and cultures—to people in our Washington, D.C. office and our offices abroad. Not surprisingly, many of these successful communicators studied in language programs abroad.

Finally, a note about program structure and program length. Regarding program structure, IIE’s report states that there is a positive correlation between highly structured programs and the gains students make in their work skills. They write:

> Student intentionality and highly structured programs contribute to skill development. Participating in highly structured study abroad programs, particularly those that incorporated group projects and activities, emerged as a common factor among those reporting significant gains in collaborative, interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership skills during their study abroad (Farrugia and Sanger 6).
Similarly, they note the positive impact of longer periods of study:

Longer periods of study abroad have a high impact on subsequent job offers and the development of most skills... Among alumni who studied abroad for one academic year, 68% reported study abroad contributing to a job offer at some point, compared to just 43% of alumni who went abroad for fewer than eight weeks (Farrugia and Sanger 6).

Learning a language requires both a structured approach and time, and language programs abroad are designed accordingly to maximize language-learning outcomes. Teachers must develop ways for students to encounter and practice the same vocabulary or grammar points, both inside and outside the classroom, through practica or structured activities. It is only through intentional repetition and practice that students start to internalize these forms. What this means is that students who choose to enroll in semester or academic-year language programs abroad will naturally gain significant work skills, simply because of the way their programs are structured. I’m not saying that loosely structured or short programs have no value, or that they don’t help students acquire new work skills. Rather, I’m pointing to the evidence that suggests there is a correlation between what it takes to learn a language—structure and time—and what it takes to gain significant work skills.

As the journalist Flora Lewis argued, “Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things but learning another way to think about things” (112). To conclude, learning this other way of thinking better prepares students for the twenty-first-century workplace than any other study abroad experience.

**Education Abroad in English**

*Martha Johnson*

George Bernard Shaw famously observed that “American and England are two countries divided by a common language” (and by the way, he was Irish). The quote is clever, and it contains an important truism that probably cannot be overstated: Words in the same language do not necessarily have the same meaning. As anyone from the American South can tell you, “Bless your heart” does not mean “bless your heart.”
With that in mind, I suggest that historically there has been a pecking order in the perceived value of study abroad experiences, something of which I have been known to be a bit vocally critical. In this taxonomy, there are few failures greater than “only” having studied in a country where the first language is English. When students say that “I only studied in Edinburgh, Cape Town, or Dublin,” and so on, they present a deficit narrative which devalues the significant learning potential for students who study in Anglophone environments. And God help you if you studied in London.

Can you imagine a scenario where the next time a student came into your office and said one of their goals abroad was to study language, you suggested Scotland?

I am a proud alumnus of, and a sometime instructor of, a study abroad program in Ireland, where they speak and write a wonderful version of English, infused with lyrical words and phrases from the Irish language. The result is more prizes for literature than the English (if you are keeping score). Ireland is the first place I was exposed to some of the facets of language I would like you to consider today.

While I have the greatest respect for the study of other languages and agree with the benefits to be gained, I am proud today to defend and discuss the unique opportunities afforded to students who choose to study in the English-speaking world. For my purposes, I will be focusing on destinations where the official language—or one of the official languages—is English, not including the ever-growing list of locations where students can pursue the majority of their studies in English, such as the Netherlands, South Korea, or Scandinavia. The following points are critical.

Learning abroad in the English-speaking world allows the opportunity—in fact, demands—that the student learns to appreciate and recognize difference and nuance within the language. The native English speaker quickly learns that English is not in fact one monolithic language, but rather a disparate collection of dialects and idioms all reflective of their histories and specific cultures. The student learns to move beyond the humorous anecdotes of why not to wear a fanny pack or discuss your suspenders, to a recognition that language is where culture lives.

Learning abroad in the English-speaking world will help a student understand the role of language in histories, social stratifications, and power
dynamics. Students are often amazed that a Brit’s level of education and class can usually be ascertained within a five-minute conversation, or that the accent of a Belfast resident reveals their religion. They are not unused to cultural identities related to language (African-American Vernacular English is an example), but tend to consider these differentiations in terms of race, region, or immigration rather than class or religion. In many other cultures, accent and idiom are reflective of deep divisions and complex social systems. The ability to recognize and to understand the linguistic clues offered within the framework of your own language allows the student the opportunity to approach ethnographies and local cultures in a much more nuanced way.

In most cases, students have the ability to engage with academic content to a far greater extent than they can as language learners. Their ability to read source material, engage in debate or an academic discourse, write an analysis, or navigate in a different academic environment successfully in an English-speaking country is demonstrably greater for the vast majority of students studying abroad. At its best, the positionality of linguistic insider yet outsider affords a perspective into content that might not have been possible otherwise. For instance, living in Ireland allowed me to observe the cadence and quality of spoken Irish language. When read or performed with this in mind, the poetic rhythms of Irish English are more apparent. The writings of W.B. Yeats or Samuel Beckett, and the question of what makes their writing particularly Irish, are better understood. The writer John M. McGahern calls it “the dead ghost of Gaelic in the language” (103). Diaspora, too, is also evident in English. Whether it be the Afrikaans vocabulary in South Africa or the British Cockney influence in Australian English, patterns of immigration, colonization, and mobility are embedded in every version of English on the planet.

Furthermore, the absence of a language barrier allows for skill development and responsibilities that would not be possible—or would at least be less likely—in a second language. Students are clearly likely to gain professional skills, whether through collaborative research, in projects, or in an internship, when they are not required to struggle with communications in another language. Students who engage in internships, observational experiences, or service programs in English-speaking locations can integrate into an office or institution very quickly and can often be given more substantive responsibilities. Our colleagues in the career offices at the University of Minnesota who have visited our internships in London
are routinely impressed with the caliber of the work the students are doing and their level of integration into their offices and work teams.

The potential for interpersonal interactions is unlimited in English-speaking locations. The student who goes to Ireland or Australia, even for a short-term program, will have the experience of being challenged or questioned about their American identity, and there will be no linguistic barrier to hide behind. The ability for students to develop friendships with peers—or, dare I say it, to date—is unparalleled. These relationships can lead to deep intercultural learning and will hopefully bring depth to their academic and professional growth.

And finally, opportunities in the English-speaking world often best serve underrepresented populations in education abroad. For better or worse, the devaluation of language study in US high school and higher education has resulted in an ever-diminishing population of students prepared to study language beyond an introductory level. The likelihood that students can successfully integrate into a second-language higher education system is dwindling. It is, therefore, imperative that we continue to work to develop high-caliber programs that are not reliant on language study and that we do not propagate elitist notions that privilege language as being better or particularly for the smartest and most serious students.

None of this is to say that the potential advantages and opportunities I have advocated can be assumed or taken for granted. In fact, I would suggest that our field has at times been terribly negligent in cultivating the exploration of the complexities of language in English-language programs. In the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota, we have found that reflection and cultural mentoring is often most necessary in locations where the language and culture are deceptively similar at a surface or cursory level. Teaching students to consider the broader and more performative elements of communication, such as volume, body language, and gesture, can help them develop a skill set that will be equally useful as they navigate multicultural or regional workplaces, whether in the US or abroad in their futures.

This is even more imperative in locations such as South Africa, Israel, or India, where the cultures operate with multiple levels of language and the question of language is contested and problematic. South Africa, for
example, has twelve official languages. These locations are increasingly promoted as desirable for their curricula without requiring students to consider why they are able to study there in English, or the reality that not everyone there speaks English, or at least that it may not be their first language, or the power dynamics that linguistic privilege represents. Students must be asked to reflect on all of the above.

I would equally argue that a student who goes to France to study the language may well develop proficiencies that enable them to order a meal with enviable facility. That does not necessarily mean that they have, for example, learned much about the difference in constructions of democracy in France versus the US. In short, language proficiency does not by definition always translate into culture learning.

I will end by pointing out that the fault lies with us as international educators. Anglophone locations are not of lesser value as places for student learning. It is time to end the bias and condescension toward programs in Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and many other English-speaking locations. English-language locations provide some of the richest opportunities for intercultural engagement and growth, but only if their potential is maximized in program and curriculum design.

Conclusion: Routes to Enlightenment

There was, of course, no winner in this debate, nor was there intended to be. Within the context of an entertaining exchange in which Lenhart and Johnson assumed exaggerated postures, a significant discourse raised critical questions about the relationship between education abroad, employability, and language learning. Lenhart and Johnson explored the various and diverse benefits gained by students who move into unfamiliar landscapes. Their arguments did not offer absolute alternatives. The formal debate created entertaining dichotomies that did not obscure a core proposition and a common commitment.

Education abroad, as both speakers demonstrated, enriches the lives of those who participate. They acquire many skills by engaging with new ideas, new modes of expression, in new environments. The critical value of the discussion was to create a field of analysis rich in insight and ideas.
Beneath the cut and thrust of disagreement, it emerged that no model is innately superior to another. The debate made explicit those benefits that are embedded in various models of education abroad. We too often operate with unexamined assumptions. We are also too often preoccupied only with the administrative burdens we all carry. The Lenhart-Johnson debate challenged and contested our assumptions, exposed superficial modes of thinking, and brought intellectual clarity to critical issues in our work. Above all, they collectively demonstrated a quality of analysis. We learned that no single model encompasses excellence. In short, and in conclusion, there are many routes to enlightenment.
These contributions from practitioners indicate the degree to which career preparation has become embedded in education abroad. They also collectively offer advice and practical suggestions for making career integration a critical element in the processes of internationalization.
The University of Minnesota serves over 30,000 undergraduate students and over 16,000 professional and graduate students. Approximately 4,000 are documented as studying abroad each year. Of those, close to 60% participate on short-term programs. Participation on short-term programs is a growing trend at the University of Minnesota and in higher education abroad in general. Short-term programs are generally understood to be defined as eight weeks or less. This article intends to dispel the myth that short-term programs do not have career development value (for further relevant discussions see Lahr, Shailey and Todd, and Chieffo and Spaith).

In addition to being large and decentralized, the University of Minnesota is geographically located in three distinct campuses: West Bank (the Learning Abroad Center, and the Carlson School of Management), East Bank (the Academic Health Center, the Pre-Health Student Resource Center), and the St. Paul campus. This indicates the physical challenges that are present when trying to collaborate. The campus has seven freshman-admitting undergraduate colleges and six health profession schools in addition to many more health profession programs and graduate programs. To serve students’ career exploration and preparation, there are fourteen different career centers on campus. To help coordinate among those centers, the campus has a Career Development Network that meets monthly, shares information and best practices, and looks to promote strategic collaboration.

One such collaboration that has been essential for serving students is that between the Learning Abroad Center, the central and comprehensive education abroad office, and various career centers focused on building global programs that have a career development component. Two specific partnerships will be highlighted in this paper.
Programs

The Learning Abroad Center works closely with career services staff across the University of Minnesota through the Career Development Network, Career Integration Campus Partnership Group, Education Abroad Network, Global Health Advising Collaborative, and more. Career services staff work one-on-one with students and often discuss learning abroad goals with students in connection to their post-collegiate career or education goals. Career services staff have noticed an emerging trend in students’ desire to pursue a volunteer experience abroad in hopes that it would strengthen applications to graduate school or competitiveness in the job market. At the same time, career services staff have noticed that students often struggled to connect what they learned from their time abroad to their future goals. Capitalizing on the opportunity to build a program to support students’ goals and development, career services staff partnered with the Learning Abroad Center to create a Volunteer and Leadership short-term, non-credit-bearing learning abroad program. The program was offered over spring break 2016 in Atenas, Costa Rica, and over spring break 2017 in Bocas del Toro, Panama. In both locations, students choose from three different volunteer options that are closely aligned with their individual career goals. The program included intentional-guided reflection as well as hands-on experiential learning through volunteer work and cultural immersion activities.

Another partnership that has grown through the years is between the Learning Abroad Center and the Pre-Health Student Resource Center. In 2012, this partnership created its first short-term program: The Global Future Physician in India. This program is led by two physicians (new physicians rotate in and out yearly), and takes students interested in medicine and public health to Mysore, where they learn about the social determinants of health. Additionally, students observe how physicians approach the complex contributors and solve health challenges from local health care professionals. Another program developed in 2015, Global Health in Thailand: Elephants, Humans, and Disease, takes students on a short-term program to Chiang Mai, Thailand. This program is also led by two University of Minnesota-based health professionals, and helps students learn about zoonotic disease and how various local health professionals engage to prevent or respond to a health threat.
Competency-Based Programs

Career centers across campus use a competency- or skill-development framework to provide the foundation for their programs. Career centers that serve students seeking employment immediately after graduation utilize the National Association of Colleges and Employers’ (NACE) career readiness competencies,1 while the Pre-Health Student Resource Center uses the Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).2 The benefit of building a program that uses skills or competencies as a foundation is the ease with which students can understand what they are doing, as well as how they are developing and demonstrating those skills or competencies.

The remainder of this paper will discuss strategies that are used by each of the programs that help to develop identified competencies. These strategies and activities are woven into pre-departure, the time spent abroad, and re-entry programming. In the case of the Global Future Physician and Global Health in Thailand courses, these short-term programs have now evolved into a hybrid model that involves two pre-departure half-day orientations in the fall, the abroad component over winter break, and a weekly course meeting for seven weeks upon return. This year, for the first time, India and Thailand students will be in class together upon return, in an effort to help them learn with and from each other about global health.

Strategies: Airplane Icebreakers

Participants on the Volunteering and Leadership programs took group flights to the study abroad destinations, where students were assigned seats next to one another. As a group, students had convened for four brief meetings together prior to departure, so students did not know one another well. As a strategy for pre-reflection and community building, the program leader gave each student a packet of “airplane icebreakers,” reflective “get-to-know-you” questions that had been attached to the student’s favorite candy as an airplane snack. Students were encouraged to reflect and connect with their neighbors during the long journey abroad about these topics and more.

1 NACE: https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/
2 AAMC: https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/core-competencies/
Intercultural Development Inventory

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a cross-cultural assessment of intercultural competence. Students in both the Global Future Physician and the Global Health in Thailand courses take the IDI. Prior to leaving the country, the aggregate scoring is shared with the students, and then it is shared again upon return after they retake it. The primary focus of the IDI is how students will use what they learn as future health professionals, particularly emphasizing the need to acquire cultural humility. While the IDI focus is on mindset, it lays the foundation to talk about cultural awareness, humility, and competence. One specific assignment used by the pre-health students is focused on learning about health in their own cultural context, and then learning about health in the context of the country they are visiting. This helps students begin to understand why cultural humility is necessary, especially when working with patients who may come from a different understanding of health or illness.

The IDI was also used with students on the Volunteering and Leadership programs in Costa Rica and Panama. Prior to departure, students took the assessment and received an individual interpretation, and the aggregate profile was shared with the group in a facilitated discussion. During the program, students engaged in discussions around cultural differences they encountered in the host country, then connected this to their IDI profile/interpretation, as they now had a shared vocabulary to process their experiences. The use of the IDI gave students an opportunity to develop an understanding of their own strengths and areas for growth related to cultural competence. Through engagement with difference while abroad and facilitated reflection/discussion, students were provided opportunities to develop global/intercultural fluency and career-readiness competency.

Describe, Interpret, Evaluate

Both the Costa Rica/Panama volunteer programs and the India/Thailand seminars utilized the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate (D-I-E) method. The D-I-E method has been used in study abroad for many years. However, working with pre-health students, the acronym creates some consternation, so it has been changed both in name and in application to O-D-I-E (Observe, Describe, Interpret, Evaluate). Students are taught that the method is

3 https://idiinventory.com/
similar to the S-O-A-P method used by health professionals (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan). Students learn how to take in as much objective information as possible, then to describe as objectively as possible, without judgment. The next two steps are taken in an effort to get students to pay attention to the way they think. The interpretation is done by identifying all the questions that they want to ask to better understand the situation they are observing; the focus is not on the situation, but on an evaluation of feeling and/or judgment. This method is used both in assignments and in-country debriefing.

Debriefing

Debrief Sessions

The Global Future Physician and Global Health in Thailand seminars use a very specific set of strategies tied to debriefing. Students in both programs are in teams of five, each with a specific leader role (travel, discussion, cultural, experience, and global health case). In the debrief sessions, done daily—sometimes with pre-brief and debrief on the same day—the discussion leader plays a key role in assuring that the instructions are followed, and everyone is participating. When using O-D-I-E, students describe what they saw in certain situations, and the rest of the group helps them to eliminate assumptions and judgments from their description. Students grow in an awareness of the importance of listening, synthesizing, and providing verbal and non-verbal feedback. These are essential skills for a future health provider, and they help students to become more comfortable with a variety of tools that improve communication.

Volunteer Reflection Discussions

Participants on the Volunteering and Leadership programs engaged in daily facilitated discussions that gave students space to process what they had experienced thus far. The discussions began with a prompt from a student volunteer, as an opportunity to practice leadership and facilitation skills. Then the group discussed a topic related to an article that the students had access to prior to program departure. Discussion topics included:
• Framing the week: Team building, strengths, and goals
• Expectations and our experience: Processing day one as a volunteer
• Service abroad: Intent vs. impact
• Culture, communication, and conflict
• Exploring our impact abroad
• Connecting to our future goals

At the conclusion of each discussion, students were given a prompt related to the day’s topic, where they could continue to reflect in an individual journal throughout the duration of the program. The Volunteer Reflection Discussions connected to several of the NACE Career Readiness competencies, including oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, and leadership.

Career Coaching

The Global Future Physician and Global Health in Thailand seminars are led by health professionals. This provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about health careers while on the seminar. David, a former student from The Global Future Physician and now a practicing surgeon, wrote:

The Global Future Physician experience was an instrumental step in my journey toward medicine. Discussing global health in the context of southern India helped me gain a broader understanding of how health care delivery relates to community development, both at home and abroad. The group discussions helped me reflect on my own goals, and what it really means to be a global citizen. Finally, this program introduced me to a group of like-minded students who have helped keep the experience relevant and transformational long after the end of the program.

Clifton Strengths for Students

Until 2016, the University of Minnesota was a Strengths campus, meaning every incoming student was given the Strengths assessment as an opportunity to learn more about themselves and their gifts. Since all students on the Volunteering and Leadership programs had completed the Strengths assessment and could articulate their top five strengths, this was used as a discussion point in one of the Leadership Reflection
Discussions. Students were asked to share their top five strengths and give an example of a time they had used their strength on the program, either with their classmates or at their volunteer site. This is a useful tool for helping students generate examples of times they have demonstrated their strength—a common interview question for employment.

**Volunteering**

The *Volunteering and Leadership* programs in Panama and Costa Rica were centered around experiential learning: volunteering and making meaning of the experience while abroad. In designing the programs, the University worked with local community organizations and organic farms that could benefit from short-term volunteers and would sustain operations beyond our contributions. The selected sites were locations where students could ethically gain experience at organizations related to their career interests, as well as develop new, transferable career skills. In both Costa Rica and Panama, the sites allowed students to exercise different skill sets. One of the volunteer sites in Costa Rica was a turtle conservation organization, where students assisted with physical maintenance of the facilities, cleaned cages, fed turtles, and planted greens around the property. One of the student volunteers in Costa Rica had aspirations of applying to veterinary school, and her experience working with reptiles cemented this goal. The student stated:

> Overall, it is my life goal to be able to start saving animals in the present so that the future animals have the same or better chance of living a healthy life. Volunteering with the turtles found a way to confirm my goal of wanting to become a veterinarian, as I have restarted my drive to care for animals whether it is a dog or turtle from Tortufauna. This experience not only grew my strengths in interacting with different species of animals, but also in forming relationships with people I’ve never met before.

The *Global Future Physician* and *Global Health in Thailand* courses do not engage in any volunteering but focus on teaching pre-health students about the ethics and legalities of global health volunteering. The University of Minnesota is a recognized leader in this field and created the Global
Ambassadors for Patient Safety\(^4\) in 2010 to address the growing issue of pre-health students going abroad to participate in direct patient care activities for which they are neither trained nor licensed to perform.

**Final Projects: Case Competition**

The *Global Future Physician and Global Health* in Thailand both use a “Global Health Case Competition” as the primary assignment for the class. Students on each program are given a contextual description of a problem or health-related issue in the country they are traveling to, and while in country, they work in their teams to learn more about the health issue through research, interviews, and other strategies. Upon return, students prepare a grant proposal and present it on the evening of the final class as part of a combined poster presentation and celebration. The Case Competition leader has the opportunity to fine-tune a number of competencies and learns to navigate team dynamics to produce a product.

**Capstone**

Upon return to the United States, participants on a *Volunteering and Leadership* program were asked to complete a capstone project that connected to their goals for participating in the program. This final project is aligned with the Career Management NACE Career Readiness Competencies. Options included the creation of a digital story to showcase what the student learned, to articulate their experience on a resume and to send to the instructor for feedback, or to integrate their experience into graduate school personal statements and send to the instructor for feedback.

**Digital Stories**

Digital stories were a capstone project option for participants in the *Volunteering and Leadership* programs. A digital story is a compilation of short videos and photographs that contain both music and the student’s voice telling a reflective story about what they learned from their learning abroad experience and how it connects to their future career goals. After returning to the United States, participants of *Volunteering and Leadership in Panama* gathered to watch the digital stories that had been created. Students may take the skill of articulating meaning from an international volunteer

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\(^4\) https://www.healthcareers.umn.edu/courses-and-events/online-workshops/global-ambassadors-patient-safety
experience into future career conversations and interviews. Shorter digital stories (ninety seconds or less) can also be added to a student’s LinkedIn profile.

**Marketing International Experience: Storytelling for Interviews**

In addition to the examples above, the Carlson School of Management’s Undergraduate Business Career Center places at the University of Minnesota places a strong emphasis on helping students articulate the learning derived from a study abroad experience, as all students within this college study abroad as part of an undergraduate degree requirement. Of the more than six hundred students who study abroad annually, more than 60% study on short-term programs.

Within the Carlson School, all study abroad returnees are invited to an annual workshop that helps students articulate the value of their study abroad experience to employers. The workshop, focused on the Career Management and Oral/Written Communications NACE Career Readiness Competencies, guides students through the process of reflecting on memories from their time abroad, then translating those stories into skills that are valued by employers in an interview setting. The workshop is co-led by study abroad staff and a career coach who guides students in a mind-mapping activity, individual reflection, and peer interview question practice.

**Summary**

Throughout this paper we have outlined examples of strategies to help students engage in reflection before, during, and after a short-term study abroad program. Through strategic campus partnerships and intentional program design, students are able to impact their career development skills and goals obtained from participating in a short-term learning abroad program.

*The Global Future Physician* and *Global Health in Thailand* boast a long list of students who have entered a health career, from medicine to public health and veterinary medicine. Perhaps one of the most exciting success stories was a student who went abroad pre-med and came back wanting to explore law, as he saw the need for social justice and wanted to be able
to focus on policy-level change. Instructors who have led these programs, including the authors, have written letters of recommendation for students applying to health profession programs and graduate programs; instructors have also served as employment referees, in addition to participating in the celebration of their students’ success. The seminars allow instructors to observe and share compelling examples of the qualities, skills, and character that students will bring to their professions.
In some of my recent conversations, as well as in papers published over the last decade or so, there has been increasing reference to—and intent to provide—locations and opportunities for students to study abroad farther and farther afield. Emphasis has been placed on providing what some have termed “less familiar” or “non-traditional” locations. While I believe there is a definite need for students to be stretched outside of their comfort zone and that often the most learning takes place when students have an optimal balance between their learning experience and their development zone (Lewin 102), I have been disheartened at times by the sentiment that “West isn’t best.” At times, it’s only deemed exciting and beneficial for students to spread their wings and head to more distant lands than those of Western Europe.

Living and working in London, I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of the reasons I feel London (in particular) and the UK (in general) are great locations for students to grow and reach their potential for the world of work. These reasons stem from common experiences I have discussed with industry professionals, as well as those found within my own working practice.

The UK has a long and illustrious academic history; despite facing significant competition and developments within the international education field, it continues to perform strongly in the recent Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings for 2019. Furthermore, it is still the top destination for US students traveling abroad. In the 2017 International Institute of Education (IIE) Open Doors report, 12% of students studying abroad chose the UK; this is down 2% from the 2006 report but is actually an increase of just over seven thousand students (Lewin 106). I think it is
encouraging to see that there are now more students studying abroad, as well as an increasing diversification in where they are studying. However, if we want to bear in mind why the UK—and London specifically—is still valuable for study and internships, I think it is worth focusing on what is regularly considered the desired outcome of study abroad: an enhanced understanding of the globe and its people (Lewin 27).

London is not just an academic hub—it is an epicenter of international finance, business, and creative and cultural industries, home to museums, a thriving arts scene, and a diverse population. Anything a student could want to learn, or experience is here. And employers think so too: in the QS Top Universities Best Student Cities for 2018 list, in addition as ranking top overall, London came second in the “Employer Activity” category, meaning that both domestic and international employers and recruiters are looking to hire graduates who have studied within the city. So, what are the benefits of living, studying, and working here, and how do they provide an enhanced understanding of the globe and its people? I’m going to explore this now, starting with a general focus on the key attributes that employers have said they seek when reviewing a prospective employee’s resume (NACE).

Communication

Yes, we technically speak the same language; it is common knowledge that that is the reason why many students pick the UK as a study abroad location. However, as many of us know in the industry, speaking the same words does not necessarily ensure their meaning is the same. Unlike the direct, straightforward style of communication often seen within the US, the communication style in the UK generally emphasizes a more diplomatic stance and is a lot less direct. Directness is often seen as confrontational, and many in the UK fear that bluntness will cause offense (Warburton, *World Business Culture*). This minefield for students is exacerbated by an almost coded manner of communication: some comments may be perceived to offend but are presented in ways that can seem much more positive to other parties present. There is many a “conversion chart” for these comments on the internet, but I have some favorites: “I hear what you say”: meaning “I disagree and do not want to discuss it further” but often understood as “They accept my point of view,” and “I only have a few minor comments”: meaning “Please rewrite completely,” but understood as “It’s just a few typos” (Philipson). Supporting students
in this area can be challenging. Work that they initially believed to have a positive response might later, in one-on-one meetings and reviews, be revealed to not actually have met the standard expected by the organization. By experiencing this abroad, students have the opportunity to learn and prevent this miscommunication in their future careers. Hopefully, opening them up to a new level of understanding with potential colleagues in the UK will also provide them with a deeper perspective on potential nuances in conversation and language in other countries and cultures.

**Initiative and Problem Solving**

I’m touching on initiative almost as a tie-in with communication. In the student evaluation reports we receive, initiative often comes out lowest on a scale of one to four in employer feedback. I feel this is partly due to the management style adopted in the UK and how job roles and work are actually set. Although UK businesses have been traditionally hierarchical in structure, we are seeing a growing trend where organizations are much flatter in structure and have a less bureaucratic approach to management. In many start-up and small and medium-sized enterprises, students find themselves sitting in the same office as the Chief Executive—sometimes even in the same pod of desks. Although this may be daunting, it provides a great opportunity for students to really learn from the top down about their organization and the industry it is working within, as well as individuals’ career stories. What many encounter due to this changing structure is a sense of vagueness about what they are being tasked with doing, or even what their role is responsible for. Flatter structures have often led to blurred boundaries and responsibilities, as well as somewhat vague job descriptions. When tasks are set, they can come across as imprecise, with unclear details on what needs to be undertaken (Warburton). While this lack of specific guidance is challenging—especially for students who have thus far been given very specific, step-by-step instructions on what they need to complete for academic courses—it can also be extremely liberating for students who have the confidence to take the initiative, ask questions, and try. Within our student advising and support, we coach students on how to break their ambiguous task down into “chunks,” to consider what questions they still need to ask for clarification, and to understand that when they put a piece of work forward, it may just be a first draft, but it shows that the initiative to drive a task forward has been taken. I hope that for some students, this sparks an element that
encourages them to take small risks, put possibilities and ideas forward, and have the courage to run with projects in their future jobs.

**Independent and Collaborative Working**

In just four years (2012–2016), flexi-time has risen by 12.35%. Furthermore, the number of UK employees undertaking remote work has increased by 250,000 over a decade, according to data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This upward trend is expected to continue, and by 2020 ONS is expecting half of the UK workforce to be working remotely (Marketing Communication News). It is not a surprise, then, to see similar trends mirrored in the US, where it is estimated that nearly 50% of Americans are working remotely for at least some of their time on a weekly basis (Browne). There are positive and negative aspects of remote working, but it is clear that the world of work is moving increasingly in that direction, and students need to be prepared for a career where they may not have a central office or desk they go to every day or colleagues they can meet in person. It is therefore important for students to experience workplaces where this is the norm while they are in the UK.

Many of our students at CAPA will undertake an interview using an online platform prior to being placed with an organization; the majority of them will undertake a Skype or virtual interview with their site, and on arrival they will be working with colleagues across London, the UK, and the world through virtual networks. This is important for students to acclimatize to and enables them to get to grips with what this looks like on the ground, experiencing both the good and bad before even graduating. These changes in technology and remote working are already starting to have a knock-on effect on communication in the workplace, influencing how employees work within a team and independently manage their own time.

**Diversity**

While students’ placements will take place in English, London gives them the opportunity to encounter over three hundred different languages, more than any other city in the world (BBC 2014). It is home to more than 270 nationalities; according to the 2011 census, 37% of the city’s population were born outside of the UK (Office of National Statistics). When you come to study and work in London, you truly put yourself on the international scene. So, how does this help support and develop our
students? Technology is making our world smaller; whatever your industry or sector, you will come into contact with people from all over the world, whether they are customers/clients, colleagues, or colleagues’ friends or family. Such exposure to different nationalities and languages in the work environment helps to promote and foster acceptance, respect, teamwork, and innovation, despite differences in race, age, gender, political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, or communication styles. It has been reported that companies that actively engage, promote, and foster diversity in their workplace outperform less diverse companies by 33% (Hunt et al. 8). With this in mind, it makes business sense as well as social sense to encourage this insight within students.

**Community Awareness**

It is also vital to consider London as a backdrop for service-learning and community engagement when it comes to students’ learning and development. London doesn’t just have diversity in the nationalities of people who call this city home; there is also diversity within the homes and lifestyles of its residents. It is important for students to be aware of the need for social support here as well, even if on the surface you may not initially assume so. Looking at the borough of Tower Hamlets, just east of the City of London, you will find one of the most simultaneously deprived and wealthiest areas in London. Almost half of its residents, 44%, are living in income poverty, and 42% of children are growing up in poverty (Office of National Statistics. 2011 census; Tower Hamlets Factsheet).

Experiencing London is not just about taking pictures of Big Ben and glass-fronted high-rises; it is acknowledging and understanding the residents that make up this vast metropolis by engaging with local communities through internships, service-learning classes and placements, or by volunteering activities through which students can develop themselves personally as well as professionally. We are seeing a growing interest from students wishing to pursue a career that “gives back,” has elements of social good, and supports local communities. In a recent survey by Cone Communications, 75% of millennials said they would take a pay cut to work for a socially responsible organization (Bennett)—and London, with its disparate communities, offers an opportunity to show students how to pursue a career that incorporates these elements within different organizations.
**Future Prospects: What’s Next?**

Brexit—I have been avoiding putting this word to paper—is still a very unknown entity, and its full impact potentially may not be felt for years to come. It does, however, provide current and future students with huge scope for political insight into the makeup of the UK and its political landscape. With local, national, and global politics affecting all industry areas, having some insight into how to navigate these tricky topics in a global location will place many in good stead. When looking at possible positives from Brexit for international education and the ability for Americans to work in the UK, there is some movement that may fall in our students’ favor; there may be potential opportunities for the expansion of offerings through BUNAC, Tier 5 internship visas, and other youth mobility programs (Kenny).

For some context: Tier 5 visas can be a very complex beast, but they provide opportunities for students and graduates to intern or work in the UK for up to six months under the category of “Temporary Worker—Government Authorised Exchange visa (Tier 5 GOVUK).” These work opportunities have to be approved through authorized exchange schemes, which organizations such as BUNAC, formerly the British Universities North America Club, are part of. Though there is the possibility for these opportunities to grow, consideration has also been given to whether a reciprocal youth mobility scheme might open between the US and UK (Kenny). This proposal would be along the lines of what is currently in place with Canada and Australia, which allows for a two-year work visa. Although it is very early days, there are already strong fears that Brexit and its impact on EU workers’ mobility will lead to job shortages and skill gaps. It is doubtful that these gaps will be filled by the youth mobility schemes currently in place with eight other countries, and the expansion of this scheme may be seen as a potential option (Consterdine).

I have tried to explore areas that we know are already important to employers and to highlight important ways that London is still key to supporting skill development in these. But I also think it is vital to begin looking at what employers may need from their employees of the future. In 2017, Nesta, a global innovation foundation, released the first part of their research entitled “The Future of Skills: Trends impacting on US and UK employment in 2030.” It is important that we are preparing students not just for the “now,” but also how to be adaptable for the future. Nesta
identified seven trends that will impact future employment: technological change, globalization, demographic change, environmental sustainability, urbanization, increasing inequality, and political uncertainty. Within these trend areas, skills that are going to be prominent include the ability to deal with automation, understanding and using digital technologies, being able to unwind trade imbalances, supporting and working with both an aging population and millennials, and a growing demand for infrastructure (Bakhshi et al. 12).

At this stage, we cannot fully envisage the speed with which these areas will independently start to impact workplaces, but it is possible to see that industry areas are already there to support skills within these trends. In May 2018, a report from Tech Nation showed that the tech sector in the UK was growing 2.6 times faster than the overall economy and that London has been identified as the second most connected place in the world for tech, just behind Silicon Valley. In 2017 there was a 59% increase in the number of software and programming business incorporated in the UK, jumping from 6,300 in 2016 to 10,016 in 2017. This growth, tied with a continuing zeal for entrepreneurialism is creating fantastic opportunities for students to learn and develop skills not only within technology, but also within their respective interest fields; we are seeing continuing growth in fin-tech, health-tech, artificial intelligence, and more. It is important that we work hard to provide opportunities for students within these heavily STEM-based roles to allow the 25% of US students in this major who are already studying abroad (International Institute of Education) to both grow and be at the forefront of this boom. For me, this indicates that London is still a place where students have access to experiences that are highly relevant in the current employment sphere but are also starting to prepare students for the rapidly developing future workplace.
How to Build and Maintain a Network of Outstanding Internship Placements

Craig Kench

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No Longer an Option

Internships continue to be an integral aspect of many students’ education abroad experiences. However, the perceived value of this mode of learning has been altered by factors such as increasing levels of student debt upon graduation, pressure upon universities to take career integration seriously, increased competition when entering the workplace, and employers’ expectations that graduates will have an immediate impact once employed. In these circumstances, it is easy to see why internships are not so much perceived by students as an optional add-on to their study abroad programs, but more as a required experience to meet the demands and pressures of life after graduation. It follows that the range, diversity, and quality of internship placements offered by an education abroad organizations can be one of its most prestigious and attractive offerings for students and their respective universities.

However, it is not a simple matter to build a sustainable network of host organizations that will provide internship placements and positively shape students toward career readiness.

To be done effectively, it takes a great deal of time, effort, and the ability to manage multiple stakeholders simultaneously. There is no shortcut to building an empire. Author Brian Carruthers states, “Success lies in your ability to go from no to no without losing your enthusiasm.”¹ It will take determination, resilience, and optimism to build your network, and then devotion and an undying passion to maintain it. My first tip: Be prepared to work hard, and then be prepared to work even harder.

¹ Brian Carruthers draws directly upon a remark attributed to Winston Churchill: “Success consists of going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.” See Building an Empire: The Most Complete Blueprint to Building a Massive Network Marketing Business
Before you set about the task of building your successful empire for all to behold, it is a good idea to know what success might look like in the context of your strategic objectives. There is no point building something that does not meet the needs of your target audience. It is important to ensure that the objective of implementing, maintaining, and expanding a network of internship sites is embedded within departmental and organizational strategic plans.

**Be Smarter**

The idea of SMARTER derives from a method of project management in which the following objectives are critical to the success of the endeavor, which should be:

1. Specific and as precise as possible
2. Measurable so that success can be evaluated and demonstrated
3. Agreed upon and, thus, be a collaborative effort across institutional departments and disciplines
4. Realistic and achievable
5. Time-based so that, as in the case of a realistic objective, it does not extend into some terrible infinity
6. Ethical
7. Representing the best practice of recorded

Creating a series of SMART targets will assist you in monitoring performance and will support the process of benchmarking for the future. In terms of internship development, collaboration is critical: almost inevitably, provision is trans-disciplinary and requires cooperation across the institution, from faculty as well as administrators. It is also imperative that success (or otherwise) is evaluated and demonstrated—both for the education abroad organization as a means of improvement, and for the US institutional partner who will need that information to ensure ongoing, cross-university support.

**Relationship Management Philosophies**

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2 There are many sources offering definitions of SMART goals. Despite minor variations, the principles are mostly the same. See, for a direct example, [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm); [https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php](https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php)
I am proud that CAPA partners with over 2,250 organizations globally, has established in excess of three thousand internship placement opportunities. Below are some of the core principles we embed effectively to forge, develop, and preserve meaningful partnerships. These are our guiding philosophies toward relationship management.

First, in forging new internship placement opportunities, it is critical to understand your “clients,” consumers, and intended audiences. It is worth bearing in mind that you will have multiple “clients,” each with their own agenda; legal constraints and attitudes toward internships will differ across the globe. It is imperative to understand that each stakeholder may place a different emphasis on your relationship and your services. For example, a university may wish to focus on how your organization screens internship sites. They may want to see evidence of student learning outcomes and the methods used to monitor and track students’ performance. It is likely that a university will want to see the breadth and diversity of your internship placement opportunities and the scope of industries available. Meanwhile, a student may place a higher priority on seeing the tangible internship roles and responsibilities available within a specific field, and the development of associated skills that will impact their career trajectories. Each individual host internship site will also have their own unique day-to-day needs, challenges, and opportunities. It is essential that you research the organization and its staff to understand their business; to discover their organizational goals and objectives; and to understand where they are positioned now and, more importantly, where they aspire to be in the future.

Through understanding these multiple stakeholders, you can identify how you bring added value to the table. This will enable you to bring a considered approach toward ways in which services are promoted, as well as how internship programs can assist in the realization of diverse strategic aims. Failure to understand your various intended audiences can have catastrophic results. Just ask Electrolux, the multinational appliance manufacturer. At one point, they marketed their vacuum cleaners in the US with the strapline “Nothing sucks like an Electrolux.” Or how about the global giants, Ford Motor Company, who stumbled when marketing their Pinto model in Brazil because the term in Brazilian Portuguese means “tiny male genitals”!

Second, a critical principle is that you need to know your own business
and services inside out. Knowledge inspires confidence. Be an authority in your field, understand how your product serves each different stakeholder, and be passionate when you talk about your services. Being an expert on your product and its associated field establishes your value and credibility. Truly understanding all aspects of your internship programs allows you to be more competent, and competence is a key factor in generating the third principle.

Trust is the number one goal when developing relationships. However, trust goes way beyond competence alone. You want to be known for doing things right, but you also want to be known for doing the right thing. What does that mean? It means having an ethical and moral compass that points in the direction of integrity, compassion, and honesty. But even this may fail to meet the needs of today’s clients. Don Peppers and Martha Rogers, leading authorities in customer-focused relationship management strategies, refer to a new level of “extreme trust” in which there is an expectation not only to provide outstanding quality and ethical services, but to proactively watch out for your clients’ interests. A good example of this level of service can be seen with iTunes or Amazon. If you try to purchase a book or song that you have already acquired, you are prompted with a notification that you already own the product. The platform then asks if you want to proceed with the transaction. By doing so, these companies are saying, “We’ve got your back, and profit is not our main objective in this consumer transaction.”

Flexibility in Forging New Internship Placement Opportunities

There are a few different ways in which to approach the development of new internship sites. This can range from proactively forecasting fields and industries for site development, to being reactive and responsive to sudden demands placed on your organization. I most certainly prefer the first but wish to ensure that we are equipped to perform the latter too.

Being proactive is a key factor in developing new sites, as it provides you with the added luxury of time. With time comes a greater ability to assess what is required and to take a calculated approach that will ultimately bring about a higher level of quality. Some of the ways in which CAPA tries to be proactive include, but are not limited to, discussing with partner universities their enrollment patterns and trends across majors; analyzing industry
movements to observe which are growing or declining; reviewing our own data sets of student internship placement requests across each program; and keeping our finger on the pulse of localized digital space to monitor any patterns in internship requests from employers. This approach has, for example, been hugely successful in relation to the health care sector. By adopting some of the key activities stated above, we recognized that there was a clear growth in the number of health care undergraduates at US universities. We became acutely aware of the growing global need from health care organizations for assistance in meeting quality assurance imperatives while being challenged by limited resources. We also reviewed external reports from bodies such as the US Department of Labor, which predicts:

Employment in the health care and social assistance sector is projected to add nearly 4.0 million jobs by 2026, about one-third of all new jobs. The share of health care and social assistance employment is projected to increase from 12.2% in 2016 to 13.8% in 2026, becoming the largest major sector in 2026.

As a result of this proactive approach, CAPA created an 18-month roadmap to expand global health care internship opportunities. We were able to increase our network of health care organizations by 32% and increase our health care internship placement opportunities by 40%. This has proved pivotal not only in meeting the increase in individual student requests for placements, but also in further opening opportunities to develop health care study abroad programs with US universities.

However, there will always be the need to be readily able to forge new site placements in a relatively short period of time. There are several elements that help make this task as manageable as possible.

**Networking**

It is essential that your staff and organization are maximizing networking opportunities. Networking obviously has a great impact on your ability to forge new opportunities quickly, but effective networking is something
that requires the commitment of time, effort, and continued engagement. Networking is not the process of pushing a business card across a desk or walking away from an event with a bundle of cards strapped together by an elastic band. It is a skill and requires practice to become proficient. I am sure that many of you will identify with my experiences when I first started attending networking events. Leading up to these events, I would place excessive pressure on myself to cover the entire room and to walk away having connected with everyone, only to enter and find myself either standing awkwardly on the periphery of groups already chatting or spending much of my time standing—no, clinging—to a person I already knew. Occasionally, I would take a strategic trip to the bar in the hope that I could find an opportunity to mutter the illustrious line of “So, what do you do, then?” But very rarely would these conversations evolve into something more fruitful.

So, after a few more events, all with equally abysmal outcomes, I decided to alter my approach. I entered these events with the premise that my objective was to find an individual whom I could become friends with, not someone who purely filled a business need. Suddenly, I found myself having and starting non-business conversations, discussing everything from favorite sports teams and recent political events through to royal weddings and what we would do if we won the lottery.

I found that my time was not being spent waiting for my chance to deliver my social pitch about how our internship offerings would change their world. Instead, I found that the other person appeared to be more present in the conversation. It felt that we were actively listening to each other. Often, the conversation would progress to discussions about what we both did and how we could support each other’s needs, but many times I left conversations without even discussing our internship programs and the associated benefits. Regardless, though, I would always make recap notes after conversations, either on a notepad or even on the back of their business card, so I had the connection points in mind for when our paths next crossed—and more than ever before I was eager for them to cross. Naturally, I would make a point of following up with them, and it certainly felt like it made a difference to be able to recall some of those personal connections: to ask if they enjoyed their recent holiday, to inquire how their daughter’s sports team did, etc. The transition to discussing internships was more readily accessible because we had a more solid foundation to start the conversation.
Quality Assurance

Once these connections are made, it is also imperative to ensure you follow a quality assurance process. One of the mandatory components when developing a new site is that we follow a strict vetting process. This will include extensive online research about the organization and its credibility as well as on-site visits to appraise its location and premises, checking commuting routes, accessibility to the building, health and safety, and appropriateness of the office environment. We also wish to get a sense of the suitability of the organization’s personnel to ensure that they understand and complement our philosophical approach toward internships.

Importantly, we review the position description outlining the opportunity, closely examining the internship responsibilities and tasks and what support structures will be in place to maximize student development. Student development is, after all, the point of these endeavors—the rationale that motivates our collective commitment. That is the ethical heart of international education.
Career development has become an expectation for higher education, and a high-impact experience like studying abroad can greatly contribute to this development. It is more necessary than ever to help students understand how study abroad can provide the global experiences and skills employers are looking for. Facilitating career development throughout the study abroad process—not only before students go and while they are away, but especially once they return—can truly make an experience abroad meaningful and relevant. The University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center has thus developed a position for returnee study abroad students to continue to capitalize on their experience abroad once they return home. By providing guided programming, reflection, community support, and practice in articulating experiences abroad, the Global Leaders Internship helps interns gain newfound understanding of how they have been impacted by their time abroad and how it is relevant to their future.

Many meaningful learning outcomes can take place during study abroad, but it can be challenging to encourage students to think more broadly about the array of experiences they have had and how they may contribute to relevant skills in the workplace. The returnee stage of study abroad, while the experience is still fresh in students’ minds, can be a crucial time to start encouraging the reflection process. Gardner, Steglitz, and Gross explain that “students need help in making sense of their collegiate experiences and in connecting their classroom, co-curricular, and life experiences. Critical reflection and being able to articulate one’s skills with meaningful examples is essential to ongoing professional development” (22). Reflecting upon and articulating high-impact experiences are essential skills for students to use when marketing themselves to employers. Educators are responsible for helping students become more conscious
of the transferable skills, knowledge, and attitudes they have gained while abroad that also serve as assets within the workforce.

Upon returning home, students are often excited and motivated to get involved and share their time abroad with others, as Young has noted. The Global Leaders Internship was created to capitalize on students’ desire to get involved upon returning to their home campus. The position is designed for students to reflect upon and articulate the skills they have acquired during their time abroad while also promoting the experience to their peers. Additionally, the Global Leaders Internship is an opportunity for students to gain experience with marketing, programming, advising, and researching the study abroad process, all while preparing to leverage their study abroad experience to future employers within a supportive community for study abroad students. The position enables students to practice marketing themselves to future employers by first marketing study abroad to their peers.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007), career preparation is often considered a top priority when evaluating a college’s educational value—more so than traditional academics, social environment, and affordability. Members of Generation Z, now entering higher education, have grown up feeling the effects of the recession and have witnessed their millennial siblings struggle in the job market. A study by Haymarket Media Group shows they are realists rather than optimists and are therefore very career focused.

The Global Leaders Internship position acts as an ideal way to provide students with an additional career development opportunity related to their time abroad while simultaneously fostering peer-to-peer marketing for the learning abroad office. Internship positions are commonly seen as a way for undergraduates to gain more substantial experience and begin to develop a professional network. This type of returnee opportunity may be more appealing to students than existing programming like print materials and workshops, thus increasing participation, strengthening retention, helping more students, and resulting in higher outreach totals.

The definition of career readiness continues to shift with our increasingly globalized workforce. According to Hamilton, the ability to work successfully with other countries, companies, and people will depend to a large extent on possessing the necessary intercultural and foreign language skills
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to make fruitful connections. There is increasing demand from employers for globally aware and culturally competent graduates who are ready to contribute to businesses that operate internationally. Norris and Gillespie note that policy makers, researchers, and practitioners across most fields “have called on US higher education to realize its vital role in facilitating the international experience and skill building of more American students” (383). With employers and now educational institutions prioritizing students’ global competencies, study abroad is gaining relevance as an experience that increases employability.

The University of Minnesota’s Global Leaders Internship focuses on both peer-to-peer marketing and facilitating career readiness. The internship program strives to create a strong student cohort which seeks to encourage others to study abroad, as well as establish career distinctiveness through their global experiences. The position is a semester-long commitment of 20 hours total, and interns are paid based on a 20-hour stipend. Responsibilities include completing classroom presentations, contributing to a project team through outreach and research on a given topic, having one-on-one meetings with a supervisor, and attending required weekly cohort meetings. Eligibility for the internship program requires students to have a 2.5 grade point average, to have already returned from a study abroad, and to be available to attend all required weekly meetings.

These meetings prepare students to start talking about their time abroad and discussing steps to become career ready. Interns reflect on their experience studying abroad and practice articulating their stories. This verbalization helps them develop and process what they have experienced abroad, how they grew and changed, and what skills they developed. Articulation takes place individually as well as in front of both small and large groups. This practice prepares students to market their international experience—first to their peers, and eventually to employers. These meetings also review topics such as utilizing resources on campus, how to integrate study abroad experiences into interviewing and resumes, opportunities abroad after graduation, and information about working in the field of international education. Participating in other activities, including sharing informal stories, photos, and food, further contributes to cohort cohesiveness.

Outside of weekly meetings, interns also contribute through project teams; responsibilities include sharing photos for marketing use or completing
a student experience interview, attending pre-departure orientation, and completing a small research project. Each project team is assigned a research topic based on interests listed in internship applications. Teams work together to investigate a given topic and pitch their findings to the cohort and supervisors at the end of the semester. Topics may include how to improve pre-departure resources, why their peers may not be studying abroad, or an investigation of new platforms and ways to reach students. These findings have the potential to provide real impact and may alter the processes the Learning Abroad Center uses moving forward.

The first Global Leaders Internship cohort consisted of 23 interns, and the cohort increased its outreach numbers from an average of approximately 5,600 students per semester to 12,000. With the third cohort currently underway with 42 interns, the program has thus far been highly successful. The desired outcomes of the Global Leaders Internship program were to increase the number of students studying abroad through peer-to-peer marketing, as well as to create a supportive cohort for study abroad returnees to strengthen their employability through practice articulating their time abroad. When collecting feedback from the first internship cohort, it was evident that these goals were met. One intern stated, “The internship is an opportunity to be part of the study abroad community on campus, provides excellent professional development skills, and has helped me become more confident in articulating my study abroad experience and public speaking skills through the classroom visits.” Another student shared, “Learning how to articulate my experiences and what I learned from study abroad was extremely helpful. I bring it up in all my interviews and now I know exactly what to say.”

US employers are looking for well-rounded candidates who display initiative, self-motivation, awareness, critical thinking, and the ability to work in teams and improvise. More and more business leaders are placing value on intercultural skills.

These skills are vital—not just in smoothing international business transactions, but also in developing long-term relationships with customers and suppliers. Increasingly, they also play a key role within the workplace by enhancing teamwork, fostering creativity, improving communication, and reducing conflict. All this translates into greater efficiency, stronger brand identity, enhanced reputation, and ultimately impact on the bottom line (Hamilton 2).
Although they often don’t realize it, students are building these types of competencies through study abroad. The University of Minnesota Global Leaders Internship program facilitates the process of reflection and articulation that is so essential for study abroad returnees in order to realize the skills they have gained and leverage these experiences in their future.
Global Employability: Common Challenges in Preparing Students for a Global World of Work

Sevi Christoforou and Nannette Ripmeester

Global changes, automation, and digital technologies, as well as “new economy” jobs and the “new ways of working,” are changing the employment landscape completely, creating a modern culture of work that is transnational and fluid. Higher education institutions are currently under pressure to rise up to meet global challenges and prepare students to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world. The value and definition of global employability skills—as well as common challenges and good practices around the matter—are prominent points of discussion at higher education conferences and meetings. Moreover, “de-demonizing” the concept of employability is important, as it entails much more than just helping students find a job upon graduation. In higher education, employability is—and should be—about maximizing the talents of each student and preparing them for the world that awaits them upon graduation.¹ Fostering employability can prove beneficial not only for students, but also for institutions and for society at large (Ripmeester); it turns graduates into brand ambassador alumni, happy to recommend their study experience at their higher education institution, and it also supports graduates in maximizing their talents, creating a return on investment for society.

Indeed, in the past few years more and more universities are taking action in the matter by offering plenty of educational opportunities and innovative programs to cater to students’ employability needs. However, a large fraction of students still feel unprepared to make that transition from education to the world of work and often need extra support in their first career

¹ For more on the value of employability for higher education institutions, along with five guiding principles on employability strategies, see “When being ‘book-smart’ is not enough; skills graduates need to succeed in the future workplace” (IHE Handbook 2018).
steps after graduation. Thus, we wonder what more universities can do in order to sufficiently equip students for the current global workplace and support them in finding the right work placements.

Our organization Expertise in Labour Mobility has been supporting international labor mobility for more than twenty-five years through career guidance and consultations, workshops, publications, events, digital career tools, and more. Our work gives us the opportunity to cooperate with universities from around the world and communicate daily and directly with international students at different university-degree levels. With our attention focused on global student employability throughout the years, we have noticed that especially now, most universities are actually doing a remarkable job in providing students with a combination of the hard and soft skills that are required to succeed in specific fields. We see students with impressive qualifications, with study or internship experiences abroad, getting involved in hands-on group projects and activities.

Nonetheless, we also see some prevailing problematic patterns. Namely, most students are confused about which career path to follow after graduation; they are usually unaware of how effectively to market their skills or approach prospective employers, and they also overlook cultural differences in their job search. Hence, we believe that although most universities have improved when it comes to providing students with skills that are needed to succeed in their future careers, the majority of students still don’t know what to do with those skills, how to translate them in order to improve their job prospects, or how to apply them in the workplace, either at home or abroad.

For most students, effectively articulating skills gained through various courses, co-curricular programs, and international experiences is a common struggle, regardless of their level of degree or country of origin. Recent studies confirm the link between international experiences and the development of those global employability skills that are currently in demand. Every student should jump at an opportunity to go abroad, and

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2. See a review of the research in Pollock’s blog post “Student Employability is a necessity, not a choice” on the Expertise in Labour Mobility website.

3. Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) is an organization aimed at customizing solutions for international labor mobility. Founded in 1992, it works with large corporate clients and higher education institutions across the globe, with a focus on the connection between graduates and job opportunities.
most students probably understand that such an experience will prove beneficial for them in the future. However, the majority of them still need help to unpack the skills gained from a global experience, link them to the skills gained through both their academic and personal life experiences, and ultimately convey an inclusive and fitting message to a prospective employer, a professor, or even future colleagues. Workshops, webinars, and other activities that show students how to reflect on and add meaning to their experiences will help them translate these into words that future stakeholders will understand, whether in industry, academia, or non-profit environments.

Another issue that we have identified is students' unfamiliarity with cultural discrepancies in career development and job hunting. Part of developing global employability skills involves becoming more interculturally aware and therefore understanding the cultural values that underlie how people around the world do and perceive things. That also entails taking into consideration the cultural norms that influence the job searching process in different countries before setting out on a global job search. This fact, in addition to a growing student mobility, demands an expansion in career guidance and employability support in order to provide tailored help to students from different cultural backgrounds who want to follow a global career.

As many university practitioners are struggling to engage with a diverse student population, train-the-trainer sessions, which will equip them with the necessary intercultural awareness and knowledge of global market features, are essential to ensure that students receive the right approach with the appropriate information. Moreover, digital tools built to support students’ global employability can also prove helpful by facilitating knowledge sharing, building international connections, and helping institutions reach and engage with a wide range of students wherever they are in the world.4

And while it is true that there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to career advising and job searching around the world, it is also proven that demands for skills differ from country to country.5 Unfortunately, most students (and maybe career advisors, too) are not aware of the differences

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5 For more research findings on global employability skills, see Mohan et al.
in resume and CV writing across the globe, or how to underline the skill set valued most in a particular job market. As Ripmeester states, “The differences in job hunting are ingrained into the cultural DNA of both the job seeker and the prospective recruiter. If higher education truly wants to provide their students with the opportunity to go for a global career, we need to make them understand what gets them hired in the different countries” (78).

On top of those cultural differences in the actual job-hunting process, students need support to understand what kind of placements they should go after in accordance with their unique skill set. Their skills and qualifications might not match the needs of a certain labor market, but in a global and expanding economy there are myriad opportunities. Including employability skills in the curriculum and developing systems that offer students global employability skills, are only two steps in preparing students for the global workforce. Another imperative step in this process is providing meaningful support to help students identify the skill set they have developed and, moreover, to help them articulate it in a way so that other people, in different countries and sectors, can understand what the graduate has to offer and how it aligns with the prospective job environment. This step can be realized with the support of workshops, events, digital resources, or any other system suitable for and applicable to an institution, depending on its size and structure (Brown, J).

For all this to happen, collaboration is the key: collaboration within institutional departments and academics, with international and domestic students, with local and multinational employers, with local and national governments, and, last but not least, with experts who can help institutions close the gap between education and the world of work.
Impact of Location on Internship Learning Experiences

Jeremy Friedlein

In this article I will explore the impact of location on internship learning experiences and look at how those programs might be better presented to prospective students. I give concrete suggestions throughout, but the article should be of general interest to any educator interested in either learning through work, or in the power of place. In this case, the place is Shanghai, where I have lived, worked, and overseen internships for US students for almost twenty years.

Please note that though there is an academic course that accompanies the internship placement, I focus here on more general learning outcomes and strategies. Please also note that all students mentioned below have consented to the specifics that I have chosen to share.

Even with the framing of an internship course and advising offered by faculty and staff, internships require a high level of self-direction. Students are responsible for the academic and professional goals that inform their internship choice and experience. An intern also necessarily engages with the influence of the country, city, and/or district where they live and work. In the context of this essay that place, Shanghai, has rich potential.

Internships involve a complex interplay of variables and demand flexibility and improvisation. No two are the same and efforts to standardize outcomes simply serve to make them less authentic. Work environments frequently change; every new supervisor-student relationship has its own unique chemistry based on everything from language ability to outlook on life. Internships must be unpredictable. They are not an object in a box that students can decide to buy and know exactly what they are getting. Internships are experiments. Therein lies the potential.
But academic internships—especially those that embrace challenge, adaptability, and self-direction—are not always as robustly enrolled as we, the purveyors, believe they should be. First, I’d like to consider the reasons why students may not be rushing to sign up. Then, I'll move into the learning potential that Shanghai, as an example, can offer.

**Pitfalls in Framing Academic Internships**

As we know, some US institutions simply do not confer academic credit for internships. Convincing academic departments of the merit of—and potential for academic learning through—internships is another discussion. But why, for those schools that do approve internship programs for credit, are we not enrolling students from all majors? There are of course a few obvious reasons—funding and degree requirements being the most common, but part of the problem is in our presentation of the model to students. I undertook a quick audit of study abroad offices and providers, did no small amount of self-reflection, and discovered a few common practices that would benefit from a rethink.

**Stories: Sometimes They Work, Sometimes They Don’t**

Oh, the power of our past participants’ stories! Students love study abroad stories from other students—we showcase these extensively in our marketing, classroom visits, and one-on-ones, because they help us make the study abroad experience instantly tangible. When participants tell their stories, we often see prospective students perk up. An enthusiastic real-life past participant with good presentation skills and photographs, our holy grail, can singlehandedly double a program’s enrollment.

But what about students whose goals and interests do not line up with the internship stories we choose to tell? There are obviously going to be students who have other plans or who cannot do an internship program for a number of good reasons, but we can also be certain that there are always some students that would have been interested if we had only presented their sort of internship story.

And that is the problem. We base our selection of the stories we tell on what is already popular with current students. When we do this, we limit the sorts of students we attract to those already represented on our programs. We may think we are welcoming all comers, but in the selection
of stories we address only a part of our audience and, by omission, make others feel less welcome. This cycle self-reinforces, and we lose diversity with each program iteration.

Also, by the way, we are killing dreams. Sometimes we succeed in getting students excited about our internship program, but, if we focus on tales of entrepreneurs, business and accounting, we may inadvertently alienate those who aspire to a future road-less-traveled, or who are struggling with the implications of the world’s widening rich-poor gap. They may be diverted from the idea of interning at a local NGO, or for a citizen journalist, or under the guidance of a scholar engaged in social action. They may decide that the business consulting internship being showcased also sounds pretty cool. Their idealism is dissipated. They may even berate themselves for not being more career-focused in the first place. This is not good.

**Lists Can Be Limiting**

Another common practice is our generous use of lists and infographics. When trying to catch the attention of US university students, who we know scan information more than they read it, few would disparage the use of a top ten list or infographic that might draw students into a more meaningful consideration of studying abroad. The most obvious deficiency of these lists is their underselling of the learning potential of an internship: Get real-world experience! Test drive a career! Be more employable! None of these popular bullet points refer to personal or academic learning. Rather, they play more to greed, fear, and uncertainty.

We should remember that, unlike a classroom presentation, our lists may be viewed by many more sets of eyes, and some of those belong to students with, for example, a commitment to liberation theology or to those hoping to help grassroots community-building groups in Ecuador. Those ideals may also give way to a perceived imperative to take that job in their dad’s company after graduation. These lists will probably live forever on the internet, killing dream after dream after dream.

Not everyone is killing dreams however, some are just busy confusing everyone. Aware that the above goals pull students’ attention away from learning outcomes and focus them instead on future paychecks, some listers chose to highlight the higher-level, more intangible stuff: Develop resilience! Increase your perceptual acuity! Learn to be more comfortable
with ambiguity! These are great! The only problem is that now our lists look like those we put out for non-internship study abroad programs. Now our students are left to wonder, “Why do an internship if the outcomes are the same?”

One final point about lists: These are pegs on which we hang the learning victories of former students; for sophomores in college however, they are just lists. Let us not rely too heavily upon them.

**How We Talk About It**

When a student comes to talk to us about the possibility of studying abroad, we usually work quickly to ascertain what locations the student is interested in, and then we just dive in. We want the student to imagine themselves there, and we try to help them see through the eyes of past participants. We talk about language, culture, and food. Our focus is on conveying the experience of the place. If they are interested in more than one location, which is likely, we do the same for the second and perhaps even a third. Then they pick one. Next student please!

When a student comes to talk to us about interning abroad but really is not sure they want to do it, we will likely jump in with examples of past students and talk about their work experiences, usually the ones that ended well. We also talk about outcomes, what they learned on the job and how that connected to their future job aspirations. We are likely to go through several student stories from several countries. Our student is a little confused and not sure if they should pick a favorite place, a favorite internship, or both, or neither.

There are several things going on here. First, even if we are well-versed in the academic and experiential learning potential of an internship, our examples tend to be the more quantifiable sort. We do this mostly out of habit, I think, because we are often speaking to a career-focused student. After all, internship programs tend to attract students from that demographic. Also, it is hard not to hold up as examples those program alumni who have launched careers from a great internship opportunity. If you look at classroom presentations and our lists, you will notice a similar bias.

The other thing we do by focusing on outcomes (versus focusing on the experience of being in a place, as we do when we talk about traditional
study abroad) is that we give students the idea that internship programs in different countries bring similar results. This is far from harmless, because we restrict ourselves to outcomes common to all international internships; we are forced to limit ourselves to the tiny area where all these experiences overlap. Content matters, and context informs content. When we foreground outcomes common, we tend to focus on getting real-world experience, test driving a career, growing a global network, acquiring global competencies, and building cultural awareness and international understanding. Though valid to some degree, I feel these are the lowest common denominators of international internships. Pulling only from this limited common area results in vague, clichéd, derivative, and insubstantial outcomes. Students are left with very little site-specific information by which to choose between internship programs in different parts of the world.

Internships do not occur in a vacuum; location has a dramatic impact on experience, learning, and outcomes. Choosing where one will pursue an international internship should be based on what makes interning there unique.

**Shanghai and the Power of Place**

I intended to present at the Career Integration Conference (2018) on the particulars of internships in Shanghai. Despite having more, more than ten years of onsite data in one form or another, I recognized that I needed to know what students had done after returning home. I needed to know what they were up to five years later. I contacted program alumni currently living and working in Washington, D.C. and invited them to join me.

The goal was to find the commonalities in alumni experiences that stemmed from the Shanghai location. We did not discuss the academic coursework per se—we wanted to lean into the power of place.

Six CET alumni joined the panel. Here is a little more about each of their professional roles: US International Trade Commission; Special Olympics, Senior Manager; Scheduler and Press Assistant in Office of Congressman William R. Keating; US Department of State Protocol Officer; Accenture Strategy Consultant; Program Associate, National Fund for Workforce Solutions.
Our Findings

First, language: Interns in Shanghai can expect to put whatever Chinese they learn to use in the workplace. Our former interns were often required to speak Chinese in formal and informal settings. No matter how low their level, efforts were usually met with glowing praise and encouragement. The panel reported that speaking Chinese once back in the US leads to even more positive responses from native Chinese speakers. Outcome: Interns win the instant respect of Chinese friends, associates, and strangers for the rest of their lives. Even if their language abilities are minimal, this will be a launching pad that can serve them in multiple and often unanticipated ways.

Second, front-row seats to world events: In Shanghai, something big is always happening. China is never not in the news. Our panel listed one international China news story after another that coincided with their semester in Shanghai. As one of the world’s largest cities, a global center for finance and trade, the next Silicon Valley in the opinion of some, and, as others predict, a metropolis destined to be the world’s third global city within a decade—Shanghai only continues to grow in importance. Outcome: As China increasingly occupies the world’s focus, Shanghai internship experience will gain increasing relevance in interviews.

Third: Real work and real responsibilities are the norm, not the exception in Shanghai. Many on the panel were surprised at the level of responsibility they were given on the job. Client-facing roles were common; written work was widely shared with minimal or no editing. The panel suggested that, since the Shanghai office of any organization is often one of its largest and most important, leadership is usually only a water cooler away, if not directly serving as internship supervisors. In addition, there is not much of an internship culture in Shanghai when it comes to foreigners, so interns tend to be treated as new employees, and even knowledgeable consultants. Outcome: Interns gain meaningful and authentic work experience.

Fourth: Shanghai interns can expect a negotiable work situation where initiative-taking is rewarded with higher-level work. Several panelists reported that they were encouraged to work independently and were given the freedom to try different roles and to choose the focus of their day-to-day work. Outcome: Interns learn initiative-taking, self-advocacy, and effective
communication with upper management.

Fifth: Shanghai interns can expect a challenging start. Our panelist currently working on Capitol Hill said that, while congressional re-election campaigns are indeed hard, “doing community theater in a Chinese regulatory environment while learning the Chinese language was harder.” Our US International Trade Commission panelist said that he has yet to encounter “a situation more stressful than working the front desk at the Okura Garden Hotel.” Another panelist said simply, “I was not as prepared as I thought I was.” One panelist pointed out that her daily interaction with skilled and ambitious local university students was also a source of stress because it reminded her that she may be competing with some of these people for work opportunities someday. Our Okura Garden Hotel intern’s experience added an additional and no doubt unanticipated source of pressure: soon after finally landing his coveted front desk spot, his coworker pulled him aside and explained to him that he was not actually a “real” American because real Americans were white. Exasperated, our intern explained that, as a Native American, he was actually “the most American there was!” Experiences like these, in combination with the stress of learning the Chinese language and of being compared to full-time local interns or new employees, were humbling. Outcome: Interns gain a realistic idea of where they stand in the competitive global marketplace, learn how to deal with challenging professional situations, and foster confidence for facing the stress of their future first days on the job.

Sixth: Shanghai interns can expect that they will adjust to Shanghai’s fast pace, get the hang of things after a week or two on the job, and hit their stride around Week Three. Panelists reported that, once they had their work under control, they started observing and reflecting more on what was going on around them and got a sense for how the workplace functioned. A parallel feeling was a growing sense that Shanghai was ground zero for the global economy and that they had previously only been living on its periphery. Outcome: Interns gain the ability to step up in a fast-paced environment. Interns gain a global perspective and a better sense of their place in the world.

Seventh, and last: Shanghai interns can then expect a drop in anxiety as they pivot from a competitive mindset to a learning posture. Several panelists recalled a shift in perspective from worrying about how they stacked up against the native bilingual staff with degrees from top universities.
that they worked alongside, to the realization that these people were not in fact their competition. Their competitors were still in the US. Outcome: Interns develop an eagerness to seek out and learn from those in their orbit whose talent exceeds their own and likewise to value the challenge of complex work situations.

Ultimately, Shanghai interns can expect to find their inner strength, confidence in facing, if not mastering, their assignments, and ultimately falling in love with their experience. Panelists reported that, after months on the job, they were no longer intimidated. They went from surviving to thriving. Big-city confidence emerged, and several reported feeling less like an imposter and more like a possible future contender for positions at the international level. “[My internship] really helped me become familiar and confident in a job traveling the world and working with many countries and cultures.” “I should be getting paid!” was one intern’s smiling appraisal of the value they were bringing to their organization. The transformation thus completed, interns reported feelings of enjoyment, pride, and higher aspirations. Outcome: Interns gain a sense of belonging to the global workforce and the confidence that they can handle complexity and the fast pace of a big-city job. They come to desire a global career, global connectedness, and global understanding. Or, in the words of our panelists:

**Rob:** [My internship] led to my pursuit of a career in international relations…originally, I was a Hospitality major and was going to go into hotel and resort management. My internship in China … made me realize that I wanted to pursue a career that helped me to really engage in the US-China relationship… So, in the end, my Shanghai internship helped to lead me into a career as an international trade analyst with the US government.

**Nicole:** I think [Shanghai internships are special] because of how unique China is. Its fast pace and constantly changing environment is different from the rest of the world. Taking on the challenge of learning and assimilating not only the culture, but the way the people, government, and the economy interact, gives students a different perspective in the workplace. Personally, it really helped me become familiar and confident in a job where I am traveling the world and working with many countries and cultures.
Our Special Olympics panelist: I had actually worked with underserved students in the autism support class at a West Philly elementary school from my first week at Penn, but still thought of that as a personal volunteer role, not something I would do professionally... Until I was in China it hadn’t clicked that disability rights is a huge issue internationally that was, especially in 2011, almost never being talked about on the global development agenda.

Conclusion

I set up my first academic internships in 1999 for a dozen Boston University students in Beijing. I also ran a seminar for these students that was a precursor to the course that is now a fixture of academic internships. Since that year, I have been on-site and intimately involved in the internships of well over 1,000 students and have helped to build several programs. Despite all of this experience, I did not have a clear sense of what is so special about a Shanghai internship until the alumni discussions. The perspective they offered is of immediate relevance to outreach and enrollment, to be sure, but it is also useful in other more directly relevant settings. Used to introduce our Shanghai internship program at the start of a semester, the information has already helped to reduce much student-intern anxiety. I am only in the initial stages of putting this new understanding to use, but already I am encouraged.

The most important outcome of the alumni outreach will be, I hope, its effect on my colleagues working in the academic internship field. If they simply repeat what I have done here with their own alumni, and then share their findings, we will be able to compare internship experiences in different locations in meaningful ways. We could quickly develop a common vocabulary that, if shared with students, would allow them to be able to make informed decisions about where to pursue an academic internship, perhaps for the very first time.
Benefits of Service-Learning and Social Justice Work Abroad for Employability and Career Readiness

Ashley Metz

Issues of social inequity, specifically race and ethnicity, are not widely discussed within education abroad, but we need to address these issues more directly and holistically. Part of our reluctance to discuss these topics is unease and fear of controversy. This is one reason why the University of Minnesota (UofM) Learning Abroad Center’s social-justice themed Global Seminar “Solidarity and Justice-Oriented Structural Change in South Africa” is so important. This program embraces uneasiness and engages students in a personal and confrontational way, encouraging deep self-reflection and nuanced conversation around prejudice and race relations in both the United States and South Africa. It covers the “White Savior Complex” and privilege, prompting students to consider their own reasons for wanting to participate on a social justice-oriented program. Students are informed of possible negative outcomes when service-learning is not rooted in the intentions and desires of the community being served. When service-learning is done without appropriate training, orientation, and reflection, it can support ineffective and sometimes harmful kinds of service. During this program, students are not only told, but shown the power of civic engagement through direct interaction with children, their peers, and adults in the township of Bellville South.

Another reason service-learning and social justice work abroad are important is that they promote self-awareness and self-recognition. Students have the opportunity to develop themselves in various aspects and to be more aware of their own presence in unfamiliar contexts (in both positive and negative ways). After having had this type of experience, they will be able to think more critically of themselves and more concretely identify their own skills and strengths, as well as their areas of growth and gaps of knowledge. They learn how much they don’t know, and that they need
to ask questions and work with others in order to best serve the public. Students consider how they relate to the world and what their place is in it (and how their education and training up to this point will assist them in finding their place). They will be able to better manage themselves in the workplace and be able to relate more to others they work with. They will also be better able to manage their emotions and critical feedback to improve their own self-direction.

Service-learning and social justice work abroad are valuable because they help students **develop patience, as well as observation and listening skills**. Students on these programs will learn to function within a high level of ambiguity and are given the opportunity to learn through observation. They will eventually learn to adapt to the context they’re in and understand that their own comfort, desires, or goals are secondary to the betterment of the task at hand to support the environment they’re working in. They will learn about the culture they’re working in and hopefully gain humility through a better understanding of the inequities and circumstances of people in the community. Focused on the absorption of content, rather than time management and productivity, they will be able to learn and teach others more effectively. After this experience, they will be better equipped to work within group settings that require more time and more voices to be heard. They will be able better to identify problems in projects, having had the practice of stepping back to watch and think critically about what’s happening around them. They will be more likely thoughtfully to consider and understand differences in work styles, values, and concepts of time.

It’s critical that students learn **the importance of ethics and truth-telling**, which is addressed directly on service-learning and social justice programs. Students learn about honesty and integrity and can apply those values to their own personal failings or mistakes. They can better align themselves with the work of the organization they’re working for (and their own personal goals) and gain respect for the values the organization stands for. They can better engage in conversation around the purpose and goals of the organization, as well as positively and professionally represent the organization in public.

This Global Seminar also teaches **respect for human rights**, and subsequently **advocacy for equity**. On social justice programs, students have opportunities to witness injustice first-hand, develop more compassion and empathy, and use that better to understand and work with others.
Service-learning presents the opportunity for students to attempt to understand others’ lived experience, the circumstances in which they live, and the injustices that make up their daily reality. Students’ desire to advocate increases with an understanding of abuses of justice. They gain a commitment to improving the human condition through meaningful and thoughtful work.

Another benefit of service-learning and social work is that it gives students an understanding of social order and complex social contexts. While it is possible to gain insight through readings in a classroom, no other method is as effective as watching the complexities play out in person in specific contexts. Learning how to digest the social realities of people in inequitable situations (as well as their own inability to affect those situations) is a humbling experience. As part of this Global Seminar, students engage in a social community education project with an after-school non-profit organization called Building Bridges. Through this project, students learn about how Building Bridges provides psychosocial, educational, and skills-based support to youth facing extreme poverty and a lack of community programming.

Service-learning and social justice work abroad are essential for developing career-ready students in many ways. They give students the opportunity to examine societal challenges through critical education, witness, and immersive experiences in a new culture. While all education abroad experiences are productive and contribute to students’ academic and professional growth, service-learning and social-justice themed programs prompt the most significant personal reflection and growth—and are most likely to develop students into civically engaged adults post-graduation.
SECTION FOUR
Current Research

This section describes some of the research generated in consideration of the interaction between education abroad and employability. This area of higher education is still in evolution; these essays present challenging findings that, at times, counter unexamined assumptions in the rhetoric of study abroad. They also signpost areas in which further investigations might be of significant value.
I initially became interested in how an education abroad experience may build resilience in students as I was coding the data from a survey of 713 UofM alumni who studied abroad. The study focused on career skill development and originally did not include research questions around adversity or challenge. Yet, as I coded the data, these themes kept strongly emerging. The common pattern was that students were challenged during their time abroad, were able to overcome barriers without their usual support systems back home, and as a result found new confidence or abilities. As I researched the idea of overcoming barriers or recovering from difficulties, the concept of resilience began to crystallize.

Resilience has been studied widely in psychology, often in connection to trauma. Fletcher and Williams reviewed the literature for definitions and concepts of psychological resilience and concluded, “Despite the construct being operationalized in a variety of ways, most definitions are based around two core concepts: adversity and positive adaptation” (2). The concepts of adversity and positive adaptation can be applied to the study abroad experience.

An education abroad experience is challenging for many students. Some of the situations that came up in the interviews in this study that may cause transitory hardship for students include not knowing the language, new mores and norms, being away from family and friends, a different academic system, as well as a new housing situation. These are some basic factors of adversity that students need to adjust to while abroad. The key in resilience literature—as in some intercultural literature—lies in positive adaptation. Often this is referred to as “bouncing back” after overcoming a difficult episode. In intercultural literature, positive adaptation is described as “the capability of shifting perspective to another culture and adapting behavior according to cultural context” (Hammer 209). In an
education abroad context, the positive “bounce back” is understanding cultural difference—which may have caused some distress when first experienced—and being able to modify one’s reaction to this difference both cognitively and behaviorally.

Based on Fletcher and Williams’ research and other studies on resilience, I modified the constructs used by Kelley and Meyers for the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory to include factors fostering resilience. This was an exploratory measure to investigate if further intentional research in this area was warranted. Kelley and Meyers identify the following four dimensions as necessary for cross-cultural adaptation: emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy. Emotional resilience was modified to include persistence when challenged (P); flexibility/openness (B) refers to behaviors that demonstrate flexibility, tolerance and non-judgment; and perceptual acuity is (C) cognitive understanding of others’ perceptions. Kelley and Meyers describe personal autonomy as “one’s sense of identity without being overly reliant on environmental cues” (Kelley and Meyers 14). This construct was changed the most in my coding to (I) independence, maturity, growth, and confidence—all factors signifying positive adaptation.

Respondents to the alumni survey had answered one open-ended question: “How did your study abroad experience make you more of a global professional?” These responses were coded using the above scale. Only two of the randomly chosen 106 responses did not contain one or more of the resilience constructs. Even when broken down by program duration, there was still evidence of resilience gain.

The following coded quotes, categorized by program duration, demonstrate the pattern of overcoming challenge leading to positive adaption. A student in the one-month category noted:

Study abroad increased my awareness of the significance of cultural differences as well as of the importance of simply being aware of the world beyond our borders [C]. Any study abroad experience will challenge you, confuse you, expand you, and reshape you [P], all of which is crucial to being a mature and critically-minded professional [I].

A student on a program for two to three months described her experience in the following way:
By learning to constructively overcome frustrations and barriers (language, misunderstandings, navigating new cities) [P] […] Studying abroad also forever planted a seed in me to pursue language learning and global travel [B], and to be open-minded to the greater world and the people within it [C].

This quote is from a student in the four- to six-month program category:

Study abroad taught me to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty as part of daily life [B], and to challenge my previously conceived expectations of myself or others [C]. As a result of my experiences, I was able to not only refine my interpersonal and intercultural communication skills but was able to increase my ability to adapt to change or difficult circumstances [P]. This is highly relevant to my job as a global professional, where change, and the ability to react to it, is the status quo [B]. This is especially true as it pertains to serving global customers and interacting with peers from around the world. Study abroad has been an invaluable contribution to both my character and my career [I].

A student who went abroad in the seven- to twelve-month category stated:

I think study abroad prepared me to be a global professional because it challenged me to work through differences and challenges [P], to think critically but also openly and to appreciate other ways of life [C]. I feel like this has enhanced my attitudes and explorations as a young professional and I am more open to new and different experiences in my career [B].

This sample of quotes shows how the challenge inherent in most education abroad experiences pushes most students, far from the safety net of home, to discover they are stronger than they realized. This has a positive influence on their self-image and future actions. Because this pattern was apparent in short-term study as well as longer programs, it seems that duration is not a factor in developing resilience. Based on my earlier research on intercultural learning and program duration, I posit that the adjustment stage would predict whether or not resilience skills were increased during a study abroad program. For example, are students mentored through their adjustment in order to make a “bounce back” or perspective shift, or
are they left with no understanding about their interactions abroad? If the latter, they may proceed negatively and remain challenged rather than adapting, gaining perspective and awareness, and hence increasing in confidence and positivity.

This exploratory study based on modified constructs indicates that further intentional research is necessary in this area. It is important to investigate whether education abroad impacts resiliency growth not only for the students themselves, but also for employers. Increased or developed resilience could be crucial in guiding potential employers to see the value of an applicant who has spent time studying abroad if this can be linked to a demonstrated ability to recover quickly and positively to setbacks.

Resilience is not on the NACE list of skills employers are seeking. Yet, after coding the UofM alumni data on being a global professional, I believe resilience is key to developing skills in other areas. I posit that when students discover they have the grit to overcome barriers, it builds confidence; once confidence and independence are established, students are more able and ready to improve skills and competencies that are desirable to employers. I further hypothesize that education abroad is one of the best spaces to guide students in this development, due to the challenges that students will encounter while distanced from their familiar sources of strength and comfort. Similar to the development of intercultural skills, resilience development would be best fostered with intentional intervention.

The next steps as a field are to identify a definition of resilience grounded in education abroad theory and context. We should investigate connections between intercultural learning, overcoming challenges, and confidence gains, as well as how this impacts skill development abroad. In order to better serve our students, we should be able to market the value of study abroad to employers. A student who studied abroad for a year explains, “By and large, studying abroad gave me resiliency skills to be able to handle challenges and consider possible solutions.”

This should be an easy sell to any employer.
First-generation (FG) college students comprise a growing and important student population on college campuses around the United States. Definitions of “first generation” student status vary according to institutional type and reporting organization. For the purposes of our article, we will define “first-generation” as college students for whom neither parent has obtained a four-year baccalaureate degree (Verdin and Godwin). Some international institutions use different titles and understandings of FG, such as “first in family” (Jehangir and Deenanath). The number of FG students enrolled in universities continues to increase despite some enrollment fluctuations in the past. Depending on the institution, FG enrollment ranges from 30% to 60% (Toutkoushian et al.). This included two-year and four-year institutions. Based on data from the US Department of Education, FG students tend to be low-income and students of color. However, efforts to categorize or generalize should be avoided. Shaped by a variety of contextual factors and interactions, first-generation students and their experiences remain unique (Jehangir et al.; Stebleton and Diamond).

Although higher education scholars continue to learn more about the first-generation student experience, less is known about FG and their engagement with study abroad initiatives. The purpose of this article will be to explore the intersection between first-generation college students, study abroad, and potential impact on career development. Moreover, a key objective will be to challenge and engage study abroad professionals to do even more to support FG students around study abroad participation—and therein lies the opportunity for educators. We will profile one institution, the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)
at the University of Minnesota, and outline strategies to best support first-generation college students.

**Providing Context and Demographics**

Recent data from Open Doors and the Institute for International Education suggest that study abroad participation continues to be predominantly White (over 75%) and women (over 67%). Efforts continue to be made to improve racial/ethnic and gender diversity. The exact number of FG students who participate in study abroad remains somewhat unclear, yet we can surmise that it is quite low. Since financial need may be a significant barrier for many of these students, more scholarship resources are required. For example, approximately 47% of recipients of the Gilman Scholarship currently identify as first-generation.

Statistics from Open Doors demonstrate that the number of short-term, faculty-led programs have increased in recent years—and these shorter-term, lower-cost models may prove to be more viable for some FG students and their families. In addition to finances, FG students may be less likely to participate in study abroad for a host of reasons. Many live at home, and many have a host of family responsibilities (Jehangir).

Furthermore, some FG students have job obligations; many work over 30 hours per week. These commitments often prevent students from fully investing in opportunities for career exploration and study abroad participation. Finally, some FG students may have parents and family members who do not fully understand the college experience, including the rationale for participating in a study abroad program. For these reasons (and likely others), FG study abroad participation rates tend to be low at most institutions.

**Why Is This Important?**

Research indicates that participation in study abroad is one of the *high-impact practices* suggested initially by George Kuh and other scholars (Kilgo et al.). Most of us who are study abroad advocates know the numerous merits and potential outcomes of studying abroad, whether short term or long term. Research indicates that engagement in these practices, including study abroad, tends to have a more powerful (or compensatory) effect on some marginalized student populations. In other words, FG
students (many who are students of color and low-income) will get more out of a study abroad experience than those who have other privileges and advantages.

Nevertheless, irrespective of status, the experience of studying and engaging abroad allows both students and faculty to engage in new and “adventurous” learning that adds immeasurable value to the overall undergraduate experience (Stebleton 14, 2016). As international educators, we can argue that we want all students to have these opportunities—yet some students will need additional support and perhaps encouragement to identify and take advantage of study abroad programs.

**A Positive, Strengths-Based Approach**

For many years, the focus on first-generation students has been misguided. Although some change has occurred in recent years, more work needs to be done. Many efforts focus on “fixing or dealing with FG students.” This approach is not only misaligned, but also undermines the FG student experience and ignores the assets they bring to the academy. We contend that student-affairs educators should see FG students as pioneers, rather than problems (Greenwald). According to Schreiner, higher education professionals need to focus on what is right with first-generation students rather than what is wrong with them: strengths and assets as opposed to weaknesses and problems.

One framework that can guide our work with students is to view students as owning different forms of capital. Scholar Tara Yosso developed a model titled “community cultural wealth.” She argues that individuals from marginalized communities (including many FG families) bring a wealth of capital (or assets) to the institution and the career development process. We also contend that this same capital can be brought to the study abroad experience. Yosso describes six forms of capital: linguistic, resistant, navigational, cultural, aspirational, and social. For example, first generation students may know multiple languages: a form of linguistic capital that students can bring to new learning situations.

Similarly, these students often possess solid navigational capital. In other words, students have considerable experience of figuring out systems and generating solutions to problems. For example, a recent student explained that she was returning to live at home to help her parents manage the
health care system and the unemployment application processes: a prime example of navigational capital that would serve the student in almost any study abroad experience. These same navigational skills will benefit this student as she moves forward with her life-career development planning. Frequently, first-generation students remain unaware that their life experiences are valuable advantages when they start in college. Student affairs professionals and study abroad educators can serve as important mentors and advisers to support FG students as they learn to own and articulate these skills and strengths.

**Career Planning and Study Abroad**

Numerous studies exist that outline the career development benefits of engaging in study abroad (Stebleton et al., 2013). Career experts contend that human skills will be important to the future workplace. According to a recent report by the Strada Institute, skills like communication, leadership, and problem solving are among the most valued by employers. These skill sets relate to management, communications, sales, customer service, operations, and leadership. Based on predictions from the Strada Institute, future workers will need a duality mentality that embraces both technical skills and human abilities. In the past, workers developed a combination of deep expertise with broad knowledge in a narrow field. Moving into the future, workers will need to become more agile in order to develop human skills for a potentially 100-year life. Arguably, these same skills, with a focus on human and interpersonal competencies, can be fostered via engagement in well-structured study abroad programs related to curriculum.

Similarly, the National Association of College and Employers (NACE) articulates eight competencies that comprise career readiness. The NACE report is strikingly similar to the Strada Institute publication with a strong emphasis on interpersonal competencies. The career readiness skills outlined include critical thinking/problem solving; oral/communication skills; teamwork/collaboration; digital technology; leadership; professionalism/work ethic; career management; and global/intercultural fluency. All competencies hold value, yet the last one (global and intercultural fluency) is paramount for the career development of FG students, and the merits of study abroad education. We argue that the most effective way to develop global fluency skills involves participating in a study abroad opportunity during the undergraduate experience. Again, FG students will likely see the most significant gains based on what is known about high-impact practices.
and study abroad experiences. Furthermore, we know that positive study abroad experiences can influence career competencies and preparation for the transition from college to career.

**Study Abroad Educators and the Business of Career Development**

Perhaps not surprisingly, most students enroll in college to earn a degree that will in turn lead to a job opportunity. More and more students (and their tuition-paying parents, in many scenarios) demand that college administrators invest in solid career development services (Dey and Cruzvergara). In the past, the old career development model was static, placement-based, and evolved little over the years (Cruzvergara et al.). In recent years, career experts contend that the delivery of career services needs to become an institutional priority where all higher education professionals play a critical role in fostering and developing career competencies and career readiness for all students (DuRose and Stebleton).

According to Fox, an advocate of leadership education and career readiness:

> Institutions are responding accordingly. However, an institutionalized approach to career readiness must extend beyond students and career service professionals. It needs to integrate student affairs colleagues, faculty, upper administration, parents, and alumni. Leadership educators can be very purposeful partners in career exploration and development (Fox 15).

Just as Fox urges leadership educators to take on critical career-oriented roles, we argue that other student affair professionals should fully invest in the business of career awareness and career development. Moreover, study abroad educators can assume important roles when they discuss the benefits of study abroad experiences with their students, both first-generation and non-first-generation students.

DuRose and Stebleton, assert that:

> We strongly believe that college and university educators, including both student affairs professionals and faculty members, can possess vital roles in supporting and assisting students to articulate the value of the learning embedded in the attainment of a college
degree. Advocating from this perspective, higher education educators should have a collective and collaborative role in extending the student learning experience to supporting students’ transitions beyond the university context (274).

We agree that many students who participate in study abroad may be unprepared to articulate fully the value of their experiences, especially as it translates to career competencies or career readiness. This articulation of experiences is a learned skill; we should not expect most undergraduate students to do this on their own without guidance, challenge, and support—the hallmarks of holistic student development (Evans and Reason). Study abroad leaders and educators are in ideal positions to play supplementary functions in the career development process for students, including FG students. In this next section, we focus on a case example at the University of Minnesota. The College of Education and Human Development CEHD serves a significant number of first-generation and marginalized students, some of whom participate in study abroad opportunities.

**University of Minnesota: A Closer Look**

Career Services (in CEHD) have strategically focused its services on the career development needs, issues, and strengths of first-generation students. CEHD Career Services is social-justice oriented and responsive to the needs of its diverse student population. Given that over 40% of the undergraduate population they serve is FG, the office has developed strategies and initiatives that capitalize on the strengths of FG students and serve to break down institutional barriers to career support.

Developed with the career success of FG students in mind, the office’s mission serves as the foundation for all services. CEHD Career Services values authentic relationships focused on community and belonging, compassion, intentionality, listening and respect. Establishing trust and building authentic relationships is core to the approach and crucial when supporting FG students. CEHD Career Services maintains a holistic, inclusive, and strengths-based approach that grounds itself in student and career development theory. This developmental approach assists FG students in learning how to make meaning of their experiences (e.g., internships, volunteering, learning abroad) and communicate their skills and competencies to employers. An important strategy has been capturing these experiences through an evaluation that students receive after each
appointment to ensure our approach is successful. Based on their comments, FG students routinely indicate that “they are more empowered and motivated to move forward in their career journey” and “are able to take concrete steps toward their major/career exploration and/or job search” as a result of their appointment with a career counselor.

Developing strong relationships with programs and offices that primarily serve FG students is fundamental. The TRIO Student Support Services program, a federally funded initiative that serves students from traditionally underserved student populations, is located in CEHD. One example of a unique resource is a career course for students titled *Your Future: Identity, Culture, and Career Success*; this course aims to meet the unique career development needs and assets of FG students. This full-semester, two-credit course meets once per week for two hours and has a maximum enrollment of twenty students. Class size remains intentionally small to encourage a sense of community, the establishment of trust, and relationship building.

The course includes two central themes that are critical to the career success of first-generation students: sense of self and social capital. These foci help students understand who they are, including their multiple identities and roles, and how these factors may influence their career success. Creating the space for students to reflect on their multiple identities, both social and personal, is foundational.

The course emphasizes how social capital influences career decision-making and success and helps students gain strategies to build their social capital. As previously indicated, by leveraging their existing capital, students feel empowered to build new capital (Yosso). A strengths-based approach supports students by first identifying the connections, relationships, and resources they already possess (Soria and Stubblefield). Next, we introduce new resources and types of social capital that will move them toward career success. Learning abroad experiences remain highlighted as an experience for students to build their connections and social capital.

A key component to the course is the use of metaphor and inclusive language. The career development process can be a mystery for many FG students, and this often causes anxiety and fear. The course uses the metaphor of “career journey” to help students understand that career development is a cyclical, nonlinear, and lifelong process that leads them
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to success, but also has potential detours, roadblocks, and winding roads. The journey metaphor also inspires students to take ownership and author their own career story. Examples of using inclusive language include focusing on building relationships and connections, rather than networking, and being aware of using career-specific terms such as “informational interview” without explanation of their meaning.

Storytelling and sharing stories of career success serve as important features throughout the course. Upper-class students, alumni, and staff who have FG identities visit the course to share their career stories including the career services staff. Currently, all of the career services staff were FG students themselves and share their own identities and stories. This representation on the career services staff ensures that the needs of FG students are paramount and gives FG students real examples of career success. In class evaluations, students repeatedly indicate the value in hearing others’ stories and the importance of sharing their stories with students from similar backgrounds and lived experiences.

Exploring the Connection Between Career and Study Abroad

In recent years, study abroad educators nationwide have prioritized and devoted attention to the relevance and importance of study abroad for employability. While much has already been done to integrate career relevance into learning abroad by assisting students in unpacking their experiences and articulating their skills to employers, the unique career development needs of FG students have not necessarily been addressed in these efforts. Study abroad educators can further make an impact on career development by reflecting on and assessing their current practices and programs through the lens of an FG student.

Study abroad educators can also support the career development of FG students by collaborating with career services and offices/programs serving these students. Collaboration can encourage deeper engagement and provide students space to develop these skills with students who have similar identities and lived experiences. Learning abroad offices often share the stories and experiences of students and alumni to promote international education and this is a great opportunity to highlight first-generation students and alumni. Intentionally including students who identify as first generation offers powerful examples of success. For example, one of our colleagues takes a group of predominantly first-generation TRIO
students to South Africa for a three-week global seminar experience to explore social justice issues.

In conclusion, we believe that study abroad educators and other higher education professionals play important roles in the career development processes of first-generation students. Applying the community cultural wealth model, first-generation college students already bring a surplus of capital and assets to the academy. We urge colleagues to reach out to first-generation students; to intentionally encourage them to participate in study abroad programs; to support them in making sense of their experiences upon return; and to collaborate with career development educators on campus to provide both challenge and support to students. ¹

¹ The authors would like to thank Tabatha Cruz for her contributions to this article.
Diversifying Destinations: Employability as a Motivator for Choosing a Non-Traditional Location

Jill Reister

Introduction

Having recently completed my doctoral dissertation, I was struck by how my key findings related so heavily to employability. I found that college students now are very motivated by academic and career goals, especially when choosing a study abroad program in a non-traditional location.

Anecdotally, when I first studied abroad in the 1990s and began working in education abroad in the early 2000s, it felt like students who chose a less common study abroad destination had a great sense of adventure. They seemed to be seeking out opportunities in remote places to take a break from their studies and immerse themselves culturally. As remote places now feel less distant due to the expansion of English, technological advances, and constant connectivity, the experiences of our students in these locations have drastically changed.

My objective was to learn what motivates students to choose a non-traditional destination and how that knowledge can help shape the way learning abroad programs are designed, developed, and marketed. My results demonstrate that students who choose non-traditional destinations are critically motivated by future career goals.

Most US college students choose to study abroad in Western Europe or Australia, countries that are commonly considered familiar and safe. Mainstream media, tourism, the business world, and even the educational system in the United States have a much greater focus on Western Europe and Australia than on the rest of the world (Che, Spearman, and Manizade;
By learning about college students’ rationales for selecting a study abroad program in a non-traditional country, universities can respond by diversifying destinations.

Drawing on definitions from the Forum on Education Abroad, NAFSA, and Wells, this study defines non-traditional study abroad destinations as those in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Overall, the number of students studying in non-traditional destinations is increasing. Over the past fifteen years, data show the total number of students studying abroad more than doubled from 154,168 in the 2000–2001 academic year to 325,339 in the 2015–2016 academic year. In that same time, the number of students studying abroad in the Middle East more than tripled from 1,659 students to 6,044 students, and the number of students studying abroad in Asia almost quadrupled. In the past fifteen years, there was also significant growth in the number of students studying in Latin America and Africa—above that of the overall study abroad growth rate. Meanwhile, the percentage of students studying abroad in Europe, the most “traditional” region, fell from 64% in 2000–2001 to 54% in 2015; the percentage of students studying abroad in Australia and New Zealand also declined from 6% to 4% (Open Doors).

This study attempts to understand the motivations of students who choose to study abroad in non-traditional destinations so that international educators can better develop and market programs in diverse geographical locations. Ultimately, students need to expand their horizons to be more prepared for the globalized world (Lewin, 2009).

It is important to acknowledge that study abroad programs are typically optional add-on experiences to a college degree and often come with significant costs. For many students, this is the first major “purchase” that they make as young adults. Considering studying abroad as an investment to employability, understanding there is an expectation that universities respond to student demands, and knowing that students have increased freedom of choice have provided structure to this discourse (Jaeger and Gram).

**Literature Review**

Little is known about why certain students choose to study abroad in non-traditional locations (Lane-Toomey and Lane; Ogden, Soneson, and
Within the past few decades, universities’ international activities have dramatically increased in volume, scope, and complexity (Altbach and Knight; Take and Shoraku). Economic, political, and societal forces are pushing higher education in the twenty-first century toward greater international involvement. Reimers has argued that global competency crucially needs to be part of the curriculum because worldwide developments impact all aspects of life. Reimers also argues that students are more engaged when learning is important to them and relevant to their lives. Since international issues impact all people, not just the elite, students need to understand the relevance of worldwide concerns.

Farrugia and Sanger assert that students who have studied overseas are more prepared for the workforce since employers are looking for a competitive edge on a global scale. They argue that international educators should “encourage students to study somewhere that is culturally or linguistically ‘different’ than what they already know” (Farrugia and Sanger 20). Nyaupane, Paris, and Teye also considered the importance of studying abroad from an economic perspective. They found that over 16% of US jobs are tied to international trade. However, US companies lose an estimated $2 billion per year due to insufficient cross-cultural guidance from their employees. Therefore, there is still a need to expand the international educational experiences of US citizens.

Throughout the international education community, there has been a call to expand opportunities for students to study abroad in non-traditional destinations (Woolf). Ogden et al. have found that prior to the 1990s, data on where students studied abroad was not reliably tracked. However, the most popular study abroad destinations were clearly the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain, and the few non-traditional destinations that attracted attention were Mexico, Japan, and Israel. In 1984, NAFSA established the Whole World Committee, with a mandate to address the need to diversify where students were studying abroad. In 1990, the National Task Force on Undergraduate Education Abroad urged for greater diversity in locations.

In recent years, politicians have begun to stress the importance of studying abroad to diversify the experiences of college students (Li, Olson, and Frieze; Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella; Stroud; Woolf). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US government increased support for students studying languages perceived
to be valuable to American political interest, introducing the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) to encourage more students to study foreign languages, particularly those of critical need to the US government, such as Arabic. In 2005, President Bush and Congress established the bipartisan federal Lincoln Commission, which set a lofty goal of one million students studying abroad annually and aimed particularly to increase opportunities in developing countries. In 2009, the US House of Representatives approved the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act, with goals similar to those of the Lincoln Commission (Stroud). Generation Study Abroad (2014) also aims to double the number of students who study abroad each year through an investment of over $2 million to bring institutions, governments, and employers together in order to find new ways to extend study abroad to more college students (Institute for International Education). In addition to these initiatives, federally funded scholarships, such as the Boren Scholarship and the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship, have been established to encourage US students to study in diverse destinations. Given these investments, universities will need to involve faculty and administration to increase and diversify participation in international programs.

There are fewer barriers to studying abroad in non-traditional destinations with the expansion of English as a world language. More study abroad programs are conducted in English so that students are able to select destinations where they may not even need to speak the native language beyond the basic skills necessary for survival and coping. This makes it easier for American students to study in non-traditional destinations if they are able to continue their studies without having the native language. Curricula taught on study abroad programs have also expanded to include business, natural sciences, education, and other specialized subjects beyond traditional language and culture programs (Ogden et al).

Rather than create study abroad programs based on student demand for popular destinations, Ferst has argued that universities need to direct the demand to non-traditional destinations. Wells agrees, making the case that “given that three quarters of the world population lives in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, the United States needs a generation of citizens who have first-hand experience of living and learning about these tremendously important areas, with their myriad cultures and explosive growth potential” (123). Ferst also asserts that as interest in
global affairs grows, students will begin to demand more opportunities to study in a diverse set of locations.

The decision to study abroad is one of the most significant and expensive initiatives a college student may undertake; study abroad decisions are complex and involve deep buyer deliberation (Cubillo, Sanchez, and Cerviño). Few studies have taken a consumer behavior approach within international higher education; Jaeger and Gram looked at the marketization of higher education and found that students were motivated by employability and considered study abroad to be an investment in their future. Since study abroad is not a frequent purchase, it demands a high level of commitment from consumers (Cubillo et al). Students who are considering study abroad want to understand that the experience that they are purchasing will be worth the costs, academically and/or professionally.

Looking at educational research through a business lens is rare in that educators do not like to commodify educational experiences. There is a limited amount of research in the field of international education that uses marketing approaches, as researchers and practitioners prefer to focus on educational outcomes rather than how and why a student might “purchase” this experience. When considering study abroad as a consumable experience, it is also critical to consider the motivations and attitudes that drive students to make big decisions. This can be explored through marketing segmentation and consumer behavior. After learning why students choose to study in non-traditional destinations, universities will be better prepared to increase participation rates for study abroad programs in less common locations overseas.

**Methodology**

To address these issues, I employed a qualitative research design to attempt to find out why students choose to study abroad in particular destinations. Being able to probe them about their motivations can reveal not only where students wish to travel and why, but also what practitioners can do with that regard to that information.

This study gave open-ended surveys and subsequent interviews to undergraduate students at a large, public Midwestern university. The sample included all of the students planning to participate in a study abroad program in a non-traditional destination for a semester or academic year.
Students were intentionally reached after they confirmed their participation, but prior to departure—a pivotal stage during which they could best describe what influenced their decision-making process. Of the 73 students who were studying in a non-traditional destination that term, and invited to participate, 39 partook in the survey and fourteen continued on for a follow-up interview.

The survey simply requested participants to provide a one- to three-sentence statement describing why they chose their study abroad destination. After providing their written statement, participants could check up to three statements that most closely connected with their rationale for selecting their study abroad destination. All survey participants were invited to participate in an interview, which focused more in depth on what motivated them to choose their destination. All interviews were audio recorded to allow for transcription, coding, and analysis. Participants were given pseudonyms to keep their responses confidential.

Both the survey and interview data were tabulated and coded for common themes. The two sets of data were analyzed to see how individual participants responded in a written versus a verbal format. The consistency in responses helped confirm the key findings. The goal of this research was to understand the factors that led to students’ selection of a study abroad destination.

The participants studied abroad in twenty different countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. They came from a wide array of majors including business, the humanities, performing and visual arts, social sciences, biological sciences, health sciences, education, and foreign languages, and many had multiple majors and minors. Their average GPA was 3.49, slightly higher than the 3.42 GPA of all students studying abroad in all destinations that term.

Survey Findings

One of the survey questions asked students to select one to three statements out of 25 choices that most closely connected to why they chose their specific study abroad destination. The most common statements selected were “The location offers specific benefits to my major or academic goals” (61.5%) and “I have been studying or want to study the
language spoken” (59%). Tied for third place, with sixteen respondents each (41%), were “The location provides for the specific career growth that I am looking for” and “I wanted to study somewhere ‘off the beaten path.’” This shows that students were goal-oriented and focused on the educational value of their abroad experience and on employability. The strong motivation for language learning is fascinating, considering the increase in study abroad programs conducted entirely in English and the decline in foreign language enrollments (Jaschik). This also suggests that these students were looking for a unique experience and the idea of something non-traditional appealed to them.

The findings from the written rationale statement were congruent, indicating that students mainly chose their study abroad destination based on academic- or career-motivated goals. Overall, the survey results suggest that participants wanted their study abroad experience to align with their academic, career, and language-learning goals. Most students were looking for a unique experience where they could challenge themselves and learn things that offered direct benefit to their future.

**Interview Data Findings**

I grouped academic and career motivations together because I found that when participants discussed academic motivations, they also referred to their career goals. Ten students chose a study abroad program that incorporated significant experiential learning such as an internship, field study, or research project. Eleven of the students had at least a minor or second major to complement their major. Four of those students were pre-med. Five students were in the University Honors Program. While most of them talked in depth about their academic motivations and goals, many also mentioned that their experience counted toward degree requirements. For example, Beth hoped to work in human services with Spanish-speaking populations in the future.

Michelle, a biology major with a minor in public health, wanted to be a physician who worked in global health with an emphasis on maternal and child health. She chose her program in Ecuador because the focus was on public health and it gave her the opportunity to learn Spanish. Jenna also chose her program specifically because it allowed her to have an internship and gain experience working within a community.
Similarly, Erin and Fay chose Senegal because of their French-language background and global public health career interests. Both of them started planning their study abroad when they were in high school and even chose their specific program before they started college, as it aligned well with the pre-medicine curriculum that they both needed. Fay said, “I guess for me, part of it is that as a career, I want to work in developing countries or countries with developing health care infrastructure.” Likewise, Erin also found Senegal to be a better fit than France:

I didn’t really want to spend a semester learning about art or learning about business because that just was not what I was passionate about. But when I saw the Senegal program and that you took it in French, and it was public health, and I could do... real hands-on work in a rural community, and that was something I haven’t done before...

Amanda, Caaliyah, and Monifa were very career oriented in planning their study abroad experience and felt that learning a specific language would offer career benefits. Amanda said, “I always knew I was interested in languages, so I wanted to make a career out of that, since I like to plan for the future.” In addition to a Russian minor, Amanda also chose to study linguistics and computer science, and planned to go to graduate school for computational linguistics. She was very focused on her long-term plans and said, “I hope the CIA gets me a job after I graduate.” She felt that experience with Russian, computer science, and computational linguistics could help her achieve success in finding a government job.

Similarly, Caaliyah chose to study Mandarin because “China in a few years is going to be a leader in global health research initiatives and everything. I thought it would be a good skill to have.” Caaliyah was a pre-med student interested in doing research on public health and policy, so she found a program in China where she could intern in that area while studying intensive Chinese.

Monifa wanted to work in an area of development pertaining to Africa, which is why she chose Kenya. Since she was from West Africa, she wanted a perspective of East Africa as a comparison. Since she was also studying Swahili, she was very motivated to “go and experience the other side of Africa.”
Katie and Holly chose their study abroad destination purely for the academic fit and benefit for future career goals; aligning with their major was more important than the actual destination. Katie, a dance major who was passionate about the arts, found a program in Israel that was recommended to her by her academic adviser. She did not consider any other locations simply because the academics fit perfectly with her career goals. Similarly, Holly chose Bhutan because of the field study program that focuses on climate change, a topic related to her environmental science major. Both students talked in depth about why these locations were a perfect fit for what they wanted to learn and hoped to do in the future.

Daus and Kia really wanted to study in Southeast Asia and found programs where they could take courses that worked toward their future goals, yet also allowed them to connect to their heritage and explore their identity. Kia chose her program in Cambodia because it offered an environmental field study that related to her major and future career goals. Daus wanted to study in Thailand because of the opportunity to work with Hmong people through his internship abroad. He talked about the benefits of this hands-on cultural experience for his future and said, “I see myself working alongside my own people.” He could take what he learned on his study abroad experience and apply it to his future work within Hmong communities in the United States.

Considering 12 out of 14 participants discussed their career goals and academic motivations at length, this key finding was important in understanding what motivates students to choose to study abroad in a non-traditional destination. When given more time to discuss these motivating factors in an interview, participants were able to expound on how they responded in the survey, providing more details about their future goals and how they were working to achieve them through their study abroad experience.

**Discussion**

The key findings demonstrated that students who study abroad in non-traditional destinations were primarily motivated by their desire to deepen their foreign language skills, their interest in participating in hands-on career-related academic experiences, and the appeal of doing something
different that would set them apart. Essentially, these students were looking for something to give themselves a competitive advantage in their chosen field.

Participants were also very motivated by applied learning through internships, fieldwork, research, service-learning, and hands-on cross-cultural experiences. They focused on how their internship or field experience would help them spend more time working directly with local people, rather than sitting inside a classroom. They intended to build skills that would ultimately positively impact their career trajectory. Many of the participants were intentionally trying to fit their study abroad experience into their lives in a way that offered them direct benefits. They wanted the credits they were taking overseas to count toward degree requirements, and they expected the academic focus of the program to help prepare them for their future as an important addition to their resume and a talking point for future interviews and personal statements.

Furthermore, by choosing a destination “off the beaten path,” they perceived their experience to be more meaningful than that of students who chose more popular destinations; it could offer more cultural immersion and impact their professional marketability. They discussed how they wanted to make local friends, live with a host family, or separate themselves from the other American participants. They were not focused on how many places they wanted to travel to during their free time or the famous sites they wanted to visit. Simply by choosing a destination that was less common, they believed they would stand out, and that alone would help them sell themselves in graduate school applications or job interviews.

Students are aware that jobs are shifting. Corporations are investing in non-traditional destinations, and students see value in going to countries that give them a competitive edge. They are investing because they believe that, by seeking out programs with applied learning in non-traditional regions of the world, they can enhance their portfolio and be better equipped for future success.

**Implications**

This research demonstrates that universities should continue to focus efforts on study abroad curriculum and career integration. It is essential that education abroad professionals and other university personnel
continue to work across campus to tie study abroad coursework directly into academic requirements. “Immersion in a culture that one is not familiar with already or is linguistically or culturally different from home can have powerful career impacts” (Farrugia and Sanger 20). It is no surprise, therefore, that students anticipate the powerful career impacts that they will gain by studying abroad in a non-traditional destination. When their home university is working to integrate career-building skills with study abroad, these students will undoubtedly benefit significantly. Moreover, they might have more confidence in the value of education abroad as they can select a program that demonstrably aligns with their future goals.
Examining the Impact of Undergraduate Study Abroad on Early Career Outcomes: A Mixed Methods Approach

Noah Goldblatt

Introduction

The impetus for this research project came from a curiosity to critically examine discourse in the international education community as it pertains to study abroad and career development. The National Association of International Educators (NAFSA) and the Institute for International Education (IIE) list career advancement on their websites as a key benefit of study abroad. They claim studying abroad will advance students’ careers by giving them a skillset that will help them in the job market, and also assert that international experience is a key component of a twenty-first century resume. Without a doubt, a majority of professionals in international education agree that studying abroad as a high-impact educational practice provides meaningful benefits to students. The goal of this study does not dispute that; however, in order to continue to legitimize our work as international educators, we need to substantiate our claims touting the benefits of study abroad. This mixed-methods research project examines whether or not a semester-long, credit-bearing, study abroad experience impacts early career outcomes at a professionally focused northeastern private college.

Methodology

A mixed-methods sequential research design provides a thorough inquiry into the influence of study abroad on early career outcomes at this institution. In the first, quantitative phase of the study, the National Organization of College and Employers’ (NACE) First Destination Survey data was analyzed to assess whether a study abroad experience has an impact on career outcomes. The First Destination Survey is completed by alumni at
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six months post-graduation and measures career outcomes. Individuals who are considered to have positive career outcomes report on the following characteristics: full-time employment; part-time employment; participating in a program of volunteer service; serving in the US Armed Forces; or enrollment in a program of continuing professional study. In contrast, individuals who fall into negative career outcome metrics report they are seeking employment; planning to continue education but not yet enrolled; or neither seeking employment nor planning to continue education. The quantitative results compare career outcomes for 2014, 2015, and 2016 graduates who have studied abroad (n = 523) and those who did not study abroad (n = 661). The quantitative survey contains 1,184 participants and represents a response rate of approximately 90% of the total graduates at the college.

The second qualitative phase examined the quantitative results in order to help explain and provide insights into the outcomes. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of three focus group interviews with 2014, 2015, and 2016 graduates who studied abroad for a semester or longer. A theoretical lens of appreciative inquiry was applied as a framework for interpreting the results and informs the qualitative line of questioning. Appreciative inquiry, often referred to as the strengths-based approach, provides a framework to reimagine career integration and study abroad from the perspective of alumni.

Results (Phase 1: Quantitative)

At six months post-graduation, the NACE survey results show virtually no statistically significant differences between populations of graduates who studied abroad versus those who did not. That said, a trend in the dataset favors both positive career outcomes and earnings for students who did not have an international study abroad experience.


**SECTION FOUR**

*Figure 1*

First Destination Survey 2014–16 Graduates:  
Percentage With Career Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Study Abroad</th>
<th>Study Abroad</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>93.00%</td>
<td>92.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.00%</td>
<td>90.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>90.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of graduates with a positive career placement, non-study abroad (n=661) and study abroad (n=523)

*Figure 2*

First Destination Survey 2014–16 Graduates:  
Mean Salary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Study Abroad</th>
<th>Study Abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>$41,000.00</td>
<td>$41,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-study abroad participants earned approximately $1,700 more in mean salary than study abroad participants.
Figure 1 and Figure 2 show both the career placement metric and mean salary output. Participants who did not study abroad fared slightly better than their peers who studied abroad; however, neither result carries a statistically significant outcome. A larger sample size would have increased the likelihood of finding statistically significant results.

Fig. 3 shows female graduates who studied abroad had a 92.9% job placement rate, while their counterparts who did not go abroad had a 98% job placement rate. Alternatively, male students who did or did not study abroad both showed a career placement metric at approximately 88.5%, showing virtually no change in outcome regardless of study abroad. Overall, study abroad seemed to have a small negative effect on female graduates' early career outcomes, and the small effect is statistically substantiated by Cohen’s d effect size measurement of d = .246.

First Destination Survey 2014–16 Graduates: Percentage with Career Placement by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study Abroad Male</th>
<th>Non-Study Abroad Male</th>
<th>Study Abroad Female</th>
<th>Non-Study Abroad Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad Female</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Study Abroad Male</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Study abroad male (n=281), non-study abroad male (n=404), study abroad female (n=225), and non-study abroad female (n=253) career outcome results.
A bright spot in the data for study abroad shows that graduates in the information technology division (majors include computer science, game programming, digital forensics, and more) had positive early career impacts of studying abroad: they earned $5,700 more in annual salary than their peers who did not study abroad, and they had a career placement metric of 100% versus 94.9% for their peers who did not go abroad. This suggests a potential positive impact of studying abroad for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors, which are non-traditional study abroad majors.

When inserting variables for race, Pell eligibility, and first-generation status, the results did not show notable effects in either a positive or negative direction. Additionally, a variable of whether or not a participant was in a career “related to their field of study” was tested and showed virtually no difference between the study abroad and non-study abroad group. With no statistically significant results reaching $p < .005$ or a large effect size of Cohen’s $d = .8$ or greater, inferences about the positive or negative impact of study abroad on early career outcomes are limited in the quantitative results.

**Results (Phase II: Qualitative)**

Despite differences in study abroad locations and program structure, participants in the qualitative focus groups gravitated toward finding internship, volunteer, and service-learning placements. Respondents highlighted these experiences as high-point professional development moments that were directly tied to their current careers and professional goals. Interviewees felt strongly that their study abroad experience gave them enhanced vocational clarity and helped them better solidify and understand the direction in which they wanted to head professionally. Moreover, respondents asserted that the study abroad experience gave them a new global perspective on their field of study.

All participants had listed study abroad on their resumes. They also spoke about their study abroad experience during job interviews and regularly drew from the experience in their working lives. Notably, respondents who were involved in hiring decisions at their company or organization felt strongly that study abroad experience is a differentiating factor among applicants for employment and looked for international experience on resumes.
Some developmental aspects of the study abroad experience noted by respondents pertain to going outside one’s comfort zone and increasing self-reliance. Interviewees discussed how going outside their comfort zone allowed them to see the world from a new perspective and bring confidence to future endeavors. One respondent said his experience abroad directly provided a job lead and resulted in a job placement after graduation. Thus, professional networking while abroad resulted in a tangible career outcome.

When asked to explain the quantitative results showing little difference in early career outcomes for study abroad students versus non-study abroad students, the focus group participants were initially surprised at this result. Insights about the result suggested that perhaps students who do not go abroad have a more defined career path than their peers who choose to study abroad. Focus group participants suggested that the study abroad group is doing more personal exploration than the non-study abroad group and may take longer to start their career path post-graduation.

Respondents generated ideas to maximize professional development during study abroad, namely increased curriculum integration before, during, and after studying abroad. Interviewees said that creating more professionally related requirements abroad would benefit overall career development. Some respondents also believed that more than one study abroad experience would provide an added career benefit to students.

**Limitations**

NACE self-identifies a limitation within its own survey framework. According to NACE, conducting a survey six months after graduation does not adequately measure career success. NACE’s published standards state, “The full benefits of the profoundly personal growth, enrichment, and increased knowledge evidenced by graduates cannot be adequately measured nor properly accounted for in the near-term. The most significant and substantive outcomes occur over the lifetime of the individual graduate” (4). In relation to this point, the full benefits of study abroad may not be captured or represented in the first destination survey’s metrics; however, this survey does provide a snapshot into early career outcomes and is one of the only nationally recognized measures to gauge early career success. One small northeastern private college with a very high job placement rate may not provide the best barometer to test career outcomes as they relate to
international experience. Students from this professionally focused institution are largely employed six months after graduation, and the potentially skewed findings of this study cannot be generalized nationally.

**Conclusion**

In higher education, study abroad is often referred to as a high-impact education practice with life-changing outcomes for students. As international educators, we strive to make meaning of the impact of study abroad and aim to understand the measurable outcomes of the international experience. In the age of globalization, many institutions expect graduates to have learned twenty-first century skills including critical thinking, adaptability, communication, social skills, problem-solving, technical skills and more. Naturally, a study abroad experience seems like an ideal environment for developing these skills. At one particular New England private college, however, studying abroad has not proven to significantly impact early career outcomes. This institution also maintains a 50% study abroad participation rate and puts programming emphasis on career integration for study abroad. Based on the NACE first destination survey, the higher-education industry standard for capturing career placement information, graduates from this college get no measurable positive early-career impact from studying abroad. In fact, some trends in the data even show an early negative effect from having studied abroad.

Further trends in the results contradict assumptions about study abroad that are held by students and international educators alike. The results of this research do not discredit the value of studying abroad or the potential lifelong impacts of the experience; however, the belief that there is a strong link between studying abroad and early career employability is not reflected in these findings. As the international education community intensifies its focus on access and increasing participation among under-represented student populations, we should take care in presenting a transactional proposition that touts benefits that may not be quantifiable or measurable. An international experience may positively influence a student’s life and career path forever, but it may not provide a near-term comparative advantage in the marketplace.
The Future of the American Liberal Arts College: Understanding the Impacts of Interim on Graduate Employability

Erin McHugh

What are Employers Seeking?

Contemporary liberal arts curriculum presents a series of concerns amongst parents, students, and employers, with valid reason. According to Neely, “in a market-driven world, the primary threat to liberal arts colleges is found in the marketplace” (29). Estimates from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York reveal that liberal arts graduates are almost “20%” more likely to be underemployed than mainstream college graduates and occupy lower-skilled jobs in comparison to graduates in technical and quantitative backgrounds (Abel and Dietz 10). Furthermore, the 2014 Hamilton Project suggests, “over the entire career, the highest-earning majors will earn about two and a half times what the lowest-earning majors will earn” (Hershbein and Kearney 4). Do these statistics mean liberal arts degrees are a lost cause? Is there hope for liberal arts graduates to fill this apparent wage gap?

To explore these questions, it is important first to explore the literature surrounding what skills employers search for in candidates. The 2014 report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and the Association of American Colleges and Universities reported that “93% of employers agree that candidates demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major” and 80% of employers agreed that all students should acquire “broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences” (AACU 2). A 2017 report of employers by the National Association of Colleges and Employers confirms the most desirable characteristics on an applicant’s resume include problem solving and written
and verbal communication, which are the “hallmarks of a traditional liberal education” (NACE; Schneider and Sigelman 5).

Rivera provides a list of the most sought-after traits in potential candidates: an aptitude for learning, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and suitability (Rivera 190). As a hiring specialist remarked, “Liberal arts colleges are not going to have any kind of finance curriculum, so you just can’t expect the undergraduates to know that stuff. They’ll learn that on the job anyways” (Rivera 188). Rivera states that employers value an individual’s “thought process and logic,” as it points to their potential and success working in teams (200). It is evident that a liberal arts curriculum can prove successful in preparing graduates for the labor market and aligns with the qualities employers are seeking (Telling).

Accordingly, a competitive liberal arts graduate will possess a comprehensive set of “analytic and communication skills” and supplement their broad knowledge with “practical and technical skills,” which employers strongly value (Schneider and Sigelman 15). The modern workforce blends skills and diversity into “hybridized” roles that a single degree program cannot fully capture. To prepare for these fast-growing and evolving careers, liberal arts are called upon to combine the traditional curriculum with specialized skills.

With these considerations in mind, liberal arts graduates should take measures to obtain both a broad knowledge base and a flexible skill set that will lead them to rewarding, high-paying jobs. However, Schneider and Sigelman argue that obtaining the right set of skills alone is not sufficient. Liberal arts graduates must transform cultural capital into what Brown and Hesketh define as personal capital, challenging one to develop a unique set of skills and experiences. To increase promising job prospects, liberal arts graduates must also be prepared to articulate their skills and experiences to convince employers they are work ready.

Today’s labor market demands a “more digitally literate workforce” (Schneider and Sigelman 10), which points to new learning approaches within liberal arts institutions. Accordingly, Emory University created the Institute for Quantitative Theory and Methods in collaboration with the College of Liberal Arts. In addition, the University of Utah moved to award Degree Plus programs, which merges liberal arts degrees with post-baccalaureate certificates specializing in data analysis, digital marketing, and exposure
to digital communication tools. As a final example, in 2016 Davidson College partnered with a technology development company, Revature, to provide free online coding programs for students and alumni. Together, these innovative programs are helping to undermine the declension narrative.

**Methods of Enhancing Graduate Employability**

Instead of accepting the gradual demise of the liberal arts college, these institutions have chosen to differentiate their course and programming offerings. Many colleges have included experiential learning opportunities and elements of a vocationally based curriculum: undergraduate research opportunities, internships, service-learning, and study abroad programs (Freeland). Schneider and Sigelman recommend that liberal arts institutions take initiatives to help students maximize their educational experiences. For example, St. Olaf College created a pathway for students into the workplaces of alumni to explore careers and broaden their perspective on the liberal arts in relation to the labor market. St. Olaf is one of many liberal arts institutions in the United States striving to reach the student body in new ways through active career coaching, internship, research opportunities, and networking.

**Research Questions**

The work of Baker et al. suggests that there is a piece missing from the research and literature on American liberal arts colleges: interim programming—a one-month intensive course, taking place on campus, off-campus, or internationally. The focus of this research is, therefore, to examine interim programs at St. Olaf College. These take place over the month of January during which students can experience a month-long internship, undertake a research project on campus or overseas, or take a class of their choice. This study will test the following hypotheses in the Midwest region of the United States by analyzing the narratives of thirteen St. Olaf alumni.

1. There seems to be a missing curriculum; how do liberal arts colleges make learning more relevant to the labor market?
2. By analyzing graduate outcomes, this research is most interested in discovering if interim courses are a type of survival mechanism for the liberal arts. If so, does this mean that these institutions are selling their original mission short, or simply supplementing their traditional core curriculum offerings?
Data Collection and Analysis

Within this study, participants were chosen and interviewed based on the following criteria: age 23 to 26, St. Olaf College alumni, with a minimum of two years of postgraduate work experience. Alumni who graduated more than three years ago had higher levels of difficulty recalling the details of their interim programs; therefore, participants between the ages of 23 and 26 were chosen as they are beginning to establish themselves in a career and can remember their interim experiences in detail. Each of the 13 participants interviewed had a different academic discipline, including math, education, religion, psychology, art, classics, Norwegian, political science, and French. In examining the correlation between interim programs and graduate outcomes, there are four major themes that emerged: confidence, interpersonal skills, language acquisition, and global perspective.

Confidence

For Kelsey, a political science graduate (St. Olaf ’16) who is currently working as an American refugee coordinator in Washington, DC, interim increased her confidence and allowed her time to pursue a work placement in a career interest area.

Kelsey: The physics course during my final year was important to my current career. I was able to do an internship in the Twin Cities during that course where I served as a volunteer … I took the physics class at St. Olaf in the morning and then drove to the city in the afternoon for the internship… I also want to mention the Spanish language course I took during my sophomore year. It was a big challenge. However, I fully credit this interim experience in preparing me for my internship in Nicaragua. Interim helped me with my career tremendously.

Kelsey described how the Spanish language course she took gave her an opportunity to intern abroad and enabled her to pursue her passion for international relations, a way to sidestep the gap in St. Olaf’s liberal arts curriculum. Kelsey explained that she chose physics as her interim course because the class structure allowed her to complete a general education requirement in less time and granted her the time to pursue an internship. Kelsey’s internship during interim acted as a steppingstone for her current position. As a political awareness committee coordinator, she
invited a representative from the American Refugee Committee (ARC) to talk with students about the refugee crisis. She became connected with a representative from the organization, inquiring if she could become further involved, and during interim she began interning there. Upon graduation, Kelsey moved to the DC area and reached out to a previous contact to investigate potential career opportunities at the organization. From there, she received an offer for the position she has now. Interim delivers more freedom for students not only to explore new disciplines or interest areas, but to gain strategic networks and work experience.

Lucy (St. Olaf ’16), a current business project consultant at UnitedHealthcare, discussed how her interim experiences informed her current work:

**Lucy:** During my fourth year, I did the Norwegian Scholars program. It was a great opportunity to use my Norwegian skills abroad in a practical way... and it also had a health care twist. Throughout this program, I learned about health care through an international perspective. I worked with other students and a local company that cleaned ambulances.

Lastly, Sam, a psychology and studio art major (St. Olaf ’16), described the significance of the interim experience and the freedom it allowed:

**Sam:** I did an independent study with a professor ... on schizophrenia and ended this interim with putting together a lecture... there was a lot of reading involved, you know, trying to figure out the statistics, which is something I wouldn’t have gotten at a bigger school. I appreciate that opportunity. I’d meet with the professor about two to three times a week ... We decided that I would conduct a lecture during the beginning of the third week.

For Sam, interim was career defining. Her independent research project helped her explore career areas and gave her incentive to apply for a PhD. For Lucy, interim exposed her to the Norwegian Scholars program. Lucy and Kelsey both came away from their interim experiences with confidence, connections, an aptitude of learning, and the ability to adapt, all of which contribute to their successes in their current positions. Self-awareness of skills and confidence in educational experiences are qualities that Sam, Lucy, and Kelsey highlight in their interviews.
Language Acquisition

Kathryn, a math major (St. Olaf ’16), currently serves as a Peace Corps math teacher in Mozambique and explained how interim directly prepared her for the future:

Kathryn: My favorite interim experience was the Costa Rica trip during my second year. It was another opportunity to practice the language. Spanish was required for Peace Corps, so it was helpful that I did this. For my junior year, I worked in a school in Minneapolis; this course really encouraged me to get into education. I gained actual hands-on teaching experience… it provided me with a lot of practical experience for my teaching position for Peace Corps, so it worked out.

The interview demonstrates a clear correlation between Kathryn’s interim experiences and her future. Language interims provide an opportunity for students to gain valuable skills that can open doors.

Brea, a 2016 St. Olaf graduate and a current English language teacher in France, explained how language helped establish her first job:

Brea: In the second year I did the interim speaking French. This was really intense. I remember meeting before and after lunch, Monday through Friday. It was with a native French speaker… I did live in the French house too. We watched movies, news, and spoke constantly in French … I believe my comprehension level went up because of this interim. As a language teacher, this course informed me how to think about teaching and learning in new ways and gave me new strategies to teach English to French students.

Chance, a first-year Harvard PhD student in early Christianity, majored in classics and religion at St. Olaf. Chance committed to these majors during his first year.

Chance: I had taken ancient Greek during my first interim and wanted to keep exploring this area of study. Before coming to St. Olaf, I had absolutely zero exposure to classical Greek texts. My first interim was literally a crash course in ancient Greek literature.
In continuation, Brea spoke on the influence of interim on her current career path:

**Brea**: The speaking French interim during my second year was a sister program to the French semester. We watched movies, news, and spoke constantly in French … I believe my comprehension level went up because of this interim. As a language teacher, this course informed me how to think about teaching and learning in new ways and gave me new strategies to teach English to French students.

**Interpersonal Skills**

One of the most common aspects participants shared about interim is the concept of time. While a variety of interims take place on campus, others are located across the country or overseas. Therefore, depending on which interim experience a student undertakes, its structure will vary.

Within the following dialogues, new insights emerge: interim as a source of strengthening communication and team-building skills. For Sam, who currently serves as a software tester at Paycom, peer critiquing was a defining aspect of interim:

**Sam**: Peer critiquing taught me how to be vulnerable and also how to take a stand when I want to support others or persuade others. I hated peer critiques, but I see what it has done for me…Peer critiquing has helped me find ways to better communicate with my teammates.

According to Chance, interim entails freedom and has positive social ramifications:

**Chance**: My first interim was on campus, 8 to 10 a.m. I have to admit this timeframe really influenced my decision to take the class. It was definitely a different experience than high school or first semester at Olaf… What do I do with all my time? Well, I spent it with friends, developed bonds with new people, and got to spend time with others.

The social aspect of interim was also part of Brea’s experience:
Brea: You are seeing the same group of students very frequently. You are in class together, eat together, and hang out together. These are the people that you make friendships with and are there to offer you moral support.

Interim enables students to interact with people from different majors and backgrounds, which exposes them to new directions in life.

Global Perspective

Interim allows students the opportunity to step outside of their comfort zones and interact with other individuals across different cultures and disciplines. Kristell, a St. Olaf ’14 alumna who is involved in policy and activism in Minnesota, explains how study abroad informed her future work:

Kristell: I remember my interim abroad in South Africa. Hearing one of the activists, leaders of the community, speak really influenced the way I see my work and see people. We are all in this journey together... the journey is about accepting others with differences... and this adds responsibility.

For Chance, interim was an opportunity to travel out of the country and be exposed to new perspectives:

Chance: The first interim was my first opportunity to think about identities, which led me deeper into the classical world and ancient constructions of identity. The second interim in Greece helped me confirm and commit to the classics major...this is what I am most interested in now and what I am devoting my PhD to. Also, our senior trip to Israel was impactful. Currently I am doing research on New Testament studies. My research interests are around religious politics and ethics... I’m actually writing a paper on the various conceptions of Jesus... and without the experience in Israel, I would not have had the depth of understanding of these differing perspectives of the historical Jesus.

Twelve out of the thirteen students interviewed studied abroad for at least one January interim. Study abroad enables students to access a wider network and to learn how to interact outside of the college. Off-campus
interim helps students gain an “appreciation of the breadth of other’s experiences” (Lamas et al. 24), particularly important in a world that is ever more globalized. Rather than having an inward focus, study abroad programs during interim help students create stronger connections with the world and among each other. One of the primary aspects of the St. Olaf liberal arts experience is the ability to care, help, and support one another and to develop a broad knowledge base and skills. Interim is an opportunity to achieve such aims.

The question of employability resonates within mainstream higher education and liberal arts colleges across the globe. However, the ways in which these different institutions address the issue widely differs. The findings of this essay agree with those of Clarke (2008) who suggests that employability is a shared responsibility with individuals, businesses, and higher education institutions. The participants in this study agreed that interim programs added positive meaning to their liberal arts experience and helped them in identifying their current careers. For many students, studying abroad during interim was a highlight of their time at St. Olaf and enabled them to develop a deeper understanding of service.

Lastly, many students described interim as an opportunity not only to learn more about themselves, but also to learn more about others and how to work in a team. The interim experience at liberal arts colleges allows students to acquire job-ready skills and possess a high degree of self-awareness and confidence in those skills. Despite the corporatization of mainstream universities, American liberal arts colleges are protecting their traditional academic value while also enhancing student employability through interim programming.

Conclusions

This article revisits the methods by which liberal arts institutions are adapting their academic programs and pedagogies to prepare their graduates to enter the labor market. The literature review revealed a gap in research on interim programs. As a peer advisor and student director at St. Olaf College, I became most interested in examining the impact of these courses and the ways in which they prepare students for the workforce.
The research reveals how interim has a significant impact on St. Olaf students in terms of finding meaning in their studies and also acts as a catalyst for graduate employability. However, there are other nuanced programs (career services, study abroad, language courses, networking, etc.) utilized by liberal arts colleges that supplement and support interim experiences; interim operates alongside other efforts in the institutions, all of which are mutually reinforcing. This research demonstrates one way in which interim fits within a wider attempt of liberal arts colleges to prepare students successfully to enter the labor market.
As a field, we spend much of our time on our students—and rightfully so. We provide opportunities that will improve their employability, develop career skills, and prepare them for life after graduation. We spend so much time focused on our students we rarely stop to look at ourselves. Who are we, collectively? How is it that we all came together to share this common profession? What brought us to where we are today? Finally, how can we inspire others, possibly the students we work with today, to join us and work alongside us in the future?

These are big questions, and there are no definite answers. But in 2018, we created a survey to explore two of those questions—specifically, what are the demographics of the professionals in our field, and what motivated them to choose this career path? Much time and attention has been devoted to diversifying the field; by better understanding what draws people to this field, we can effectively recruit a diverse and robust workforce. We would like to share a portion of what we learned through our survey, with the goal of informing our collective diversification efforts.

Rationale and Methodology

Our survey had two goals: to investigate the reasons professionals choose to enter the field of education abroad, and to collect demographic information of the individuals currently working in US education abroad. We collected data from April to August of 2018, totaling 899 usable responses. US-based education abroad professionals were contacted through various channels, including regional and state-specific education abroad groups, NAFSA message boards and online knowledge communities, the national SECUSS-L listserv, various newsletters, LinkedIn, Twitter, and the authors’ personal networks.
These data will help establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of diversity and inclusion efforts, and will help inform hiring practices in the future, in order to create a field that accurately reflects the diverse student populations on campuses around the country and US society as a whole. Lastly, we hope that our data will contribute to an ongoing discussion and encourage further research on these important topics.

**Demographics**

As widely assumed in the field, we found that the population of education abroad professionals in the US is dominated by White females. We found that 79% of individuals working in US education abroad identify as female, and 83.1% identify as White. In addition, we found that a majority of education abroad professionals are heterosexual (80.7%), do not have a physical or mental disability (91.8%), and do not identify as a military veteran or service member (99.2%). A majority of the field were not first-generation college students when they attended university (73.9%) and were not high financial need students (66.8%).

<table>
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If yes, what is your racial identity?

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<tr>
<td>Arab or Middle Eastern</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>839</strong></td>
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There have been many efforts in recent years to diversify further the student population studying abroad (including targeted promotion and outreach; identity-specific advising; increased collaboration with offices on campus serving diverse populations; connecting with diverse student groups and affinity groups on campus; and diversity scholarship programs). Yet despite these efforts, study abroad in the US is still largely populated with White females. According to 2018 Open Doors data results, the current population of students going abroad consists of 67.3% women, and 70.8% White participants.
Perhaps not surprisingly, the current makeup of the US education abroad field is fairly similar to the makeup of the students who go abroad. This
makes sense, when noted that in our survey an overwhelming majority (89.6%) of education abroad professionals are alumni of study, work, volunteer, or intern experiences themselves. That having an experience abroad as a student makes someone far more likely to choose to work in education abroad after graduation is no major revelation and would explain why White females would dominate the demographics of both groups.

As we are a field that highly values diversity of thought, people, and experiences, it is problematic that the body of professionals in education abroad is itself somewhat homogeneous. Possibly more students of diverse backgrounds will be more inclined to consider study abroad if the staff representing study abroad at their institution is representative of their background and identities.

**Motivations**

One major surprise in our findings is that many people currently working in US education abroad decided on this field very early on in their professional careers, and many intentionally chose this field as undergraduates. Almost half of respondents to our survey (49.3%) decided to work in education abroad either as an undergraduate student or within two years of graduation. In addition, over half (51.3%) of the current field intentionally pursued a graduate and/or postgraduate degree specifically to make them a stronger candidate for the field of education abroad, and well over half (60.4%) plan to stay in the field for the majority of their careers. These numbers are possible reflections of the fact that jobs in education abroad are becoming increasingly more competitive, with the rising popularity of study abroad in general, as well as specialized degree programs focused on international-themed education. Those who enter the field today need to be more intentional than ever before in order to “break in” and succeed.

When looking at individuals’ experiences abroad, and the role those experiences may have had in their decision to pursue international education as a career, we found some interesting trends. Of the professionals currently working in the field of international education, most (89.6%) had an experience abroad during their undergraduate careers. A majority (62.5%) had been abroad as students more than once, and more than one-third (34.3%) had been abroad as students more than twice. While it seems surprising at first, it is perhaps not shocking that the students who are the most engaged and involved in education abroad as undergraduate students eventually choose to pursue it as a career.
Also related to professionals' experiences abroad as students, a significant number of US education abroad professionals participated in host university, direct-enroll model programs (42.8%), a surprisingly large number (37.3%) lived in homestay accommodations while they were abroad, and the majority (81.0%) went abroad on programs lasting 10 weeks or longer. According to IIE’s 2018 Open Doors report, 35.4% of students going abroad in 2016-17 went abroad on programs of 10 weeks or longer, meaning educational abroad professionals tend to go abroad for longer periods of time than students who went abroad but did not choose education abroad as a career. This suggests correlation between participating on longer programs abroad and the desire to work in this field as a career.

Given this data, it would seem that going abroad multiple times, living in homestay accommodations, host university study, and programs of 10 weeks or longer are indicators of individuals who might become interested in working in education abroad as a career. Knowing this, to attract young professionals from diverse backgrounds to join our field, we should start by looking at students who fit some or all of this profile.

Discussion

One strategy for diverse hiring is to focus efforts on recruiting diverse study abroad alumni to work in our offices as student staff or peer advisors, before they finish their undergraduate education, or as graduate interns. Our survey found that a significant number of professionals (17.5%) who did not initially choose education abroad as a career, but came back to it later on in life, did so because of an experience as a student peer advisor or graduate intern in an education abroad office as a student. Many student internship programs, such as the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center’s Global Leaders Internship program, have had excellent participation rates among students from diverse backgrounds. This program gives students the unique opportunity to learn about different facets of a career in education abroad and exposure to the field, and also gives them opportunities to meet staff in the Learning Abroad Center and build a community of professional contacts. In addition to developing valuable career skills, this internship program might encourage participants to stay in the field after graduation.

Like most education abroad offices, the Learning Abroad Center also hires many students for part-time positions each year, including peer advisers,
who take a lead role in providing student support services and guidance through the learning abroad process. Many of those student advisors have eventually joined the field of international education, either in the Learning Abroad Center, or other education abroad offices around the country. Hiring diverse talent for these student positions in our offices will give us the opportunity to connect earlier, and to prepare students with specific training and skills that will allow them to be successful working in education abroad.

Another strategy for promoting diversity within our field may be to recruit professionals from other departments around campus. Our data found that a large number of professionals currently working in education abroad (23.4%) came to the field from a faculty appointment, another student affairs position, or other higher-education roles. The individuals around campus who are so vital in recruiting diverse student populations to study abroad might also make great candidates to work in education abroad. In order to inform individuals on campus of the variety of professional opportunities within the field, it is important to establish campus connections and to continue sharing accomplishments, challenges, and ideas, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of our work (and of the students’ experiences abroad).

Conclusion

Our data suggests that some of the widely held assumptions about the demographic makeup of our field are likely true. Our survey found the field to be largely comprised of White females who studied abroad as undergraduates (usually multiple times) and hold master’s degrees. These data provide an important baseline for future surveys of education abroad professionals, to determine if current diversification efforts have the impact we hope it will.

One surprise from our data is that professionals are choosing a career in education abroad younger and younger—often while still undergraduates. We also found that many current professionals had their start in the field as student workers, peer advisors, or graduate assistants while still students. For this reason, we believe that diversification efforts in hiring practices need to start before entry-level professional positions and should begin with hiring student employees.
We found that four specific aspects of the study abroad experience might be predictive of which students will one day choose a career in education abroad. Current US education abroad professionals are more likely than others to have studied abroad multiple times as students, on programs lasting 10 weeks or longer, on host university direct-enroll programs, and living in homestay accommodations. When looking to recruit students into peer advisor or graduate positions with the hopes they might choose education abroad as a career, it might be helpful to look for students who match some or all of this profile.

With all this in mind, the data collected in our survey provides a valuable snapshot of the demographic makeup of the current field of US education abroad professionals, upon which future studies can be compared. It also gives helpful clues as to what draws people to pursue this field as a career, which is necessary to consider when developing any new hiring strategies.
In this concluding section, Beth Lory’s essay on employer attitudes introduces two leaders in human resource management from both sides of the Atlantic. Ben Tucker is co-founder of Minerva, an executive search and leadership services organization which works with clients across the world including the Middle East, Bangladesh, Fiji and Australia, as well as the UK where it is based. Minerva is currently working with a partner in India to develop a program of leadership development activities aimed at the rapidly developing Higher Education sector.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., is President of The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM is the world’s largest HR professional society, representing 285,000 members in more than 165 countries. For nearly seven decades, it has been the leading provider of resources serving the needs of HR professionals and advancing the practice of human resource management. SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China, India and United Arab Emirates. These voices conclude this edition with a reminder that the case for the liberal arts is also made by those who represent the voices of employers across the world.
As higher education professionals, we all realize the benefits of education abroad, such as the ability to develop cross-cultural competencies, leadership, adaptability and flexibility, and to gain personal confidence. Many students seek education abroad opportunities precisely to strengthen and further develop these competencies; many of these align with the University of Minnesota, College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Core Career Competencies. But do organizations who are hiring CLA students see the value of these experiences as much as we do?

CLA’s Employer Engagement staff report that employers have mixed reactions to the value of education abroad. A recent survey of a small sampling of our employer partners revealed that they are either positive or somewhat neutral on the topic. A recurrent problem is that while students often list education abroad on their resume, they are unable to articulate clearly the value of that experience in an interview.

If education abroad seems obviously beneficial to us, why don’t those who recruit our students understand the same benefits? Here is a sampling of what we heard from employers:

**Positive**

[Study abroad] allows students to adapt to global situations and helps in personal growth and confidence. Adaptability, second-language skills, diversity of thought, an interest in other cultures, and cultural flexibility are always strong skills to learn.

**Neutral**

Depends what they are learning and if it is relevant to the position.
they are applying for. Gaining a life experience abroad isn’t really that valuable if students can’t show experience that ties to the role. It would be of value if the student communicated skills learned or enhanced by their study abroad.

Employers’ neutrality or indifference on the topic of education abroad often comes back to a common issue: a student’s inability to translate their experience in language that an employer can readily understand, and in a way that directly applies to the position for which a student is being considered.

Opportunities for students to reflect and “unpack” experiences are available prior to program departure, during a student’s time abroad, and after returning home. Those of us who work with employers are also in a position to promote what students are gaining through their studies abroad, helping them understand the value of these experiences.

A small group of CLA Undergraduate Education staff had the opportunity to learn more about CLA students’ experiences abroad—including their internships—during an on-site workshop in Florence and London in 2019. We visited two University of Minnesota centers (Study and Intern in Florence and Study and Intern in London), as well as the site of the program University Study in the UK: Queen Mary University in London. Each of these locations supports CLA’s Career Readiness goals through programming and curriculum, by vetting quality internship sites, supporting students during their internships, and helping students articulate the value of their internships.

CLA’s Career Readiness effort helps students understand and articulate their educational experiences at home and abroad in ways that set them apart and give them a distinct advantage from other liberal arts students. A key goal for this on-site workshop visit was to share information and resources we are currently developing/delivering, and to share our respective best practices so that we can all continue to strengthen students’ ability to process and articulate their experiences abroad with clear focus and purpose.

We spoke with students who had inspiring internship experiences. Students worked in a variety of large and small or family-owned businesses such as a wine shop, a hat shop, and a leather goods maker.
Another student interned with a former theater director whose business (Production Exchange) focuses on supporting the careers of new professional actors. Students also interned at the Foundling Museum in London doing research and working on label copy.

Small business owners provided students with marketing and promotions opportunities “on the ground floor.” These students helped develop a marketing and promotions plan to ensure the owners’ products were getting exposure nationally and internationally. The students worked to identify, develop, “sell,” and execute a marketing plan for these owners. Students began each internship with a framework of their work responsibilities, but they were in charge of fleshing out the details of all that needed to be done to meet the marketing needs of the business owner, whose primary focus was often on creating a product.

Through these internship assignments, students learned valuable skills in marketing, social media, project management, time management, strategic planning, communicating persuasively, and budgeting, among other skills. The positions also required students to be creative and self-motivated, to have a strong work ethic and the ability to work independently and with others different from themselves, to set goals and deadlines, and to meet those deadlines and expectations.

Said the owner of Production Exchange, regarding the profile of the students he looks for in his three-person organization:

We need people to embrace the opportunity rather than ask for what work needs to be done. There is a lot to do, so just do it! Don’t wait to be told. We need people who are self-starters, motivators, have numeric aptitude, manage data with precision, like the business we are involved with, and effectively—and in a gentle yet firm way—support actors who are just starting out in their careers.

All CLA students who study abroad have rich cultural experiences inside and outside of the classroom and have the ability to articulate precisely how those experiences should matter to future employers. The work that we are doing through prior preparation and reflection, both during and after their time abroad, will enable students to better translate what some regard as “academic tourism” into a compelling story that prepares students more competitively for the job market.
Pity the nation that knows no other language but its own
and no other culture but its own
_Pity the Nation_, Lawrence Ferlinghetti.¹

What really happens when we study abroad? Google the topic and you will find numerous personal accounts of the transformative nature of a study abroad experience. It builds confidence, gives new perspectives, develops a love for travel, offers new skills. There are many, many reasons for doing it. The case is often made at the individual level, couched in terms of how it will broaden the mind and enhance career opportunities.

I argue in this article that it is more important than ever that we encourage and support our students in studying abroad, not just for individual but also for societal reasons. There is a broader benefit that should not be underestimated; and the ability to see the world from multiple cultural perspectives, to critique the behaviors and assumptions of our own nations, and to participate responsibly in the political processes of an increasingly interdependent world will be absolutely vital in years to come. As delusions become more and more prominent in popular politics, studying abroad and related activities can play a part in keeping our societies sane.

**The Parallel Universe**

It became clear that, at some point during 2015, the world crossed over into a parallel universe, where we watched events occur that only a few short years ago would have seemed impossibly absurd or bizarre. We watch structures collapse that seemed solid before, and are surrounded by grim political aesthetics. The monkeys are, quite literally, running the zoo. As the situation out there gets fraught, and the centers of power shift eastwards, many nations seem to be pulling up the drawbridge at exactly

¹ [http://www.citylights.com/Ferlinghetti/?fa=ferlinghetti_poems](http://www.citylights.com/Ferlinghetti/?fa=ferlinghetti_poems)
the time when we should be engaging more, not less. Every toddler learns that the monster under the bed disappears as soon as you peep over the edge, but nations seem to forget this extremely quickly.

My point here is not original but I think it is one that we need to keep reminding ourselves of. Those of us who feel engaged in society should be working against these reductionist aesthetics, and seeking to encourage engagement and collaboration across national boundaries. In this context, the study abroad experience becomes extremely important. In my country—the UK—our Universities as an agent of supporting this have in my view been far too cynical about the process. International students have been all too often used as cash cows without enough meaningful thought given to how their engagement with our universities can be mutually beneficial.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the long-lasting American poet, talks directly to these issues in his poem *Pity the Nation*, which itself talks to an earlier poem of the same name by Kahlil Gibran, who wrote his 70 years earlier. Both poems looked critically at the idea of nations and their identities, and both take slightly different stances. For me, there is an urgency that we embrace the message of Ferlinghetti’s poem now.

**Sentimental Delusions for the Old Universe**

Gibran wrote in the first three decades of the 20th Century, and was himself a product of global mobility, having been born into a Lebanese family that moved to the Boston area when he was 10. His poem was written in the period between two world wars, and two lines of it are particularly relevant for us here.

First, a recognition of how changes in the global economy change our livelihoods, with a threat to our own agency and ownership of our own manufacture:

> Pity the nation that wears a cloth it does not weave, eats a bread it does not harvest, and drinks a wine that flows not from its own wine-press.”

2 Kahlil Gibran, “The Garden Of The Prophet” (1933) http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0500581h.html
As Gibran’s poem progresses, he portrays a nation more and more beset by passenger syndrome, looking to “heroic” leaders to solve problems and bring the past back into the future. Ultimately the impossibility of this is clear, as these sentimental delusions collapse upon themselves: “Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation.”

The Messy Tide

So much of our modern popular discourses seem to be about this sentimentalism or straining to board a ship that sailed a long time ago. Successive rounds of economic change occur and, unless we are willing to return to the woods, we cannot pick and choose which elements we welcome or disregard. Our modern indispensable, the smart phone—regardless of individual manufacturer—is the perfectly formed baby of this process. The hardware and chemicals will be manufactured on three separate continents, and the software and apps produced on others.

And, although it is uncomfortable for many, it is also clear that the latest waves are shifting power and wealth to the East. To my mind we then need to build societies that are outward looking and engaging, recognizing that our best way to work with it will be to engage with the changes. It is not a tide that we control.

Ferlinghetti wrote his poem over 20 year ago, but it is perfect for now. He starts with false news: “Pity that nation whose people are sheep and whose shepherds mislead them,” and describes our leaders and media, “and whose bigots haunt the airwaves.” And in our opening quote, he talks of the parochialism that seems to be settling in.

To summarize after this brief diversion, I should make my overall point here more clearly: The benefits of studying abroad are most often couched in terms of the individual benefit they offer for careers and personal development, but I think we should throw more accent onto the broader social benefits of the activity and its potential to support the development of sensible, outward-looking, and responsibly engaged citizens. Just saying that I’m pretty sure Boris Johnson and Donald Trump never studied overseas...
Global Skills: A Must-Have in Today’s Workplace

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.

In 2019, I was honored with an invitation to deliver a keynote address to high-level government officials in the UAE about workforce challenges in the public sector. It was my first business mission to the Middle East, and I had been prepped by my advance team on “everything one needs to know” about the religious, geo-political, and economic environment to ensure a flawless visit.

My car arrives at the impressive welcoming party, and I check my tie one last time before I exit to ensure it is perfectly centered. I head into the grand venue to meet the host, the Director-General of the UAE’s Ministry of Labor.

He extends his hand to mine for a handshake, then introduces me to the others standing with him. The first person, in full dress uniform and obviously a high-ranking military leader, shakes my hand. The next person in line is a woman, also clearly an important leader, who is covered head to toe in black and wearing a hijab. Instinctively, I extend my hand to her for a handshake—just as I would to any woman leader in the US—but she immediately turns away.

Horrified, I realize I have engaged in an offense against the local social customs. And because my empathy score is off the scale, I have reflected many times since that day about how uncomfortable I must have made her feel.

When we are in familiar circumstances, we tend to speak and act without thinking much about how it will be received. Our communication is culturally instinctive. But in another country, a small gesture, habitual behavior, or innocent comment may turn out to be exactly the wrong thing to say or do.
That one moment underscored for me how important global skills are in today’s workplace. And there is little substitute for in-person experience abroad.

Cultural competency is one of the most desired skills on hiring managers’ lists today. At SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, we have a vested interest in making sure employers can access candidates with the twenty-first-century global skills for success.

Our own professional certifications, the SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP, test HR professionals for strong competencies in global and cultural effectiveness, understanding that the ability to work effectively across cultures is essential to success in their career and in their organization. And the strongest lessons in global proficiency are taught in real time, in the lab of life.

**Bilingualism is a Bonus**

Many students choose to study abroad for immersive language training that can distinguish them in the job market. That’s smart, because demand for bilingual workers in the US has more than doubled in the last decade, with growing demand from service industries like banking and health care. Bilingual employees can expect to make between 5% and 20% more than their counterparts (Salary.com).

But language learning is just one part of being globally proficient. The other component is the experience of being there. One of the most valuable lessons students learn while living abroad is to pause, to listen, and to observe before acting. They discover how to put the brakes on reflexive behaviors and consider the experiences of others. Study abroad delivers daily lessons in forethought and cross-cultural affinity. There is no other preparatory experience like it.

Still, fewer than 10% of American college students have had a global experience (Klebnikov), and only 42% of Americans hold a valid passport (McCarthy). Clearly, corporate strategists and HR professionals are hard-pressed to find and develop the right talent for an increasingly international business climate. They understand that companies that demonstrate a commitment to global skills are much more likely to achieve their strategic and business priorities than companies that do not (Kuehner-Hebert).
Beyond language, a whole host of critical workplace skills are in short supply across the world. In the US, 83% of HR professionals say they have had trouble recruiting suitable candidates in the previous twelve months. Almost one-third cited problems finding people with the appropriate “soft” skills (SHRM).

School for Soft Skills

Learning while entirely immersed in another culture has a profound effect on developing the soft skills that are most sought after in today’s workplaces. Soft skills are what we use to effectively communicate, problem-solve, collaborate, and organize. Soft skills are global skills, and study abroad sharpens them in some very specific ways.

a) Teamwork: Immersing oneself in an unfamiliar culture enables a student to experience close, collaborative contact with others who have grown up with different socio-economic, religious, familial, or educational values. Diverse teams are successful teams because they can consolidate their array of singular experiences to discover answers to novel and complicated business issues.

b) Flexibility: Almost all of the learning that takes place in a study abroad program happens outside of the classroom. From navigating a train schedule to negotiating an emergency, the daily challenges of being out of one’s cultural context require being open to new ways of doing things and pivoting and embracing the unexpected with zeal and ingenuity. These are the problem-solving competencies every employer covets, and it is one of SHRM’s guiding principles for our own staff.

c) Resilience: Students who study abroad often report an amazing transformation—they become bolder, better versions of themselves. They are able to recover quickly from mistakes and bounce back from failure. They take more risks. And all along, they are growing into hardy, self-reliant adults. They bring a maturity and unflappability to the workplace that may take years for others to refine in their careers.

d) Communication: Learning a new language goes far beyond the spoken word. Intercultural communication requires an understanding that different cultures have different customs, standards, social mores, and even thought patterns. It requires a willingness to accept these differences and adapt to them.
Global Skills Create Better Workplaces

Employers generally value global skills like these as much or more than they value technical skills. The reason may be because the advance of technology itself increases the importance of skills for which there is still no good human substitute.

Employers report that the top three soft skills missing in today’s candidates are:

- Problem-solving, innovation and creativity;
- Ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity; and
- Communication.

Importantly, these are the skills that contribute to more inclusive workplaces, which tend to perform better than others (Catalyst).

Those with a global perspective can more easily understand and steer through explicit cultural differences as well as the implicit differences that hide below the surface, creating stronger, more cohesive teams.

Explicit differences, for example, are signaled by such things as language, food, architecture, dress, and music as well as how people work, including attitudes about punctuality, negotiation styles, decision-making patterns, and management techniques. Implicit culture, on the other hand, is reflected in how work relationships are characterized, such as whether individual or group dynamics take precedence in decision-making, whether the culture is hierarchical or egalitarian, and whether relationships must be established before or after entering into a project.

Global Pathway to Leadership

This is valuable knowledge in every diverse workplace, but global skills really come into their own when you are part of an internationally mobile workforce.

More employees than ever are being asked to accept short- or long-term assignments overseas as companies seek to be competitive everywhere.
But even as these assignments proliferate, companies report a 42% failure rate (SHRM).

Many assignments fail because the individuals chosen for the work do not have the right “global mindset” that comes with recognizing and adjusting to cultural signals. This mindset ensures that an employee’s effectiveness is not compromised—and may even be enhanced—when working with people from different backgrounds.

In an important but not surprising trend, multinational employers are using international assignments in their leadership development programs. Having experience in different geographies, and the global mindset it requires, is seen as an essential milestone on the executive leadership path (Ratanjee, Gallup Workplace).

In our increasingly mobile world, global skills are important for all job seekers, but organizational leaders really are forged abroad. An analysis of CEOs in the Forbes Global 2000 rankings found that almost one-third of them studied abroad (Study.EU).

**The Truth about Ourselves**

Having that immersive learning experience in an unfamiliar culture prepares today’s graduates for a workplace that will never stop changing, and where change will never be slower than it is today. Study abroad opens the mind to embrace new and different ways of doing things in a world where disruption is driving how we live and work. But perhaps the greatest gift offered by an international learning experience is that it forces us to learn truth about ourselves, and who we are away from our home and our tribe.
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