

World Learning
SIT Study Abroad

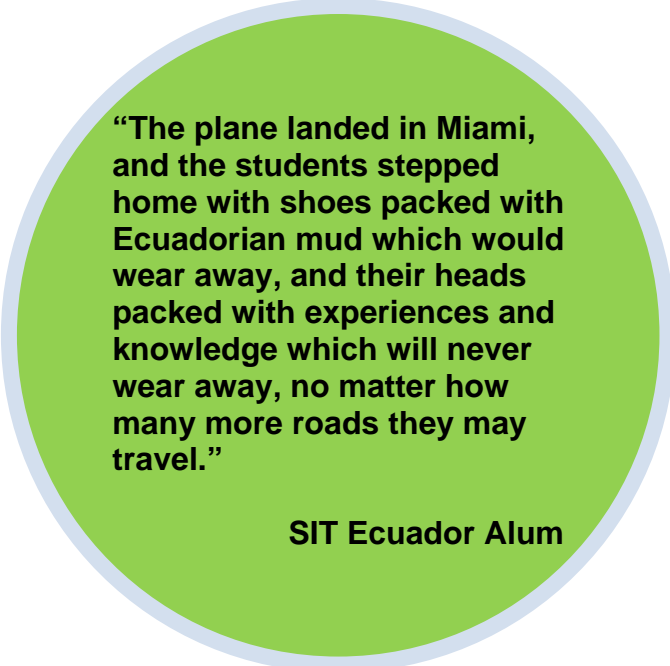


After Study Abroad
A toolkit for returning students

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After Study Abroad

A toolkit for returning students



“The plane landed in Miami, and the students stepped home with shoes packed with Ecuadorian mud which would wear away, and their heads packed with experiences and knowledge which will never wear away, no matter how many more roads they may travel.”

SIT Ecuador Alum

“Having faced a rich and rewarding trial, I can now put a face to a name, and a place to where I stand within that name: Viet Nam.”

SIT Viet Nam Alum

“The Experience has not ended here, but only served as a starting point.”

SIT Tibetan Studies Alum

For those who took the challenge to study abroad, the transition back to life at home is full of exciting possibilities. This toolkit will be a starting point for you as you readjust to home life. Our goal is to provide you with resources to help smooth your transition, to help you integrate your experiences into your academic and professional lives and to help you take action and be an engaged global citizen. Your study abroad experiences can be put to use in a variety of ways. Take a look at the world of resources available to you.

Before you return home

Highlights in this toolkit:

- [What is Re-entry?](#)
- [Personal/Emotional Aspects of Re-entry](#)
- [Civic Engagement and Social Action](#)
- [Academic Reintegration](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Good Resources to Learn More about Re-entry](#)
- [Re-entry Action Plan](#)
- [Fellowships and Grants](#)
- [How to Maximize Your Study Abroad Experience on Your Resume](#)
- [Networking with other alumni](#)

“My trip left me with infinite questions and sketched a framework for piecing together some answers.”

SIT South Africa Alum

Welcome home. Take a deep breath and let us take the opportunity to congratulate you for completing World Learning's SIT Study Abroad. You have engaged in SIT's mission to "prepare students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals, and citizens." We hope to see you continue your journey and transfer some of the skills you gained abroad into being an effective global citizen. We hope to help you achieve SIT's mission. We will continue to help you to use your energy in creative and sustainable ways.

You are probably returning home energized with new emotions, newfound passions, or even confusion from seeing the world in a different way. This toolkit aims to engage you as you return to your campus and local community. We have identified four areas where your experience with SIT can have a profound effect in your life:

1. [Personal/Emotional Aspects of the Re-entry Process](#)
2. [Civic Engagement and Social Action](#)
3. [Academic Reintegration](#)
4. [Professional Development](#)

We call this a toolkit because it contains tools that we hope you will utilize. You will find examples of motivated study abroad alums who put their ideas into action. We give you practical professional advice from expert career service providers. There are essays and activities that will facilitate your transition home. There are multitudes of ways to get involved, stay connected and make the most out of your study abroad experience.

World Learning has dedicated staff available to assist you as you return home from studying abroad. Please do not hesitate to contact us to share ideas, ask questions, retrieve more information, or just talk to knowledgeable people about your return. Contact us at 802-258-3515 or email alumni@worldlearning.org.

What is Re-entry?

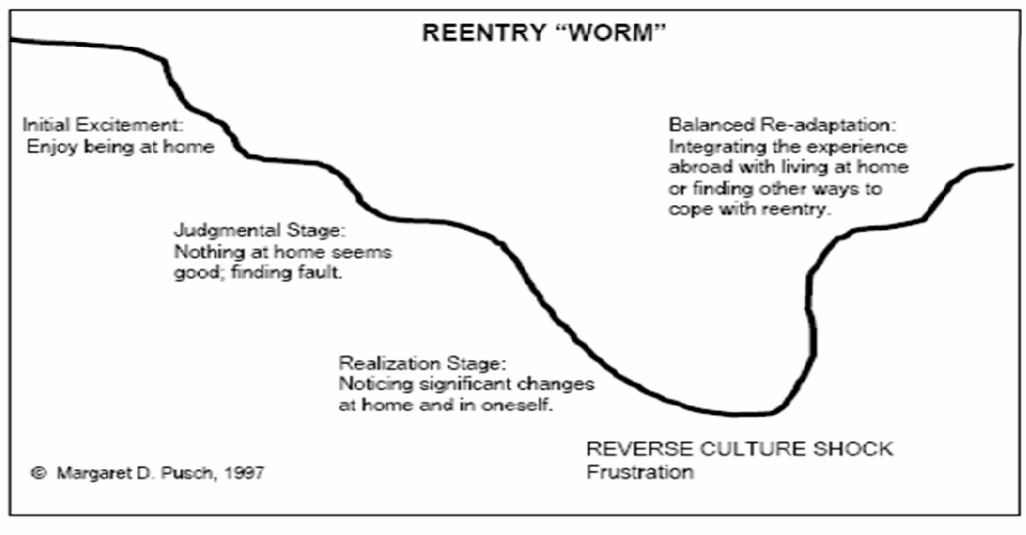
Re-entry is the process of returning home after spending time abroad. It is a powerful experience that has the potential to allow for personal growth, to provide mobility for social action and civic engagement, to enhance skills for your professional life, and lastly the ability to further your knowledge about the world and your place within it.

The traditional view of re-entry has focused mainly on the emotional challenges that come with seeing your home community or country again after studying or living abroad. Like many other students returning from studying abroad, the emotions are just one aspect of your experience. You may also need to:

- ✚ meaningfully connect with others through social action or civic engagement;
- ✚ integrate your new experiences into your academic and professional life;
- ✚ find ways to continue to embody the global understanding that you experienced abroad.

To get you started, the re-entry worm can be a useful tool in helping you realize that you are not alone in feeling a range of emotions. We recognize that illustrations like the "reentry worm" may be useful for many students and that NOT all students' experiences fit into these categories. While the worm shows these emotions in an order, we know that emotions can happen at any point during your re-entry. In fact, you may not classify any of your experiences this way. The worm offers us a range of feelings that may be happening.

Margaret D. Pusch, designer of the worm, also has a resource that identifies personality types and draws connections to re-entry. [Click here](#) to see this resource.



[Return to Toolkit Highlights](#)

Personal/Emotional Aspects of Re-entry

Highlights

- [Kyla Jagger \(Alum\) created a picture album from her experience](#)
- [Study Abroad Expert \(Stacey Woody Thebodo\) offers some suggestions and advice](#)
- [Let the worm ease your mind](#)
- [Write a letter to yourself](#)
- [Parent Re-entry Manual](#)

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The hardest part of re-entry was people seemingly not caring how my life had been transformed.”

SIT Ecuador Alum

Personal/emotional- adjusting to life at home after studying abroad can often lead to a range of emotions and confusing questions. Often these emotions are described as reverse culture shock.

The key to facilitating your personal/emotional re-entry is staying connected to people. The resources in this section are an attempt to get you talking to people, reflecting on your experience, and working through some of the challenging mental and emotional aspects of coming home. Remember there are lots of resources out there. This toolkit is just to get you started and to give you some ideas.

Strategies for personal/emotional re-entry:

- Make time to **show your pictures** or gather others' pictures from abroad. Some good on-line sites are <http://picasa.google.com/> <http://www.flickr.com/>. [World Learning would love to post your pictures](#) so we can share them with others about to embark on a similar journey.

- Say **meaningful goodbyes** and plan ways to stay in touch with friends from the host country and from your group.
- Be aware of the importance and challenges of re-entry. Check out Dr. Bruce LaBrack's list of tips, "[Preparing to Return Home](#)".
- Discuss or write about (in a group or individually) the fears and expectations of returning home and dealing with relatives, friends and acquaintances. Keeping a **journal** during this time may be extremely useful.
- Read **articles** that outline common re-entry emotions and coping strategies. The [Re-entry Worm](#) offers a great visual for common re-entry emotions.
- **Reflect** on your time abroad (i.e. keep a journal of your thoughts, ideas, questions, etc). Here are three resources to get you started:
 - "[Final Journal Entry](#)" (worksheet)
 - "[A Thoughtful Re-entry](#)" (worksheet)
 - "[What's Up With Culture?](#)" (website)
- Develop and participate in **support groups** with others on the program.
- Identify others you can talk to upon return. Check out [networking at World Learning](#).
- Plug into a **network of prior program participants** you can contact. Check out [World Learning's regional networks](#) or look up old friends on World Learning's alumni [directory](#).
- Serve as a **contact for future students** who are about to embark on a similar experience. [Click here](#) to find out how.
- Develop ways to effectively **share your experience** and self-growth with people at home (see sections on [academic reintegration](#) and [civic engagement](#) for ideas).
- Acknowledge the new set of values and beliefs adopted in the host country while continuing to celebrate your own cultural heritage.
- Take advantage of **on-campus counseling**.

Other resources for personal/emotional re-entry:

Stacey Woody Thebodo works at Middlebury College and professionally assists students as they return home. She wrote [an article](#) that is useful for returning students like you.



Featured Alum

Alum Kyla Jagger created a [story of her experience abroad through pictures](#). Kyla studied abroad in Mali on the [Gender, Health and Development](#) program. She downloaded pictures onto the Picasa Web photo sharing website. We commend her for allowing us to share her photos. Thanks Kyla! To do this yourself go to: <http://picasaweb.google.com> or we like to use www.flickr.com too. Also to your benefit, [World Learning's Re-entry Coordinator](#) knows all about the different ways that alumni connect through the internet. This is just one of the many ways you can digest your experience and share it with others.

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Civic Engagement and Social Action

Highlights

- [Alum Joyce Francis and the Literacy for Globalists Project](#)
- [Log-in to SIT's Alumni Directory](#)
- [Alumni Networks near you](#)
- [Cool Social Action and Civic Engagement Websites](#)
- [Get advice from World Learning's Re-entry Coordinator](#)
- [Do you want to start an NGO? Read about creative alumni that started their own organizations](#)

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"I have emerged from this experience with the understanding that world peace begins with the individual. Whether I end up holding a policy-making position, working for an advocacy group, mediating discussions or pursuing further international work, my decisions will be made with calculating objectivity in my head and my South African sister Nombuso's laugh in my ear."

SIT South Africa Alum

"No other creatures possess the means to create such lasting effects on our world as we do; thus we should be encouraged to play a positive role instead of the current movement towards separation from our environment".

SIT Brazil Alum

Civic Engagement and Social Action-- For many of our alumni, returning home from studying abroad means a desire to organize activities for social change. This can take

the form of starting an organization or club, seeking to deepen one's civic engagement or developing a sense of group life.

The key to Civic Engagement and Social Action is organizing or connecting yourself to organizations and people doing the work you want to do. We suggest that you join listservs, donate to and volunteer with organizations whose work you like, talk to people in organizations doing things you are interested in, and organize groups with others who share in your beliefs. Activist work cannot be done alone. We encourage you to start networking with others who share in your passions. You might be asking yourself, "How can I turn my ideas into action?" In this section you will find suggestions to help you become socially active and/or civically engaged.

Strategies for Civic Engagement and Social Action:

- **Link your experiences** in the host country to political and social action in the place where you study or live.
- **Volunteer** or work for NGOs and local or national movements.
- Identify immigrants from the host country and try to connect with that **immigrant community**; explore possible opportunities for volunteering or interning.
- Determine whether **community service** activities you've carried out during the program can be applied to your home community and look into continuing these types of activities at home.
- Create a **group contact list/network of students** on your campus or World Learning alums. [Log on to World Learning's website](#) to contact World Learning alums.
- If you didn't make your own video, obtain copies of other students who produced videos during the semester to present to your home community, in your class, in your church or at a local school. Local schools are a great place to **present your experience**. Connect with educators from your local school district.
- **Publish stories or articles** about your study abroad experience in community media sources. Want to submit your writing? [Click here](#)
- Write an article for your local newspaper or college paper about how your experience abroad helped you gain global understanding about a particular global issue. What is your perspective about a social issue having lived abroad? Share this with others through **citizen journalism**. Call your campus or local newspaper to see what you need to do to submit a letter to the editor, an op-ed or an article. See [guidelines for writing an op-ed](#).

- Get involved with a **student group** connected to your host country or another international student group on your campus, if there is one. If not, think about starting one!
- Stay connected to the host country/culture:
 - Obtain contact information for the people you meet and **stay in touch** through letters, email, phone calls, etc.
 - Read **magazines, books, and newspapers** about or from the host country. Sign up to receive RSS feeds from host country newspapers.
 - Listen to the **radio or music** from the host country
 - Watch TV, videos or news from the host country
 - Work with **sister cities** connected to the region. To find out if your home community has a sister city, [click here](#).
 - Eat at restaurants with the **cuisine** from the host country and bring friends along with you. This way you are introducing new people to the culture.
 - Find a **language partner** from the host country
 - Once you have re-established yourself at home, **make plans to go back** and visit

Featured Alum



Peter Quaranto, who studied in [Uganda](#) with SIT Study Abroad in spring 2005, was interviewed on the public radio show "[Here on Earth](#)," on child soldiers in Uganda. The broadcast was named Wisconsin Public Radio's Podcast of the Week.

Having witnessed the horror of the war in northern Uganda and the plight of children in the war, including child soldiers, Quaranto and a group of other SIT alumni formed UgandaCAN, the Uganda Conflict Action Network, to raise awareness of the conflict and advocate for its victims. On "Here on Earth," Quaranto, the director of UgandaCAN, discussed the need for U.S. engagement to help end the 20-year war. [Click here](#) to read more or visit the UgandaCAN [website](#).

[**Return to beginning of Civic Engagement/Social Action section**](#)

Below is an initial list of organizations and/ or websites that you may want to research.

The views and work of these organizations do not necessarily reflect the views of World Learning or SIT. World Learning does not endorse, support or encourage the work or actions of these organizations. This list is merely a starting point for students to begin their own research on what organizations interest them.

A Katrina Reader <http://www.csworkshop.org/katrinareader/> is dedicated to all the Katrina survivors and grassroots racial justice organizations of New Orleans, who are

fighting for the right of return of all 'Internally Displaced Persons,' and the right to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast with justice, dignity and self-determination.

Action for Change <http://www.actionforchange.org/> is devoted to connecting, challenging, and supporting college and university students in community work, activism, leadership, and civic growth. Here you will find practical information, ideas, and resources, as well as a forum for sharing ideas.

Americans for Informed Democracy <http://www.aidemocracy.org/> empowers and equips young people in the United States to address global issues—poverty, health, climate change, peace and security—through awareness-raising and actions that promote just and sustainable solutions on their campuses, in their communities, and nationally.

Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment, End War, and Build a Better World <http://www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook>

Association of American Colleges & Universities <http://www.aacu.org/resources/civicingagement/index.cfm> Web pages include publications on and a list of campus centers specializing in civic engagement.

Campus Activism www.campusactivism.org This is an interactive website that has tools for progressive activists. It is part of a network of websites that share information called the Activism Network.

Campus Compact www.compact.org A coalition of university presidents committed to deepening students' civic and social responsibility. Check out the [2nd Annual Fostering Global Citizens in Higher Education](#) sponsored by Campus Compact and co-sponsored by World Learning.

Care 2 Petition <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/> Set up on-line petitions for social change.

CBC Archives <http://archives.cbc.ca/index.asp?IDLan=1>
Here you can find some great archived videos. Once at the CBC Archive site, look at the left side of the screen and you will see a list of themes like "life and society"...click on any one of these and you can find lots of videos.

Corporation for National & Community Services Americorps, Learn & Serve America, etc. www.cns.gov

CorpWatch <http://www.corpwatch.org/> CorpWatch investigates and exposes corporate violations of human rights, environmental crimes, fraud and corruption around the world.

Creative Commons www.creativecommons.org provides free tools that let authors, scientists, artists, and educators easily mark their creative work with the freedoms they

want it to carry. You can use CC to change your copyright terms from "All Rights Reserved" to "Some Rights Reserved."

Culture Matters

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/educators/enrichment/culturematters/index.html> This website was specifically developed by the Peace Corps to help new Volunteers acquire the knowledge and skills to work successfully and respectfully in other cultures.

Democracy Matters

<http://www.democracymatters.org/site/c.lgLUIXOwGnF/b.3742845/> is a non-partisan campus-based project that works to get big private money out of politics.

DukeEngage <http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/engage/> Duke University pays travel expenses and a cost-of-living stipend for students wanting to participate in activities of civic engagement. Stanford has a similar program. Pomona College is developing one also. Research to see if your school has one.

EdChange www.edchange.org is dedicated to equity and justice in schools and society. They *act* to shape schools, organizations, and communities in which the full diversity of people has opportunities to live, learn, and thrive free from oppression.

Engage www.engagetheworld.org is a network of returned study abroad students, study abroad programs, and communities working collectively to link social movements around the world.

Feminist Majority Foundation Internship Program <http://feminist.org/intern/> seeks highly motivated undergraduate students with an interest in public policy and political science, particularly in areas concerning gender, human rights and development. Interns must demonstrate a strong academic record and preferably have a background in the feminist movement and/or feminist issues. Internships are available in the Washington, DC and Los Angeles offices.

Free Documentaries are available at <http://freedocumentaries.org/>

Idealist www.idealist.org is an interactive site where people and organizations can exchange resources and ideas, locate opportunities and supporters, and take steps toward building a world where all people can lead free and dignified lives.

Literacy for Globalists Project (LFG) <http://nw08.american.edu/~jfran/> is a citizen self-education program about America's global affairs, available in a multi-media, E-Learning format. It has been created with the help of numerous people within universities, spiritual communities, and lifelong learning centers.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force builds the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Their annual Creating Change conference link: <http://www.creatingchange.org/>

National Conference on Organized Resistance <http://www.ncor2008.org/>

New Student Politics Curriculum Guide

www.compact.org/students/NSP_curriculum_guide.pdf is designed to provide a structure for engaging students in reflection on their community service experience in a way that allows for exploration of the connections between service and politics, the purpose of their education and work in the community, and their role as participants in the civic life of American democracy.

OUT for Work <http://www.outforwork.com/> is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to educating, preparing, and empowering Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) college students, and their allies for the workplace.

Project South www.projectsouth.org Project South is a leadership development organization based in the US South creating spaces for movement building.

State of Working America <http://www.stateofworkingamerica.org/> Prepared biennially since 1988, EPI's flagship publication sums up the problems and challenges facing American working families, presenting a wide variety of data on family incomes, taxes, wages, unemployment, wealth, and poverty — data that enables the book's authors to closely examine the impact of the economy on the living standards of the American people.

Sweatshop Watch www.sweatshopwatch.org Check out the website for Sweatshop Watch to find a list of current projects, action alerts, and information about unions etc. They also have a resource section with lists of videos.

United States Student Association <http://www.usstudents.org/> USSA, the country's oldest and largest national student-led organization, develops current and future leaders and amplifies the student voice at the local, state, and national levels by mobilizing grassroots power to win concrete victories on student issues.

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Academic Re-integration

Highlights

- [Upcoming Conferences](#)
- [Websites and Conferences for Academic Re-Integration](#)
- [Publish your work](#)
- [Alumni who have received cash, awards and other recognition](#)
- [Fellowships, Scholarships, Grants](#)
- [SIT Graduate School](#)
- [Alum's ISP creates a wave in the surf industry](#)

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"I am involved with political activism in the U.S. and did a senior independent study on activist art. So the whole question of how to make art purposeful is also, for me, a question of how to fuse my artistic work with my political work."

SIT Czech Republic Alum

"My experiences studying Arabic in Oman have awakened a passion in me to learn the language."

SIT Oman Alum

Academic Reintegration-- Coming back home usually involves new passions for knowledge that puts your study abroad learning into a larger framework or follows up on paths opened up during study abroad.

The key to academic reintegration is finding ways to actively integrate your new knowledge, interests and skills into your college and university experience. You may be asking yourself, "How can I talk about my experiences in class?" "Where can I talk about or present my ISP?" You may also be anxious to find graduate schools that integrate experiential and social justice-based learning. [SIT Graduate Institute](#) is just one example

of the graduate schools that combine critical thinking and experiential learning with a similar topical focus as SIT Study Abroad. This section will get you going on integrating your new experiences into your academic life.

Strategies for academic reintegration:

- Identify professors you can work or communicate with regarding their areas of interest (such as becoming a Spanish professor's assistant).
- Determine how your independent study can be incorporated into the university curriculum through campus presentations and other campus work. Think about ways you can **expand on your ISP** through other coursework.
- Obtain copies of other student projects produced during the semester to present to the university community. Check out SIT's on-line [directory of ISPs](#) or [directory of Graduate Institute research](#).
- Complete university **assignments or research** connected to the host country and program-related topics of interest (where possible).
- Become a member and participate in university **clubs** related to issues relevant to your academic interests (human rights, ecology, public health, etc).
- **Publish stories or articles** about your study abroad experience in campus media sources.
- Participate in or present at **conferences, seminars, or presentations** that are related to what you learned or would like to learn about the host country. Check out the conferences list below.
- Get involved in **freshman orientation** if you can. (Many campuses hire students to help with new student orientation.) Encourage incoming freshmen to study abroad; share your knowledge and experience at orientation sessions with students and their parents.
- Look into **undergraduate research conferences** on your campus or in your area. These are great ways to present your ISP projects and gain experience presenting at conferences. The National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), established in 1987, is dedicated to promoting undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity in all fields of study by sponsoring an annual conference for students. [Find out more](#) about the NCUR.

Ideas for taking your Study Abroad and ISP to the next step:

- ✚ Connect it with your senior paper or master thesis
- ✚ Try getting parts or all of it published
- ✚ Present at conferences
- ✚ Ask your academic counselor or professors how to integrate your experiences into your course work
- ✚ Read the examples in the sections of how other alumni have used their ISPs to receive awards, give presentations, and make the most of their ISPs

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Websites and Conferences for Academic Reintegration

Check out the [World Learning Conferences page](#) for up-to-date information on conferences throughout the country.

African Studies Association <http://www.africanstudies.org/> brings people together with a scholarly and professional interest in Africa.

American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS)

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~aaass/> A nonprofit, non-political, scholarly society, it is the leading private organization in the world dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about the former Soviet Union (including Eurasia) and Eastern and Central Europe. The AAASS supports teaching, research, and publication relating to the peoples and territories within this area.

Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students

www.abrcms.org/index.html The conference is designed to encourage underrepresented minority students to pursue advanced training in the biomedical and behavioral sciences and provide faculty mentors and advisors with resources for facilitating students' success.

ASIANetwork <http://www.asianetwork.org/> is a consortium of over 170 liberal arts colleges in North America dedicated to promoting Asian studies. ASIANetwork strives to strengthen the role of Asian studies within the framework of a liberal arts education.

Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA) <http://www.brasa.org/> is an international interdisciplinary group of scholars who support and promote Brazilian studies in all fields, especially in the humanities and social sciences. BRASA is dedicated to the promotion of Brazilian studies around the world in general, and in the United States in particular. The Association holds a conference every two years. The next one will be in 2010.

Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) www.cur.org hosts a biannual undergraduate research conference and an annual "Posters on the Hill" event that takes place in Washington, D.C.

Eldis Poverty Reporter www.eldis.org Their aim is to share the best in development policy, practice and research. Browse more than 24,000 summarized documents from over 4,500 development organizations - all available free to download. Share your work with over 80,000 development practitioners.

Institute for Policy Studies <http://www.ips-dc.org/> The Institute for Policy Studies turns ideas into action for peace, justice and the environment. We strengthen social movements with independent research, visionary thinking, and links to the grassroots, scholars and elected officials.

Latin American Studies Symposium www.bsc.edu/academics/las/symposium.htm - Birmingham Southern College, Alabama

Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/> is a non-political association that fosters the study of the Middle East, promotes high standards of scholarship and teaching, and encourages public understanding of the region and its peoples through programs, publications and services.

National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR): www.ncur.org is dedicated to promoting undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity in all fields of study by sponsoring an annual conference for students. The conference takes place at a different institution each year and draws 2,000 students and faculty members.

National Women's Studies Association leads the field in women's studies in educational and social transformation. Visit the student site <http://www.nwsa.org/students/index.php> to view resources and to download the 2006 edition of National Women's Studies Association *Guide to Graduate Work in Women's and Gender Studies*

Sigma Xi Annual Meeting & Student Research Conference- <http://www.sigmaxi.org/meetings/annual/index.shtml> Each November, Sigma Xi leaders and highly motivated college students gather to share ideas, information and camaraderie at the Sigma Xi Annual Meeting and Student Research Conference.

So Just <http://www.sojust.net/> is the only document history of social justice, civil rights, equity, peace, and activism. Uncover the history of anti-racism, suffrage, the gay rights movement, labor activism, and other movements through historic speeches, song lyrics, poetry, essays, and other documentary artifacts related to social justice.

Undergraduate Research Community for Human Sciences http://www.kon.org/urc/undergrad_research.html This initiative creates a framework and community to augment the scholarship of learning and teaching in preparing students for graduate education, the workplace, and responsible citizenship. It serves as a catalyst for increasing the experiential content of undergraduate education in the human sciences. In other words, this project develops a model to advance both undergraduate student development and a national undergraduate research agenda for the human sciences.

US in the World Guidebook <http://www.usintheworld.org/index.php?flash=yes> *U.S. in the World* supports the work of advocates of pragmatic, principled, effective, and collaborative U.S. engagement in the world.

Featured Alum



SIT Study Abroad alum presents research project on sustainability of surfboards at a major surf industry conference. Sean Sullivan's research project causes waves within the surf industry as he questions the environmental and health impact of the modern surfboard. [Click here](#) to read more.

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Publish your work and read about published alumni!

“Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad” features SIT Study Abroad contributors. Alums and Academic Directors of the Mali and Kenya programs share findings and reflections on the research process. [Read more](#).

Other great sources where you can publish your work includes:

1. Abroad View - <http://www.abroadviewmagazine.com/> ([Read about SIT Study Abroad alum](#) Justine McGowan featured in Abroad View)
2. Campus Compact publications - http://www.compact.org/publications/by_category/student
3. Critique – a worldwide student journal of politics - <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/critique/>
4. Frontiers – The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad - <http://www.frontiersjournal.com/>
5. Glimpse Abroad - <http://www.glimpseabroad.org>
6. Transitions Abroad - <http://www.transitionsabroad.com/> ([Read about an alum](#) featured in Transitions Abroad)
7. Verge Magazine online - <http://www.vergemagazine.ca/>

Fellowship and Grants

Visit World Learning [Opportunities and Scholarships](#) section for up-to-date information on fellowships, grants, and other similar opportunities.

[Click here](#) to read about the numerous Fellowships and Grants awarded to SIT Study Abroad alums.

Alumni that have used their study abroad experience to further their studies

[Read more](#) about how four alumni like *Yohannes Cleary* received awards, grants, gave presentations and made the most of their experience abroad.

After studying abroad on SIT's Brazil: Culture, Development and Social Justice program, *Bianca Santos* published article and presented at conferences. Her experiences in Brazil and on SIT's Mongolia: Culture and Development program led to professional development opportunities. [Click here](#) to read more.

Deanna Lesht presented her experiences in Oman at the National Young Women's Leadership Conference. To read more about this SIT Study Abroad alum, [click here](#).

SIT Study Abroad Students Awarded Fulbright Scholarships. [Click here](#) to read more.

Demetri Blanas received the 2007 Undergraduate Research Award for his research on rural health care in Senegal. He was recognized by the Forum on Education Abroad. [Click here](#) to read more.

SIT Study Abroad alum awarded Fulbright Fellowship to Paraguay. *Sarita Role* conducted participatory research with leading sustainable agriculture and microfinance institutes. [Click here](#) to read more.

Shelly Facente focused her Masters of Public Health thesis on research she started while on SIT's Netherlands: International Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender program. [Read more](#) about this alum.

Nicaragua study abroad alum is Rhodes Scholar. [Click here](#) to read more about *Elizabeth Kistin*.

SIT alum named Rhodes Scholar for 2005. Social anthropology scholar *Anastasia Piliavsky* studied at Oxford University. [Click here](#) to read more

Rachel Hadler received a Fulbright Fellowship to continue the research she started in Berlin while on SIT's Central Europe: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Culture program. [Click here](#) to read more.

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Professional Development

Highlights

- [Professional Development Resources](#)
- [How to Maximize Your Study Abroad Experience on Your Résumé](#)
- [More Résumé Advice](#)
- [Professional Development Advice](#)
- [World Learning's Professional Network Listserv](#). Joining the professional network connects you with other globally-focused alums. It's a great way to ask questions and share resources.
- [SIT Graduate Institute Prepares You Professionally](#)

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"My Fulbright proposal was founded on a subject that I researched during my Independent Study Project with SIT. My semester abroad with SIT was an amazing, eye-opening experience, which continues to influence how I see the world, and what I want to do in it."

SIT France Alum

The US cannot conduct itself effectively in a competitive international environment when our most educated citizens lack minimal exposure to, and understanding of, the world beyond US borders. If we lack the ability to see ourselves as others see us – a skill imparted through the direct experience of living and studying abroad – then we diminish our ability to influence and persuade foreign governments and world opinion.

--From the Christian Science Monitor June 12, 2008 edition

Professional Development - More employers are looking for international experience. You may come home looking to work in areas that touch upon issues raised in study abroad, or are seeking ways to spruce up your résumé with the knowledge, skills and experience gained in study abroad.

The key to professional development is to integrate your international experience into your repertoire of skills and abilities. You may be asking, “How do I talk about what I learned in a résumé?” There is nothing like good solid advice for “[internationalizing your résumé](#)”. Besides polishing up your résumé, you may be preparing for your career. This section will provide you with resources that will help you utilize your international experience to add value to your career ambitions.

Strategies to prepare yourself for professional development:

- Discuss **skill development** with a career counselor and visit your career center.
- Identify professional fields that draw on your areas of interest.
- Look at **resources of programs, organizations, and institutions** in the host and home countries where you can find potential internships or jobs.
- Synthesize what you learned during the program and consider how to reflect acquired skills in a résumé or job interview.
- Gather **letters of recommendation** from your contacts in your host country.
- Participate or present in **conferences, seminars, or presentations** that are related to what you learned or would like to learn about the host country.
- Visit your **career services or professional development offices** on your campus.
- Get a group of study abroad returnees together and work with your campus career center to set up an **international career event or day**. This could involve inviting professionals with international careers to speak, a prospective employers’ fair, interactions with college alumni with international careers, and other events highlighting international careers.

Professional Development Resources

Interested in Peace and Conflict Studies? SIT Graduate Institute offers one of the best programs in the country. [Click here](#) for more info. Also you can watch a [Youtube Video](#) about the program.

Sherry Mueller and Mark Overmann just released a new book called [Working World: Careers in International Education, Exchange, and Development](#). The book has information on applying for internships, government jobs, nonprofit jobs, and volunteer opportunities in these fields. It is a tremendous resource for the job seeker, and is targeted for college graduates. Sherry Mueller is a World Learning Board of Trustee, and the book profiles World Learning's President Carol Bellamy. The book is also [available at Amazon.com](#).

[AmeriCorps VISTA](#) –VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, strengthen community groups, and much more. With passion, commitment, and hard work, VISTA members create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty. [Click here](#) to check out what the VISTA member is doing at World Learning

[Peace Corps](#) – traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. Today, Peace Corps Volunteers work in the following areas: education, youth outreach, and community development; business development; agriculture and environment; health and HIV/AIDS; and information technology.

[Teach for America](#) - recruits recent college graduates of all majors and career interests and working professionals to commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools and invests in the training and professional development necessary to ensure their success as teachers in the nation's highest-poverty communities

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How to Maximize Your Study Abroad Experience on Your Résumé

There are several techniques you can use to maximize the impact of your study abroad experience while job searching. Since your résumé is your key marketing device for finding a great job, you will want to know how to best showcase your international experience. Here are some suggestions:

- Use a 'Career Profile' with a 'Qualifications include' section to highlight language ability. This can be done in a résumé that has separate 'Career Objective' and 'Summary of Qualifications' sections with the language bullet entered in the 'Summary of Qualifications' section. See résumé sample ([Sara Hudson](#)) for language bullet.
- List any work or projects you did as part of your study abroad experience or as part of travel/study/work you undertook before or after your study abroad.
- Use an 'Addendum'* to list additional international travel and/or work, even if this experience happened before you entered college (e.g. living abroad with parents as a teen, high school service learning experience abroad, etc.)

* An addendum is a very handy device to present additional interesting information to your reader without having a 2-page résumé. As a recent college grad, your experiences probably do not warrant using a 2-page résumé. Present the "extra" experience in an addendum. An addendum is a totally separate document (it should not be an addition to your one-page résumé). When giving it or sending it to a potential employer, attach it or upload it separately. You can use an addendum to list:

- volunteer work
- projects (ones completed during college and those completed during summer breaks or after college)
- memberships/affiliations
- international travel
- research
- additional training/education that doesn't fit on the résumé

See the ['Sara Hudson' addendum sample](#) for suggestions.

Developed by Mary E. Hayward, M.Ed. (2008.) Mary E. Hayward is a Certified Professional Résumé Writer who has authored over 3,000 résumés and is the Director of Career Services at the SIT Graduate Institute, a program of World Learning. *Do not copy or distribute the above text without permission.*

[Click here](#) for advice on articulating your study abroad experience in your cover letter, résumé, and interviews and making your international experience look professional.

Want more advice on professional development? Check out the articles [Build an International Employment Profile](#) and [Marketing Study Abroad: How to Sell Your Overseas Experience to Employers](#) by international career advisor Jean-March Hachey.

Featured Alumni

SIT graduate student *Friederike S. Muehls* researched the ways in which SIT Study Abroad and ISPs have been useful to participants. [Click here](#) to learn more about her research. Contact the [SIT library](#) to obtain a copy of the research.

Bill Stanley, alum of SIT's Brazil: Amazon Resource Management and Human Ecology, works for The Nature Conservancy's Climate Change Initiatives. [Click here](#) to read how his study abroad experience influenced his career choice.

Lindsey Moore works as part of the USFT delegation tasked with broadening the focus of the Fair Trade Movement for coffee. She is an alum of the Mali: Gender and Development program. To read more, [click here](#).

SIT Study Abroad alum works as photojournalist in South America. To find out more how David Rochkind's time in Ecuador and Bolivia sparked this interest, [click here](#).

Other Resources

Several colleges and universities are partnering with the career centers and/or career offices on campus to help students incorporate their study abroad experience into their résumé, cover letters and interviews. A few examples of what schools are doing:

- Auburn University's "[Using Your Study Abroad Experience in Your Job Search](#)"
- Brandeis University's "[International Work, Internships, and Volunteer Experiences](#)"
- University of Denver's "[Incorporating Your Study Abroad Experience in Your Job Search](#)"

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Upon your return

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We are happy to have staff available to assist you upon your return. We can answer any questions, concerns, or take suggestions regarding this toolkit. We can also work with you one on one to help find specific ways for you to implement the suggestions in this toolkit. Please feel free to contact us at 802-258-3515 or alumni@worldlearning.org.

This toolkit is a work in progress. It comes from a developed sense of how you return home with new sensibilities concerning world issues and the diversity of people who live in it. Your voice is integral to the process of this being an up-to-date and useful resource for you and other study abroad alums. We encourage you to take a look at the resources in this toolkit to get a sense of the multitude of ways that SIT Study Abroad students are utilizing their new experiences. . Please be sure to let us know if you have any additions, suggestions or examples that would be relevant to this toolkit. Email us at alumni@worldlearning.org.

Stay connected to World Learning's global network by updating your profile at www.worldlearning.org/ourworld. Thank you.

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I. Re-entry Readings and Websites

Austin, Clyde. (1983). *Cross-Cultural Re-entry: An Annotated Bibliography*. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

Austin, Clyde. (1983). *Cross-Cultural Re-entry: A Book of Readings*. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

- A strategy for managing “cultural” transitions: Re-entry from training
- Return to Society: Problematic Features of the Re-Entry Process
- Re-entry Stress: the pain of coming home

Blak, Stewart & Gregersen, Hal. (1999). *So You’re Coming Home: The social dynamics of coming home*. San Diego, CA: Global Business Publishers.

Bridges, William. (1980). *Transitions: Making sense of life’s changes*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books Publishing, L.L.C.

- Being in transition
- A lifetime of transitions

Citron and Mendison “Relationships Roots and Unpacking” Transition Abroad Magazine July/August 2005 extracted on June 20th, 2008
http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0507/coming_home_from_study_abroad.shtml

CET Academic Programs. (2003). *Journeying Home: Perspectives on study abroad and reverse culture shock* (DVD). Washington D.C.: CET Academic Programs.

Cornes, Alan. (2004). *Culture from the Inside Out – TRAVEL AND MEET YOURSELF*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

- Self-awareness and feelings
- Understand your own stress response
- To integrate or not to integrate: that is the question

Hess, J. D. *The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1994.

Holm, B. *Coming Home Crazy*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 1990.

Kauffman, N. L., J. N. Martin and H. D. Weaver with J. Weaver. *Students Abroad—Strangers at Home: Education for a global society*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1992.

Kepets, D. *Back in the USA: Reflecting on your study abroad experience and putting it to work*. Washington, DC: NAFSA Association of International Educators, 1995.

Paige, Michael. (ed.) (1993). *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

- Understanding and Coping with Cross-Cultural Adjustment Stress
- Missing Linkage: The Process of Integrating Orientation and Re-entry
- The Intercultural Re-entry of Student Sojourners

Peace Corps. *Peace Corps Odyssey: The Voyage Home*. Washington, DC: Peace Corps Returned Volunteer Services, Office of Domestic Programs, 1997.

Rohrlich, Beulah. (1986). *There and Back Again: A guide for coping with re-entry*. Coping suggestions. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University.

Smith, C. D. (Ed.). *Strangers at Home: Essays on the effects of living overseas and coming "home" to a strange land*. Bayside, NY: Aletheia Publications, 1996.

Storti, C. *The Art of Coming Home*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997.

Ward, C., S. Bochner, & A. Furnham. *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, 2nd. ed. East Sussex, Great Britain: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2001. Chapter 7 (Sojourners: International students) deals with the study abroad and international educational exchange groups both in terms of adjustment abroad and upon return home.

Website:

<http://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit.html>

The *Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration* was created as a result of a study of collaboration styles of African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic American, and Anglo American communities. While some similarities in styles were found across communities, a great chasm separated each minority community from the European American Communities. The chasm was created by differences in expectations, styles, assumptions, values, body language, and privilege. Each minority community understands that great differences separate them from the European American mainstream cultures. In contrast, European American communities do not have much awareness of the magnitude of differences. Occasional events open a small portal to this awareness, but European Americans do not experience cultural differences as a central concern in their lives. For minority communities, the differences are not only central, but vast and inescapable.

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II. Re-entry Action Plan

Name:

Program:

Semester:

PERSONAL/EMOTIONAL PROCESS PLAN

I plan to do the following in order to prepare for and deal with the personal/emotional stress I may face upon my return to home:

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

I plan to do the following in order to contribute to positive social change on my campus or home community through engagement in my home community and/or continued involvement with my host country or region:

ACADEMIC REINTEGRATION

I plan to do the following in order to actively integrate my new knowledge, interests and skills into my university experience:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

I plan to do the following in order to incorporate my new skills and interests into my professional path:

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III. Fellowships and Grants

[Click here](#) to see a list of SIT Study Abroad alumni who have received Fellowships and Grants from the list below.

Boren Fellowships

Boren Fellowships provide up to \$30,000 to U.S. graduate students to add an important international and language component to their graduate education through specialization in area study, language study, or increased language proficiency. Boren Fellowships are funded by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), which focuses on geographic areas, languages, and fields of study deemed critical to U.S. national security. For more information, visit: http://www.borenawards.org/boren_fellowship

Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program is the largest U.S. international exchange program offering opportunities for students, scholars, and professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide. Visit <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/home.html> for more information.

Rotary Ambassador of Goodwill Scholarships

Some Rotary Clubs offer Ambassadorial Scholarship opportunities to increase international peace and understanding through graduate study abroad. Please refer to the club in your home district to find out whether they sponsor ambassadorial scholarships and find more information, including eligibility criteria, at: <http://www.rotary.org/en/StudentsAndYouth/EducationalPrograms/AmbassadorialScholarships/Pages/ridefault.aspx>

Rhodes Scholarships

Rhodes Scholarships enable outstanding students to pursue a second degree from the University of Oxford. For more information see: <http://www.rhodesscholar.org/>

US-Ireland Alliance Fellowship

The George J. Mitchell Scholarship is a national post-graduate fellowship awarded for one year of study at an institution of higher learning in Ireland or Northern Ireland. Please see <http://www.us-irelandalliance.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=34> for further information.

Watson Fellowship

This is a one year grant for independent study and travel outside the U.S. awarded to graduating college seniors nominated by participating institutions. To learn more, visit <http://www.watsonfellowship.org/site/index.html>

A list of many other international fellowship opportunities available to U.S. citizens is at:

<http://www.fulbrightalumni.org/olc/pub/FBA/cpages/gfn/grants.jsp>

Non-U.S. citizens please refer to:

<http://www.fulbrightalumni.org/olc/pub/FBA/cpages/gfn/commissions.jsp>

Alternative Sources of Funding

Finding Funders: <http://www.fdncenter.org/funders/>

The Grantsmanship Center: <http://www.tgci.com/funding.shtml>

International Funding Sources:

http://research.uiowa.edu/dsp/main/?get=internat_funding_sources

The Ford Foundation: <http://www.fordfound.org/>

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation: <http://www.packard.org/home.aspx>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: <http://www.rwjf.org/index.jsp>

The Pew Charitable Trusts: <http://www.rwjf.org/index.jsp>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation: <http://www.wkkf.org/>

MacArthur Foundation: <http://www.macfdn.org/>

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: <http://www.mellon.org/>

The Starr Foundation: <http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/starr/>

The Rockefeller Foundation: <http://www.rockfound.org/>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation: <http://www.aecf.org/>

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation: <http://www.mott.org/>

The Robert W. Woodruff Foundation: <http://www.woodruff.org/>

The Annenberg Foundation: <http://www.whannenberg.org/>

Adapted from materials by Alex Trayford, Assistant Dean of Studies and Director of Scholar Programs, Wheaton College, Norton, MA.

For another list of Grants and Scholarships available:

http://www.compact.org/opportunities/grants_and_fellowships

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IV. Going Home: Styles of Re-entry by Margaret D. Pusch:

<u>Intended Style</u>	<u>Free Spirit</u>	<u>Detached</u>	<u>Reassimilator</u>	<u>Integrator</u>
Reactions to Home Culture	Some estrangement and rejection (ranging from Discontent to Alienation)	Reluctance to go back to old patterns and home culture, but not alienated	Reassimilation; delighted to be back, may even exaggerate cultural norms, often downplays foreign experience	Positive Integration blending old and new pragmatically
Main Concern	Continue experience of being different	Survival, comfort	Easy reentry, fitting into home culture and prior roles	Finding best fit with the home culture without losing past
Internal Commitment	Being "unique"	Creating comfortable environment for self (and perhaps family)	Home culture; life as it has always been, cheerfully readaptive	Continuing to change and develop
Role One Seems (or Attempts) to Play	Eccentric	Detached but tolerant participant	Total participant	Leader or Mediator, Contented Believer, Advocate, Expatriate

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V. Letters to yourself: Writing Activities

This activity was adapted from "A Guide to preparing SIT Study Abroad Students to Re-adjust to the United States after Study Abroad" by Stacey K. Woody, 1995 and from the website "What's Up With Culture" (<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>).

ACTIVITY #1

LETTER TO YOURSELF #1 FEARS AND EXPECTATIONS

(During Orientation)

Use this worksheet to reflect upon your fears and expectations of the study abroad semester. If you prefer, you may choose to write a letter to yourself on a separate sheet of paper addressing some of these issues. When you are finished, put it in a sealed envelope with your name on it. Save it in a safe place or give it to your AD until the end of the semester.

1. What are the five things that you are **most looking forward to** about studying abroad?
2. What are the five things you believe you will miss **most** from home when you are abroad?
3. What are the five things (people, places, activities, etc.) you believe you will miss **least** from home when you are abroad?
4. My greatest single challenge overseas will be:
5. Other thoughts or reflections:

LETTER TO YOURSELF #2
REFLECTING UPON THE EXPERIENCE
FEARS AND EXPECTATIONS OF GOING HOME

(At the end of your study abroad program/ during evaluation)

Complete this worksheet reflecting upon your experience abroad and on your fears and expectations for returning home. If you prefer, you may choose to write a letter to yourself on a separate sheet of paper addressing some of these issues. Hold on to this letter until the last day of the program evaluation.

Now read the worksheet or letter you wrote to yourself during orientation and compare it with what you just wrote. Any surprises? What can you learn from these reflections? When you are finished, put this worksheet or letter in a sealed envelope with your name on it. Save it in a safe place or give it to your AD to send to you several weeks or months after the end of the program.

I definitely do not want to forget:

1. What made me laugh out loud:
2. What brought tears to my eyes:
3. My greatest personal insight:
4. My biggest cultural gaffe:
5. My biggest cultural success:

About Going Home

1. The five things that I worry about **most** when thinking about going home are:
2. The five things that I missed the most about the home since I have been abroad are:
3. Once I return home from overseas the five things (people, places, circumstances, etc.) I believe I will miss the **least** about living abroad are:
4. The five things (people, places, activities, etc.) I believe I will miss **most** from abroad once I have returned home are:

LETTER TO YOURSELF #3 REFLECTING UPON RE-ENTRY

(Several weeks or months after the end of the study abroad program)

Complete this worksheet reflecting upon your re-entry experience. If you prefer, you may choose to write a letter to yourself on a separate sheet of paper addressing some of these issues.

Now read the worksheet or letter you wrote to yourself at the end of your semester abroad and compare it with what you just wrote. Any surprises? What can you learn from these reflections?

When you are finished, discuss both worksheets/letters with a friend or family member. You might consider contacting someone from your study abroad program or someone else you know who has also gone through the re-entry process.

1. The five things that have bothered me **most** about being home are:
2. The five things I have enjoyed **most** about being home are:
3. The five international things (people, places, situations, etc.) I miss the **least** since I have returned home are:
4. The five things (people, places, activities, etc.) I miss **most** from abroad since I have returned home are:
5. How might any of this apply to my future expectations about my life after graduation and the significant changes I can probably expect as part of my personal and professional life? How can I apply the skills and knowledge I gained as part of study abroad in all the important areas of my life and future transitions?

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VI. Preparing To Return Home: Quick Tips by Dr. Bruce LaBrack

Compiled by Dr. Bruce LaBrack. School of International Studies, University of the Pacific for use by the Institute of International Education, San Francisco. Aspire Newsletter, Spring 1996.

Re-entry into your home culture can be both challenging and as frustrating as living overseas, mostly because our attitude toward going "home" is that it should be a simple matter of getting resettled, resuming your earlier routines, and reestablishing your relationships.

However, world wide re-entry has its own set of special social and psychological adjustments which can be facilitated by being aware of the re-entry process and following some advice from those who have already returned.

The following list is compiled from many sources, but all of the tips come from returnees who offer these ideas in the hope of making your re-entry easier for you and for those at home.

- **Prepare for an adjustment process.**
The more you consider your alternatives, think about what is to come, and know about how returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful. As one psychologist put it, "Worrying helps."
- **Allow yourself time.**
Re-entry is a process that will take time, just like adjusting to a new foreign culture. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.
- **Understand that the familiar will seem different.**
You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological reactions to being home. Everyone does.
- **There will be much "cultural catching up" to do.**
Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment and current event topics will be unfamiliar to you as new programs, slang, and even governmental forms

may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture. (Note: most returnees report that major insights into themselves and their home countries occur during re-entry).

- **Reserve judgments.**

Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place after allowing sometime for thorough reflection.

- **Respond thoughtfully and slowly.**

Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom in the returnee can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations; prepare to greet those that are less predictable with a calm, thoughtful approach.

- **Cultivate sensibility.**

Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is the surest way to reestablish rapport. Much frustration in returnees stems from what is perceived as disinterest by others in their experience and lack of opportunity to express their feelings and tell their stories. Being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing.

- **Beware of comparisons.**

Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after residence abroad; however, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to others. The tendency to be an "instant expert" is to be avoided at all costs.

- **Remain flexible.**

Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-socialize totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between maintaining earlier patterns and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.

- **Seek support networks.**

There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own re-entry and understand a returnees concerns — academic faculty, exchange students, international development staff, diplomatic corps, military personnel, church officials, and businessmen and women. University study-abroad and foreign student offices are just a few of the places where returnees can seek others who can offer support and country-specific advice.

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VII. A Thoughtful Return from the book Maximizing Study Abroad (2004)

Most of the following questions were adapted and cited from A Thoughtful Return, Maximizing Study Abroad, Student Handbook pp. 141-142. University of Minnesota

1. In what ways might my friends or family have changed?

2. How would I like my family and friends to treat me when I return home?

3. What am I looking forward to the most?

4. What are the lessons I have learned that I never want to forget?

5. What are some skills I have learned?

6. Many say that the experience of re-entry is more challenging than your initial move to another place. What are some things I might do to make the transition easier?

7. What have been the important things about this experience that I want to share with my family and friends?

8. What do I want to do with the experiences I've had (e.g., stay in touch with people I've met, continue with a new interest)?

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VIII. Final Journal Entry

By David Shallenberger

Faculty, Department of Intercultural Service Leadership and Management
SIT Graduate Institute

1. How has re-entry been? What have been the most challenging aspects of coming back into your home-based life?
2. When you look back at the travel, what did you learn about yourself?
3. What new insights do you have about your own place in today's global community?
4. What is the most interesting thing you learned about your topic?
5. What applications do you foresee based on your new insights?
6. What activities were most valuable to you?
7. What activities could be eliminated?
8. If you were to do it all over again, what would you change?

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IX. Share your stories through SIT/World Learning's connections

If you are interested in sharing your study abroad stories on World Learning's blog, your photos on our flickr site, videos on YouTube, etc, contact World Learning's Re-entry Coordinator at alumni@worldlearning.org

World Learning Online

- OurWorld <http://www.worldlearning.org/ourworld>
- PIM Admissions Blog <http://pimadmissions.wordpress.com/>
- World Learning <http://www.worldlearning.org/>
- World Learning on Facebook
- World Learning on Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/photos/worldlearning>
- World Learning on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/worldlearning>
- MAT Admissions Blog <http://matadmissions.wordpress.com/>

World Learning Programs

- Experiment in International Living <http://www.worldlearning.org/experiment>
- International Development Program <http://www.worldlearning.org/development>
- SIT Graduate Institute <http://www.sit.edu/graduate>
- SIT Study Abroad <http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad>

The link to the blog is: <http://worldlearningnow.wordpress.com>

What are PIM and MAT?

PIM stands for the Program for Intercultural Service, Leadership and Management, which is one of the Master Degree programs at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT.

MAT stands for Masters of Arts in Teaching, which is the other Masters level program at the SIT Graduate Institute.

For more information about either program please go to <http://www.sit.edu/graduate>

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X. Alumni who have started NGOs

Bolivia: Culture and Development program alum, *Robin Pendoley*, **helps students to think beyond borders**. [Click here](#) to read his story of studying abroad and starting up a gap year program.

Peter Quaranto **helps end the hidden war in Northern Uganda** by starting the Uganda Conflict Action Network. [Click here](#) to read how his organization is making an impact in Uganda.

Karen Austrian and *Emily Verellen*, alumni of SIT's Kenya: Development, Health and Society program, **started Binti Pamoja** in Nairobi. [Click here](#) to read more.

Sarita Role built on SIT Study Abroad experiences and **started a program in Latin America** that bridges culture and sustainability. [Click here](#) to read more.

Check out five SIT alumni profiled in this article. Their talents started NGOs and won awards. [Click here](#) to read more.

Taylor Mork and *Jakob Elster*, alumni of SIT Study Abroad in Switzerland, **created a center in Uganda** that provides public internet access to more than 150 local NGOs. To find out more, [click here](#).

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XI. Professional Development

Articulating the study abroad experience in the cover letter, resume and interviews

Babson College, Babson Park, MA

I. Identifying New Accomplishments & Acquired Skills

Examples of Accomplishments

- Learned a foreign language
 - Communication skills (verbal & written)
- Adjusted to another culture
 - Flexibility, adaptability
 - Entrepreneurial skills/risk
- Lost passport and had to get a new one
 - Problem solving skills
 - Resourcefulness

Source: Emmanuel College Office of Internships & Career Development

II. Presenting Your Transferable Skills: The Cover Letter

Collectively, my coursework, study abroad experience, internships, and co-curricular involvement have prepared me well for the [position] at [name of company].

...

While enrolled at the [name of program] in summer 2006, I had the opportunity to complete an internship at [name of company]. This experience helped me to hone my [specify, e.g. analytical, research, etc.] skills and gave me insight into how to work effectively in a cross-cultural situation in the context of health care services. I believe this skill will prove beneficial in working with [name of company] global clients.

Provide an opening statement that introduces your diverse experience.

Mention the name of the program where you studied and state the name of the organization where you interned.

Clearly articulate what you learned from the experience and how this will help you in the position you are applying to.

III. Presenting Your Transferable Skills: The Resume

- Education
 - Name of college/university attended
 - City and country
 - Dates of enrollment
 - Coursework and/or program of study
- Experience
 - Create a section called “International Experience” to highlight your internship, part-time jobs, and volunteer work abroad
- Skills
 - List foreign language(s)
 - Specify language skill level (e.g. basic, intermediate, fluent)

Sample Resume

EDUCATION

Babson College

Candidate for *Bachelor of Science* in Business Management
Concentration: Global Business Management

Wellesley, MA

5/2007

University of New South Wales

Coursework in Global Finance, Computer Information Systems

Sydney, Australia

1/2006 – 5/200

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

UBS Espania

Global Wealth Management Intern

- Assisted with audit processes
- Prepared and reviewed financial statements to advise clients

Madrid, Spain

6/2006 – 8/2006

SKILLS

Fluent in French, Intermediate German, Basic Spanish

IV. Presenting Your Transferable Skills: The Interview

- Reflect on the “why” questions
 - Why did you choose to study abroad?
 - Why and how did you choose your program location?
- Give examples that illustrate competency in qualities employers seek. Identify experiences that demonstrate that you can:
 - Creatively solve problems by applying familiar concepts in unfamiliar situations
 - Contribute to an ethnically diverse team
 - Take personal risks and act independently
 - Be flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing situations

- Refer to your education abroad experience when answering behavior-based interview questions
 - Ex. “Tell me about a challenging experience you faced while in college and how you handled the situation.”

V. Present Your Transferable Skills: The Interview

Practice Interview Questions

- Why did you choose to study abroad?
- How and why did you choose your program location?
- What skills did you learn abroad? How will these skills be helpful to you in the future?
- Tell me about your most challenging situation while in college and how you handled the situation.
- Tell me about a time when you took a risk. What was the risk? What did you gain or lose from the risk?
-

V. Bottom Line: Employers value your ability to...

- Demonstrate cross-cultural competence, and

Articulate lessons learned and skills developed through your international experience.

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XII. Sample Résumé

- Sara Hudson

sarahudson85@gmail.com / 802-579-3782

CAREER PROFILE:

Highly motivated graduate seeking challenging position where my international experience and education will bring added value to your organization.

Qualifications include:

- Solid written and verbal communication skills with professional presentation skills
- Excellent interpersonal skills and highly adaptable to new and challenging situations
- Self motivated team member with experience in high performance teamwork
- Knowledgeable of MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel and internet research
- Extensive travel throughout the U.S., India, Ireland, Western Europe and Costa Rica
- Languages: English (Native), Spanish (Fluent), Tamil (Beginner)

EDUCATION:

Bachelors of Arts Information Systems

Minor in Modern Languages and Linguistics: Spanish Emphasis
Amherst College, Amherst, MA (2007)

Studies in Spanish Language and History

The Institute of Spanish Studies, Valencia, Spain (2005)

EXPERIENCE:

English as a Foreign Language Teacher

WorldTeach, La Esquela Puerto Carrillo, Puerto Carrillo, Costa Rica (2008)

- Designed lesson plans pertaining to English language development in primary school
- Applied experiential learning teaching methods in the classroom
- Coordinated pen pal program with school in the US
- Created ecological project to enhance environmental awareness in the community

Residential Advisor

Amherst College, Amherst, MA (2005-2007)

- Advise and support all residents throughout the year
- Plan and facilitate group meetings and organize dorm activities
- Assist residents in solving any issues within the dorm
- Maintain a safe and positive living situation for all residents

Primary Assistant Teacher

Jarrow Montessori School, Boulder, CO (2000-2003)

- Supported lead teacher by creating lesson plans and materials
- Directed work time and facilitated lessons
- Aided lead teacher in classroom management and activity supervision

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES:

WorldTeach Regional Team Leader, Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica (2008)

Habitat for Humanity International Group Project Coordinator, Monteverde, Costa Rica (2003)

REFERENCES: Available upon request

ADDENDUM

VOLUNTEER WORK:

Habitat for Humanity International, San Jose, Costa Rica (2008)

- Participated in a two-day house-building project
- Coordinated and facilitated project as the group leader
- Managed and facilitated a group of 21 participants throughout the project
- Researched and negotiated project with Habitat for Humanity

English as a Second Language Teachers Aid, Boulder, CO (2003)

- Co-led with lead teacher in classroom activities
- Worked with students on an individual basis

East Baltimore Latino Organization, Baltimore, MD (2002)

- Tutored students with homework assignments
- Practiced reading in English language

Choice Tutoring Services, Catonsville, MD (2000-2002)

- Mentor for “ at risk” students
- Provided emotional and academic support for students

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

K- 12 Tutoring Program, Catonsville, MD (1997)

- Engaged students in small group activities
- Worked with students in an after-school program

Trainings Designed

The Importance of Multicultural Education in U.S. Society Today
Fostering Diversity in Multicultural Groups

Trainings Attended

Refugee Needs, Trauma, and Adaptation
Diversity and Strategies in Cross-Cultural Communication
Intercultural Marriage

Travel

Lived in Madras, India from 1-9 month periods throughout my life
Backpacked through Western/ Eastern Europe in 2005
Traveled to Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia in 2004
Traveled throughout Costa Rica and Nicaragua in 2003
Traveled throughout Britain, Scotland and Wales in 2001
Lived and worked in Dublin, Ireland for two months in 2001
Studied in Valencia, Spain for one month in 2001
Traveled to Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore in 2000

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XIII. Surviving Re-entry: A Readjustment Manual for Parents

By Leonore Cavallero

SIT Study Abroad Academic Director
Ecuador: Culture and Development

“You can’t go home again,” wrote author Thomas Wolfe. Could he have been thinking about SIT students? For some young men and women, the transition back to life at home seems to be even harder than adjusting to the country they have just left. Readjustment also takes its toll on parents, families, and friends who often do not understand why their loved one is having problems.

The goal of this handbook is to look at why return culture shock occurs, look at some of the typical concerns of students going through re-entry, and finally, discuss what parents can do to assist their children during this process. Student quotes have been included in italics to help parents understand re-entry from a student’s perspective.

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“The hardest part of re-entry was people seemingly not caring how my life had been transformed.”

“For me, the hardest part was finding myself in the lives of others who have been without me for so long.”

Introduction:

As an Academic Director in Ecuador with SIT Study Abroad, I see students making the adjustment to life in a new country and a new culture. I am also a parent and recently my own daughter participated in an SIT Study Abroad program. When she returned home, I had the opportunity for the first time to see a student adjust back to life in her home country and culture.

It was an eye-opening experience:

Driving back home from the airport, I glanced over at my daughter. I was so happy to see her. Somehow she seemed a little disoriented, though I knew she must be excited to be back, after spending four months in France on an SIT program. “Exhaustion and jet lag,” I thought to myself.

After a few days, the situation at home was becoming difficult. She wanted wine with every meal. She requested cloth napkins. She wanted to listen only to French music and look through her photographs. She kept describing the wonderful places she had been and the food they had eaten. She complained about the quality of our cheese. She didn’t want to call her old friends. She didn’t really seem to be happy to be home. Frankly, I was a little concerned and frustrated, as well. How long was it going to take her to readjust to normal life?

Time went by. After three weeks, I was ready to have a fit. She still continually criticized everything. She moped around the house. She didn’t seem to want to get out and find a job for the summer. I could feel myself running out of patience. I was tired of hearing about her life abroad, and I wanted her to be glad to be home! Even though I knew it was normal to have some difficulties adjusting to being back, it seemed to me that this had been going on long enough. It was time for her to get over it. I wanted my sunny, positive, energetic daughter back again.

My own experience got me thinking and, while on sabbatical for a semester, I researched and wrote this handbook as a resource for other parents. For guidance, I enlisted the assistance of many of my former students from here in Ecuador and other SIT Study Abroad alumni. I am grateful for their assistance. This handbook would not have been possible without them.

**What happens to young college students when they go overseas?
Why do they come back feeling out of place in the environment
in which they were raised?**

Most parents are familiar with the features of SIT's programs. They know their children will be living with host families, interacting with the local culture and learning the language and the customs. They are aware of the strong academic focus that provides students with specific requirements to fulfill, including writing papers, participating in discussion groups, and taking exams. They are confident that both intellectually and interculturally, students are being challenged and guided by their Academic Directors.

What parents may not be aware of, however, is the emotional impact of living and studying abroad. When they arrive in their host country most students, on some level, temporarily regress to a more dependent stage of life. They know themselves to be independent young adults with control over their lives. Yet, they find themselves dependent on the graciousness of their hosts. Their language ability is not fluent; their environment is full of unknowns; they are fed unusual foods at family meals; and most of all, they no longer understand the nonverbal cues that are going on around them. This experience can be both disconcerting and stimulating as well as exhausting, exhilarating, and even occasionally frightening!

So what does the student do?

Typically, shortly after arrival, the student begins a process that is essential to his or her psychological survival: to absorb and learn as much as possible about this new world. Since knowledge equals power in this situation, the student focuses on unraveling how the society is structured, understanding cultural priorities, and discovering what is considered appropriate behavior in any given situation. This experience continually requires students to grow. Their dramatic learning curve consists of daily emotional ups and downs. Their senses are heightened, and they find their life is full of challenges and unexpected surprises. Their overall comprehension steadily increases. Eventually, if they are successful in their adaptation process, they feel the thrill of realizing they finally fit in, simultaneously accepting and being accepted by the locals.

**Why is there a problem when they come home?
Surely they have not forgotten who they really are and how they were raised.
Have they really become different people than who they were when they left?**

In a way, yes, they have. Culture, after all, is a learned process. People around the

world face the same problems. However, they develop very different mechanisms for dealing with them. To genuinely feel a part of the culture, the students have to sincerely be able to accept, believe and participate in the practices of the new culture. What at first appeared strange – whether eating with their hands, or greeting perfect strangers with a kiss on the cheek – has to become normal everyday behavior. Interestingly enough, this process occurs regardless of which country the student has chosen for his or her study abroad experience. Eventually, in many cases, the new customs become automatic. When the students finally board the plane to come home, these learned responses to social situations and different ways of perceiving their environment come right along with them. Although this newly acquired worldview is no longer necessary back home, it is virtually impossible to drop it overnight. Many students are also not quite sure they want to lose what they have acquired through so much effort and struggle. They do not want to return to being exactly who they were before they left. They feel this would invalidate their experience, and the care and love they received from all the people who helped and supported them through their learning process.

“I definitely felt I had become part Ecuadorian, and had no way to express that new part of myself.”

“It’s so tough to return to your own ‘reality’ (or what it was before leaving) and realize that you don’t necessarily agree with your life or your culture or the values underlying it”.

Superficial changes fade with time, of course. The key word here is time, since the process of readjustment is different for each person. Some students go through months of feeling alienated from their home environment. For others, it may take longer. Some lucky souls seem to slip back into their previous life with little or no difficulties. These individuals often experience a delayed return culture shock that catches them unawares months later.

“I stayed inside for three days before going out.”

“For three weeks after I got home I ended up just trying to recuperate, rarely going out.”

“I was a good wreck for a couple of months.”

“In total, return culture shock lasted about a year.”

Is there a way to tell how long the process of adapting to return culture shock is going to take?

Unfortunately, probably not. Students can also go through different cycles in their readjustment. The first few days of being home can be euphoric. During the subsequent weeks, when the shock of re-entry hits, the student might feel depressed or unsure of him/herself and uncertain about previously made plans. Mood swings are frequent, as are long conversations about goals and priorities. The problem is compounded by the feeling that no one around them can relate to what is happening to them, except perhaps other newly returned SIT students.

Students who have traveled extensively before enrolling in an SIT program often suffer in the same way as their companions who had never previously left the U.S. Perhaps the only difference is that they remember having gone through the experience before and realize that it will indeed pass. While students are struggling with this process, it is not uncommon for some of them to try desperately to find a way to go back overseas.

There are students who feel out of place from the moment they walk through the door. For them, the readjustment to home actually feels harder than the original culture shock they felt when they left to go abroad. They may take weeks to integrate the new person they have become into the reality they left behind. Usually, the more successful the student was in integrating into the host culture, the more difficult he or she will find the challenge of slipping back into the American way of life. Conversely, students who were less affected by the time they spent abroad will typically have an easier time returning home.

“Re-entry is an emotional roller coaster that no one in the home community is likely to fully understand.”

“I’d say that there isn’t one formula to make your kid’s re-entry smooth. In fact, there may not be, and that’s probably just part of the whole process. It is not easy to go away so it makes sense that it should not be easy to come back.”

What are some of the main difficulties faced by students returning home?

Pace of Life

Although many of us know that other cultures have a far more flexible attitude towards time, it comes as a shock when we realize how well our children have adapted to “Jamaican time” or “Spanish time” or “Indian time.” This particular cultural idiosyncrasy is

often treated lightly, even jokingly. However, it actually is indicative of a deeper issue. Much of the rest of the world is amazed at how Americans allow their lives to be ruled by the clock, ignoring mitigating factors and circumstances beyond one's control. Although students can re-learn to check the watch, it might be hard for them to give time the same importance it once had. They often continue to feel that people and situations should take priority over schedules and deadlines.

“People in the US are far too tense, selfish and in a hurry.”

“It was difficult to adjust to the pace of life back home -- the dependence upon time and scheduling.”

Consumerism

Most SIT students choose to study in countries that are not as wealthy as the United States. They often are amazed at the quality of life of people abroad who lack what the US culture has taught them to consider as basic possessions. They are taken by surprise at the closeness of the families, the warmth and friendliness, the willingness to share. Coming home, it is not unusual for students to feel vaguely guilty for all they and their real families own.

Christmas is frequently mentioned as a particularly difficult time of year. The commercialization of the holidays in the United States, and the emphasis on buying presents contrasts painfully with their memories of the generosity of the people who had so little and yet gave them so much.

“The hardest part of re-entry for me was Christmas and the extraordinary amounts of money that Americans spend at Christmas time and in general”.

“Then Christmas hit. The extravagance was overwhelming and depressing to me – the waste, the excess.”

“I found myself many times completely unable to cope with the fact that I live in a society that glorifies material wealth and in a country that dominates the world economy.”

Personal Communication

How can one describe the adventures, learning experiences, growth, expansion, realizations that one has had during the months overseas? Is it possible to share the importance of the relationships made, the poignancy of leaving, the joys and sadness made even more intense by the awareness that the stay abroad was temporary? Most students are bursting with stories to tell, yet also apprehensive that they will not be able to adequately communicate their feelings. They then realize, though it comes as a shock, that life has gone on for everyone at home as well, and that their friends have also experienced changes in their worlds.

When the student is returning to a boyfriend or girlfriend, there is often an additional strain since the person who left may be quite different from the person who has returned. Although some couples do remain together, for others the added pressure can lead to separation. The frustration with personal communication frequently leaves students with a sense of alienation both within the family circle and among their broader group of friends. This, in turn, can lead to withdrawal and depression. Often it is easier for returning students to relate to new friends who are also home from study abroad programs and experiencing the same difficulties in readjusting.

“The hardest part for me was reconciling how much I had experienced and therefore changed with people and things that had remained the same at home.”

“I felt like I was unable to really communicate to people what my semester abroad meant. Few people want to take the time to hear about what really touched your heart and changed your perspective.”

“My biggest desire was just to be around people who understand, who would listen to me, validate my feelings and not expect me to ‘get over’ my depression or confusion or anger or frustration too quickly.”

Returning to School

They have just completed four months of experiential learning where their education reached beyond the four walls of the classroom into the sphere of everyday life. They were able to observe, almost on a daily basis, their progress in language ability, interpersonal skills, cross-cultural awareness, and self-confidence. Every moment held the potential to learn and grow. As an added benefit, each program provided a built-in support group, with other students going through similar experiences. The friendships formed during an SIT semester abroad are often very deep and profound. No wonder students feel anxious about returning to a traditional learning system, with regular classes that seem to have little or no relevance to their lives, and classmates who will have no way of relating to their overseas experience.

“School was really hard to get back into. I just didn’t want to be there... didn’t want to be reading about other people doing things, I wanted to be doing them.”

“When I went back to school I was hit with the reality that the lives of my friends had changed and I was no longer a part of the close knit circle I had had before.”

“It is crazy to think it was two years ago and is still so important and the source of most of my best friendships.”

World View

Many students also feel their world view has expanded immeasurably. They have a deeper awareness of global issues and a broader perspective regarding globalization, IMF policies, ecological challenges, health concerns, international income disparity, and so on. They feel the richness, the weight, and the responsibility of first-hand experience. They are understandably frustrated with the seemingly superficial priorities and the general lack of international awareness in the lives of their friends and family. Some returning students realize that they themselves were as unaware as their friends before they left to study overseas. Most, however, conveniently forget this fact. If they are not careful, their attitude of moral superiority alienates the very individuals they are trying to reach. The challenge here is for them to not forget what they have learned, and at the same time, not allow their indignation and self-righteousness to get in the way of productive dialogue with others.

“My views were so changed, my eyes awakened, and I could not continue as I had before leaving.”

“I was listening to my two closest friends talk during my first week back, and I was shocked and appalled. I assumed that they had grown and matured as much as I had. Boy, was I wrong.”

“One hard thing for me was finding myself among peers who don’t share the same global consciousness that I had acquired while I was away. I wanted to smack a lot of people and tell them to wake up and look around them, even though I could easily have been one of them four months before.”

Self Image

One of the final issues faced by returning students is confronting their self image. Many students go to countries where they look different from most of the local population. Both men and women often find themselves receiving far more attention from the opposite sex than they were accustomed to, simply because of their American appearance. Although this constant fishbowl effect is exhausting, it is also flattering. Plump women are frequently considered desirable in other countries. Occasionally, female students are actively encouraged by their host families to gain weight and thus be even more attractive. This can be quite a pleasant surprise for some US college women accustomed to the American obsession with weight loss and physical fitness. It is a powerful experience to be considered “special” and beautiful, simply because you are different: a foreigner, an American. Understandably, to return home and once again become “just one of the crowd” is often quite a let down and, indirectly, a blow to one’s self esteem.

“I definitely felt the shock of ‘being normal.’”

“White girls are viewed as being beautiful overseas simply because of their blue eyes and pale skin – but when they come home, they are back to being average looking with about 10 unwanted pounds.”

“Don’t say ‘you’ve gained weight’ – we feel bad enough about it without someone having to remind us”

**What can we do, as parents?
What do our children need from us to help them
through this unexpectedly difficult time?**

Patience

Readjustment is a very individual process, and no one pattern holds true for everyone. Your child might not feel ready to meet lots of family members or friends – even a visit to the supermarket can seem overwhelming. For the first few days, a light schedule is probably better than a heavily packed one. Even though physically they are there with you, emotionally and psychologically they have not completely arrived home yet. They need time to reacquaint themselves with what they previously accepted as “normal” life.

It is not uncommon for children to go through a stage of being critical of what is around them, including what they see at home. Complaints range from wasting food, producing too much garbage, driving instead of walking or taking the bus, over-spending, unawareness of what is going on overseas, and so on. Patience. Their indignation will settle down and hopefully transform itself into the willingness to work towards productive goals. Some students feel the need to make specific -- occasionally radical -- changes in their lives. Some have sold or given away their possessions, found fellowships to go back overseas, switched majors, chosen new careers, even changed schools. Although this can be quite upsetting for parents, patience and dialogue can go a long way in allowing a deeper understanding of just what changes each son or daughter has experienced. Students sincerely appreciate the effort their parents make in trying to comprehend how the world of their children has broadened. This attention allows them to feel that the results of their study abroad experience are both valued and respected.

“My parents realized that I was going to be changed by my experience and they saw that as positive.”

“Be proud of me and all that I’ve accomplished in a few months!”

“Accept that I have changed, don’t put pressure on me to act the same as I had before. Be accommodating in my changes in habits and help me incorporate this amazing experience into my life.”

Listen

The other request most often heard from students going through the process of readjustment is for their parents to be open and willing to listen to them. Since most parents are already curious and eager to hear what their children have to tell them, why is this an issue? The problem seems to be that each situation is different. Some returning students want to talk non-stop from the moment they arrive, others need a little time before they can share their stories. Some find it difficult to put their experience into words. They need to process within themselves before they can talk to others. In these cases, parents can give their children an empty photo album or a scrapbook. This can serve as an excellent tool to open the way for communication, while allowing the student to create a visual display of their semester. Occasionally, students will find it easier to talk about activities or experiences later, as events trigger memories during the course of days and weeks instead of immediately sitting down and answering questions from curious family members. (A balance of interest and, again, of patience). Many students know they are going through a difficult time. They need to hear about what has been happening in the lives of those at home to help them relate to the fact that life has not stood still while they were gone. If parents have had occasion to travel and have themselves also experienced return culture shock after living or working overseas, they can share their own stories with their children. Not only will this help create a mutual

bond of experience, it will also serve to reassure the disoriented student that this condition is temporary and will indeed pass.

“Ask questions! Show an interest and let me talk when I need to, ask to see my pictures, be positive and sympathize with me, ask who or what I miss the most!”

“Be supportive but not smothering – give your child space and be patient with him/her but be sure you are available and always ready and willing to listen and offer support.”

“Be genuinely interested in the story behind every picture – don’t rush me, let me talk in my own time. Ask specific questions, listen and be excited! Remember the names of my friends from SIT, and ask about them from time to time.”

Support

A final request from students is for their parents to support them in finding ways to keep their experience real and vital in their lives. Although students have concerns about their ability to adequately communicate the impact their SIT semester had on their lives, they are even more apprehensive that they will forget what they have learned, that they will allow themselves to fall back into complacency and unawareness.

Unfortunately, if students do not focus on this issue, there is indeed a very real possibility of having the learning and changes of the previous four months fade into a somewhat hazy dream. Current reality can easily become more important than the past. Although this is necessary at some level, it is also important for the student to not lose the many benefits acquired abroad including language skills, cultural awareness, global understanding. This would be a waste of time and money and a true disservice to the people who accepted the student into their lives. It would also greatly diminish the validity and importance of the overseas experience.

Academic Directors regularly conduct sessions on re-entry before the end of the program, and discuss with their students different ways they can keep their experience alive once they have returned home. To help in this, parents can help their children investigate areas in their communities where they can get involved in working with immigrants and their families. They can arrange for their children to give talks and presentations to local schools or groups of interested individuals. They can provide information on local radio and TV stations that might cater to the language or cultural needs of the people of the student’s host country. They can encourage their children to take classes relevant to their overseas experience and to get involved in campus

activities that are important to them, such as tutoring foreign students, living in an International House, volunteering on ecological projects, presenting a radio program with host country music, increasing political awareness, organizing fundraisers. Simply encouraging your child to cook a meal for the family using the ingredients of their host country can provide an enjoyable and positive experience for all involved.

“The toughest part for me was sinking back into the lifestyle – the bubble – and not feeling that I was abandoning something.”

“I needed to find connections to my former host country in my home community, even just a restaurant. This would have helped me relax, given me a taste of the culture that had become so familiar to me.”

“Be educated about your child’s surroundings, in terms of what s/he could be involved in – like different non-profit organizations or ways to organize groups on campus.”

Conclusion

Have patience, be ready to listen, and be willing to support them. It sounds simple, once you know. Looking back, as a parent, I realize that I simply did not have any idea what my daughter really needed from me. I tried to do my best. I ran out of patience. I got tired of listening. I didn’t know how to be supportive. At the same time, I was genuinely delighted my daughter was home, and I did what I could to show her, by surrounding her with love and affection. I realize now, in retrospect, that I never expected her readjustment process to last so long, nor that it would be so hard on all of us. A few days, maybe. Not weeks and weeks. However, we did survive! Her SIT semester abroad truly had a major impact, a positive and long-lasting impact on her and on all of our family.

“It is difficult to describe how my semester abroad totally transformed my life.”

“The worse thing my parents could have done was to fail to realize the importance of that time in my life and how hard/sad it was for me to return.”

“My parents were incredible during this process. Even though they didn’t understand me, they accepted that I had changed. It is such an individual process that one must own and struggle with in order to make the improvements.”

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XIV. Having Your Say: Op-eds as Advocacy Tools

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“Op-Ed” is shorthand for “opposite the editorial page.” This is the place in most newspapers where experts, luminaries, and ordinary citizens get to weigh in with their unique and informed opinions on issues in the news. As a tool for raising awareness or shaping public opinion around social and environmental concerns, the op-ed is a powerful and effective way to reach a large audience and have an impact on issues you care about. Of course, being such a great platform, the op-ed page tends to be much-coveted terrain, so it helps to know the ropes before you jump into writing your first piece.

How to Write a Successful Op-Ed – A Top 10 List

1. **Hone your message** – Before you even sit down to write, think about the essence of what you want to say and what you want your readers to take away. Is it a timely topic in the news? Can you connect it to a timely hook? Capture the take-away message in one solid sentence and use it to keep your writing focused.
2. **Know your audience** – To whom are you writing? The general public? Policy-makers? What do you want them to do as a result of reading your op-ed? Change their behavior? Introduce legislation? Imagine 10 ideal readers and write with them and with clear, desired outcomes in mind.
3. **Know the outlet** – Decide where you are going to submit (see more on this below) and do your homework. Read the outlet’s submission guidelines and word limits (usually 500-750 words) and familiarize yourself with published examples that have parallels to your piece.
4. **Details, details, details** – Just because it’s an “opinion” piece doesn’t mean you don’t need to support your view with solid facts, quotes, and statistics. Arm yourself in

advance with all the data you need to make a compelling argument and provide solid background on the subject.

5. **Jumping in** – The first sentence or two, often called the ‘lede’, represent your biggest chance to hook your reader. Grab the reader’s attention out of the gate with a compelling statement or personal hook. Draw the reader into your perspective using active, descriptive, vivid language while avoiding jargon and long, run-on sentences. Keep it punchy, pithy and readable throughout. Strike a rhythm and stick to it.

6. **The meat of it** – The body of your op-ed should support your main argument with a few key points, each of which might be contained in a paragraph. Illustrate and defend your points with selective facts and data, without overloading the piece with numbers.

7. **Bring it home** – The ending needs to be as compelling as the lede and should tie the piece into a neat package. Often, the ending will refer back to the lede and underscore the importance of the issue you’ve addressed.

8. **Review, circulate, edit, repeat** – Editors are busy people and don’t read pieces that are sloppy, have errors, are too long, or don’t read well. Take the time to do multiple drafts and ask for detailed editorial input from knowledgeable colleagues or other writers. Review your text and cut out unnecessary words or sections to be sure it’s watertight and well within word limits.

9. **Send** – Submit your op-ed by email to the appropriate op-ed editor. You’ll find this information in the ‘Contact Us’ section of most online versions of newspapers. Paste your op-ed into the body of the email for quick review and also attach as a document. Give some indication of the topic in the subject line and include a very short note suggesting why you think readers will find your perspective interesting.

10. **Follow up** – If you don’t hear back within a week, send a respectful reminder until you get an answer. If they don’t accept it, try another outlet or adapt it to make it more timely or effective. Consider adding a local politician or head of a relevant organization to your byline (with their permission, of course) to lend greater weight to your message. In any case, don’t give up!

Where to Submit

If you’re like everyone and their brother, sister and distant cousin you would like to get your op-ed into the New York Times but would settle for the Washington Post. Well...you might want to start with more realistic goals and shoot for a regional or local community newspaper where your odds of getting in are significantly higher. It may even be the case that your local community paper is the most appropriate audience for your message and they like to highlight voices of community members.

[This link](#) from the Communications Consortium provides details and contact info for the Top 100 circulation newspapers in the US. You’ll generally find similar information on any newspaper’s website. If you can’t find it, call the paper directly and ask for

guidelines and contact info. Tip: It's always better to use a personal email address for the editor where one's available rather than a generic address and to personalize your email accordingly.

Beyond traditional newspapers, you might consider submitting to an online publication within your area of interest or even submitting it as an entry in an online forum that practitioners and policy-makers visit regularly. Especially for your first op-eds, don't get hung up on high-profile placement. Focus on getting your message out there and to the right people.

XV. Acknowledgements

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