

Studying abroad gives students a global perspective of life around the world

Walking through the bustling London streets, exploring the victorian and modern eras of England, studying European architecture in many different neighborhoods with all new classmates, U of I alumna Stephanie Piotrowski described her study abroad experience as, “Perspective enhancing.” As an accounting major from the Gies College of Business, studying abroad allowed Piotrowski to not only receive credit by taking elective courses, but it also allowed her to learn about herself, develop her networking skills and leave her comfort zone.

At the [Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange office](#), Media and Marketing Coordinator Alex Williamson explained that students who study abroad benefit in many ways. “The benefits are different for every student depending on what program they choose. We like to put them into three categories,” Williamson said. Between academic, professional and personal benefits, students often times come back with a new perspective on life, just like Piotrowski.

Williamson claims, “I think the personal benefits are why most students study abroad, and that’s sort of the biggest benefit that they have--or that study abroad has on them.” Williamson also explained that often times living abroad gives students the opportunity to study a topic they can not study at Illinois, or have an academic experience that they can not have in the midwest. “For example, if you’re going to go to Australia and study marine biology, the ocean is right there! It’s more difficult to study marine biology here because the ocean isn’t here,” Williamson said.

For those students who are preparing to study abroad, such as senior global studies major Kyra Ward, who is traveling to Vienna, Austria next semester, there are many reasons to be excited. “I’m looking forward to the city and getting to live abroad. I am looking forward to

possibly getting an internship there too. With the program, they offer internships where you could work at the UN headquarters,” Ward said.

An internship with the UN headquarters would be a professional benefit like no other. “Companies will see that I have worked with programs associated with the UN and global politics. It will help me get my foot into the door,” Ward continued.

Campus-wide, nearly 400 study abroad programs are offered. Several colleges have their own study abroad offices, however, the campus study abroad office, also known as Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange (IAGE), has 120 programs open to all majors. Many Illini are taking advantage of these programs. In fact, in a 2018 statement by the [Open Doors Report](#), researchers concluded that U of I was ranked 24th in the nation with 1,945 students studying abroad.

If you are on the fence about studying abroad, Williamson suggests to just do it. “There are tons of reasons not to because it is a challenge to do logistically. You are leaving for an extended period of time, there are finances to consider, there’s course credit transfer to consider, maybe some family obligations. The benefits of doing it outweigh a lot of the logistical challenges that may come with it,” she said.

You can [search for the program](#) that best fits you on their website. Whether you go for a short term trip or a semester-long experience, the life-changing adventure you embark on will change your perspective of the world.

## Source List

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- Alex Williamson, [anw@illinois.edu](mailto:anw@illinois.edu)
- Illinois Abroad and Global Exchange Website, <https://www.studyabroad.illinois.edu/>
- Open Doors Report,  
<https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad/Leading-Institutions>