

# **STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN: A Guide for Advising Students**



## STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN: a Guide for Advising Students

How do you help students elevate “study abroad” beyond a bullet point on résumés or anecdotes in interviews?

Despite improvement in design and administration of study abroad programs, support from offices of career services on some campuses, and increased attention to skill sets and competencies which employers value in talent searches, our students struggle to articulate how their study abroad experiences prepare them for the global workforce.

The **Inventory for the Education Abroad Office** will help you assess your office’s current offerings and strategize to improve services in linking education abroad to career development.

The **Study Abroad Career Plan** provides a structure for advising students to consider the career implications of their decisions to study abroad, from the moment they decide on programs, to the critical moments when they are asked to describe their skills in interviews. Whether you are an adviser based in the study abroad office, the career services office, or elsewhere, you can use this guide to direct students to be career-minded throughout their study abroad experiences.

The inventory and guide were developed by Vera V. Chapman (Colgate University), Curtiss Oneil Stevens (University of Texas at Austin), and Martin Tillman (Global Career Compass) to support the webinar “[Helping Students Translate ‘study abroad’ for the Job Search](#).” Recordings of the webinar are available for purchase from NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Recommendations for using the inventory and career plan:

- Share the **Study Abroad Career Plan** with students who are considering study abroad to enhance their educational experience.
- Have students complete the assignments and the key questions to help them frame their study abroad experiences from a career perspective.
- Periodically review the students’ plans (before, while abroad, and upon return) and provide direction to new ways of thinking, resources, and direction to help them further their career pursuits.
- Consider a series of workshops to help students practice articulating their skills in low-risk situations with their peers and in higher-risk situations with actual employers.
- Review the suggested resources to find ideas to fit your institution or organization.

## CAREER PLANNING AND STUDY ABROAD

### An Inventory for the Education Abroad Office

How do you provide linkages between academic programs and the study abroad experience?

What is the emphasis on study abroad as an embedded component of your educational structure?

What terminology do your campus use to define global competencies and intercultural development?

Which competencies does your institution promote and provide programming to help develop through study abroad programs?

- Interacting with people who hold different cultural perspectives
- Understanding cultural differences in the workplace
- Adapting to situations of change
- Gaining new knowledge from experiences
- Work independently
- Undertaking tasks that are risky or unfamiliar
- Applying information in new or broader contexts
- Identify new problems/solutions to problems
- Working effectively with co-workers
- From Gardner et al.(2009)

Are your Career Services and Education Abroad offices (and others) integrating planning and support to develop long term skills?

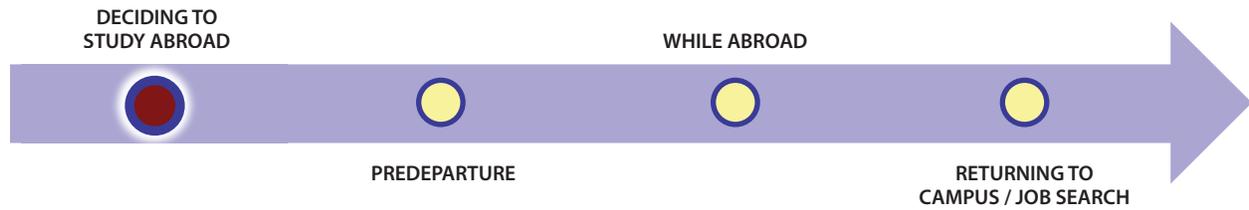
What opportunities might be available to increase partnerships?

**CAREER PLANNING AND STUDY ABROAD**  
**An Inventory for the Education Abroad Office (continued)**

Are there opportunities to promote the impact of education abroad on student career aspirations in program outreach and marketing?

How is the institution demonstrating to employers the skills students are gaining while abroad?

# MY STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN

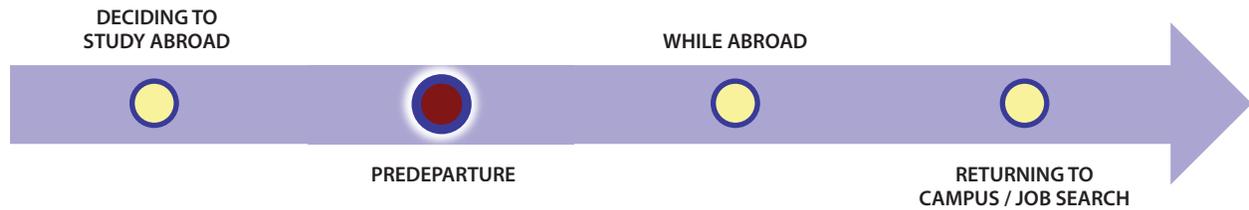


## DECIDING TO STUDY ABROAD

*Not sure whether you should go abroad or not? These assignments and questions may help.*

<p><b>Assignment 1:</b></p>	<p>Interview a returned study abroad student from your major or who took part in a study abroad program in which you are interested. (Your Study Abroad or Career Services office can provide you with some names.)</p> <p><b>Ask about:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The trade-off of time overseas and skills gained</li> <li>■ What they would do differently if they were to study abroad again</li> <li>■ What was most challenging about their experience abroad and how they coped</li> <li>■ How they hope to use their experience in their job search</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assignment 2:</b></p>	<p>Do an online search for jobs in which you are interested when you graduate from your program. Highlight desired skills and traits.</p>
<p><b>Assignment 3:</b></p>	<p>Schedule an appointment with career services, study abroad, and your academic adviser to learn more about how study abroad can support your career aspirations. Don't make this decision without considering your long-term plans.</p>
<p><b>Key Questions:</b></p>	<p>What career do I hope to pursue after I graduate?</p> <p>What key skills are needed to be successful in this field?</p> <p>In what way does this study abroad program impact my academic course of study?</p> <p>What opportunities will I miss out on if I am abroad during this period of time?</p> <p>How does this study abroad program make sense in terms of my career goals and future employment goals?</p>

## MY STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN (continued)



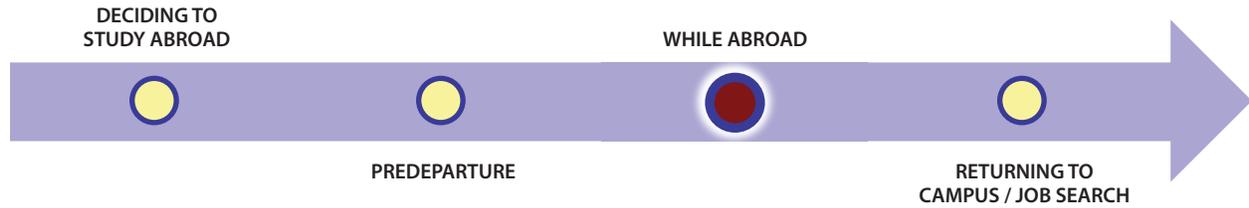
### PRE-DEPARTURE

*There are a lot of logistics to consider before you go, but careful preparation now can ensure that this experience will make an impact that will last your entire life.*

<b>Key Questions:</b>	Name three benefits that study abroad could provide to support your career.
	How do your career goals link to your study abroad program?
	How will you stay connected to your field of interest while you are away?
<b>Assignment 1:</b>	Look for ways to jump start your experience by taking courses (e.g. international business etiquette), meeting with foreign nationals from your destination country, and studying the language and cultural expectations of your destination.
<b>Assignment 2:</b>	What is intercultural sensitivity? You don't have to be overseas to witness it in action. Review the different stages and catalogue real life examples of each stage to help you recognize development in action.
<b>Assignment 3:</b>	Picture yourself employed in your chosen field and give your younger self some advice about how to make the most of this experience.

*Set up a pre-departure appointment with your adviser.*

# MY STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN (continued)



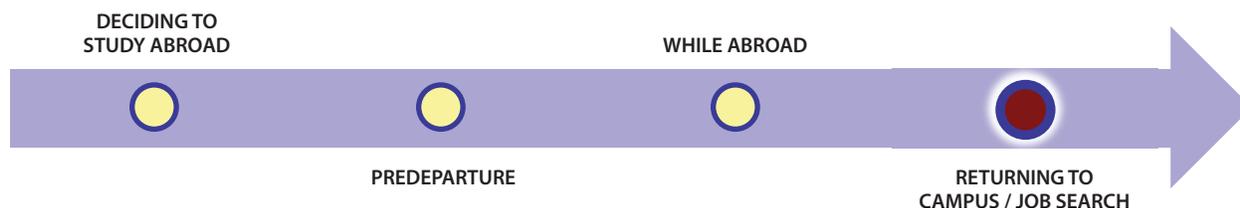
## WHILE IN COUNTRY

*After so much planning, it's hard to believe that you are finally here.  
Be sure to stay focused while you are abroad and accomplish both personal and career goals.*

<p><b>Assignment 1:</b></p>	<p>Keep a journal that details the experiences and skills that you are experiencing while abroad. Use this journal to help you develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Intercultural experiences that test your view of yourself and your culture. Consider your reactions in terms of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism.</li> <li>■ A list of skills that you are developing</li> <li>■ Plans to engage with host nationals</li> <li>■ The social mores around “how business gets done” in the country where you are studying</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assignment 2:</b></p>	<p>Set up meetings with 2-3 host nationals in your planned career as a way to compare how culture impacts work and to understand your field of interest in a more global way.</p>
<p><b>Assignment 3:</b></p>	<p>Develop a plan to discuss and dialogue about your study abroad experience upon your return to campus. Consider the possible options: Study Abroad ambassador, volunteering with communities representing your time abroad, doing a presentation to highlight your learning abroad, or even publishing your experiences in a blog or self-published book.</p>
<p><b>Key Questions:</b></p>	<p>What skills do you hope to gain while you are abroad? What activities or experiences can help you to build these?</p> <p>How do you work towards interacting and engaging with host nationals?</p>

*Set up an online chat with your Career Counselor.*

## MY STUDY ABROAD CAREER PLAN (continued)



### RETURN TO CAMPUS

*Now that you have returned to campus, put your experience abroad to work to further your career goals and ensure your competitiveness as a candidate during the job search.*

<b>Assignment 1:</b>	Your résumé is a marketing tool to introduce yourself to a potential employer. Highlight how your skills align with those that are defined in the job description. Meet with your Career Adviser to update your résumé and detail how your study abroad experience is an asset for employers.
<b>Assignment 2:</b>	There are many organizations that seek employees with intercultural skills. Select a few from the list and review their job boards. Consider the position that you are qualified for and how your skills make you a competitive applicant.
<b>Assignment 3:</b>	The connections you made abroad may end up as tomorrow's career connections. Before too much time passes, reconnect with those contacts that you met while abroad. Consider finding them on LinkedIn.
<b>Assignment 4:</b>	Interview professionals in your field. Ask about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Career goals prior to studying abroad</li> <li>■ How the study abroad experience impacted their career direction</li> </ul>
<b>Assignment 5:</b>	Your ability to succinctly describe what you have gained during your experience abroad will demonstrate strategic thinking and harness the power of your study abroad experience. Develop your narrative around your study abroad experience. Emphasize behavioral skills attained while abroad using the STAR method to help you frame your response.
<b>Key Questions:</b>  [Be prepared for these possible interview questions.]	What are the skills you have gained during your time abroad?
	How will your experience abroad make you a better employee in these changing times?
	What was the most challenging situation you faced during your experience abroad, and how did you deal with it?
	Give an example of something from your study abroad experience that has changed you, and why.
	Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems abroad and developed preventive measures.

*Set up a career planning appointment with your adviser.*

## SELECTED RESOURCES

### Demonstrating the Value of Study Abroad for Career Development

British Council (2013). Culture at Work: The value of intercultural skills in the workplace. Booz, Allen, Hamilton, McLean, VA. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/documents/culture-at-work-research.pdf>

Norris, E.M., Gillespie, J. (2009). How Study Abroad Shapes Global Careers: Evidence From the United States. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13, 382-397.

Nolting, W.; Donohue, D.; Matherly, C.; and Tillman, M. (2013). Internships, Service Learning, Volunteering Abroad: Successful Models and Best Practices. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Washington, D.C.

Tillman, M., (2012). "Employer Perspectives on International Education," SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education

Tillman, M., Ed. (20??). "Impact of Education Abroad on Career Development: Volume 1." American Institute For Foreign Study. [www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Impact\\_of\\_Education\\_AbroadI.pdf](http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Impact_of_Education_AbroadI.pdf)

### Study Abroad-Career Resources

Chapman, V.V. (2011). *Beyond the "Bubble": Study Abroad and the Psychosocial and Career Development of Undergraduates*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (AAT 3461273) <http://gradworks.umi.com/3461273.pdf>

Gardner, P.; Gross, L.; and Steglitz, I. "Unpacking Your Study Abroad Experience: Critical Reflection for Workplace Competencies." Collegiate Employment Research Institute, Michigan State University, CERI Research Brief 1-2008. [www.studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/people/unpacking\\_brief.pdf](http://www.studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/people/unpacking_brief.pdf)

"Global Competency." Binghamton University Career Development Center, State University of New York. <http://www2.binghamton.edu/career-development-center/quick-reference-guides/global-competency.pdf>

Matherly, C.; and Nolting, W. "Career Benefits: Understanding & Articulating the Skills you Gained Abroad." *Abroad View* 10:1 (2007).

Tillman, M. (2011). AIFS Guide to Study Abroad and Career Development. AIFS, Connecticut. [http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Tillman\\_AIFS\\_Student\\_Guide\\_Career.pdf](http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Tillman_AIFS_Student_Guide_Career.pdf)

Tillman, M. (2005). "The Right Tool for the Job." NAFSA: Association of International Educators. *International Educator* 14.4 [www.nafsa.org/ /File/ /InternationalEducator/FrontLinesJulAug05.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/File/InternationalEducator/FrontLinesJulAug05.pdf)

"Resume Tips for Your International Experience." University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center. [www.umabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/students/returnedStudents/resumeTips.pdf](http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/students/returnedStudents/resumeTips.pdf)

## CONTRIBUTORS

### **Martin Tillman, Global Career Compass**



Martin Tillman is President of Global Career Compass (GCC), an international consulting practice focused on global workforce trends and the impact of education abroad experiences on student career development. His diverse consultancies have included the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS), CEA Global Education, CET Academic Programs, EducationDynamics, and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, World Learning SIT Graduate Institute and EducationUSA/U.S.State Department. He is the former Associate Director for Career Services at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C.

A prolific writer, his chapter, “Employer Perspectives on International Education,” appears in the new SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education. He is also author of the AIFS Student Guide to Study Abroad and Career Development and editor of the two volume series, Impact of Education Abroad on Career Development and Study Abroad: A 21st Century Perspective, and The Right Tool for the Job. He holds a B.A. in Political Science from the State University of New York at Stony Brook; M.A. degrees from Colgate University in Student Personnel Administration in Higher Education and the World Learning SIT Graduate Institute in Intercultural Management. He blogs at Global Career Compass <http://globalcareercompass.wordpress.com/>

### **Vera V. Chapman, Ph.D, Colgate University**



Vera V. Chapman is the Associate Director of Career Development at Colgate University where she provides the primary vision for the advising and program development component of the office by leading the career advising team. Dr. Chapman counsels and advises diverse students and alumni in all phases of the career development process. An active scholar, Dr. Chapman serves as a Field Editor for the National Career Development Association’s (NCDA) Career Convergence web magazine, and as an Associate Editor for the Journal of International Students. Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, a study abroad experience to Clemson

University in turn led her to the University of Mississippi, where she pursued advanced degrees in Counseling and Higher Education. After becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Mississippi, Dr. Chapman served as a Career Planning Specialist and Adjunct Professor at the same institution. She finds great purpose in empowering others towards becoming the most extraordinary version of themselves. Dr. Chapman actively shares career and life planning success strategies through Twitter (@VeraVChapman) and blogging ([www.ChasingYourFire.com](http://www.ChasingYourFire.com)).

### **Curtiss Oneil Stevens, MA, The University of Texas at Austin**



Curtiss Oneil Stevens, MA, is a Program Coordinator in the International Office at The University of Texas at Austin, where he is responsible for collaborating with departments on campus as well as international partners to provide innovative, academically relevant programs and exceptional services to students. He also oversees exchange and affiliated study abroad programs in Spain and France.

Mr. Stevens joined the UT Austin International Office in July 2011, after 10 years of living abroad in Europe. In Europe, he was an Assistant Director of Admissions and an ESL Instructor for several English Academics and was also a professional basketball trainer. His teaching and administration experiences have been at The University of Texas at Austin, Valparaiso University, Western Michigan University, Indiana University, and Purdue University. He earned his Master of Arts in Geographic Education and Research at Western Michigan University and Bachelors of Art in Geography at Valparaiso University.

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