

Definitely a Year!

Hear What 4 CSU Students Have to Say. . .

FRANCE 2009-2010

My name is Brandon DeJesus and I am a graduate of CSU Sacramento. While at CSU Sacramento I had privilege of studying abroad for 2 semesters in France. While I am extremely outgoing, before I left for France I was the type of person who went home every weekend and never spent more than a week away from my family. I was also in a long term relationship with someone who I cared for very much (happy to say that we are still together and doing better than ever!).

*At first, I only wanted to study abroad for one semester, but in retrospect I could not imagine my life now without having taken advantage of the full year that I had abroad. **Brandon DeJesus, France, Math Education, CSU Sacramento***

When it comes to choosing between a one-semester study abroad program and a two-semester study abroad program, there are many questions that students stop to ask themselves: Can I really leave home for that long? Will my relationships last if I am gone for such a long time? What if I don't like it; will I be stuck for a year? Will studying abroad really benefit me more than finishing my studies at home?

I personally believe that opting to study abroad for one semester, while may be the right choice for some, deprives students of fully immersing themselves in the culture, customs and language that they desire to learn.

Your first semester abroad is typically defined by finding a place to live, stumbling around like a tourist trying to find your way to school, and trying to make friends with locals so you don't have to spend every night learning language from a book. While this, in itself, is an amazing experience, what you gain in the second semester of studying abroad puts you light years ahead of where you would be leaving at the end of the first semester!

The greatest benefits of an entire year abroad are: a deeper comprehension of another language and culture, discovering there is a world outside of the town your school is in, and developing connections that last a lifetime with people from all around the world.

During my first semester I vividly remember being at a bus station trying to purchase tickets to a town only a short distance away. The saleswoman behind the counter became so frustrated with my poor French that she finally gave up and spoke to me in English! I am proud to say, however, that after completing 32 units of French immersion, by the end of my year abroad I was able to communicate fluently in French. Now working at Levi's, where many French tourists pass through daily, I am able to communicate with them fluently in French. If I had only studied in France for one semester, there is no way I would have the skill set to hold a solid conversation.

Furthermore, studying abroad for a year enables students to learn the ins and outs of worldwide travel. Being that it was my first time in Europe, I spent the whole first semester just seeing the beauty of France. Then, feeling more secure in my ability to book flights and purchase train and bus tickets in French, I set out to see the rest of

Europe and even made a trip to Africa during my second semester abroad!

The best part of studying abroad in my experience is being able to expand your world view by comparing opinions and beliefs with people from all over the world. Having two semesters to make friends and reach a level of comfort that allows you to completely be yourself in conversations and friendly debates is truly a gift.

Having been invited into the homes of some of the kindest and most welcoming people, I look back on my year abroad and still wonder how it could have gone by so fast.

While I was excited to get back to my life in America, I can't imagine the feeling of loss I would have had if I had opted to study abroad for only one semester. While a year abroad may seem like an eternity away from the comforts of home, you are being presented with the rare opportunity to learn something truly useful about the world and your place in that world.

Having taken the opportunity to leave my comfort zone and challenge myself, I truly feel like I have grown as a person and as a contributing member of the human race because of the skills I gained during my year abroad. While a semester may be enough to get your feet wet, there is nothing like jumping in head first!
Brandon DeJesus, France – Math Education, CSU Sacramento

KOREA 2009-2010

A yearlong study abroad program gives you the wonderful opportunity to experience what it is like to fully integrate, learn, experience, and absorb all of the culture, education and life lessons that just can't be provided by a short, one-semester program.

While I was studying abroad in Korea, I made many wonderful, international friends who attended Yonsei University as exchange

students, but I wish that all of them had stayed for the full year. Since we were participating in different programs from around the world, some exchange students studied at Yonsei University for only one semester, while others stayed for a full year, like me. Those who were there for only one semester regretted not being able to stay for the full year. And I know that if I were one of them, I would have wanted to stay longer too, especially now that I have experienced all of the things I did during my second semester abroad. I know that, for me, one semester would have been way too short.

Because I was in Korea for a good amount of time, I became familiar with life there. I felt as if I had been living there for a long time, rather than the short 1 year that I was really there. I knew where to go to find groceries, to meet friends, to hang out and relax. I knew my favorite places to eat, when the subway was crowded and the way the sunset looked in different places around Seoul.

I made friends with the old man selling breakfast sandwiches on the corner, and I think about the many experiences I would have missed out on without the repetition of living in one place for longer than just one summer or semester. In society now, life spans are increasing, and while one year of my life seemed like an *eternity* when I was applying to study abroad, I realized how short one year was after living in Seoul for only 6 months.
Heather Boyer, Korea – Art/Asian American Studies, SFSU

I didn't want my time in Korea to end! I felt that if I had left after only one semester, I would not have been able to experience everything I did. I definitely recommend that all students who study abroad choose a yearlong program.
Heather Boyer, Korea – Art/Asian American Studies SFSU

CHILE 2009-2010

If we were to speculate, hypothetically, that you were to go abroad for a year, many more opportunities would be available for you to take advantage of than could be had by a student who only goes for a semester. For those of us who went to Chile, for example, one of the most amazing parts of the year was the summer break!

***Potential applicant:** “Hi, I’d like to apply to study abroad for a semester.”*

***My response:** How exciting that you’re thinking about going abroad! Before we start looking through available programs, I’d like you to seriously consider going abroad for more than a semester. I know that you may have hesitations because of emotional attachments you have here in the U.S., but having already gone abroad myself, I can guarantee you that a semester is not nearly long enough! Think about the enormous transition you will have ahead of you! You will arrive in your host country and the first month-and-a-half is gone in a flash! You have to acclimate to the new food, you’re making new friends, you’re exploring a new city, learning new dialects and, even if it isn’t a priority for you right now, there is actually a “study” component in “study abroad.” By the time you have an understanding of the city’s layout, it’s already midterm season. By the time you start to feel comfortable in your new surroundings, finals are around the corner. And all too soon, there will be a seat reserved just for you on an airplane for your return flight to California.*

Alexandra McGee, Chile – Humboldt State University, Anthropology

If you stay for a year, you have more time to travel. Instead of trying to cram an entire country into one semester, along with your academic responsibilities, blossoming exotic social life and a vibrant culture to soak up, you can take the scenic route. Studying abroad for a year allows you to not feel rushed. Instead, you’re able to enjoy something in its entirety, build a relationship with it and appreciate it for what it really is.

Also important are the friendships that you create. Studying abroad has many advantages; one of them is the opportunity to build an international social network. By staying in one place for a full year, you can build long-lasting relationships with friends, professors and your fellow study abroad companions. Personally, by choosing to study abroad for a year, I was able to truly appreciate Chile and the people I met within its skinny borders on a much deeper level than I would have if I had only stayed for one semester. If I had left after one semester, I wouldn’t have made the most amazing memories I have stored away in my head. I wouldn’t have met one of my best friends in the world. I wouldn’t have been able to take the time needed to fully understand another culture.

I owe a lot to my year abroad, particularly the introspection and self-cultivation that I underwent. I returned to the United States a different person, a more mature and more focused person. I doubt that transformation could have taken place at such a profound level without so much time invested in that change.

Alexandra McGee, Chile – Humboldt State University, Anthropology

A yearlong commitment might seem daunting for you right now, but once you arrive, life will speed up so quickly that you might regret having only chosen to go abroad for a semester. Every single one of the CSU IP participants that I have talked to have reaffirmed my belief, that a true appreciation and genuine affection for your host country is only borne after personally having a relationship with it.

Alexandra McGee, Chile – Humboldt State University, Anthropology

ITALY 2009-2010

*A semester abroad is like tasting a cultural appetizer but not staying for the delicious main course.
Albert Endoma, Italy – Cal State LA, Business/ Marketing*

Although a semester abroad would undeniably be a memorable and fun experience for any student interested in studying abroad, a year-long program is infinitely better. There is nothing like it. A year-long program is a richer, deeper experience compared to a short stint abroad.

I believe that you can only scratch the surface of the city with only a few months. There is simply not enough time to learn and understand a host city's culture, people, and all the nuances.

Students who have done a year-long program can attest to the incredible value of a longer commitment abroad. It is a commitment born of a real desire to live in a different city and not just be a visitor, or worse a tourist.

There are many more benefits in a year-long commitment abroad. Not only do you experience the excitement, the expectations, and the anxieties of a new student in a foreign place, but you also experience the inevitable assimilation that naturally occurs when living in a place longer than a few months. Everything becomes more comfortable. Unfamiliar streets and places become local hangouts. Strange customs become routine. The language and culture, once foreign, becomes one's own. A year-long program just doesn't mean studying in a city; it means **LIVING** in it and being part of it. It means meeting people, seeing new places, and most of all, immersing in the culture. These ingredients served to create a full experience- What study abroad is all about! **Albert Endoma, Italy – Cal State LA, Business/Marketing**

CSU INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

www.calstate.edu/ip

International Programs (IP) was established by the CSU Board of Trustees in 1963 as the study abroad program of the California State University system.

IP's guiding principle is that students should be "immersed" in the academic and living environments in their host countries. Accordingly, all instruction is offered by recognized host universities and/or by distinguished host country faculty.

Learning the language and learning to function in the daily life of the host culture to achieve maximum social integration is a high priority for IP students.

IP students are provided special assistance in preparing for their year of study and while they are overseas by professional CSU and/or host university staff. This assistance includes, for example, help in obtaining visas, arranging for transportation and housing, health insurance, and academic advising.

WHY AN ACADEMIC YEAR?

To get the most out of the study abroad experience, personally and academically.

Some things cannot be hurried. One of these is cultural assimilation. It takes time to go beyond tourism and to undergo the transformation from visitor to resident. An academic year offers the opportunity for the fullest possible integration in the context of university studies.

To allow time to achieve advanced language, academic and cultural coping skills.

During the first half of your year you will be learning, adjusting, and assimilating information at an incredibly rapid pace. During the second half of your year you will be applying and using what you have learned and you will finally feel "at home" in your host country and host university environment.