

# BADGERS BEYOND ABROAD

alumni interview series

## David Appel

France

### Life After Study Abroad

After my junior year in Aix-en-Provence, France, I finished my senior year at UW finalizing my economics and French majors. My year abroad further deepened my desire to live abroad post-graduation to experience the same amount and quality of personal growth I had in France. Unsure how to do that, I spent a couple months working various jobs while I searched. Eventually, the opportunity presented itself from communicating within my network what I was looking for: work in a Non-Governmental Organization abroad preferably using my French. A family friend directed me to a relative working at the African Leadership Academy in Johannesburg, South Africa. She encouraged me to talk to the Human Resources Director who said they needed help in the admissions office of this school recruiting 16-19 leaders from all over Africa. I had never considered admissions but, the organization enormously interested me. Also, I've found many skills that I am learning here to be 100% transferable, including: personal organization, Excel, Microsoft Word, public speaking, and effective communication. I started as an intern and have since transitioned to the fellowship position within admissions. The Academy is extremely international as I work with people of almost every African country and use my French daily.

### Impact on Life, Goals & Career

Those nine months in France taught me patience, curiosity, and independence. Most importantly though, those months taught me to appreciate the quotation, "Ultimately we know deeply that the other side of every fear is freedom." (Marilyn Ferguson) I developed a desire to put myself in challenging situations emotionally and intellectually. For example, I wanted to be more adaptive to change, comfortable talking to all kinds of people, and resourceful in the absence of my support systems in the States. Intellectually, I wanted to be more cognizant of the similarities and difference of people around the world, the effect of the United States on the world, and learning other languages. My goal became to live abroad and my career has been guided by that goal.

### Advice for Returning Students

I think returning from abroad leaves you enormously excited about the prospect of living abroad again but intimidated by the logistics of figuring it out. You will need to be a flexible and open to different opportunities but, it's more than possible. Most importantly, tell people in your network what you're interested in because you never know what connections or knowledge someone might have to unlock an opportunity for you to live and work abroad. One of my mentors used to send out an email to everyone in his network explaining his goals, interests, and wants while searching for new opportunities. I wish you luck!

Interview from November 2015



David (back row, 2nd from left) with the Sciences Po-Aix men's football team in the final match against Sciences Po-Paris in Bordeaux, France.

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