

STUDY ABROAD AND YOUR **CAREER**

YOUR GUIDE TO GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE FOR YOUR FUTURE



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& **CAPA International Education**



STUDY ABROAD AND YOUR CAREER



Ghana

Study Abroad and Your Career

What does studying abroad have to do with your future career? A lot more than you think! Landing your first full-time job is more difficult than ever. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for students who graduated from a four-year institution in 2011 was 13.5%; this unemployment rate has not improved in the last two years (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *The Job Market for Recent College Graduates in the United States*. April 2013).

In light of these statistics, it is now more important than ever to stand out from the crowd when applying for jobs. One way to stand out as a job candidate is to study and/or intern abroad. This experience can make an impressive addition to your resume, gives you a competitive edge, and sets you apart from other job applicants. During an interview, your international experience may even be the first thing a recruiter asks you about!

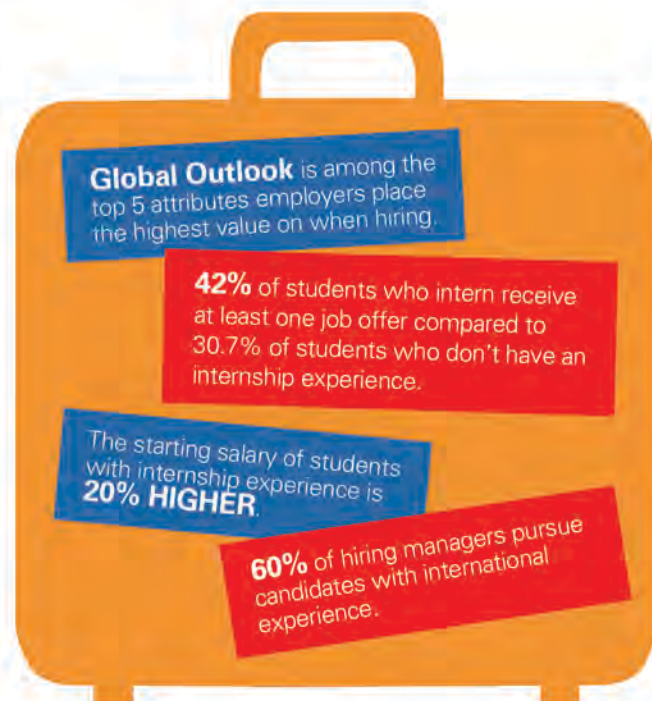
In addition to helping set you apart during your career search, studying abroad can help you gain practical experience and knowledge about the world around you that may ultimately influence your career choices.

// All students should study outside the United States so as to gain the necessary global perspective and mindset essential in today's global business. //

Chairman of a mid-sized company. (IIE, 2009 CEOs Survey)

What Do Employers Look For When Hiring?

Many employers look for well-rounded candidates with a global outlook whose success in the classroom is enhanced by practical experiences outside the classroom.



(Career Advisory Board, *Job Preparedness Indicator Study*, 2011; Institute of International Education, *The Value of International Education to U.S. Business and Industry Leaders: Key Findings from a Survey of CEOs*, 2009; National Association of Colleges and Employers, *Job Outlook Study* 2012.)

An international education experience can be an ideal part of preparing for your future career. A survey conducted by Global HR News found that studying abroad can increase your employability both in the United States and abroad. The survey showed that approximately 75% of employers cited study abroad as important when evaluating the resume of a job candidate for an entry-level position, and 80% of human resources executives think study abroad is important when considering a candidate for an overseas job placement (Global HR, *HR Executives Survey*. April 2007).

WHAT TYPE OF **INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE** WILL YOU CHOOSE?



Greece

Studying Abroad

Studying abroad provides an opportunity for students to have an educational experience and receive academic credit while living in a different country. Your study abroad program can focus on one particular course led by one faculty member or you can directly enroll in an international institution and take a variety of courses related to your major. Study abroad programs can last for a few weeks in the summer or winter, an entire semester, or a full academic year. Costs vary depending on the structure of the program, the location, and other important variables.

Living in a new environment while navigating the educational system of a new culture leads many study abroad students to develop cross-cultural communication and problem solving skills, achieve goals, learn quickly in an unfamiliar environment, manage their time well, and demonstrate superior organizational skills. These are all qualities that future employers seek.

Interning Abroad

In addition to an international education experience, interning abroad is an excellent way to prepare for your future career. International internships can help you build the skills employers are increasingly demanding of applicants: an exposure to, understanding of, and appreciation for diverse working cultures and practices.

Much like studying abroad, interning abroad exposes you to a variety of experiences that give you an edge as you enter the job market. These experiences include seeing your chosen field from an international perspective and working alongside and building relationships with people from different cultures.

● **Learn about your field from a different perspective!**

No matter what your anticipated career field is, different cultures bring different perspectives. By working and learning alongside people from another country, you will learn things you never knew about your field.

● **Get academic credit for your work!**

Have a for-credit internship to put on your resume.

● **Build relationships with international references!**

Your supervisor and coworkers can act as references for your future job search.

Experiential-learning and volunteer opportunities are other popular ways to gain experience in an international setting, also allowing you to acquire skill sets that can make you a more attractive job candidate.

There are many study abroad programs where you can participate in intern, experiential-learning, and volunteer abroad opportunities. As you research your options, seek a reputable study abroad organization that:

- Has an established network of organizations in your desired field.
- Can provide you with opportunities to integrate practical, real-world work experience through internships, service-learning, or volunteer placements.
- Requires you to formally apply for an internship.
- Will provide advice on how to craft your resume and cover letter.
- Will prepare you for your interview.
- Requires their internship sites to meet strict criteria to ensure that you develop industry-related skill sets and have the opportunity for international networking so that you are competitive in the job market.



Get More Information Online

Visit these online resources to start selecting the right international opportunity for you.

Diversity Abroad Study Abroad Program Directory:
<http://www.diversityabroad.com/study-abroad-programs>

Diversity Abroad Internship Directory:
<http://www.diversityabroad.com/internabroad>

CAPA Study & Intern Abroad:
<http://www.capa.org/students>

International Scholarships & Fellowships Directory:
<http://www.diversityabroad.com/financial-aid>

HOW TO **PREPARE** FOR **YOUR** INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE



United Kingdom

1. Clarify Your Academic, Personal, and Career Goals

Before you go abroad, think about how this experience can impact your career and how future employers will perceive it. Whether you already know what field you will go into after graduation or are still undecided on a major, participating in a study, internship, service-learning, or volunteer abroad opportunity can help you clarify your career interests.

Experiencing a new culture can help guide you toward current career goals or may encourage the exploration of new career pursuits. If you decide to do an internship abroad, think of it as a career "test run" before you enter the work force.

2. Research Available Options

Now that you've clarified your goals, begin to narrow down the options to find the program that works best for you. Consider the following as you keep your future career in mind:

- **Location** It is now easier than ever to find a program anywhere in the world. So how do you choose? Ask yourself, "What type of experience do I want to be exposed to?" A global city that offers a mesh of different cultural experiences is an option, or perhaps you'd like to learn a new language. Also, consider the popularity of your study abroad destination. While it may be tempting to study abroad in the most popular location, experiences in nontraditional locations can help set you apart and ensure you have unique opportunities. If you are unsure of where to go, you can get help from your study abroad office or a study abroad organization that is vested in meeting your interests and needs.

- **Program Type** Whether you are interested in a study abroad program with other US students, an exchange program where you are fully immersed into the host culture, or an internship, your goals will

help determine what type of program you will choose. Speak with students who went abroad to get insight into their experiences on their program.

Visit <http://www.diversityabroad.com/studentstories> as you research to find firsthand perspectives from study abroad alumni.

3. Plan Accordingly

Does your study abroad office have predeparture requirements before participating in a study abroad experience? Does your study abroad destination require you to apply for and obtain a work visa in order to intern or volunteer? Will you need to apply for internships or jobs back home while you are away? These are some of the questions that you should ask yourself prior to departure.

4. Update (or Create) Your Resume

Developing a resume can help you visualize the skills and benefits that you already have and the ones that you will want to gain while abroad. You never know what types of opportunities may arise while you are abroad so be sure to bring copies of your resume with you. Throughout your time abroad, update your resume with the new experiences and skills you are gaining.

5. Pack Smart!

While studying and interning abroad can be a fun adventure, don't forget to also bring with you work-appropriate clothing. "Professional attire" can mean many different things to many different cultures, so be sure to research the country's cultural background and avoid bringing anything that may seem offensive to locals.



WHILE **YOU** ARE ABROAD & WHEN YOU **RETURN**

China

WHILE YOU'RE ABROAD

Prepare to Meet Employers Stay focused! While you are abroad, remember that your goal is to gain skills that will give you a competitive edge in the job market.

Stick to Your Goals Remember why you decided to study abroad in the first place. Make sure that your goals are realistic and tangible. Don't worry if your goals change! While the goal itself may change, the importance of having one does not.

Start a Journal Take note of the experiences and events that are happening while abroad. This will give you concrete examples to use during interviews upon your return. When you tell employers about the cross-cultural skills you gained, include examples from your journal that show how you handled a particular cross-cultural situation—this will have a greater impact.

Work, Intern, or Volunteer Even if you select a program abroad that is not focused on career development, consider seeking out opportunities on your own. Working, interning, or volunteering provides you an opportunity to immerse yourself in a completely different aspect of the culture.

Pursue Your Passion Exploring your hobbies while studying abroad provides a dynamic dimension to your experience. If you like skateboarding or music, find the local skate park or open mic nights. If you are into sports, join a local club or gym. Employers admire the initiative, risk, and dedication that it takes to pursue opportunities like these in a new environment.

Expand your Personal and Professional Network

Networking is a great way to meet new people, all while expanding your personal, social, and professional circles. These new connections can help you broaden your perspective as well as your pool of resources for future opportunities. Don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone and talk to others while abroad!

WHEN YOU RETURN

Career Resources You will have newly acquired qualities and skills, international experience, and many references upon your return from your study abroad or intern abroad program. Your next step will be to communicate all of these to potential employers on an updated resume, through cover letters, and in job interviews.

Sometimes, knowing how to talk about your overall experience can be challenging. Fortunately, there are many resources available that will help you with this. A good place to start is with your study abroad organization. Even after your experience abroad, a trusted study abroad organization will continue to advise you and help you translate your new skills into an actionable resume and cover letter. Articles, papers, and blogs on leveraging your study abroad experience are also available online. And finally, your school's career center and/or study abroad office are good on-campus options if you are seeking advice.

If you need help updating your resume and talking about your experience with employers, be sure to check out these resources:



Get More Information Online

Visit the Diversity Abroad Career Center
<http://jobs.diversityabroad.com/>

CAPA Alumni Career Resources
www.capa.org/alumni

Career Advisory Board
www.careeradvisoryboard.org

National Association of Colleges and Employers
Job Outlook Survey
www.nacweb.org/surveys

Your Institution's Career Center!

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Spain

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