

Abroad Education



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Applying the Experience

Study abroad professionals have long believed that study abroad, especially when entirely “in language,” is a huge plus on any student’s résumé. And, while I am unaware of any studies demonstrating this assumption, given that a mere 2–3% of U.S. college students currently study abroad, with only a small percentage of those studying in another language for at least a semester, it would surely stand to reason that this experience would distinguish such students before both prospective employers as well as graduate and professional school admissions’ officers.

... the impact of an intensive period of living the language ... has affected people in a variety of different ways ...

Not only does study abroad open up professional options, the personal growth that accompanies these experiences adds new dimensions to an individual’s life. Assets such as maturity, self-awareness, and confidence are important characteristics to possess when entering the workforce, and study abroad helps to awaken these attributes. Living and learning in a different language challenges one’s conception of the world and leads to new relationships and perceptions. The combination of personal growth and academic achievement is at the core of Middlebury’s study abroad experience.

It is with this idea in mind that we have brought together some self-evaluations of the significance of their study abroad experience by alumni of the C.V. Starr–Middlebury Schools Abroad. As the reader will see, the impact of an intensive period of living the language, such as the Schools Abroad strive to offer, has affected people in a variety of different ways, some professional, others personal. And while study abroad can disrupt one’s traditional paradigms, it can also help forge new ones.

DAVID MACEY
DIRECTOR, OFF-CAMPUS STUDY

Office of Off-Campus Study

Sunderland Language Center 129
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT 05753
tel: (802) 443-5745
fax: (802) 443-3157
schoolsabroad@middlebury.edu
www.middlebury.edu/sap

David Macey, Director
Liz Ross, Associate Director
Stacey Woody Thebodo, Assistant Director
Julie Good, Coordinator
Nicole Chance, Coordinator
Jamie Northrup, University Relations
Coordinator
Maggie Edmonds, Program Assistant

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I studied at the Middlebury School in Germany in Mainz during the spring semester 1998. It was an incredibly profound experience for me in many ways—the effects of which I am still witnessing in my life.

In February 2001, the company I was working for in New York City relocated me to their new office in Frankfurt. If I had not developed the language skills gained from studying in Germany, I would have never been asked to make the move. But, having previously lived immersed in German society, I possessed the confidence and cultural awareness required to make an easy transition back to Germany—coincidentally, a mere thirty miles from where I studied.

I work for a large global provider of financial data and software solutions. As our European operations are by and large based out of our London office, we hire staff to support clients all over the continent. For this reason, language skills are essential and qualified candidates are highly sought after. We look for people who can easily adapt to working with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, and a study abroad experience is generally a good indicator of success in those areas.

JOHN FLEMMING, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '99, **School in Germany**

As a child, I always felt that I was looking for something beyond my neighborhood, state, and country. Middlebury was the first to present me with the opportunities that have made travel, work, and study abroad not just a hobby, but a way of life. At Middlebury, I entered the Russian Department determined to study abroad, spending the 1993–94 academic year in Yaroslavl, Russia. Upon returning, I became involved with the Salzburg Seminar, which provided the opportunity to make Austria my home for three years after graduation. Several years later I entered an MA program at Harvard where I studied Serbian and spent the summer of 2002 in Belgrade, Serbia conducting thesis research.

I currently find myself back in Vermont working for Project Harmony, serving as Deputy Director for the ECA-funded School Connectivity Programs in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Studying and working abroad has provided pivotal experiences in my life that not only opened my eyes in ways I never expected, but also reaffirmed my beliefs that people are more alike than they are different, individuals can make a difference, and that we must all learn to think and act as global citizens in an increasingly interdependent world. It's hard to imagine where I would have gone with my life had I not taken advantage of the opportunities presented to me at Middlebury to study overseas.

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BRYAN WOCKLEY, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '95, **School in Russia**



In my current position at El Pomar Foundation I often rely on what I learned while studying in Logroño, Spain. The ability to speak and understand Spanish, even if some of the Latinos in Colorado make fun of my accent, is by far the most important skill that I acquired during my stay abroad. While the opportunity to use my language does not occur as frequently as I would like, knowing Spanish has already proven to be a vital tool in the working world.

Most people would agree that living abroad broadens one's mind; my experience was no exception. The respect that I gained for others from my time abroad assists me daily in working with different teams at El Pomar. During my year in Spain I learned about how people from different cultures look at the world; now it translates to my working life because even people from the same culture have various leadership styles and can look at the same event from different perspectives.

KENT NEWMAN, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '03, **School in Spain**

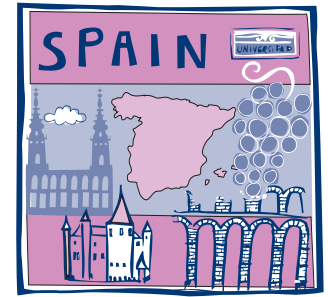
I spent my junior year abroad at the Middlebury School in France (Paris). During that time I participated in an internship with the Forum d'Alternatives Europeennes, which was an EU think-tank of sorts in Paris. That summer, instead of returning home or traveling, I interned with the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels.

After Middlebury, I worked in New York City as a paralegal for Sullivan & Cromwell. A year into my job, I was offered a transfer to their London office and jumped at the opportunity to experience life in yet another culture. A year in London, during which I was often sent abroad for work because of my language skills, led to an offer to transfer to the Paris office. I think something about Middlebury, and in particular studying abroad, really opens one up to new opportunities. I left Sullivan & Cromwell to pursue a masters in EU Wine Law at France's Université de Vine. After a stint in a vineyard in France, I moved to New Zealand and worked there as a Business Developer for the leading Maori Private Training Establishment.

I think something about Middlebury, and in particular studying abroad, really opens one up to new opportunities.

At the age of 27, I still do not have a real concept of home. While I have origins, I do not necessarily have "roots" anymore. A Dutch roommate of mine once told me that I was "at home everywhere, yet nowhere was my home." And, while this is true, I'd rather be rootless than sacrifice any of the experiences that have brought me to where I am today.

ELISABETH FALALEEV, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '98, **School in France**



During the fall semester of my junior year I studied at the Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The purpose of my trip was to gain a global perspective of economics and politics but more importantly, to achieve a high degree of fluency in the Spanish language.

Presently, as an equity research analyst focusing on Latin American companies, I can honestly say that my study abroad experience provided me with the language, analytical, and cultural skills that are fundamental to a successful career in international business. To this day, there isn't an hour that passes when I am not using the skills or applying the knowledge that I gained as a U.S. citizen living and studying abroad.

JUSTIN WENSEK
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '00
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Director: Tao Hong

Hangzhou: Zhejiang University of Technology

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Director: Amy Allington

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Yaroslavl: Yaroslavl State University

Spain

Director: Kim Griffin

Getafe: Universidad Carlos III

Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja

Madrid: Sede Prim

Segovia: Universidad Internacional SEK

I spent my junior year (1997–1998) at the School in Russia in Voronezh. After many years of studying Russian in the U.S., my study abroad experience allowed me to immerse myself in the language as never before. I lived with Russian families and gained a true understanding of everyday life. After two semesters in Voronezh, I stayed another month in Moscow, where I completed an internship with the Eurasia Foundation through the Dillon Dunwalke fellowship program. It was an extraordinary experience to see how Americans and Russians were working together to the benefit of Russian civil society.



After graduating from Middlebury with an International Studies degree, I received a State Department funded fellowship to study in Kazan—the scenic capital of the ethnic Republic of Tatarstan, a culturally Muslim region of Russia. I began to study the Tatar language and traveled throughout the republic. Upon my return to the United States, I earned a Master's degree in Russian and East European Studies at Georgetown University, where I was able to focus in part on Muslim populations in Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The unique opportunities I had to study in Russia's provinces, ... and to master the Russian language set me apart ...

All these pieces fit together perfectly when I applied for my current position as a research assistant at the Brookings Institution, an independent think-tank in Washington. I work with a scholar who has a broad research portfolio, including developing democracy in Russia and Eurasia, the economic and political legacy of the Soviet system, Islam in Russia, the social and economic costs of the war in Chechnya, Eurasian energy, and poverty and unrest in Central Asia. The unique opportunities I had to study in Russia's provinces, to work with one of the most effective NGOs in Russia, and to master the Russian language set me apart in the search to fill this position. My employment at Brookings, has allowed me to witness firsthand the intersection of scholarship and policy-making, and it has been a rewarding experience.

On a more personal note, I met a dashing young Tatar while living in Kazan. We have been married three years and are parents to Leisan Amelia, a six-month-old Tatar-American.

CATHE (NEELY) YUSUPOV, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE '99
School in Russia