



### Study Abroad

Studying abroad offers students and others the opportunity to immerse themselves in other cultures to build cultural competence and intercultural skills. This issue of Multicultural Moments will present some benefits of studying abroad, highlight Montgomery College's (MC) study abroad program, and explain study abroad alternatives in light of the pandemic.

**Benefits of Study Abroad.** The University of Delaware is credited with the [first study abroad program for undergraduates in the US](#) when it sent a group of eight juniors to France by boat in July 1923. The 2019-2020 academic year saw more than 19.6 million US college students participate in study abroad programs, as reported by the [Association of International Educators](#). Given these significant numbers, it is important to note the benefits of studying abroad.

- *Career Benefits.* In a [survey](#) of more than 1,000 people who make hiring decisions, 41% of respondents said they would consider offering more money to applicants who participated in a study abroad experience. According to a [University of California report](#), studies show that 97% of college graduates who participated in study abroad found jobs within 12 months, compared to only 49% of college graduates overall. In addition, study abroad alum earn \$7,000 more per year with their firsthand were more frequently placed in supervisory positions by their employers.
- *Personal Benefits.* While the career benefits are appealing, study abroad experiences can contribute to one's personal growth. Read [one student's personal experience](#) with how a summer study abroad experience in South Korea helped improve her self-confidence.
- *Skills Benefits.* The [US State Department](#) promotes short- and long-term study abroad programs to "build skills and knowledge, prepare to solve the world's toughest challenges, and compete in the 21st-century workforce." Some of those skills presented in this [infographic](#) include teamwork, time management, language proficiency, and crisis resolution.

**Study Abroad at Montgomery College.** Montgomery College started its [study abroad program](#) in 1996 to "bring a greater awareness of world cultures and global perspectives and augment academics and workforce development to the student body, college employees, and the community."

- *Program Scope:* MC typically offers two to four study abroad experiences per year. The program emphasizes the international richness of the College's enrollment which enhances students' understanding and appreciation of one another through daily contact. Study abroad experiences include short-term overseas study (approximately two weeks), virtual global internship opportunities, and long-term study experiences (semester, summer, or year-long) selected from a consortium of accredited institutions in more than 26 countries. Study abroad students have gone to Russia, China, England, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Mexico, Thailand, Vietnam, Senegal, Peru, India, Cuba, and Iceland, to name a few locations. Each program merges with an existing

cataloged course or enroll in a pre-departure class in partnership with Workforce Development. In addition, the program offers real-time virtual overseas experiences, exhibitions, student scholars' presentations, performances, lectures, films, discussions, and college employee professional development presentations.

- *Program Leadership.* [Dr. Greg Malveaux](#), Collegewide Coordinator of Study Abroad and International Education, has penned his experiences and advice on studying abroad in his book *Look Before Leaping: Risks, Liabilities, and Repair of Study Abroad in Higher Education*. In the book's preface, Malveaux explains, "a chance meeting with civil rights activist, Nelson Mandela, who had only been recently released from prison, set the course for my life's journey." He further explains "that truly transformative events take hold when you are willing to leave the familiar safe haven of your own backyard (i.e., home country)." Hear Dr. Malveaux speak about his experience and recommendations from his book to help schools and students prepare for study abroad experiences in this [CSPAN presentation](#).
- *Testimonials.* Check out reflection [essays and video testimonials](#) from MC students, staff, and faculty who share their research and study abroad experience through MC's program.

**Study Abroad in the Pandemic and Beyond.** The pandemic forced us to rethink the delivery of educational programs. Studying abroad was no exception. The global pandemic further highlighted the need for understanding and engagement across cultures and borders. Here are a few examples of study abroad adaptations.

- *Virtual Courses.* At many institutions, students enrolled in virtual courses in other countries. For example, one [student majoring in Global Business](#) enrolled in virtual courses at a university in Ecuador when his study abroad experience in the country was canceled. The shift enabled him to interact with peers from the institution and the global cultural experience needed for his degree. At other institutions, professors used their global connections and experiences to develop virtual courses. For example, a Drexel University Professor of Architecture used her research, personal experiences, photos, and connections to develop a "[Virtually Venice](#)" to replace a summer intensive study abroad experience.
- *Free International Content.* Through a US State Department grant, MC faculty had the opportunity to integrate free international content (synchronous and asynchronous) into their summer 2021 courses via Swansea University in Wales and Trinidadian faculty from Morgan State University. Content included workshops conducted from museums and sites in the "host" country. Content interactions with students, virtual visits to museums, art galleries, and ecological sites.
- *Curated Content:* Study Abroad Association curates global learning resources such as [360 GLE](#). MC faculty, staff, and students can sign up with their school email address to access the resources for course integration. Signing up gives you access to educational videos from 1,500 overseas sites representing 60 global locations. Videos cover a range of multi-disciplinary topics presented by professional speakers, including professors, educators, curators, authors, and more!
- *In-Country/Off-Campus Study Abroad.* MC has launched a new in-country study abroad program that offers short-term, educational, and cultural experiences. One offering, the

[Pathway to Freedom: An Examination of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Path along the Eastern Shore](#), is set to run in fall 2022 in conjunction with ENGL 226.

*May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstance and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.*

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