



The George R. Muirhead
Center for International Education
Central Connecticut State University

Why Study Abroad?

Consider these top 10 reasons!

1. See the world and broaden your experience.

There are so many amazing things to experience around the world. You can see different natural landscapes and climates that do not exist in America. There are historical landmarks in every country that helped shape the history of the globe. You can expand your knowledge of the world by actually being there, seeing it, touching it, and experiencing it. Pictures in text books simply do not do justice to standing under the Eiffel Tower or on the Great Wall of China. Is there a place or landmark you have always wanted to see? This is how you can understand the world in a direct, all-encompassing way. Studying and living in a different culture will help you see the world from a completely different perspective. It is an amazing experience that will change your life.

2. Gain a new perspective on your own country.

Being immersed in one country tends to give us a limited view of our world. Traveling outside the country will show you how America affects and fits into all of humanity. From the vantage point of someone else's culture you can truly see your own. By being exposed to so many diverse traditions you will understand the significance of keeping your own traditions alive. The American anthropologist Margaret Mead said, "As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own." You may come to a better understanding of how you as an individual fit into this world. Learning about your own country by living abroad remains extremely relevant today as we continue to further our understanding of other cultures.

3. Explore your heritage.

Getting in touch with your family's heritage can be another strong motivation to study abroad. Many minority students report tremendous educational and personal benefits from exploring countries where their families have roots. Studying abroad can provide you with an opportunity to learn about your own ethnicity and to explore your own identity. Whether your family recently emigrated to the U.S. or has lived here for decades, and whether you are discovering your family's culture for the first time or interested in learning

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4. Learn a language in a country where it is spoken.

The only way to truly become fluent in a language is to be immersed in it. If you've studied a language for several years and wish to gain fluency in that language, study abroad. Conversely, if you haven't studied languages at all, remember that almost half of all Study Abroad programs don't require any foreign language. Learning a foreign language will increase your educational development, improve your communication skills, and give you a world of opportunities you might not otherwise have. Knowing another language will help you to appreciate international literature, music and film, as well as to better understand the culture you live in. As you learn a different language, you will also come to know more of your own, as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, "Those who know nothing of foreign languages, knows nothing of their own."

5. Improve your professional and financial potential.

International experience is a critical and impressive part of any resume. In addition to the personal growth you'll undergo while overseas, the international and cross-cultural skills you'll develop will certainly expand your employment opportunities and, consequently, your income potential. Globally-minded employees are in high demand. Many companies seek out individuals with multi-lingual and multi-cultural experience and skills. Additionally, students can also take advantage of internships while they study abroad for an international work experience that is valued among U.S. employers. Your newly acquired skills will strengthen your resume in America's increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse workforce.

6. Become a full-time learner.

While studying abroad you will have the opportunity to truly become a full-time student. Traveling outside the United States will be an education in itself. Many students who go abroad report that in addition to enjoying and learning in their classes during the week, they learn some of the most valuable lessons outside of the classroom. Weekend excursions to museums and cultural sites also add to your academic and personal growth. You learn to interact with people who may not necessarily think or communicate like you. While in a foreign country, even mundane activities – like shopping for groceries – become educational experiences. Study broad programs also run for a variety of timeframes, meaning a student can fit a study abroad experience into their academic schedule and gain credit towards their major.

7. Gain new insights and outlooks through new relationships.

The relationships formed while studying abroad might become some of the deepest friendships you will ever develop. You will have the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, and some of these people may even become life-long friends. Study abroad returnees often report meeting others with whom they expected to have no common ground, and then discovering that, despite being from different parts of the globe, they have much in common and much to learn from one another. These relationships, insights, and outlooks are a critical part of the study abroad experience. You'll network with fellow students, teachers, host families and professionals. Oftentimes your best opportunities will come from who you know.

8. Fight stereotypes by educating others.

There is a distinct challenge everyone face abroad. Many other cultures only have experience with different ethnic groups through the American media (i.e. news, sports, music, and movies). Students may become frustrated when the same stereotypes from home follow them overseas. However, this is also a unique opportunity to educate others about who you are as an individual and as a group. You can illustrate your own experiences in the United States in comparison to what others see and hear. This is your chance to be an individual, as well as a representative of your culture, and to encourage positive understanding of global diversity.

9. Dispel your own stereotypes.

Frederick Douglass, the renowned abolitionist of the 19th century, once said, “Men who travel should leave their prejudices at home.” In addition to serving as a cultural ambassador to dispel other’s misconceptions, studying abroad gives you a chance to break down some of your own stereotypes about other countries and peoples. Not only will you have the chance to immerse yourself in another culture, you will also meet people from different backgrounds and make personal connections with people whom you may have never expected.

10. Take control of your future.

During your time abroad, you will be exposed to countless different experiences that may influence the rest of your life. Some students even end up changing their major or career path as a result of the new things they learn from being abroad. Others discover a newfound passion for travel, decide they want to work abroad, or desire to learn a new language. Elaine Chao, the Secretary of Labor, explains how her experiences in different cultures have influenced her career, “Memories of living in a developing nation are part of who I am today and give me a profound understanding of the challenges of economic development.” After studying abroad, you may find your travels have had a profound influence on your career or personal goals. If you wish to continue with your higher education into either a masters or a doctorate, study abroad experience will give an edge on the competition. Graduate programs, law schools, and med schools all look favorably on such global experience. You never know who may be impressed by your travels.

**Not convinced? Stop by the Center for International Education
in Barnard Hall, Room 123 to learn more about CCSU’s program
and find one that is right for you!**