As you prepare for your life after K, study abroad provides a singular opportunity for you to set yourself apart from other job seekers and to build valuable new intercultural skills and competencies. While you may not have a clear career direction at the time you make study abroad decisions, research shows that your study abroad experience will be very important years later in shaping your career mobility and influencing your choice of graduate study or work abroad.

Kalamazoo College students report that study abroad has enabled them to:

- Develop higher levels of global and intercultural competence
- Gain appreciation for diversity and interact successfully between cultures
- Build international professional networks
- Gain a better understanding of the global job market and become better prepared for international careers
- Become more independent and adaptable
- Function comfortably in an unfamiliar environment
- Become more empathetic, compassionate, and sophisticated

Participation in study abroad often sparks interest in new career options as well as unanticipated desire to pursue graduate study or careers abroad. Unfortunately, since students rarely study abroad with career goals in mind, they often find themselves unprepared for the many career development opportunities available to them while abroad.

Making Choices about Study Abroad Programs

To maximize the career value of your study abroad, ask yourself career-related questions as you consider the type of program and the location. For example:

- How will the experience be integrated into my field of study?
- What skills and competencies relevant to my chosen career can I develop while abroad?
- Is improving my language skills an important career goal for me?
- Outside the classroom, what options are there for volunteering, job shadows, or internships?
- Are there alumni living and working in the host city with whom I can meet to discuss my career interests?
Planning for Your Study Abroad Experience

Once you know where you will be studying abroad, make a list of activities specific to your career learning goals. You might set goals of:

- attending a professional networking event
- shadowing a professional in your field of study
- pursuing a part-time unpaid internship or engaging in service-learning in conjunction with or in addition to your ICRP
- inquiring about graduate study at your host institution or visiting nearby graduate schools
- making connections with potential research or project advisors for your SIP
- scheduling an informational interview with a K graduate living in your host country

How the CCPD Can Help

As you prepare to make the most of your study abroad experience, take advantage of the CCPD’s expertise to help you:

- Define career areas that interest you and consider how the study abroad experience will help you meet your goals
- Consider ways to develop skills on study abroad that will make you a stronger candidate for graduate school, employment, or post-baccalaureate service
- Create and review your ICRP résumé to clarify your objectives and highlight your relevant skills and experiences
- Use LinkedIn and the alumni directory to identify potential career mentors in your host country

We hope you’ll stay in touch while you’re on study abroad. CCPD career coaches will be available via email and video chat during your time abroad, ready to answer questions, review your materials, and/or help with your summer internship search. We’ll look forward to working with you to integrate your study abroad experiences into your résumé and your career planning when you’re back on campus.