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England

Life After Study Abroad
I studied abroad at the University of Warwick, in Coventry, England, for the Academic Year 2007-2008. I graduated from UW-Madison in 2009, then went directly to South Korea and spent a year teaching English in a small, rural town, about an hour outside of Seoul. After my year in Korea, I went to the University of Maryland and completed a master’s program in Counseling and Personnel Services, with a focus in College Student Personnel. Following graduate school, I accepted a position as a Study Abroad Coordinator at a liberal arts university in Florida, which is where I currently work.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career
My time abroad had a huge impact on my life, goals, and clearly, my career as well. Academically, adjusting to the UK system of higher education was a little rough at first, although I got used to it after a couple of months. The UK faculty expected high quality and very detailed and lengthy papers (and they were tough graders!), but it ended up being great preparation for graduate school. In general though, I gained so much confidence and independence from my time abroad, and I now have a very global network. I’m still in contact with my UK friends and the other international friends I made while studying at Warwick - a few of them have visited me, and I’ve gone back and visited them.

Once you go abroad and start seeing the world, you can’t ever un-see it. Because of my time abroad, I’m more appreciative of different people, customs, and beliefs (and am more aware of my own). I’m more aware of global news and issues. I’m more sensitive to how the decisions made by the US impacts other countries. And, I’m hyper-aware of how I am representing the US when I go abroad to new countries or when I am interacting with international people at home.

Advice for Returning Students
Use the time you spent abroad to your advantage. So often, students return and all they can really say about their experience was that they had a great time. However, it’s important to think beyond that. As you start applying for internships, jobs, graduate school, etc., think about how you can really articulate your study abroad experience to potential employers and/or graduate schools. Studying abroad shows initiative, independence, the ability to take a risk and step outside of your comfort zone, cross-cultural competence and communication, a deeper understanding of both yourself and others, the ability to work with and make friends across differences, and for some, an improved language ability. Be able to talk about those things with other people and use these acquired skills to your advantage!

My experience studying abroad impacted so many of my major life decisions after returning - from working abroad in Korea, going to graduate school, and finally a career in the field of study abroad.

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