

# Employer Attitudes toward Study Abroad

**Stevan Trooboff**

*Council for International Educational Exchange*

**Michael Vande Berg**

*Council for International Educational Exchange*

**Jack Rayman**

*The Pennsylvania State University*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, as study abroad professionals have come to focus more squarely on the question of what students are in fact learning abroad, there has been increasing speculation about the extent to which study abroad increases prospects for employability following graduation. Common wisdom has it that undergraduates who study abroad have an advantage over those who stay at home. There is a sense—ranging from vague hope to strong conviction—among study abroad professionals, and among increasing numbers of parents, that students who have studied abroad will have a leg up in the job market when they interview for first jobs following graduation. A second piece of conventional wisdom somewhat tempers this optimistic view about study abroad's likely role in enhancing employability. It is commonly held that CEOs and presidents value studying abroad more than the human resource professionals and others in their firms who make the hiring decisions. The authors of a recent *Christian Science Monitor* article, "Send Future US Business Leaders Abroad," put it this way: "The worse news is that human resources professionals and line managers do not appear to value experiences abroad when making hiring decisions (...) while CEOs express their conviction that international competence is important, that view is not shared by campus recruiters and is not being reflected in hirings and promotions."<sup>1</sup>

At the request of its Academic Consortium, 2006 The Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE) designed and carried out a research study to explore these and related questions. The study's results provide significant support for the belief that employers value study abroad in hiring recent college and university graduates—particularly certain classes of employers. The study does not, however, lend support to the second piece of common wisdom: our data strongly suggest that human resource professionals and others responsible

for hiring employees are in fact more likely to value study abroad than are CEOs and presidents.

Two recent studies, both unpublished, influenced our research design and methodology. The first study, commissioned some five years ago by a consortium of exchange organizations (IIE, DAAD, the British Council, and the Australian Education Office), investigated the extent to which both employers and former student participants value “overseas study.”<sup>2</sup> That research, which grew out of the sponsors’ interest in identifying ways to encourage more US students to enroll in degree programs at universities abroad and to study abroad, was carried out through interviews of 100 employers and 100 students. The results suggested, among other things, that in recruiting candidates, employers rated interpersonal skills more highly than other skills. They also suggested a connection in employers’ minds between overseas study and the development of interpersonal skills. The study’s conclusions, while tentative, pointed to several likely areas for future research, and it helped inform our thinking in important ways. Now alert to the pitfalls of combining study abroad and earning a degree abroad into a single “overseas study” category—we reasoned that combining the two blurs important distinctions—we instead asked employers to consider “study abroad” as one of a variety of international experiences, and to rate the value of each. Our reading of this pioneering consorcial study also influenced our decision to ask employers how much value they place on different types of study abroad programs.

The second study, carried out in 2004 by the Scott Research Group and Robert Greenberg (former Director of Career Services at the University Tennessee),<sup>3</sup> explored the assumption that employers look favorably on students who have engaged in one of several international education experiences—studying abroad, completing an internship, learning a second language, or working or traveling abroad. The researchers surveyed 26 employers and ten directors of “campus international affairs offices” about their respective attitudes about each of these experiences. It concluded, in part, that international educators value these experiences more than employers, and that educators are more likely than employers to link studying abroad with a range of desirable attributes in prospective employees (such characteristics as “more inclined to take risks,” “more mature,” and so on). The study’s samples were too small to provide convincing support for these conclusions. However, like the earlier study, this one influenced our thinking about how we might best focus on our own target audience—the various types of employers who hire US undergraduates for entry-level positions—and about what we would need to do to get these employers to respond in sufficient numbers to support the validity of our own data.

## **Methodology and Response Rate**

Believing that employers would be more likely to participate in a research project if they had a stake in the results, we approached the directors of career services at four of CIEE's partner institutions—Pennsylvania State University (PSU), the University of Kentucky, the University of Notre Dame and Pacific Lutheran University<sup>4</sup>—and asked them whether they would be willing to have us survey employers who annually attend career fairs and/or interview seniors on their campuses. In agreeing to join the study, the directors themselves became important stakeholders since the study's results would presumably allow them to improve their own on-campus programming in preparing graduating seniors to compete for jobs. One of the study's authors, Jack Rayman, Director of Career Services at PSU, in fact became a full research partner and co-author at this point. In addition to benefiting from the participation of the four career services directors, the study enjoyed the support of study abroad directors at each of the four participating universities,<sup>5</sup> and of the Director of Student Affairs Research and Assessment at PSU.<sup>6</sup>

The research design that resulted from this collaboration allowed us to survey a broad range of respondents: representatives of 352 firms, organizations and agencies from a wide range of industries across the US completed an on-line questionnaire that we had designed. Our research methodology included having each of the four career services directors send out, under his or her own name and title, copies of a form letter that we had written for this purpose. The letter asked human resources professionals, employed at firms that work with at least one of the four universities, to respond to an attached on-line questionnaire that we had developed. This invitation letter also asked the human resources professionals to forward the survey to the CEO or president of the firm, with a request that he or she, or someone from his or her immediate staff, complete and return the survey to us. We additionally provided material incentives: employers interviewing seniors at PSU, for example, were told that if they completed the survey, they would be eligible to participate in a prize drawing, with each of three winners receiving a pair of tickets to the upcoming PSU/University of Michigan football game. Twenty-nine percent of those in the firms, organizations and agencies who received the survey completed it—a high response rate for a survey directed to businesses. Eleven percent of the respondents were CEOs, presidents or individuals who worked in their offices. Eighty-nine percent held other positions in their firms, with nearly two-thirds (65%) of this second group made up of campus recruiters and other human resource professionals.

**Research Results**

The results of this research will, we believe, be of interest to study abroad professionals, career services professionals, and employers alike. The data both enriches our understanding of employer attitudes about study abroad and points out several steps that can be taken to strengthen the connection between student learning abroad and enhanced possibilities for gainful employment following graduation.

First, the study provides evidence that employers do in fact value study abroad, when compared to a variety of other educational experiences. Table 1.0 illustrates the relative value that CEOs, presidents and others working in their offices (we refer to this group throughout the article as “senior managers”), on one hand, and human resource professionals and others responsible for hiring employees, on the other, place on undergraduate study abroad

*Table 1.0: Table 1.0 Relative Value of International Educational Experiences Comparison of Senior Managers and Those Responsible for Hiring (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)*

<b>Type of International Education Experience</b>	<b>Senior Mgmt</b>	<b>HR and Others</b>
Majored in subject relevant to firm	4.27	4.12
Completed a major/minor in foreign language	1.89	2.20
College study abroad in non English-speaking country	2.20	2.20
College study abroad in English-speaking country	2.20	1.89
Completed one semester internship abroad	1.57	1.95*
Completed major in International Business	1.49	1.49
Attended high school abroad, 1-4 years, non-English speaking	1.49	1.75*
Attended High school abroad, 1-4 years, English-speaking	1.75*	1.71*
Completed area studies certificate in college	1.41	1.41

Key: \* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .05 level  
 \*\* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .01 level

Not surprisingly, employers, as a group, place the highest value on students’ academic majors when hiring—and the degree of preference they show for academic major in hiring for entry-level positions far exceeds any other educational experience listed. Employers looking for engineers do not hire accountants just because they have studied abroad. However, employers do

value both college/university study abroad and completing an internship abroad to a greater extent than all but one other type of educational experience: majoring or minoring in a foreign language. Given the role that well-designed and -delivered study abroad programs can play in strengthening second language skills,<sup>7</sup> study abroad professionals and foreign language faculty alike will be pleased that employers also recognize the value of second language learning in considering prospective employees.

It is significant to note as well that human resources professionals and others responsible for hiring in firms place more value on eight of the nine types of educational experiences that they were asked to rank than do senior managers (numerical values followed by one asterisk show significant difference with the adjacent value at the .05 level, with two asterisks showing still higher significance of difference, this time at the .01 level)—a pattern that we will discuss in the final section of this article.

We also explored whether there is a correlation between the proportion of revenue that an employer's firm, organization or agency earns from international sales, and his or her attitudes toward the various types of international experiences displayed in Table 1.0. Of the 352 respondents, 152 worked at firms, organizations or agencies that generated some amount of their revenue through international sales. Table 1.1 compares how relatively important the various types of international educational experiences were across these 152 employees. It compares the response of employees whose firms annually earn between 1% and 24% of their revenue internationally (80 respondents) with employees (51 respondents) whose firms annually earn more than 25% of their revenue through international sales.

The greater the firm's internationally generated revenue, the more likely that its employees value all types of study abroad. The degree of difference between firms that earn 1–24% of revenue from international sales, and firms that earn 25% or more of their revenue internationally, reaches significance or high significance for seven of the nine types of international education experiences.

Comparing the rank ordering of international educational experiences in Table 1.1 with the rank orderings of Table 1.0 is also revealing: employers represented in Table 1.1 show a significantly higher appreciation than all employees considered together (Table 1.0), both for "Completed major or minor in a foreign language" (values of 2.16 and 2.66 in Table 1.1, as compared to values of 1.89 and 2.20 in Table 1.0) and "College study abroad in a non-English-speaking country (where the employees at firms with international revenue valued it at 1.99 and 2.42, as compared with all employers, at 1.72 and 2.02).

Table 1.1 *Relative Importance of International Educational Experiences (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)*

<b>Type of International. Education Experience</b>	<b>Annual International Revenue 1%-24%</b>	<b>Annual International Revenue &gt;25%</b>
Majored in subject relevant to firm	4.19	4.20
Completed a major/minor in foreign language	2.16	2.66*
College study abroad in non English-speaking country	1.99	2.42*
Completed one semester internship abroad	1.99	2.50*
Completed major in International Business	1.95	2.54**
College study abroad in English-speaking country	1.84	2.47**
Completed area studies certificate in college	1.73	1.88
Attended high school abroad, 1-4 years, non-English speaking	1.68	2.10**
Attended High school abroad, 1-4 years, English-speaking	1.65	2.08*

Key: \* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .05 level  
 \*\* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .01 level

We found significant differences in comparing employers’ rank orderings of international education experiences in Tables 1 and 1.1. While employers in Table 1.0 ranked “College study abroad in an English-speaking country” fourth, employees in Table 1.1, whose firms earn some portion of their revenue through international sales, ranked English-speaking study abroad only sixth—another reflection of the importance employers attach to second language acquisition, especially employers whose firms do business internationally.

Second, we asked employers to rank which types of study abroad experiences they believe are most likely to develop the qualities and skills they look for in hiring graduating students.

Table 2.0 *Types of Study Abroad Programs and Value Placed by: Senior Management and Others Responsible for Hiring (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)*

Program Type	Senior Management	other
1-3 week Jan./May-term or summer program w/ classes	1.80	2.30**
1-3 week Jan-/May-term or summer service learning	1.91	2.36**
4-10 week summer program w/ classes	2.29	2.80**
4-10 week summer service learning program	2.60	2.87
14-18 week semester program w/ classes outside university	3.00	3.16
14-18 week semester program w/ classes at university	3.00	3.31*
14-18 week service learning program	3.00	3.26
Academic year program w/ semester of classes outside	3.42	3.74
University followed by semester internship		
Academic year program / semester of classes at university followed by semester internship	3.57	3.74
14-18 week internship w/ firm/organization/agency	3.57	3.60

Key: \* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .05 level

\*\* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .01 level

It's clear that responding employers—whether senior management or those hiring entry-level employees—have two significant preferences where education abroad is concerned. First, employers believe that the longer the program, the more value it has; and second, they place relatively high value on experiential learning—on programs that feature service learning and, especially, internship opportunities. As was the case with the data in Table 1.0, those responsible for making hiring decisions (the “Other” group here in Table 2.0) also place a higher value on all types of study abroad than do senior managers (with differences followed by one asterisk reaching a level of significance at the .05 level, and by two asterisks at the .01 level).

We also investigated whether those employers who had studied abroad (15.2% of respondents) and those who had not believe that various types of education abroad experiences are likely to provide students with opportunities to develop the personal qualities and skills that their firm, organization or agency values in hiring employees.

Table 2.1 Value of Different Types of Education Abroad Experiences: Comparison of Employers Who Had and Had Not Studied Abroad (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)

Program Type	Did not study abroad	Studied abroad
1-3 week Jan./May-term or summer program w/ classes	2.23	2.39
1-3 week Jan./May-term or summer service learning	2.28	2.51
4-10 week summer program w/ classes	2.68	3.08
4-10 week summer service learning program	2.78	3.18**
14-18 week semester program w/ classes outside university	3.04	3.60**
14-18 week semester program w/ classes at university	3.15	3.84***
14-18 week service learning program	3.16	3.64**
14-18 week internship w/ firm/organization/agency	3.50	4.14***
Academic year program w/ semester of classes outside university followed by semester internship	3.56	4.30***
Academic year program / semester of classes at university followed by semester internship	3.60	4.37***

Key: \* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .05 level

\*\*significant difference with the adjacent value at the .01 level

\*\*\* significant difference with the adjacent value at the .001 level

Not only did employers who had studied abroad in college rank all types of study abroad more highly than those who had not, but also the extent to which former participants valued all types of study abroad rose to very high levels of significance (differences followed by two asterisks show a level of significance at the .01 level, and by three asterisks at the .001 level). The preferences for different forms of education abroad shown in Table 2.0, in the comparison of senior management preferences with those of other employees—a bias for programs of longer duration, and for service learning and internships—are even more pronounced in the comparison of those who have and have not studied abroad. The most valued type of education abroad experience for the groups in Table 2.0—both the senior managers and the HR professionals and others responsible for hiring—was a semester internship. Table 2.1 shows, however, that among those who have studied abroad, the most highly valued experience is a year-long program that offers a first semester of courses at a university abroad, followed by a second-semester internship. The experience of studying

abroad, in other words, very significantly increases the extent to which employers value academic study at a host university abroad. We will have more to say about this important finding in the final section of the article.

Third, we asked employers to identify the personal qualities and skills they look for in prospective employees—and we then asked them to tell us the extent to which they believe that studying abroad enhances each of these qualities and skills. In constructing the survey, we wondered whether employers, when hiring students, would show a preference for different personal qualities and skills than do international educators. Would employers and international educators hold very different views about the sorts of personal qualities and skills students will need in order to compete in Thomas Friedman’s “flat world”? Would employers demonstrate, in hiring for entry level positions, that they place more value on personal qualities and skills associated with the traditional workplace—honesty, self-motivation, innovation, effective speaking and writing skills, etc.—or would they show a preference for the sorts of intercultural and global knowledge and skills that many study abroad professionals and others in our colleges and universities urge students to acquire (flexibility, curiosity, the ability to communicate effectively in intercultural situations, and so on)?

To test these waters, we turned to three different published sources to identify personal qualities and skills that we would list for employers in asking them to choose which they valued when hiring for entry level jobs. We relied, first, on lists of personal qualities and skills that appear in the published results of surveys that the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) annually sends to many thousands of US employers.<sup>8</sup> Relying on NACE surveys conducted during the last six years, we drew up a list made up of the three most highly rated personal qualities and skills that employers had identified during each of those years. For our second source, we turned to two recently completed doctoral dissertations, one by Darla Deardorff that identified core criteria for “intercultural competence,”<sup>9</sup> and the other by William Hunter that identified core criteria for “global competence.”<sup>10</sup> Combining items from these two sources, we created two separate lists for employers completing our survey: one made up of personal qualities, the other of skills. In putting together these two lists, we interwove items from both the NACE and intercultural/global competence sources, with each list then containing approximately the same number of items from both sources.

Our decision to draw items for personal qualities and skills from these two very different sources represented a methodological departure from the two studies we discussed earlier. Employers responding to those studies were

focusing on a narrower set of options than we offered those responding to our study. As the results of our study show, this is an important difference: we did not limit ourselves, a priori, to trying to determine whether employers would respond positively to personal qualities and skills that are presumably associated with intercultural or global competence. Instead, in deliberately interweaving the qualities and skills that we had found in the NACE annual surveys with many of the intercultural and global qualities and skills identified in the Deardorff and Hunter dissertations, we were exploring a more open-ended, and we believe, a more significant question: whether employers continue to value the traditional sorts of personal qualities and skills revealed in the annual NACE surveys, or whether they are at least beginning to show a preference, in their hiring decisions, for the sorts of intercultural and global skills that many study abroad professionals regard both as desirable and as necessary for preparing students for work and life after graduation.

A recent report of the Goldman Sachs Foundation and Asia Society—one among a veritable deluge of reports and statements we might have chosen to make the point—begins with the proposition that “today’s students must acquire a far different set of knowledge, skills and perspectives than previous generations”<sup>11</sup> if they are to live and work successfully in a complex and rapidly changing global world. Such statements beg an important question: are employers now showing a preference for intercultural and global qualities and skills in hiring for entry level positions? Our decision to ask employers to rank order personal qualities and skills from lists that represented both traditional workplace values (the NACE values) and newer intercultural/global values (the values identified in the Deardorff and Hunter dissertations) would, we hoped, help us to understand whether employers are in fact showing a preference in hiring those graduating seniors who—to borrow again from the Goldman Sachs/Asia Society report again—have acquired global knowledge, achieved significant proficiency in a second language, and gained global perspectives.

Table 3.0 lists “Personal Qualities” of prospective employees in the order that responding employers ranked them, as well as the extent to which the employers believe that studying abroad enhances each of them. Those qualities that derive from the “intercultural/global” criteria are in bold italics.

Table 3.0 *Personal Qualities in Prospective Employees: Ranking for All Employers (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)*

Quality	Importance in Hiring	Enhanced By Study Abroad
1. Honesty and integrity	4.93	2.25
2. Shows strong work ethic	4.87	2.79
3. Self motivated, shows initiative	4.85	3.63
<b>4. <i>Listens and observes well</i></b>	<b>4.68</b>	<b>3.24</b>
<b>5. <i>Flexible, adapts well</i></b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>4.02</b>
6. Rational and logical	4.47	2.77
7. Innovative and Creative	4.33	3.32
8. Enthusiastic and outgoing	4.29	3.35
<b>9. <i>Curious; wants to discover more</i></b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>4.27</b>
<b>10. <i>Non-judgmental toward other world views</i></b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>4.16</b>
<b>11. <i>Willing to take risks to learn new things</i></b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>4.06</b>
<b>12. <i>Recognizes own world view is not universal</i></b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>4.24</b>

Considered as a group, employers place most value on three personal qualities that derive from the annual NACE surveys: “shows honesty and integrity,” “shows a strong work ethic,” and “is self motivated—shows initiative.” They also place significant value on two other criteria—“listens and observes well” and “flexible; adapts well to change”—that we drew from the “intercultural/global competence” criteria that Deardorff and Hunter had identified in their dissertations, learning outcomes that many of us who send students abroad would typically associate with studying abroad. It is worth noting as well that there is a pronounced and nearly consistent inverse relationship between the value that employers place on personal qualities, and the extent to which they believe that study abroad enhances these qualities. We will have more to say about this inverse relationship in the final section of the article.

Table 3.1 lists employee “Skills” in the order that employers ranked them, as well as the extent to which employers believe that studying abroad enhances each of these skills. Here again, those skills that derive from the “intercultural/global competence” list of criteria are in bold italics.

Table 3.1 *Personal Skills of Prospective Employees: Ranking for all Employers (5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the highest, and 1 the lowest, importance)*

Skills	Importance in Hiring	Enhanced by Study Abroad
1. Effective working in teams	4.73	2.93
<b>2. Works well under pressure</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>2.94</b>
<b>3. Analyzes, evaluates, interprets well</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>2.92</b>
<b>4. Works effectively outside comfort zone</b>	<b>4.54</b>	<b>4.03</b>
5. Expresses self effectively in writing	4.22	2.60
6. Knowledgeable about firm’s core activities	4.22	2.31
<b>7. Communicates effectively in intercultural situations</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>4.06</b>
8. Knowledgeable doing business elsewhere	2.92	3.20
<b>9. Understand global econ., political trends</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>3.58</b>
<b>10. Well-informed re: world events/history</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>3.71</b>
<b>11. Effective socializing/doing business elsewhere</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>3.96</b>
<b>12. Knowledgeable re: other history/culture</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>4.12</b>

What is striking about these rankings of personal qualities and skills is the relatively high value that employers place on skills drawn from the intercultural/global sources—three of the four highest-rated skills on Table 3.1 represent intercultural/global criteria—as compared with the list of personal qualities in Table 3.0, where employers ranked the NACE qualities (representing more traditional workplace values) more highly. These rankings offer convincing evidence that employers do value the sorts of intercultural/global competence skills that study abroad professionals typically associate with student learning abroad. As was the case with the personal qualities displayed in Table 3.0, here in Table 3.1 we again find an inverse relationship between employers’ ranking of prospective employees’ skills, on the one hand, and the extent to which they believe study abroad enhances those skills. Again, we will discuss this inverse relationship in the final section of the article.

Fourth, we asked employers whether they asked about study abroad during interviews with students who indicate on their resumes that they have studied abroad. With a 5 representing “Always,” 4 “Most of the time,” 3 “Some of the time,” 2 “Rarely,” and 1 “Never,” the mean score across our respondents was 3.7. In other words, while this study has produced strong evidence that

employers, and particularly some classes of employers, do believe that study abroad enhances personal qualities and skills that they value in prospective employees, they often fail to ask students to discuss their study abroad experiences during interviews.

### **Implications of Findings**

First, it is clear that employers in general, and some classes of employers in particular, place significant value on studying abroad. While common wisdom has it that presidents and other senior management value study abroad more than other human resource and other employees do, our data show that those responsible for hiring students for entry-level positions in fact value study abroad more than senior managers do. Human resource professionals and others responsible for hiring value all types of study abroad more than senior managers, and they are more likely to believe that study abroad enhances desired qualities and skills. The explanation for this lies, we believe, at least partly in the fact that more than 15% of the non-senior managers responding to the survey had studied abroad. In other words, a significant portion of those responsible for hiring new employees are, by virtue of their own experience, positively disposed toward study abroad. As US study abroad enrollments continue to increase in the coming years, there is every reason to believe that this halo effect—the valuing of “folks like me”—will continue to grow, as increasing numbers of former participants join the ranks of human resource professionals in US firms, organizations and agencies.

Second, employers value some personal qualities, and an even greater numbers of skills, that derive from the “intercultural/global competence” criteria they were asked to rank. They especially value “listening and observing well,” “adapting well to change,” “working well under pressure,” “analyzing, evaluating and interpreting well,” and “working effectively outside one’s comfort zone.” At the same time, responding employers indicate they are not, for the most part, strongly convinced that study abroad enhances these skills. These results challenge study abroad professionals to take steps that will convince employers that study abroad can in fact enhance such highly desired personal qualities and skills. We believe that at least three courses of action are called for here:

A. We need to continue to make efforts to carry out research on student learning abroad in order to collect data that will help convince employers that specific types of study abroad do in fact provide students with opportunities to develop or enhance desired learning outcomes — whether personal qualities or skills. The inverse relationship that we have seen

between the extent to which employers value specific employee qualities and skills, on the one hand, and the extent to which employers believe that study abroad enhances desired qualities and skills, is instructive. If we want employers, for example, to change their minds about the extent to which study abroad enhances a student's ability to work in teams (as we saw in Table 3.1, employers value team work more highly than any other skill, yet believe at the same time that it is the skill least likely to be enhanced through study abroad), we are going to have to design and carry out credible research that investigates whether some types of study abroad programs do in fact strengthen team building skills. And if the connection between program type and learning outcome is established through a well-designed study, then those working both in study abroad and in career services offices will need to advocate for the effectiveness of appropriate types of study abroad programs in this regard, through sharing the research results with colleagues and employers alike.

B. We need to pay more attention to desired learning outcomes in designing programs abroad for our students. Since employers place the very highest value on team-building skills in hiring for entry-level positions, it would clearly make sense for study abroad professionals to design programs that provide students with well-structured opportunities to do meaningful work abroad in teams. The good news in this regard is that many existing study abroad programs could relatively easily be adapted to focus on the building of this skill.

C. Study abroad and career services professionals should collaborate in order to give students some basic training in how to present what they have learned through studying abroad, in ways that employers will appreciate. In our experience, former study abroad participants are more likely to discuss the place where they studied, and aspects of local cultural life, than they are the sorts of learning outcomes—the specific knowledge, skills and perspectives they learned abroad. This study provides clear evidence about which of these employers are most likely to value. And the fact that employers often fail to ask students about study abroad during interviews means that it's important to train and coach the students about the importance of bringing up their experiences abroad in the first place, whether the employer does or not.

Third, the value that employers place on study abroad grows significantly as program length increases. Employers also show a strong preference for programs that feature service learning or internships. This is not an indictment of shorter programs, or of programs that don't feature structured experiential learning; it is simply a recognition that in training students to discuss their learning abroad in effective ways, those who have participated in relatively short-term programs, or in programs that didn't include experiential options, will need to be able to describe their activities in ways that will convince prospective employers that their learning abroad has prepared them in other ways.

In short, studying abroad is not, in and of itself, a way to get a job. Picking the major is probably the single most important decision a student will make, where his or her employment possibilities are concerned. However, students who opt to study abroad are making a decision that can have a very positive impact on their employability. Employers clearly value many of the qualities, and especially the skills, that international educators associate with study abroad. It is also clear, though, that study abroad professionals and career services professionals alike need to consider what steps they can take—through research; program design, on and off campus; and the training of students—that will strengthen the case, with employers, about the effectiveness of learning abroad, and that will allow students to describe their learning through discussing the sorts of learning outcomes that employers value.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kaufman, H. and Johnson, T. S. (2005). *The Christian science monitor*, December 08. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1208/p09s01-coop.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous. (No date). An Exploration of the demand for study overseas from american students and employers. <http://www.iienetwork.org/?p=41525>.

<sup>3</sup> Scott, M. and Greenberg, R. (No date). The Global connection: how much does international experience contribute to a student's employability? Unpublished research report sent to us by Russ Coughenour, Director of Career Services, University of Tennessee.

<sup>4</sup> We enjoyed and benefited from the collaboration of the Directors of Career Services at these four universities. They are, respectively, Dr. Jack Rayman, Sue Strup, Lee Svete, and Ruth Rogers.

<sup>5</sup> We also appreciate the significant support provided by the directors of Study Abroad (or an equivalently titled office) at the four universities. They are, respectively, Dr. John Keller, Dr. Janet Roccanova, Dr. Julia Douthwaite, and Dr. Neal Sobania.

<sup>6</sup> We benefited greatly from the advice provided, and data analysis conducted by, Dr. Andrea Dowhower, Director of the Office of Student Affairs Research and Assessment at Penn State University. She was ably assisted by Robert Domingo, Data Analyst/Research Assistant in her office and a Ph.D. candidate in Penn State's Higher Education Program.

<sup>7</sup> For convincing evidence that student gains in oral proficiency can be greater in well-designed and -delivered programs abroad than in classrooms on the home campus, see Segalowitz, N., Freed, B., *et al* (2004). *Frontiers: the interdisciplinary journal of study abroad*, X, 1–18.

<sup>8</sup> The results of the annual NACE survey can be accessed at [www.naceweb.org/pubs/joboutlook/2007/JO7.pdf](http://www.naceweb.org/pubs/joboutlook/2007/JO7.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> For complete information about the intercultural competence criteria she identified, see Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization at institutions of higher education in the United States*. Unpublished dissertation. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.

<sup>10</sup> For complete information about the global competence criteria he identified, see Hunter, W. (2004). *Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences necessary to become globally competent*. Unpublished dissertation. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University.

<sup>11</sup> Bell-Rose, S. and Desai, V. (2005). *Educating Leaders for a Global Society*, p. 2. See: [http://www2.goldmansachs.com/our\\_firm/our\\_culture/corporate\\_citizenship/gs\\_foundation/knowledge\\_center/docs/Educating\\_Leaders.pdf](http://www2.goldmansachs.com/our_firm/our_culture/corporate_citizenship/gs_foundation/knowledge_center/docs/Educating_Leaders.pdf)

## References

- Anonymous. (No date). An exploration of the demand for study overseas from american students and employers. Provided by Russ Coughenor, Director of Career Services at the University of Tennessee. <http://www.iienetwork.org/?p=41525>.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2004). The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization at institutions of higher education in the United States. Unpublished dissertation. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.
- Friedman, T. L. (2006). *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Hunter, W. (2004). Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences necessary to become globally competent. Unpublished dissertation. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University.
- Kaufman, H. and Johnson, T. S. (2005). *The Christian science monitor*, December 08. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1208/p09s01-coop.html>.
- NACE annual survey. (2007). [www.nacweb.org/pubs/joboutlook/2007/JO7.pdf](http://www.nacweb.org/pubs/joboutlook/2007/JO7.pdf).
- Scott, M. and Greenberg, R. (No date). The global connection: How much does international experience contribute to a student's employability? Provided by Russ Coughenour, Director of Career Services, University of Tennessee.
- Segalowitz, N., Freed, B., et al. (2004). *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad*, X, 1–18.

