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COMING HOME

Welcome back from your study abroad experience!

Coming home after being away for a period of time has its varying degrees of rewards and difficulties. Having seen the United States from a new perspective, you may see things differently than how your family and friends do. The way you see the world has changed due to your own unique experiences.

Re-entry can be an emotional experience during any given time and the ability to see the world through new eyes can be highly rewarding. However, it is important keep in mind the varying degrees in which people filter information. Talk with family, friends, and advisors about your experiences.

This booklet has information about reentry and reverse culture shock, and tools to help you put your overseas experiences into different contexts. There is also practical information about campus opportunities and transferring credits. We hope that you find it helpful.

If you have ideas about programming for returned students, ways to share your experiences on campus, or other ways to promote study abroad, please contact us! Your ideas are welcomed.

Sincerely,
HELPFUL TIPS FOR RE-ENTRY: RE-ENTRY CONCERNS

The concerns about returning home listed below are from a compilation of essays by students about to return home from a study abroad experience and by students who had recently returned home. Rest assured that many of your peers are dealing with the same issues; these are part of the re-entry process.

About Friends – understand that relationships may change, or have changed, as a result of your experiences, and because of time spent away from each other.
• Will it be possible to pick up old friendships?
• Reaction of old friends to the “new me.”
• Being able to communicate with friends
• Some classmates will have graduated; need to make new friends
• Friends will think I’m bragging and showing off when speaking about my experiences overseas
• Not being able to live up to the expectations of my old friends

About Language – How will I ever remember?
• Losing the ability to speak English well
• Mixing host country language with English
• Losing the ability to speak host country language well or proficiently

About Academics / Campus Life – now that you finally got used to the system overseas, it’s time to adjust to the ‘old’ way of doing things.
• Coming back to a different academic system; will it be less or more rigorous?
• Getting used to living in a residence hall again, or living off campus for the first time
Returning Home from Abroad

"Culture shock is the expected encounter with the unfamiliar...
Re-Entry Shock is the unexpected encounter with the familiar."

Re-Entry shock can manifest itself in many ways and at any moment. Because it is unexpected, the best way to prepare for re-entry shock is to be aware of it. Here are some tips on how to prepare for the return home and to campus:

• **While You Are Home**
  
  **Stay in touch.** Write to your friends overseas. Receiving news from abroad will make you feel like you're not so far away. Invite your foreign friends to visit you in the U.S. Read international news.

  **Don't tell everything at once.** Although family and friends will be eager to hear about your adventures overseas, don't try to describe all of your experiences at once. Save some stories for later.

  **Don't flaunt your experience.** Restrain from stating too often "When I was in . . ." Friends may be jealous of your time abroad, or may think you are no longer interested in them, or in the U.S. Be respectful of their feelings; in the long run they will be more willing to listen to your stories if you're not overbearing.

  **Get involved in home activities.** When you arrived abroad you probably threw yourself into your new culture in an attempt to fit in. You may want to use this same technique as a
way to assimilate back into life at home. For example, volunteer to talk to classes at your high school or Rotary Club about your study abroad experience.

**Keep up with habits of the host countries.** At the same time you're assimilating back into the US mainstream, don't forget the "new you". Think of one or two habits you picked up while abroad and continue them. Have coffee in a sidewalk cafe; attend foreign films; have afternoon tea. Share some of these new customs with your friends and family.

**Organize your photos.** You may not want to do this immediately. When you do organize them, keep these tips in mind:
- Label everything! You will be surprised how quickly you forget names of people and places.
- Organize your photo album so that it tells a story (or several stories). It will be easier to keep friends interested.
- Include ticket stubs, postcards and other souvenirs in your album or scrapbook.

• **Returning to campus**

**Come back to campus in time** to take care of paperwork before classes begin, to move in to your room, and to get together with your old friends at a slower pace.

**Go to the Career and Internship Center.** Get back into the swing of career/graduate school exploration. Find out what you should be doing to find a job after graduation and when applications to graduate schools are due. Investigate the possibility of returning overseas to work.

**Get involved.** Help prospective study abroad students decide where or whether to go abroad. Become a buddy to an international student. You have learned how to adjust to a new culture; help international students on campus go through that same adjustment period.

In conjunction with the Career and Internship Center, we are organizing workshops to help you think about how to translate your overseas experiences as you consider life after UR. Details to follow.

The Study Abroad Expo takes place January 31, 2014, from 1:00-3:00 pm. If you went on a UR-affiliated study abroad program, we’d be happy to have you volunteer at the event. We’ll contact you at a later date with details.

The University Counseling Center (275-3113), www.rochester.edu/ucc is available if you would like additional help or resources regarding re-entry issues.

**Re-entry resources**
The Art of Coming Home, by Craig Storti

Students Abroad, Strangers at Home, by N. L. Kauffmann, J. N. Martin, and H.D. Weaver with J. Weaver

Back in the USA, by Dawn Kepets. NAFSA: Association of International Educators Publications. (1-800-836-4994)

**IMPORTANT DATES** for the UR Spring 2014 semester:

- **Wednesday, January 15** first day of classes
- **Tuesday, February 4** Last date to add 4 credit independent study and internships
- **Tuesday, February 11** Add/drop deadline
- **Tuesday, April 8** Satisfactory/Fail option deadline; last day to withdraw from a class

http://www.rochester.edu/registrar/?id=04.01
**Reentry: A Range of Possibilities**

It is never too early to begin preparing for a return home from a study abroad experience. It is easy to become bogged down in the monumental physical tasks of tying up loose ends, finding out where to store items while you go on one final trip, selling possessions, and packing bags. As departure time draws near, farewell parties, goodbye gifts (more packing), and fond goodbyes will probably fill your final days. The moments for reflecting on how you have grown and changed as the result of living overseas are usually few and far between.

Yet the changes that have taken place in your daily living patterns and academic relationships, the foods you’ve grown accustomed to eating, the games you’ve played, the clothes you’ve worn, the language you’ve spoken, and the people you’ve spent time with have probably had an effect on your identity and your global perspective. Although you may not have noticed it, the odds are that you have changed and that your perception of things to come will be heightened because you have had the opportunity to live in another culture.

The process of reentry to the United States can be easy or difficult and is usually related to how well an individual has integrated into his or her overseas environment. Frequently, the better adjusted you are to an overseas lifestyle, the more difficult the readjustment to life back home. Expectations also play an important part in the adjustment process.

*Feelings of Transition*

Transitions in life are often associated with loss of friends and family and changes in your status or environment. Feelings of transition are often present when you move overseas and when you return home.

For a moment, think back to the weeks before your move overseas. Most likely, you acknowledged that a major transition was imminent. Moving away from the United States, you probably expected to undergo a period of adjustment to a different environment and culture. Were you prepared to experience a period of disorientation,
some frustration with the language, and missing friends back home as you adjusted to living overseas? These same feelings may resurface after your return home. It will be helpful for you to acknowledge this possibility and to prepare a strategy for coping with your feelings.

Once back in the United States, it is not unusual to feel alienated and have difficulties relating to American friends, family members, and your U.S. academic environment. The process of reintegrating yourself into the niche you left may leave you feeling overly tired, needing more sleep than usual, angering more easily, and wishing it were possible to move back overseas immediately. These feelings are frequently present during transitions. They are normal, and many people experience them.

A study abroad experience may also incorporate changes in your attitude, cultural orientation, and values. These latter changes may have the most profound effect on your reentry.

Lisa Espineli-Chinn, a cross-cultural trainer with International Ministries Fellowship, graphically demonstrates the process of moving overseas and returning home by transplanting a flowering potted plant in front of her audience. To re-pot a plant, the soil around the roots of the plant should be loosened gently, exposing the roots. Once in the new pot, the roots must become accustomed to different soil. Some plants are very sensitive to this process and wilt or drop leaves. It may take weeks before the plant begins to flourish and grow in its new domicile.

Imagine how difficult it would be to transplant the same plant a second time by trying to fit it back into its original pot. As Espineli-Chinn demonstrates, the roots, now longer and looser, resist being compressed back into the original pot. In fact, they simply don't fit. The same is true for many Americans who have moved overseas and adjusted to the new environment, lifestyle, and values of a different culture. Once an individual grows, it may be difficult to fit back completely into the same niche from which he or she came.

This essay is excerpted from Dawn Kepets's book, Back in the USA. Kepets is the director of international programs at Randolph-Macon Women's College in Lynchburg, VA. Back in the USA is written especially for a student audience.

Single copies cost $16 each. Contact publications@nafsa.org to order.
SOME AMERICAN VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS
Compiled by Judith M. Blohm

Have your “American” value, attitudes and beliefs changed as a result of your study abroad experience? How do they compare to those below?

*Time conscious* - “time is money,” must be on time for an appointment; may give the distance from one place to another in time rather than linear distance.

*Personal achievement is basis of identity* - rarely achieve status by who family is; educational institutions, degrees, profession that one prepares oneself for and accomplishes determines status.

*Problem-solvers* - rarely take attitude that one must bear what life gives; have ability to change their life for good or ill by own action; interested in conquering the unknown, solving mysteries (such as causes and cures for diseases).

*Interest in Technology* - bigger, faster, more efficient machinery to free one’s time for other things.

*Value youth* - desire to appear, act young; not particularly respectful of age (age and wisdom not necessarily equated).

*Belief in equality of persons* - refers to desire to give all people equality of opportunity, not that all people are equal in abilities. Lack of emphasis on titles; informality in work and social settings; respect for achievement not mere titles.

*Progress* - look to the future, anxious to make a better future, don’t dwell on the past.
Settlement of disputes by compromise - exact determination of right and wrong not always as important as settling in a way both parties are somewhat satisfied with.

Distrust of authority - government system of checks and balances to ensure that power can’t get out of hand; very strict moral standards for persons in public office.

Ignorant of outside world - historical development has focused our interests to developing our own rich content with little concern for or interest in or need for the outside world.

Movement of people - frequent changes of homes for upward mobility in jobs; changing jobs for personal betterment.

Honesty - strong demand for honesty in children, public officials; “white lies” only permissible in certain situations; cheating in school strongly disliked.

Fluid social structure - people can move from one social class to another through their own achievements.
How might these affect you academically, personally, and as you consider graduate school and/or future careers?

1. Ability to see situations and issues from more than one perspective.

2. Ability to empathize - sense how an event appears and feels to someone else.

3. Ability to tolerate other person’s actions and ideas vastly different from my own.

4. Ability to see advantages and disadvantages of my own culture and society.

5. Ability to express personal opinions in a tentative yet clear manner.

6. Ability to make clear personal choices about my lifestyle which friends may not necessarily understand.

7. Ability to create personal peace and satisfaction in my life.

8. Ability to cope in vastly different settings.

9. Ability to accept the shortcomings of my family members in an understanding way.
GUIDELINES FOR STUDY ABROAD PEER ADVISERS

Thank you for considering becoming a Peer Adviser. Students interested in studying abroad appreciate the advice that you, a recent returnee, provide them. Your names and e-mail addresses are made available in our office to interested students. Following are some tips that will be helpful to you when talking to students individually or in group settings. You are not expected to be an expert on UR policies and procedures - refer students to our office for those, and any, questions you don’t feel comfortable answering. Please notify us if you do not wish to be a Peer Adviser.

Typical questions / concerns that students have; questions you can ask them:

- Find out if the student has specific questions; answer what you can and refer them to a study abroad adviser for things you can't answer.
- Tell them about your decision-making process: Why did you go abroad? How did you choose your program?
- courses abroad – how did you select them? What were the grading/assessment methods?
- if you participated in an internship: supervisor expectations, daily tasks and responsibilities, language challenges, dress code
- life abroad: housing, social life, language
- tips on getting there, what to pack, what not to pack
- adjusting to life abroad
- budget / money issues
- traveling
- your adventures
- Be honest and realistic:
  - look at your experience in perspective; emphasize what you gained from the experience overall; don't concentrate too much on details, especially at first - you'll lose your audience
  - don't over-emphasize the bad or the good
  - don't harp on the administrative hassles of returning to the UR, even if it’s fresh in your mind. Are the problems settled now?
  - don't scare students by telling them stories of being robbed your first day overseas; rather, advise them of real-life problems/dangers
  - admit to being homesick occasionally

Speaking at special events, such as Open Campus Weekends and study abroad pre-departure meetings.
Returnee participation at meetings: you have a lot of inside information about life abroad and your particular program. You may make a brief presentation once the adviser has finished and are also encouraged to interject your thoughts throughout the meeting.

Come prepared: Have notes on the specific things you would like to talk about. Be prepared to answer questions of all kinds. Be enthusiastic and energetic!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR UR STUDY ABROAD RETURNEES

Study Abroad Peer Advisers
Spread the word about study abroad to other students. Talk to students one-on-one, participate in Rochester Open Campus Weekends, and more. This is a great way to share your experiences with others! We will make your name, study abroad location, and UR email address available in our office. The Center for Study Abroad offers numerous ways to communicate with students who are interested in going abroad. Volunteer anytime! Read the enclosed information about our mini-internship opportunities.

Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted by students interested in studying abroad.

Contribute to the Campus Times
Become an advocate for study abroad through your first hand experience by submitting an article on your experiences abroad. For example, you can share what it was like to be in Greece during the economic crisis, or what it was like to study in China with no previous Chinese language experience.

Graduate Fellowships, KEY and the Take Five Scholars Program
If you are interested in pursuing special programs, you should know that you may be facing deadlines soon after you return to campus. Attend a group information meeting, and set up an appointment as soon as you are back on campus to establish your candidacy. The group information meeting schedule is available at the Center for Advising Services, Lattimore 312. Don’t miss them!

The responsible advisers are: Karen Forsythe (Take Five), Liz Monte (Kaufman Entrepreneurial Year), Center for Advising Services, Lattimore 312, and Belinda Redden (Fellowships), Dewey Hall 4-209B.

Rochester Global Connections
You know what it’s like to be far from home! Pair up with an international student from the country where you studied or from a different country. Learn about their culture and teach them about ours. Participate in sponsored events such as Welcome Picnics, hikes, and others. Lattimore Hall 208 http://www.rochesterglobalconnections.org/

Be an International Student Orientation Volunteer
Welcome incoming international students (now that you’ve been one yourself) during Orientation (August) and throughout the academic year. Contact the ISO for details.
www.iso.rochester.edu  tel. 585.275.2866

Write for
Transitions Abroad  “a pioneering travel resource for meaningful work, living and study abroad”  http://www.transitionsabroad.com
Diversity Abroad  Share your experiences with students across the US who are considering study abroad. www.diversityabroad.com
International Student Voice  a venue for US students and international students to share their experiences around the world. http://www.isvmag.com/

UR students: Are you looking for a two-credit course? Consider these …

Internships at the Center for Study Abroad & Interdepartmental Programs

The Center offers semester-long, mini-internships for students who have studied abroad. These are unpaid internships; interested students may be able to earn academic credit.

•Bulletin Board Coordinator  – organize (with other returnees) and publicize a region or country of the month bulletin board at the Center for Study Abroad.

•Pre-departure Meetings intern  – help develop and prepare materials for the Pre-departure seminars.
• **Lecture series/brown bag luncheon series Coordinator** – create a series of lectures/discussions given by students, faculty, or staff relating to international issues.

• **Marketing intern** – Assist Study Abroad Adviser with advertising sales for *UR There* (study abroad handbook) and related projects.

• **Writing Contest Coordinator** – organize, publicize, and administer a writing contest by study abroad returnees. (fall semester)

If any of these internships sound just right for you, or if you have your own idea for an internship, contact our office for more detailed descriptions and to set up a brief interview.

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**A reminder about transfer credit …**

Having appropriate course approvals will facilitate the evaluation of the transcripts and the awarding of credits. You will receive notification of transfer credit by email from our office. If credit has not been awarded for a course or courses, the cover memo will provide a reason and what to do in order to obtain course approval. You can also check ACCESS (look way at the bottom). [http://www.rochester.edu/registrar/access.html](http://www.rochester.edu/registrar/access.html)

We normally *begin* to receive study abroad program transcripts in our office in February for fall semester programs, and in July for spring semester programs. This is a general timeline; some may arrive earlier, some may arrive much later.
Internships in Europe participants: You will normally receive your academic course grades in late February/July. Internship grades are normally awarded *beginning* in February/October and later.

**Using the Course Approval Form**

- If you went on a non-UR sponsored program, you should have had *all* of your courses approved (by CSAIP staff and/or by faculty) before going away.
- All courses taken at overseas universities require approval.
- Courses you wish to apply to your major, minor, or certificate must have approval from faculty in the appropriate department. [http://www.rochester.edu/college/CCAS/Authsign.html](http://www.rochester.edu/college/CCAS/Authsign.html)
- Independent studies, service learning, and internships also require appropriate departmental approval on a Course Approval form.
- Seek approval *and* UR course equivalency for language courses from the Dept. of Modern Languages or the Dept. of Classics.

Course approval forms may be obtained at the College Center for Advising Services Lattimore 312, or at the Center for Study Abroad, Dewey Hall 2-161.