Gaining an Employment Edge

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Linking Education Abroad and Employability

March 2018
GAINING AN EMPLOYMENT EDGE:

The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects
Purpose of the Study

• Does study abroad impact employment and career development?
• *How* does study abroad positively impact careers?

Methodology

• National Survey: **4,565 survey responses** from alumni who studied abroad from U.S. institutions between 1999/00 – 2016/17
• Interviews: **30 interviews**, representing a variety of demographics, academic experiences, and professional fields
21st Century Workforce Skills

INTRA-PERSONAL
- Tolerance for Ambiguity
- Adaptability, Flexibility
- Work Ethic
- Intercultural Skills
- Self-Awareness

COGNITIVE
- Problem Solving
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Foreign Language
- Technical, Software Skills
- Course or Major-Knowledge

INTER-PERSONAL
- Leadership
- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication
- Teamwork

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Study abroad has a positive impact on most 21st century job skills.

### Intrapersonal Competencies
- Intercultural Skills: 76% Significant, 18% Some degree
- Flexibility/Adaptability: 75% Significant, 18% Some degree
- Self-Awareness: 72% Significant, 21% Some degree
- Tolerance for Ambiguity: 45% Significant, 33% Some degree
- Work Ethic: 26% Significant, 34% Some degree

### Cognitive Competencies
- Curiosity: 75% Significant, 18% Some degree
- Confidence: 74% Significant, 20% Some degree
- Problem Solving: 53% Significant, 34% Some degree
- Language Skills: 48% Significant, 22% Some degree
- Course/Major Knowledge: 45% Significant, 35% Some degree

### Interpersonal Competencies
- Interpersonal Skills: 57% Significant, 34% Some degree
- Communication: 54% Significant, 35% Some degree
- Teamwork Skills: 30% Significant, 40% Some degree
- Leadership Skills: 27% Significant, 39% Some degree

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**Gaining an Employment Edge**

- Study abroad has a positive impact on most 21st century job skills.

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<th>Competency</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Some degree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not very much</th>
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**Significant**

- Study abroad has a positive impact on most 21st century job skills.
Short-term programs are most effective at developing teamwork.

- Negative correlation between study length and teamwork:
  
  
  Teamwork
  $(r=-0.08, p<0.001)$

- Strongest impact of study abroad length:
  
  - Foreign Language
    $(r=0.35, p<0.001)$
  
  - Communication
    $(r=0.22, p<0.01)$

- Skills **not** impacted by length:
STEM majors who study abroad in non-STEM fields have high gains.

Did study abroad contribute to a job offer?

Study abroad outside of science:
- Yes: 24%
- Not sure: 30%
- No: 47%

Study abroad in science:
- Yes: 24%
- Not sure: 28%
- No: 48%

“Generally, in the sciences communication isn’t really emphasized, especially intercultural communication. That’s not something I would be able to learn in the classroom. It’s something that I was able to learn through my experience studying abroad.”

Environmental Science Major – Short-Term in Ghana, 2013/14 – Current Industry: Education, PhD Student
“Different” destinations have a bigger impact.

- Unexplored, Culturally Different Location: Clear impact on skill development & career utility.

“...for me, it was important to go somewhere that was in a foreign language. My school has [a program in the UK], but I didn’t want to do that, I didn’t feel like it was going to push me enough... [What allowed skill development] was experiencing the different cultures and just being in a different environment.”

Marketing & Economics Major – Short-Term in Brazil, 2009/10 – Current Industry: Information Technology
The Impact of Goals and Program Structure

Career prospects in mind?

Better articulation of skill development

Better articulation of career impact

More likely to study abroad in a highly structured program

Collaboration

Interpersonal skills

Teamwork

Leadership

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RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS:

✓ Coach students on how to **effectively communicate** the skills learned through study abroad to employers.

✓ Integrate clear **employment-related learning outcomes** into the design of study abroad programs.

✓ Leverage the strength of **short-term** study abroad programs in developing **teamwork** skills.

✓ Encourage students to study somewhere that is culturally or linguistically “**different**” than what they already know.

✓ Increase **STEM** students’ participation in study abroad.
Read the full report: www.iie.org/employability