

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



Practicalities and Perks Abroad

Stories on Non-Apparent Disabilities: Mental Health, Autism, Learning Disabilities and More

Generation Access

Managing Changing Times

Ask any exchange professional about the changing face of international exchange – they will tell you that it seems like more and more participants with non-apparent disabilities are going abroad. But why and what does this mean?

Today, equal access to college for many U.S. students with disabilities is more the norm. They advanced through their K-12 education with accommodations and services that prepared them better for university life.

Other social changes are also impacting the understanding and reducing the stigma of people with disabilities both in the U.S. and globally. Emergence of disability advocacy groups increase self-awareness and may lead to more disclosure on exchange programs. This generation of leaders with disabilities is being raised with equal opportunities before them – having international experiences gives them skills and experiences needed for the future.



By the numbers, exchange participants with disabilities will still be a minority, but their impact on diversity will make international educators rethink how they are designing their programs to be more inclusive.

If exchange programs were to put in place program components in a flexible, broad-reaching way then they would be better prepared to welcome diverse participants and individual arrangements would fall quicker into place. People with and without disabilities can find these built-in options useful.

Having an increase in people with mental health or other non-apparent disabilities on international exchange programs doesn't mean programs have to do something extra. It is just the impetus to prioritize what they should have been getting into place for all participants on the program already. Good health, safety, support, and risk management is good planning for all.

In this issue of the A World Awaits You (AWAY) Journal, read firsthand accounts and learn the resources that can guide you in embracing the changing times.

Our goal is to empower people with disabilities to take advantage of the same international exchange opportunities as everyone else, navigating any access barriers along the way. For two decades, our free services and resources have been made possible by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, a project sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and administered by Mobility International USA.



www.miusa.org/ncde



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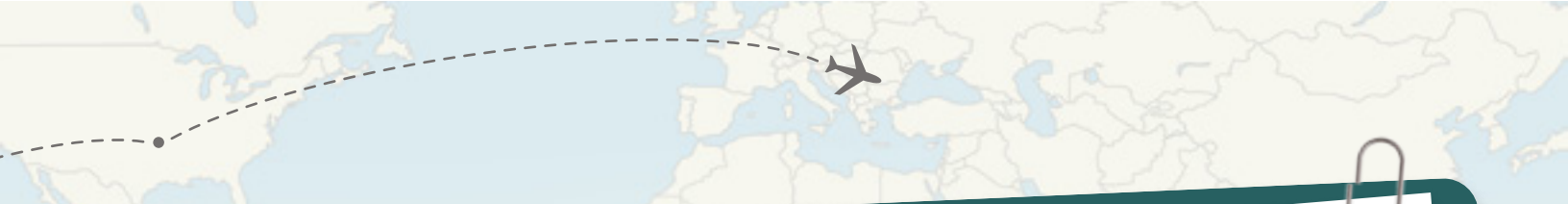
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Infographic: The Numbers Tell the Story



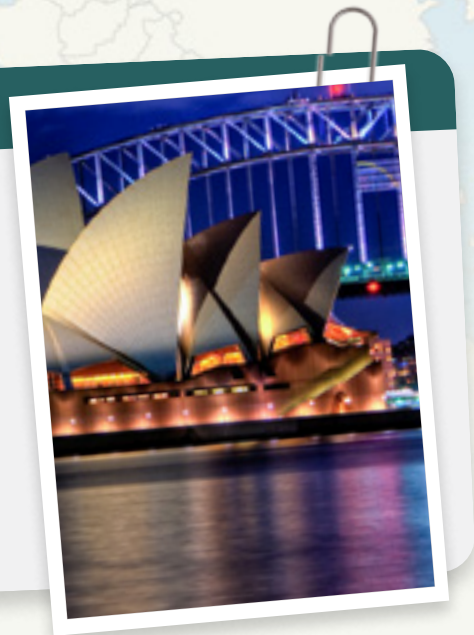
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME
YANIN

FROM **USA** TO **AUSTRALIA & SLOVAKIA**

PROGRAM
STUDY ABROAD

0123456789



Keep Calm and Study Abroad

Just Because it's Uncomfortable, it Doesn't Make it Bad

When it came to the day she was dropped off at the airport, Yanin's concerns that had kept her up at night, turned into tears and nerves. She was leaving familiarity behind in order to study abroad. Actually, Yanin, who has anxiety and depression, found the courage to study abroad, twice.

The first time a scholarship attracted her to spend a summer in Slovakia at the University of Economics in Bratislava. It was a group program with other Americans.

The second time she took on a nine-month global leadership program at a university in Sydney, Australia. While it fit perfectly into her future plans, she found herself on her own once there.

Two very different types of programs; both put her in situations where she was uncomfortable and challenged her to grow.

"I was with a group of people in Slovakia the whole time, and it taught me how to deal with people with different personality traits because you literally couldn't get away from them."

On return from Slovakia, Yanin, who has spent the majority of time in Florida, felt more open to people and their ways of thinking and doing things.

In Australia, she was the only one from her institution and lived among students from other countries. She had arrived earlier than others, which meant she didn't have anyone to connect with in getting set up and integrated into the community.

"I've never felt more scared in my life before I went to Australia and when I first got there, but I don't think a single experience has changed me more and for the better than that experience either. It forced me to get out of my shell a lot. It has changed how I go about my life now."

Since returning, Yanin feels more ready and able to speak up in different situations like class or clubs and to seek out positions or apply for awards she probably wouldn't have before.

What Supported Her Abroad?

- Her home university's study abroad orientations talked about culture shock and this helped her take it one week at a time when feeling homesick and questioning her decision. In Australia, once more students arrived and she became involved, it got better.
- Faculty and staff were always available to consult with on the Slovakia program, though some were more empathic than others. She talked with them about the specific issues that were bothering her or making her anxious. She also could connect with her boyfriend who was on the program.
- In Australia, Yanin was in contact with her therapist back home but it was very difficult because of the time zone changes and expense. She sought out resources at the Australian university and found an advocacy center for students going through anxiety or depression that would help free of charge.
- The advocacy center counselors also introduced her to two exchange students who had similar issues, but had been on campus longer; these peers listened when she was having doubts or feeling overwhelmed and offered her coping strategies.
- Yanin was in contact with her family once a week; as the only child and with her mental health history, they were a little worried. It was just a way to let them know she was okay and to connect when she was homesick in the first weeks.
- In Australia, she was required to buy into the country's universal health care, which was affordable and convenient.

Without my support - friends, family and therapist of 8 years - telling me that I was strong enough to go out there, meet people, make these connections, I probably wouldn't have gone or would have come back early. Make that support group. If you really want to do it, don't let your fears stop you.



Learn 15 Ways to Feel Emotionally Ready

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/15mentalhealthpreparations

Current Trends

Health History, Medical Forms, and Disability Disclosure

Are you trending up or down with these changes that long-established education abroad programs are spearheading and other types of international exchanges could tap into?

Swapping Hard Copy for the Cloud

Online applications are making it easier for today's digital natives to check a box or type a longer explanation about pre-existing health conditions in a format that seems more private.

Do You Really Need to Know?

More programs are asking fewer questions and encouraging self-assessment to avoid screening out or discouraging diverse participants. Limit who has the "need to know" status about the individual's specific health history. If you're not that person, and someone discloses a disability to you, then say "Thank you for trusting me with this important information, and I know who to put you in touch with to take the next step."

Leave it to a Professional

Physicians, disability service providers, and counselors are increasingly being trained to understand the demands of international travel and charged with determining the health clearance for individuals, not international exchange staff. Ask doctors or psychologists to review exchange participant self-assessment forms and refer to their own records for completeness and accuracy.

When, Who, What, Where, How?

When an individual discloses a disability, is it clear who it will be shared with, what the purpose of disclosure is, where to go to arrange accommodations, and how the information will affect his or her participation?

The Leader Becomes the Learner

Exchange leaders and faculty on overseas programs are being trained on how to simply and neutrally respond to a participant's disclosure of a disability. Train advisors and staff on disability disclosure protocols and increase education on non-apparent disabilities to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and other disabilities. Ask "What support do you need abroad that you use now?" or "We can talk about what barriers you're experiencing and some options for resolving those barriers."

No Secrets and Lots of Repetition

Be more transparent and persistent in informing exchange participants where and how they can get information when they need it. Share regularly about medications, English-speaking doctors or psychologists abroad, peer support, and other resources. Consider making counselors available at no cost upfront to participants.

Knowing What To Do

If you are the person responsible for making arrangements, how do you know where to begin? The following online forms and guidelines are examples of how to learn from the individual what is needed, and then how to interpret his or her responses and possible follow-up questions to start planning.



Download and adapt for your use disability assessment forms and guidelines

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/assessmentforms

Train faculty and other exchange leaders on disability arrangements

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/facultyled

Include peer support as an innovation for services abroad

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/peersupport



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

NAME

HALYNA KURYLO

FROM

UKRAINE

TO

USA

PROGRAM

Global UGRAD



0123456789



On Recovery and Reaching Out

It's One Thing to Know You Need Support and Another to Ask for It

Halyna Kurylo applied to the U.S. Department of State-sponsored Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (Global UGRAD) program twice. After not getting selected the first time, Halyna, who was severely underweight at 80 pounds, went into treatment realizing that her eating disorder was limiting what she wanted to do.

The next time she interviewed for the Global UGRAD program, Halyna explained one reason she wanted to go to the United States was to see how education about anorexia works; she wanted to set up a non-governmental organization (NGO) related to eating disorders in Ukraine. This time she was accepted.

“The exchange experience not only helped me grow professionally. But personally it was also a major stepping stone in my recovery, which I see in retrospect.”

As a foreign language interpreting major, she chose the American Studies program at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Oswego. The whole exchange experience was life altering, she says, and it was

especially helpful to move away from her family to live on her own for a year.

“Anorexia is usually a family-related systemic disorder. You don’t recover from an eating disorder right away – I had gained weight back but my thoughts had not changed.”

Unsure and afraid that a new place would trigger her behaviors, Halyna made friends abroad but still found herself struggling. She spent a lot of time preoccupied with studying and restricting herself from eating American food.

When she went to the on-campus medical center to seek out counseling, it turned out one counselor was in the process of writing a doctorate about eating disorders. Halyna started to talk with the counselor, and it seemed easier for her to open up and share in English.

“Expressing my emotions in a foreign language didn’t seem as exposing, even though I was saying the same thing. When I’m speaking English, I’m taking on a different personality.”

Halyna continued her counseling throughout the academic year, and when her program ended, a handful of the over one hundred Global UGRAD fellows were allowed to secure an internship and receive a visa extension. Halyna's desire to gain practical experience at an NGO earned her an internship in the Chicago area with The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Inc. (ANAD).

The internship in the United States helped Halyna to see the gap that existed in Ukraine. It is not in psychological or medical health, as there are specialists. It's the social component – the awareness-raising about eating disorders, information on where to locate specialists, connections with parents, and education about secondary conditions.

After returning from the United States, Halyna finished her undergraduate degree and then moved out of her hometown to Kyiv for a graduate degree in Social Work and Social Policy.

Eager to do something similar to ANAD, Halyna also applied for and received a U.S. Department of State Alumni Small Grant to set up a school prevention program for 16 year old girls. The Ukrainian schools had seminars on drug addictions, alcohol, and safe sex, but nothing about eating disorders. Youth are more likely to develop eating disorders, as was Halyna's own experience, so she really wanted to reach this age group.

"I talk with them not about if they have a problem, but if their best friend has a problem."

While working the hotline during her internship in Chicago, she realized it was often the friends or family who were calling to find help for someone they cared about. When Halyna was in school, she said it would have been very easy for her friends and classmates to have noticed her classic anorexic behavior.

If there was such a place to go and be heard when I was younger, maybe I would have gotten to the doctor, not when my BMI (body mass index) was 12, but before. It would be easier and not take so many years to recover. I also think if I did not go to the United States, it would have taken me longer to recover; for me it was very helpful.

The experience also propelled Halyna to follow through and start her NGO on eating disorders and other psychosocial disabilities in Ukraine, and now it supports other women in their own awareness and journeys forward.



ALMA MATER VILNENSIS

 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

TRAVIS GUNN

 FROM

USA

 TO

MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

 PROGRAM

GILMAN



0123456789



Coming Into My Own

Away From Home, I Managed to Find My Voice

Travis Gunn has been told that he is missing out on life, that his fear is allowing it to pass him by. He spent years trying to change himself. Others have spent years trying to “fix” him. And after four years, four continents, eight countries, and a countless number of cultures, he found what he needed most. And, it was his Global Studies degree from the Global College of Long Island University in New York that helped him achieve it.

“Leaving home was recommended. In fact, it allowed me to start over in some ways. I can’t say for certain, but I think that is the only reason that my parents (neither of whom have ever left the United States) allowed me to participate in a four year study abroad program. We didn’t just think about it as an educational investment; it was a treatment program.”

Although they saw the benefits, Travis worried about going away from home, which had been the only place where he could be himself. Would he lose himself in the process and become reclusive?

Growing up Travis rarely spoke to anyone outside his immediate family, which developed into “selective mutism” as his interactions dwindled. Today this is known as a form of social anxiety, and which he still has but to a lesser degree. He describes himself as quiet, though most others immediately notice the red splotches on his face and the quiver and gasping in his voice when he does speak. They see it as a personality trait – shy or socially awkward – but these fail to address the intensity that surrounds speaking for him. And the success he feels when making progress.

“Other people don’t understand, can’t understand. For almost ten years, I never really spoke to anyone outside of my ‘inner circle.’ Then, in Costa Rica, I talked to someone, really talked them, for the first time. That night, I fell asleep smiling. It was then that I knew I could make it away from home.”

While others may not have recognized it, Travis found he was progressing by leaps and bounds during his time living with a Costa Rican host family and interning on a HIV/AIDS and tourism project with a non-governmental organization (NGO). He continued to be challenged and grow over the next years of his program: he interned at a newspaper in India, did independent research in China, and finally interned with the U.S. Department of State Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania. All as part of his unique undergraduate degree program.

His time in Lithuania was supported by a U.S. Department of State-sponsored Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, and required a lot of adjusting. It was his first experience without other students from his U.S. university, his first experience juggling a 40-hour work week with a full study schedule, and his first time being asked to “make connections” during work-related social functions.

“It’s terrifying and frustrating and, at times humiliating, but it’s precisely for those reasons that it’s so worthwhile. It’s in these moments, I think, that force you into a state of discomfort, that you learn the most about yourself.”

Travis developed a newfound appreciation and understanding for the United States having gained comparative perspectives with other countries and witnessed the U.S. role abroad firsthand. He also says the experiences further helped to accept himself for who he is.

“I’m living life just like everyone else. I just live my life differently. My international exchange experience forced me to become more independent. With social anxiety, it’s easy to become reliant on friends and family. For a long time, they were my voice to the public. Now I am my own voice.”



Dealing with Negative Doubts

Most of Our Original Concerns Have Been Unfounded

Alyssa Hillary, an Autistic student blogging about her study abroad experience in China, is having a successful time but the initial reaction from the overseas university would have made one think that was not possible.

“[Chinese administrators] said people like me shouldn’t go to college, and they tried to get the program to un-accept me, and they tried to have me sent home.”

Instead the professors have worked with her to use augmentative communication in class as needed and to allow her to email other responses as part of her class participation. Alyssa has also learned from her experiences, and in working with the resident director, to better transition during and following excursions. This includes building in breaks during the activities, and on return reducing changes to routines and taking rest away from human interactions.

“Directly insulting a person to their face isn’t so much a thing [in China]. Makes it hard to know what people are really thinking of me, but it also helps shield me from the worst of the discrimination stuff – my residence director [dealt] with it instead.”

Resident directors or other exchange leaders do have the responsibility to navigate and negotiate not only the cultural setting but individual differences of participants in the destination. This can be frustrating and enlightening at the same time.

In Jordan, Elena Corbett, a resident director for Council on International Educational Exchange, found the information she received from the home institution, or when trying to read about a participant’s disability online, tended to couch disability in a way that brings more worry than necessary.

“We wish the home institution would have just said, ‘You have an awesome student coming to study with you, and she is an autistic person.’ The different issues related to being autistic weren’t defining in our experience with her. She was one of our best students – she is really bright and very social.”

If cultural or disability assumptions arise when seeking access solutions and arranging disability-related services at an overseas location, the following tips lay the groundwork for a positive response:

- When you are signing or renegotiating contracts or partner agreements or training exchange leaders on their responsibilities, make it clear that you have a diversity of participants, including those with disabilities, and provide policies for non-discrimination.
- If you encounter attitudes that are barriers to inclusion, get specifics about what concerns they have and problem-solve or dispel them one at a time.
- There are allies or champions for people with disabilities in every community; find those with the right connections to join you and educate your partners.
- Learn how change happens in the host culture and what motivates reconsideration - is it leveraging personal connections, bringing up legal or economic arguments, or showing how others do it?



15 Tips for Planning an Autistic-Friendly Exchange Program

- Explain the social features of the program to all participants.
- Accommodate sensory sensitivities by discouraging scented products.
- Supply name badges to be worn throughout the program.
- Discuss acceptable behavior on the program.
- Provide opportunity, but not pressure, for social interactions.
- Create ways for participants to signal if they want to interact or not.
- Designate a calm, “sensory-friendly” space.
- Schedule breaks throughout the day.
- Explain food options and how to culturally decline food.
- Arrange for peer social mentors to explain cultural cues.
- Provide opportunity for self-disclosure during orientation.
- Provide a list of what could go wrong while traveling and what to do.
- Modify program policies if needed for a reasonable accommodation.
- Set clear guidelines for housing and communication with staff.
- Encourage self-advocacy if something is needed.



Read More on Each Tip

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/autismfriendlytips

Learn more about Global Disability Culture

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/culturalreactions

Read Alyssa’s Blog “Yes That Too”

www.yesthattoo.blogspot.com



How To Prepare for Diversity

Match the Disability to Accommodations

Do you know what to put in place at your program site to be best prepared? Can you match up the list of disabilities with the list of program accommodations?

Disabilities

Autism
LD / ADHD
Intellectual
Mental health
Chronic health
Physical
Blind
Deaf
Non-disabled

Accommodations

Early arrival options
Health insurance options
Local connections
Academic options
Housing options
Flexibility in schedules
Assistance funds
Electronic handouts
Challenge by choice

You have it correct! Every possibility is a match, so you can't get it wrong. For example, housing options may include equally affordable living spaces close to campus or on the ground floor for those with navigational challenges or fatigue issues, or single room options for those who need a space to decompress or manage their treatments.



Learn 10 Steps to a Universally-Designed Exchange Program

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/preparefordiversity



 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

ROBERT THOMPSON

 FROM

USA

 TO

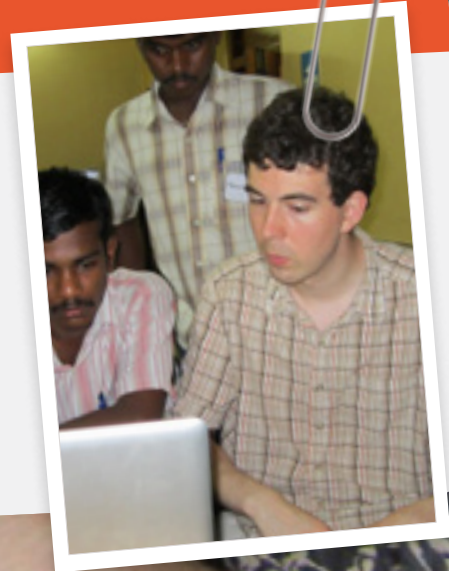
INDIA

 PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER ABROAD



0123456789



Volunteering Abroad in India

We Can Impact Somebody

Robert Thompson returned home to the United States from his volunteer experiences in India very humbled. He noticed the contrast between poverty and luxury, between being appreciative and taking something for granted.

“I loved seeing the smiles on people’s faces after they received something that was of great value to them, whether it was our time with them or new knowledge and skills they obtained.... I have come back with a new perspective on who I am and the things that matter most in life.”

International travel often requires some willingness to go with the flow, which for anyone can be rewarding, despite the varying levels of comfort in doing it. However, finding a program that was well organized to minimize potential obstacles was easier for Robert, since he has Asperger’s Syndrome.

India Partners, which organized one of his volunteer programs, works alongside a broad group of indigenous Christian grassroots agencies in India focused on alleviating poverty and injustice.

“The leader of our team had made a very specific and concise trip agenda and made sure that everything would go according to plans.”

Robert volunteered in India three times, and each time he has improved his ability to be flexible.

“Admittedly, I would still have a couple panic attacks here and there. However, I learned that going out of my comfort zone, whether playing with the kids or doing little activities that I would prefer not to do, proved to be the most beneficial.”

He volunteered at the Agape Rehabilitation Center in Chennai where students with disabilities are taught computer courses and other skills for leading independent lives. Robert could relate this to his own experience; when he met his current workplace, Incight, they similarly encouraged him, challenged him, and gave him the confidence to dream big.

As the Chennai graduates were preparing for their job search, Robert and other team members arrived to volunteer for several days. Robert used his videography skills from his current job to assist them in creating videos in which they practiced their interviewing skills.

He later traveled with the volunteer team to Machilipatnam to participate in a water sanitation and hygiene project for several more days. They used prevention education programs to help train locals on how to cut down on the spread of disease.

“Going to India is one of the greatest things I’ve ever done. There are things that could go wrong on a trip abroad. Stuff can be misplaced, you may get sick, and you may do things that you really don’t want to do. However, you will gain something in the end that will be worth it. You will gain experience, wisdom, and humility. These three are essential to making you a person whom people will listen to and look up to.”



Check out Robert’s fundraising and trip videos

<http://youtu.be/SXHhSwn8OfA>

<http://youtu.be/pv8mnKWUcfk>



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

COURTNEY THOMPSON

FROM

USA

TO

TBD

PROGRAM

TBD



0123456789



What if I'm Not Yet Ready? Growing Globally Without Leaving Home

When Courtney Thompson misplaced her train pass for the fourth time in one month, she realized her challenges with visual configuration and short-term memory were not something she could leave behind in the United States. She had planned to study Russian for four weeks that upcoming summer in St. Petersburg, Russia.

“Initially I was so flustered by scholarship applications, the development of my Russian skills, and visa processing that I neglected to sincerely consider the impact of my disability and measures that could mitigate it abroad.”

She sought out a counseling center on her U.S. campus to learn strategies to compensate for issues related her nonverbal learning disability (NLD) and anxiety, but the several weeks until departure proved too close to learn what she needed.

Among other concerns, Courtney worried about potential tensions in tight living quarters with a host family due to her organizational challenges and the extra costs for living closer to campus, which she needed for her visual spatial disorientation. The physical negotiation of all her luggage, shoes, and more through airport security would have also been taxing because of motor coordination and muscle tone issues with NLD.

Ultimately, she concluded that she was not ready to live independently.

“I had wanted to be courageous and confront my disability abroad, but recognizing I needed to withdraw from the program and focus on my well-being, was in its own way a display of growth and self-awareness.”

Courtney had to resist the urge to compare herself to others with disabilities that had successfully studied abroad, but who did not have her “breadth of complex challenges that traditional compensatory strategies and accommodations did not fully address.”

In retrospect, Courtney wishes she had tested herself leading up to the experience, perhaps going on a weekend trip by herself, then an entire week away – preparing herself incrementally to leave home. She may have also chosen either a program with more support or travel with someone who knew her needs.

I have the tendency to minimize the functional limitations of my disability when sharing it with strangers because I do not want to arouse concern, but transparency is of paramount importance when planning for study abroad. American programming staff can advocate for the needs of students with disabilities, but there may be no anti-discrimination legislation to ensure students are accommodated – and treated with dignity – once abroad.

While Russia may still be in her future, she has found other ways to grow globally without leaving home. Courtney opted to volunteer at a local immigrant resource center as a co-teacher of an English as a Second Language class, which turned out to be quite an enriching experience and eased some of the disappointment from not having gone abroad.

“When I am navigating through a trying time, I read about Russia where oppression and optimism, decay and dreams have learned to coexist. I have found no better mirror for the paradox that characterizes our human experience.”

Host or Volunteer with International Visitors



Global Ties U.S.

www.globaltiesus.org/volunteer/volunteer.html

CSIET Youth Exchange

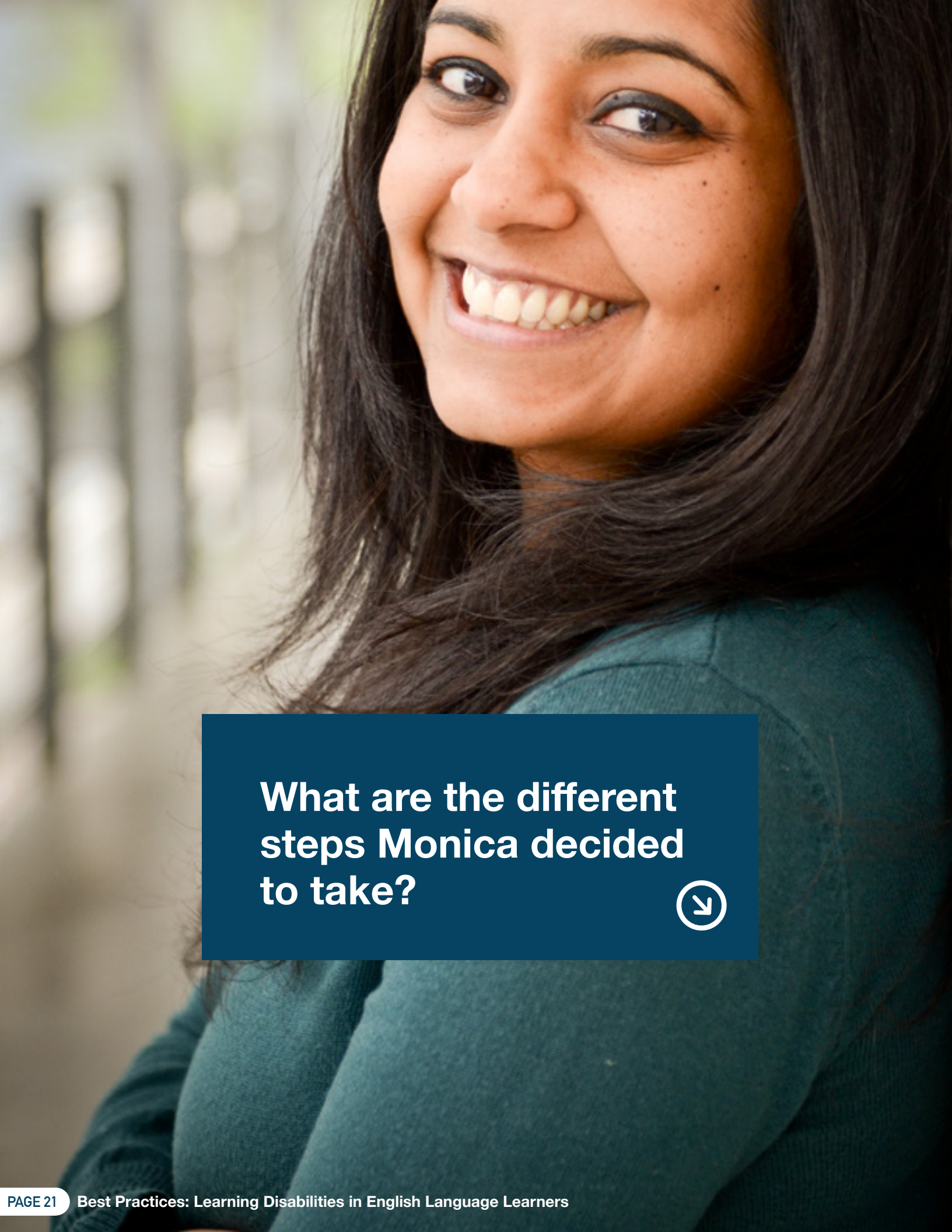
<http://getstarted.csiet.org>

Best Practices

Learning Disabilities in English Language Learners

During the second semester of an English as a Second Language (ESL) course, a faculty member finds one of the students from Saudi Arabia, Mohammed (not his real name), is doing fine in all his courses, except for those related to reading. The instructor approaches Monica Malhotra, the ESL international student advisor at University of Texas in Austin about the concern that Mohammed doesn't seem to progress, and questions if it's his struggles with English or something else.

Monica calls Mohammed into her office. The student explains he understands the lectures but when he goes to read his assignments it just takes him so long. The pages don't seem as clear to him. He is a student on a scholarship from the Saudi government and enrolled as a non-matriculated student in the university's ESL program. As a result, he does not automatically have full access to support services with the university.



**What are the different
steps Monica decided
to take?**



Testing for a Learning Disability (LD)

Monica asks Mohammed to get tested for a LD when he was home over the school break.

- This would allow him to get tested in his own language and be potentially more culturally normed
- LDs typically show up in the first language too
- He could avoid the costs of testing that he would need to pay for in the United States

He did not have difficulty finding someone to do diagnostic testing in Saudi Arabia, however the tests had many errors when he brought it back and was shown to the U.S. LD specialists. Other options are to find a LD specialist in the United States that would offer testing on a sliding fee scale, if cost was an issue. Students at a high school level may find these tests covered by the U.S. school district.

Talking About and Understanding a LD

Monica talks with Mohammed about what is a LD in a positive and empowering way.

- He begins to understand it as a difference and takes to heart his need to self-advocate
- He sought out books on the topic of LDs and this helped him develop a positive outlook

His family offered very limited support because they did not understand LDs, and thought it would be easier and best if he returned home. He was able to continue in the United States with counseling support to handle the pressures he felt to succeed without his family support.

Connecting with LD Experts

Monica consults with the disability office on campus and seeks out off-campus LD coaches for Mohammed.

- Disability advisors on campus looked at his tests and suggested possible accommodations she could ask faculty to implement in the ESL program
- He met with LD counselors to learn more about his recent diagnosis
- Off-campus classes on learning methods for reading and writing were available from an LD specialist which he could concurrently enroll in and use as a substitute for other courses

He was able to take the allotted course credits to maintain his visa with the help of this LD class. Monica asked for an enrollment letter from the LD specialist to state the hours, dates, days of week, and curriculum in order to confirm he was taking the required 18 hours.

Getting Funding and Support

Monica requests funds from his Saudi government sponsor to cover the LD specialist off campus.

- This was able to be requested as extra support funds without needing to indicate its specific use
- Monica creates a rubric to more easily show that the student is not progressing and how an LD specialist would help beyond the classroom accommodations
- Mohammed's grades greatly improved as a result of this off-campus coaching

This took extra attention and education by the international student advisor to get the sponsor's funds, although it should be a more common practice in ESL programs across the United States. Mohammed was later accepted into a graduate school program also sponsored by the Saudi government.

Two Views on the Topic

Ruth J. Fink, Ph.D.

Learning Disabilities Specialist, Language Disorders Specialist, (Retired) Professor Adjunct, (Retired) Director of Disability Services, University of Colorado-Boulder

You are going to find very few qualified individuals to give [LD diagnostic] tests in the native language unless it is Spanish, German or French; and then it is most likely in New York City, or possibly Los Angeles. Then if an English-language test is translated into Turkish, Korean or Russian by a native speaker, so there is less validity or reliability.

Everything is an educated guess. So I rely heavily on:

- An extensive interview with the student
- A description of the student's difficulty in English with the professor
- TOEFL scores
- An English vocabulary test
- Parts of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT)
- A thorough academic history beginning at the pre-school level

I always suggest that the professor should give a test in the allotted time everyone else gets, mark it, and then give the student another 30 minutes to see if improvement occurs. A couple times of doing this, we can get a reasonable idea of how fast the student processes the English language, and whether extended time will help or not. If it doesn't help, then we go back and look at TOEFL and Vocabulary scores, and compare them to actual class performance in English.

I speak English exhaustively with the student in question so as to obtain an informal evaluation of their use of English in common 'street language,' academic language (the language of learning), and then in vocabulary commonly used in their major.



David B. Woodward

President & CEO, A.C.E. - Associates in Cultural Exchange

There are potentially conflicting legal requirements. In the case of law pertaining to non-immigrant visas, the student has to make continued progress toward his or her educational goal and accreditation does not allow for repeated 'failure' in a program.

Conversely, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires 'reasonable accommodation' be made for people with disabilities in educational programs and this extends to ESL programs.

In my opinion, what accreditation precludes is an ad hoc response to the student need, so there should be an established process for evaluating the situation, implementing a solution, and following up.



At the end of the day, it's important to do what is right for the student as well as what is right legally. I think there is room for individualized programs which allow for exceptional program length as long as one can demonstrate in writing that the program is consistent with established protocols in terms of achieving measurable results.



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

SHMUEL KANNER

FROM

ISRAEL

TO

USA

PROGRAM

EMPOWER



0123456789



One-on-One Support is Far Reaching

We Must Learn Our Duties, Not Just Our Rights

While Shmuel Kanner attended a presentation during his professional exchange to the United States, Naama Lerner sat with a computer next to him. She listened to the translation of the presentation from English to Hebrew, and then she simplified what was spoken and typed it on her laptop screen for Shmuel to read. The night before, he also received supplemental materials related to the presentation, so Naama could prepare him for the content being delivered. This was an accommodation for his intellectual disability.

“Some of my ideas were vague in the beginning, and through the program they are starting to build.”

Shmuel wants to take the tools he learned in the presentations and site visits in the United States and recruit other people with intellectual disabilities in Israel to be part of a political advocacy organization and to become empowered.

“The travel was empowering for me. It made me stronger. It was always my dream to see how the world gets along. How people in the world include people with disabilities.”

Since this was Shmuel’s first time being out of Israel, everything was new. Naama, his support provider during the program, worked in clarifying the environment, the habits, the people, and the culture, too. The water tap is different, for example, so every situation had to be learned from step one.

Despite the jet lag and difficulty finding kosher food in Eugene, Oregon, Shmuel sees the benefits of participating in this U.S. Department of State-sponsored Empower Partnerships for Inclusive Communities exchange program.

“I am concerned people with intellectual disabilities are avoiding participation in life – just staying at home and not doing anything. I will try to take them out from their houses. They have a lot to say but they need someone to help them make the first step.”

Often that first step means finding independence from parents and becoming more self-aware and building resilience.

It’s important to have the support of the parents, but it’s more important that the young people, we, do the projects and make the decisions. Parents will not be always with us, and they should empower us to do it alone.



Shmuel leads a group of people with and without disabilities based at a post-secondary campus in Jerusalem. Its focus is for people with disabilities who want to learn in the university and need some support. Those in the group study together and learn what it means to be person with a disability. What helps Shmuel is someone sitting with him and tutoring him in the course material; he also needs a smaller group in the classroom so he will not be distracted.

Shmuel has been active in other projects too, such as reporting to city hall on what could be improved about the accessibility of public transportation. He also wants to find a life partner and be married, so he decided to open a group to learn social relationship skills.

On the U.S. exchange program, everywhere the group went Shmuel was trying to get the intellectual disability point of view. On meeting Americans with intellectual disabilities, they would share experiences in school, society, relationships, and work – he would ask “What tips can you give me?” related to creating his organization in Israel.

Through interactions with the U.S. partner, Full Access, and Bizchut Israel Human Rights Center for People with Disabilities and Ono Academic College, he learned to be more aware of what is working for him and to use these resources.

“I learned something about myself that I already knew but was made more obvious. If there is something that I don’t understand, I have to advocate and then I will get it. I gained a lot of new knowledge about people’s rights and duties – I am inspired to not let go and not to give up.”

Learn More About the Partners



**Naama Katz, Research Institute for the Health and Medical Professions,
Occupational Therapy Program at Ono Academic College in Kiryat Ono, Israel**

www.ono.ac.il/?lang=en

**Naama Lerner works on a self-advocacy and leadership project for people with
intellectual disabilities with Bizchut in Jerusalem, Israel**

www.bizchut.org.il/en

**Stephanie Blum who traveled to Israel, represents Full Access, a non-profit
organization in Oregon, USA**

www.fullaccess.org/

**The Empower Partnerships for Inclusive Communities two-way professional
exchange program was administered by Mobility International USA with 19
countries, and sponsored by the U.S. Department of State**

www.eca.state.gov/programs-initiatives/disabilities-exchange-programs



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

DWIGHT RICHARDSON KELLY

FROM

USA

TO

UK

PROGRAM

STUDY ABROAD



0123456789



Accessing Information and Insight

One of the Big Challenges is Finding the Services

One reason Dwight Richardson Kelly chose his study abroad program was to work on his writing. The writing intensive aspects of the Oxford University system were appealing, even though he knew with his learning disability he would need the right accommodations.

“I absolutely wanted a rigorous experience, but I knew that without appropriate accommodations I would spend all my time writing the required essays and wouldn’t be able to experience the other parts of the program, which is really important, like the cultural pieces and to integrate into the university.”

While Oxford could provide the academic adjustments and services he needed and more, he did not know for certain this would be possible until he arrived in England.

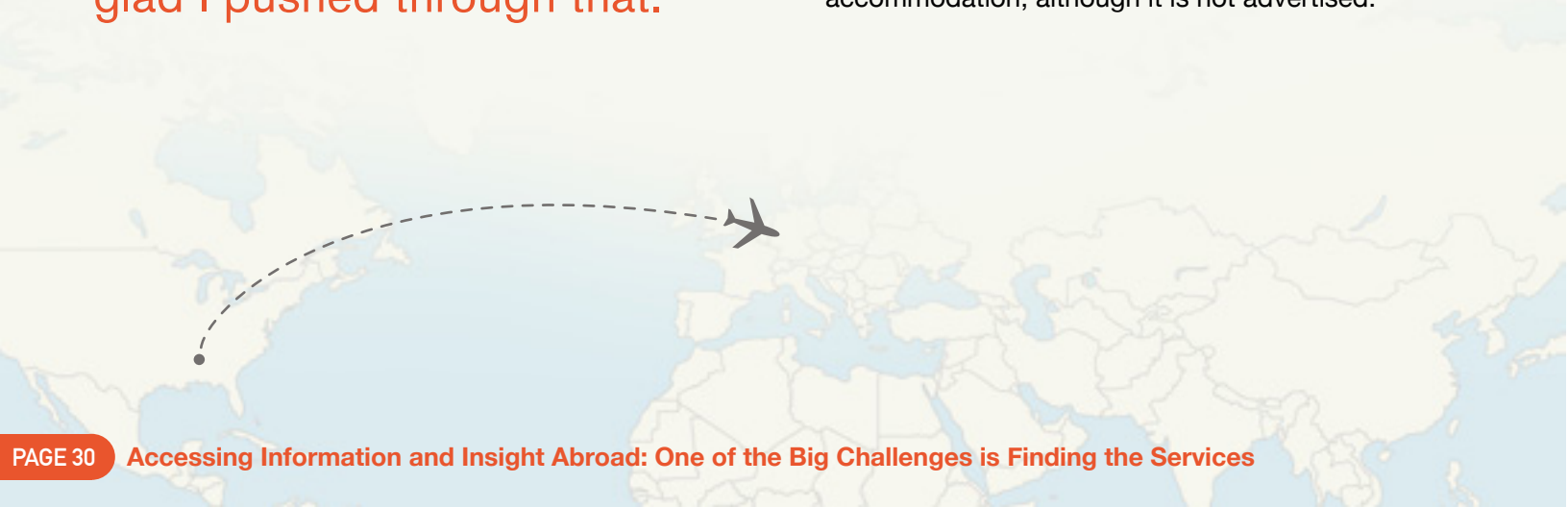
My home school didn’t really provide information on what kind of services would be provided, and for whatever reason seemed unable to get it. I was pretty frustrated and nearly at a point where I thought maybe this wasn’t going to work out, and I’m really glad I pushed through that.

Despite students with learning disabilities studying abroad at the same rate as other students, their numbers are still small enough that the process to get answers can be drawn out. Study abroad offices at both the home and host universities were not the only ones involved in his disability-related arrangements. Disability offices on both sides and the administration at the individual college Dwight would attend at Oxford all factored into the determinations.

He contacted Mobility International USA to find out about his rights under the Equality Act in the United Kingdom (U.K.), and got the support of his academic advisor at Sarah Lawrence College. His disability office provided him adaptive software to bring along.

“I got to Oxford a little early for an orientation, so I was able to meet with the disability office there; as soon as I was able to make that contact, things really fell in place.”

Oxford is a very big university and a lot of the colleges are autonomous with a labyrinth of support structures. Dwight found that by asking “What is available for my disability?” there were useful accommodations not available at his home college. A department in the library scanned books rapidly or got them directly from the publishers, so he was able to get everything needed well in advance. He also received dedicated workspace in the library as a disability accommodation, although it is not advertised.



“Unlike in the U.S., it is common in the U.K. for college students with dyslexia to be provided with tutors who are particularly trained to work at the post-secondary level, and that was a service I was able to take advantage of and which proved to be incredibly useful.”

He had a weekly meeting for an hour with a tutor to work on writing. This included learning new processes, such as physically outlining written assignments with the use of arrows and post-it notes. Tutors also reviewed his past assignments to point out changes he could make for clarity and gave him new strategies to assist with his spelling.

He also found Oxford schedules required less class time than in the United States; courses were one-on-one tutorials with professors, doctoral students, or researchers. All the professors Dwight worked with provided flexible deadlines and alternative oral assessment. Slowly over the year, he started to do more writing and supplementing it with fewer oral presentations.

For the first time in my education, I felt like I was putting in the same amount of time as my peers on those assignments and that opened a whole bag of opportunities.

Dwight participated in site visits and traveling, and he became involved with the disabled students advocacy campaigns at the university, which he ended up chairing in his last two terms. The group produced a disabled student’s guide to better inform incoming students about how access varies between individual colleges at Oxford.

Dwight’s career interests also shifted during his time abroad. Originally focused on going into academia either researching dyslexia or critical disability studies, his experience leading up to and once abroad, made him shift into wanting a career in disability services.

“I think the approach in the U.K., particularly with the tutors, is where the U.S. could improve. Why wouldn’t we be providing these services to someone who needs it? That applies to various disabilities. It instructed my thinking about disability services and what I would hope to do going forward.”



Read more about Learning Disability Accommodations

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/ldaccommodations



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

JACK GODWIN

FROM

USA

TO

MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

PROGRAM

FULBRIGHT



0123456789



Lifetime Connections as a Fulbright Alumnus

People Who Do International Exchange Feel More Alive

Jack Godwin has made international education his life mission. He is changing the assumption that it's just about one study abroad experience as an undergraduate. Throughout his professional career as a university administrator, he has participated in the U.S. Department of State-sponsored J. William Fulbright Program to different countries every few years.

While an international experience is voluntary, he finds those who choose it to be most interesting.

“They are on the verge of something – they are choosing to take the adventurous path and want to keep learning, keep growing, and to put themselves where they are immersed in another culture.”

When Jack was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, like others in his family, he did not let it stop him.

“Diabetes altered my entire life. It took a while to get used to it but you have no choice; you could stop traveling and doing international education or you could manage it. In managing it, you get a level of control over it. It all goes into planning.”

During his five Fulbright experiences, for example, Jack disclosed to the program staff on their medical form, packed enough medication and supplies in his airline carry-on, and wore a medical alert necklace in case of an emergency.

He also knows he will walk more when he travels than he does at home. This means he must adjust his insulin for more calories burned even if he eats the same. The goal is to keep his blood sugar down, and sometimes it just goes too low. So, he carries an emergency supply of sugar in his pocket to easily access during a presentation or anytime he needs it.

Once in Japan, this dose of sugar wasn't enough, so used his broken Japanese quickly to ask for orange juice from a snack counter. After draining the bottle, he recovered and then was able to pay and interact in a way he felt was more culturally polite.

He often finds himself not only a cultural ambassador in his role as Fulbright Specialist, but also for his diabetes. It can be awkward at times when a host graciously offers too many different types of foods that he can't eat and still stay healthy.

"They are so insistent – have cake, have cookies, have a second helping. They aren't trying to kill you, they are trying to be nice."

In Canada, Wales, and Hungary, Jack lectured on politics or business in classes for undergraduates and graduate students or during public speeches, and gave presentations about what it was like to study in the United States. These three-week experiences kept him busy.

The Fulbright International Education Administrators seminars he did for three weeks to Japan and Germany also were fascinating for him. He traveled with other Americans to look at higher education in those countries, and in smaller groups he was able to debrief all they had seen that day over dinner.

The great thing about Fulbright is the name means something so you get treated with respect and deference. There are so many great things about the program, but my memory of the real camaraderie with the group in Japan is one of the highlights of my life.

It's no surprise that Jack is now a lifetime member of the Fulbright Association, and often encourages his colleagues and students he advises to make international exchange part of



Learn More About the Fulbright Program

<http://www.eca.state.gov/fulbright>



 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

PAUL MONROE

 FROM

USA

 TO

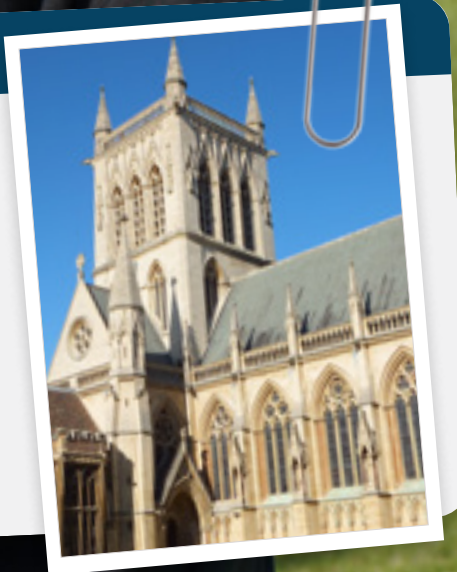
UK

 PROGRAM

STUDY ABROAD



0123456789



Health Matters Abroad

Removing Barriers and Researching Solutions

Once he made the decision to go, traveling from the United States to the United Kingdom for graduate study in technology policy seemed fairly straightforward for Paul Monroe – until it came time to figure out how two different health systems would cover the same (expensive!) treatments he used back home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Navigating local educational institutions, health care systems, or border customs are not always easy to understand. Differences in treatments, rules about importing medications, and varying definitions of disability can compound the confusion.

Paul had to manage a lot of moving pieces and parts, such as where he could receive the treatment, what doctors and administrators needed about his treatment history, which insurance schemes (if any) would cover his treatment and how to qualify, what the university could do to help him, and backup sources for care and payment.

Receiving my treatment at home can sometimes be a challenge in itself, and given the complexity of my case, there was little help readily available. This experience was certainly a trial by fire in learning to manage my healthcare in an international context.

Paul was very detailed in his research, learning his options, and being persistent in getting responses from the U.K.'s national health system about if his particular treatment for Crohn's disease would be available for him during his year at the University of Cambridge.

After collecting extensive documentation on his treatment history and meeting with multiple physicians and administrators in the U.K., he finally received a "YES!" response, but he proceeded cautiously and made back-up plans. Several days before his scheduled treatment, however, he received the news that the treatment had not been approved for funding by the regional authorities. He couldn't risk missing regular doses, so he maintained his home insurance and flew home periodically, primarily at his own expense, due to little other funding or coverage options.



Working Together to Find Answers

Since many people do not have health insurance that covers them while traveling abroad except in emergencies, they purchase supplemental plans which may not cover pre-existing conditions.

Plans offered to international exchange participants for less than a year of coverage are not fully licensed products, so changes to U.S. health laws through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act do not apply. These plans can increase costs, have pre-existing condition exclusions, or deny enrollment to an individual based on health status.

When Atlas Corps accepted an international participant who was HIV-positive, they realized their group insurance excluded his condition. While they found a separate plan through Patriot Travel that did not exclude people living with HIV, any needs related to HIV condition would not be covered. Like all participants, he was encouraged to bring the maximum amount of allowable medications and to get thoroughly checked out by a doctor before traveling. Since he could only get six month's worth of medications, he agreed at his own expense to fly home mid-point of the fellowship for more medications and another doctor check-up.

"He was very determined to not let this affect his fellowship, so he was able to come. He's had no issues since he's been here and been fine," says Nicole Pytlik at Atlas Corps.

For two exchange participants with kidney dialysis and a transplant, health insurance turned out to be a non-issue due to pre-existing condition coverage in their university student plans. This allowed time for other research required in making arrangements.

Rob Venable in the disability office at Northern Texas University assisted one of the students by connecting him to Global Dialysis that lists centers in the United Kingdom, communicating with the host family and study abroad office, and negotiating his schedule and missed activities with the faculty leader.

If the doctor said there's no problem with traveling for this student, then we needed to do everything that was reasonable that we can to arrange accommodations for him.

Robert Wenc, the community liaison for international students at Michigan Technological University, similarly worked to assist a student who had a kidney transplant several years ago in China before coming for his undergraduate degree in the United States.

Robert reviewed government sites to see what medications could legally be brought, contacted their student insurance company to confirm coverage, connected doctors in both countries, and asked international colleagues on listservs for other advice. Also, the local hospitals, pharmacists, and doctors helped translate the Chinese medical records, research the medications to see if they

were available in the United States (they were, except one only patented in China), and arrange for nephrologist visits that were covered by insurance.

“The student’s correspondence with me was clear – that was one of the good things in that he had a good grasp of English. By the time he came, I had worked with him so much by email that I had emotional connection with him.”

It’s the teamwork of these professional staff that can help to ease the way, and assist exchange participants to get started off on the right foot – and a step towards changing the underrepresented status of students with medical-related disabilities in study abroad and other exchanges.

Negotiating Group Health Policies

- Remove exclusions for pre-existing conditions
- Reduce the time period defining pre-existing conditions
- Offer limited coverage to a certain maximum dollar amount for pre-existing conditions or medications
- Specify coverage in the case of an emergency to stabilize a pre-existing condition
- Exclude from the definition of a pre-existing condition, any condition in which one takes a prescribed drug or medicine that remains controlled without any change in a required prescription prior to the start of coverage



3 Ways To Get Health Coverage While Overseas

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/healthcoverage

Medications When Traveling Internationally Tipsheet

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/medications

10 Tips for Chronic Health Conditions & Planning for Your International Exchange

www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/chronichealth

The Numbers Tell the Story Infographic

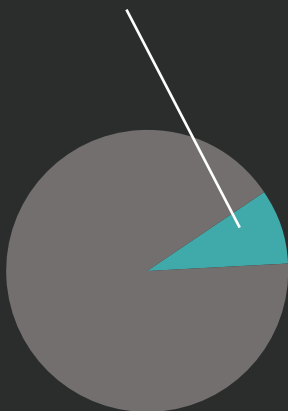
You are not imagining it!

The majority of disabled international students who arrive on U.S. campuses, and American students with disabilities who have studied abroad, have non-apparent disabilities.

How Many U.S. College Seniors Have Disabilities?

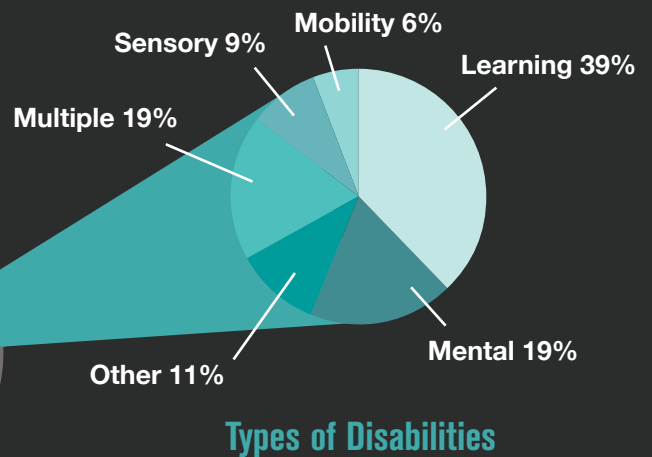
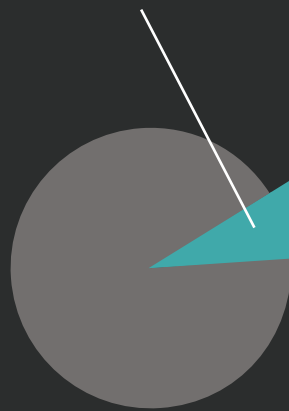
On U.S. Campuses

Disabled 8.8%



In Study Abroad

Disabled 7.8%



Types of Disabilities

Study Abroad Follows U.S. Campus Trends

Numbers Grow Over 4 Years



Source: The National Survey on Student Engagement 2014 and 2010. All study abroad data is taken from senior college student responses.

Who are Study Abroad Students with Non-Apparent Disabilities?

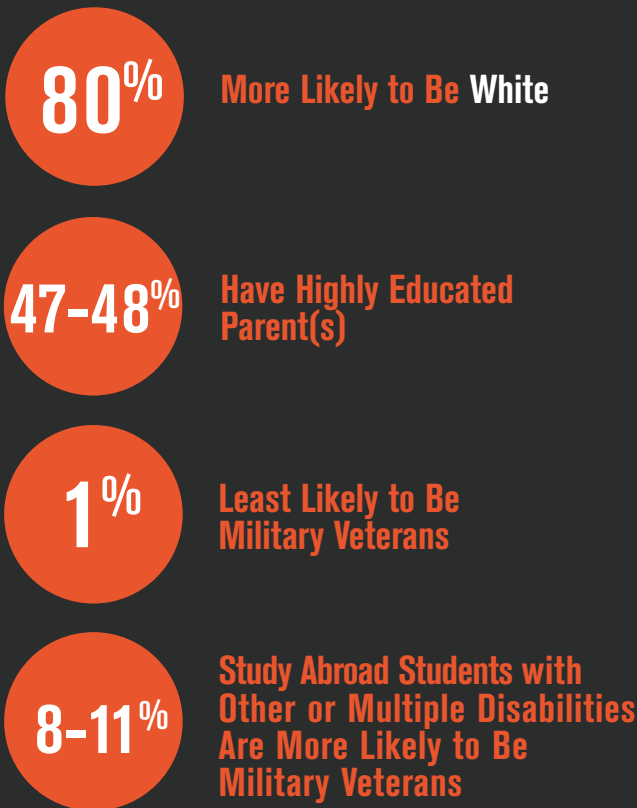
1 in 5 Women with Mental or Learning Disabilities Have Studied Abroad



1 in 4 Student Leaders with Mental or Learning Disabilities Have Chosen to Study Abroad



Study abroad students with mental and learning disabilities are:



Source: The National Survey on Student Engagement 2014 and 2010. All study abroad data is taken from senior college student responses.

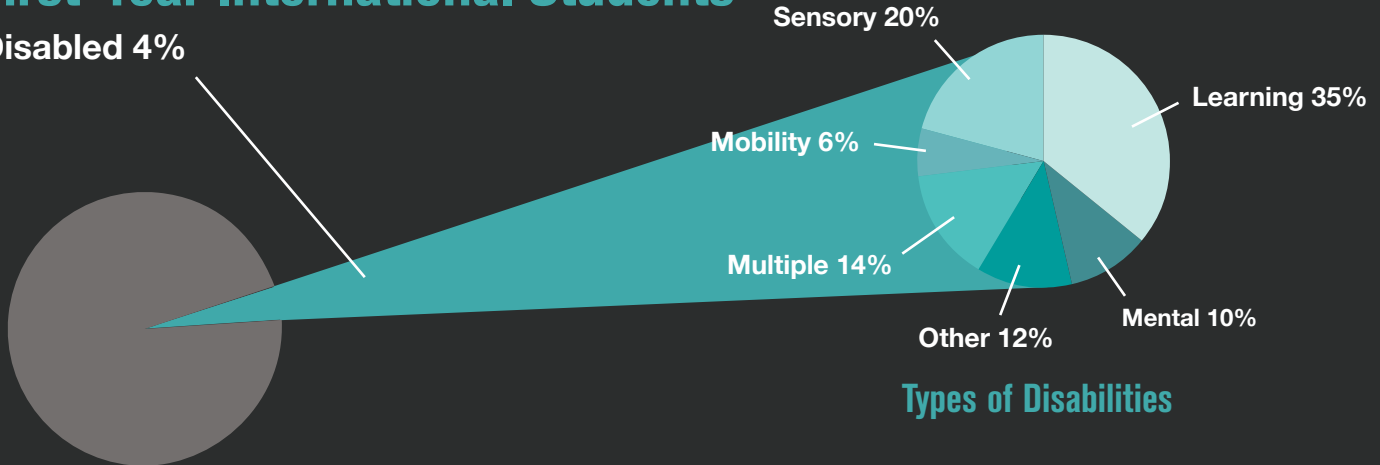
How Prepared are Education Abroad Programs?



Source: Risk Management in International Education: National Survey Results, 2014, David Engberg and Andrea Wagner

First-Year International Students

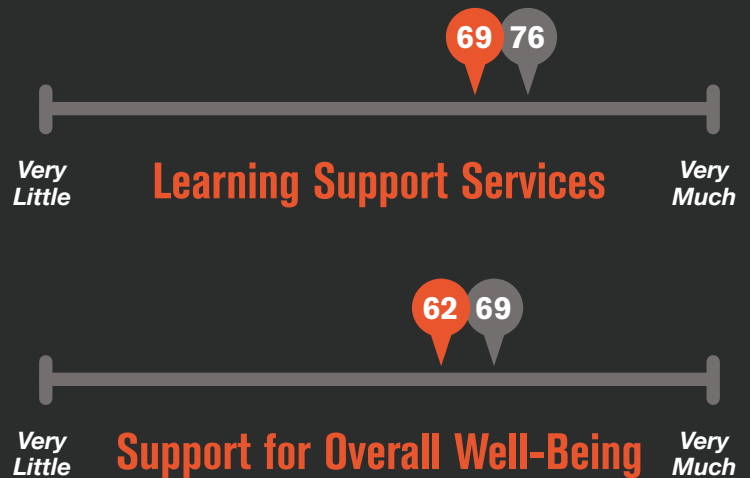
Disabled 4%



How have the Numbers of International Students with Non-Apparent Disabilities Changed in 4 years?



International Students with Learning, Other, or Multiple Disabilities Compared with All International Students Rate Less:



Source: The National Survey on Student Engagement 2014 and 2010. All international student data is from the first year student responses.



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Author: Michele Scheib

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www.MIUSA.org/NCDE