What Are Your Study Abroad Goals?

The process of setting goals is a valuable exercise as you prepare to study abroad because if you are not clear as to what you want to get out of your trip abroad, you will have no way of knowing whether you are accomplishing your goals. In addition, by considering your personal goals for your study abroad experience you will begin to understand your motivations for wanting to live and study abroad.

Here is a list of the objectives most commonly given by Americans going overseas. Put an “X” next to all those that apply to you.

1. Advancement in future job or profession  
2. Challenge of living and studying overseas  
3. Opportunity to increase future salary  
4. Pressure from friends or parents, teachers, or the “K” Plan  
5. Desire to expand your own horizons  
6. Desire to experience an exotic foreign place  
7. Desire to learn another language and culture  
8. Desire to keep up with classmates and friends who have been overseas  
9. Desire to get away from the United States  
10. Need for a change  
11. Desire to get away from something in personal or college life  
12. Hope that the new setting will solve something distressing in personal, college, or family life  
13. Hope that foreign experience will stop the drift, uncertainty, or pointlessness in your personal or college life and give it new meaning  
14. Other (specify)

If you are like most people, you have checked several items. You will want to review this list from time to time while you are abroad to check whether you are making progress on achieving your objectives. You might find it helpful to write in your journal about your feelings and motivations as you review this list.
Now go back through the list and note which three or four are most important to you now and put them in rank order. Consider these and the rest of the items carefully. Are there conflicts among the objectives that are most important now? Are there motivations on the list (or others that you’ve thought of) that you were unwilling to acknowledge? Almost everyone goes abroad with mixed motives, some of which we are not comfortable with. Over the next ten weeks you may wish to talk about your motives with friends, your advisor, a counselor, or someone from the Center for International Programs. By clearly and honestly stating your needs and goals in your own mind (even if they are less idealistic than you would like), you will be better able to establish realistic expectations for your sojourn abroad. Clear objectives and realistic expectations are the best beginning for your study abroad experience.