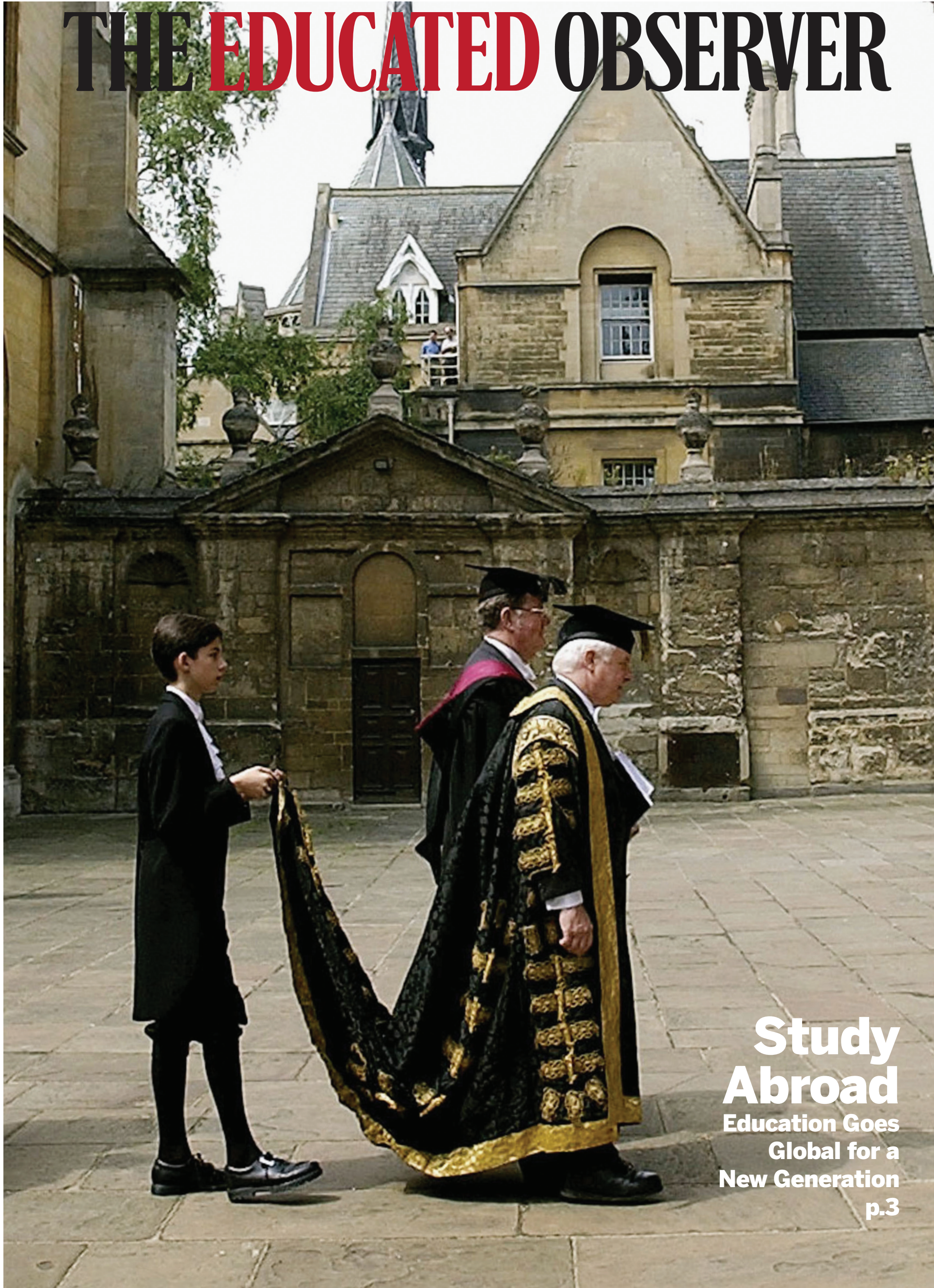


THE EDUCATED OBSERVER



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Abroad**
Education Goes
Global for a
New Generation
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A Semester at Sea student participating in a field program in India.



Global Classrooms

Study abroad programs may be the key to future success in a global marketplace

by **Jillian Blume**

The well-known song, It's a Small World, was written for the 1964 World's Fair, and since then, the world has been getting smaller and smaller. We have grown increasingly interconnected on all levels, including energy, the environment, politics, and the economy. Today, worldwide news travels across continents in real-time live feeds, bringing even the most remote events into the intimacy of our living rooms.

Our culture is progressively affected by the sensibilities of other societies, and the values and ideas of American exceptionalism are being challenged as the reality of a much larger world intrudes on the concept—particularly among college student communities—that our country is the center of the world. Add to all these changes the challenging job market facing graduates, especially in the cities that have previously promised employment abundance, and we have the perfect storm requiring today's students, more than ever, to become global citizens in a much smaller world in order to be successful.

Jennifer Kushell, a global expert on emerging adults and the generation called Millennials and the founder of YSN.com (Your Success Network), believes that study abroad is one of the most valuable experiences students can have in the course of their education. "I think of lot of people have the misconception that they should try and make the most of those years on one campus," she says, "but when they graduate, it's a total shock when they have to go out into the real world. When

you start traveling and you start experiencing cultures beyond that main incubator, you start opening up your perspective on what's out there. I think the most valuable thing in the world is being able to build connections globally and know that when you're starting to build your career, the world is your oyster, not just the United States."

Universities and Colleges

Universities and colleges across the country are strengthening their internationalization and study abroad programs. New York University, for example, is in the process of creating a "Global Network University" with plans to open a campus in Abu Dhabi, where faculty and students from both NYU locations will spend a semester away at one or more study abroad sites that the university maintains on five continents. In September 2008, Alfred Bloom, president of Swarthmore College was appointed Vice Chancellor of New York University Abu Dhabi. "I see the challenges," Bloom says, "but I see even more importantly the prospect of truly advancing the role of education in promoting cooperative pursuit of knowledge, global understanding, and ultimately a world that recognizes and builds on human common ground."

Yale University has mapped out a framework for internationalization, with the goal of transitioning from a national to an international university. "We think it's critically important for students, no matter what type of career they end up pursuing, to having a better understanding

of the perspectives and background of different cultures," says Donald Filer, Director of the Office of International Affairs at Yale University. To that end, Mr. Filer says, the university has made a commitment that every undergraduate has an opportunity to do something substantial abroad within their four years.

"There is nothing more powerful than walking on the ground in another society," says Jane Edwards, Associate Dean for International Affairs at Yale, who works closely with students regarding all international aspects of undergraduate life at Yale. New international programs are being developed in the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Arts and Sciences, the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, and Yale's Joint Center for Plant Molecular Genetics and Agribiotechnology at Peking University, among others.

At SUNY, a college system consists of 64 campuses located throughout New York State, students are able to choose from over 400 programs across all their campuses in addition to programs outside the SUNY system. Their programs cover a diverse assortment of destinations, from Madrid, Spain to Soochow University in Suzhou, China. Katherine Krebs, Director of International Programs at SUNY's Binghamton University, believes that study abroad gives students a fresh perspective on American culture and society. "Many times students are working in academic disciplines that are related to their major, so they get a cross-cultural

perspective on their major," she says. "Students sometimes return from study abroad with stronger commitments to their future directions. It has a wonderful effect in that it helps students take their next step in whatever their most serious goals are."

Travel changes a person's perspective not only on the world, but also on the opportunities available to them and their ability to make an impact on the world. "When you're able to pick up and move anywhere in the world and become successful, that person has advantages that most people on the planet will never have," Jennifer Kushell says. "It's a really unique skill set that will really separate a person."

Bold Schoolers

In 2005, Maya Frost and her husband sold everything and moved to Argentina via Mexico in order to give their four children a broader perspective and education than they believed they could get in their suburban neighborhood of Beaverton, Oregon. As a family, they had travelled to India and Nepal, and their two older daughters had already spent their junior year in high school as exchange students in Chile and Brazil. "They came back fluent in either Portuguese or Spanish, and they were much more mature than their peers because they'd lived far away from family, and a lot of things go on during that year," Ms. Frost says.

In her book, *The New Global Student*, she coins the phrase "bold school." Bold schoolers

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BETH DUNN

Study Abroad at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare

As a sociology and anthropology major at Lake Forest College in Chicago, Beth Dunn spent six months taking classes at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare and living with a host family.

Beth studied the native language, Shona, took a class on their political system, and chose to study the native ancestral religion for an independent thesis because she felt baffled by religion.

Besides giving her a much deeper understanding of the world outside the United States, she feels the experience was a process of self-actualization.

"When I went to Zimbabwe, where nobody knew me, I found that it was an opportunity for me to see that no matter where I was, I was still myself," she says. "I was very preppy. There were students from many different colleges, and I was the only one who looked like that. The rest of them had long hair and wore Birkenstocks. I didn't try to adapt to them. I befriended them and enjoyed the irony. We got a kick out of our differences, and it really let me see who I was."

She found that the program gave her an enthusiasm for learning. "I was never much of a student. I got into the program by the skin of my teeth. I came back and that semester and got all A's and B's where before I had been a C student."

She graduated from Lake Forest in 1993. Having grown up on the Main Line, she says she had participated in many debutant events, and she now puts her background to good use. Today, she owns her own company called Social Climbers LLC and has published her first novel, *Social Climbers*.

"The classroom isn't an ideal learning situation for about three quarters of our population," she says. "There's four different ways that people process information, and the American learning system really only serves about a quarter of our population best. I learn better in the real world, working and meeting people. If a student can get away for a semester, they will learn life lessons that will serve them in all areas of their life."



pursue an education that doesn't follow a prescribed path but is rather a personalized learning experience. She believes this kind of education gives people a great advantage in the world. Jennifer Kushell, who advises students worldwide, counsels that in today's world, pursuing a personalized education is a formula for success. "There are a lot of people who are going to graduate from your school who've been there for four years, who have joined the same club, who have all got good grades, and in the end, what makes you look different from all those people? Sometimes playing by all the rules and doing all of the things that have been laid out for you just make you look a lot more of the same," she says.

Ms. Frost's children have all followed their own personalized path, and every single one has graduated from college years ahead of their peers, including their daughter Tara who recently graduated at 21 after attending six different programs in four different countries. "The quality of education definitely changes from relying on someone to teach you how to learn to you teaching yourself how to learn," she says. "It really teaches you as an individual to be responsible for whatever you're doing."

Maya Frost believes this kind of journey is inherently different from traditional study abroad programs where students go overseas with other American students. "What happens in most study abroad programs is a lot of the kids who come in groups spend most of their time with other American students, and it turns into sort of an extended Spring Break experience," she says.

But you don't have to pack up your life and move abroad to receive a "bold" education. Programs like Rotary Exchange and Semester at Sea both offer unique opportunities for global learning experiences.

Rotary Youth Exchange has a study abroad program for high school student and for college graduates aged 18-25 years. The programs aim to help students mature and understand themselves and the world on a deeper level. High school students typically stay for a year, living with three host families so they can be exposed to as broad of an experience as possible, and they are immersed in all aspects of life and customs in another country.

The shorter term New Generations Exchange offers specialized internships to recent graduates, home stays, tours, and International Youth Camps, which bring together students from different

countries, provide leadership training, address international concerns, and promote cultural tolerance. The experience can have long-lasting effects. "When you come back," says Rotary Exchange student Tara Frost, "you want to maintain that level of stimulation. You want to continue meeting international students and keep improving your language skills."

Semester at Sea is the only program of its kind and one of the more spectacular ones. A comparative global education program, students study abroad while sailing around the world on a passenger ship, the MV Explorer, which functions as their home and their classroom. Founded in 1963, guest lecturers who travel between countries or sign on for the entire voyage have included Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Mother Teresa, Archbishop Desmond TuTu, Fidel Castro, and authors like Arthur C. Clarke in Sri Lanka.

"The program provides students with an opportunity to contrast and compare different parts of the world, cultures, economies, the people, the history, in order to form what we believe ultimately creates a more global perspective for the individual at

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More High Academic Achievers Choose CUNY

More high academic achievers with top-tier grades and highly competitive SAT scores are choosing the colleges of The City University of New York.

Five elite New York City public high schools – Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, Staten Island Technical High School, Stuyvesant High School and Townsend Harris High School – sent 505 freshmen to CUNY colleges this fall, a 27 percent increase compared with the number enrolled in baccalaureate programs in 1999.

Moreover, CUNY colleges attracted 166 percent more first-time freshmen with combined math-verbal SAT scores of 1200 or higher – 1,487 such students compared to 559 in 1999. And since 1999, the colleges have more than doubled their enrollment of first-time freshmen with high-school averages of 85 or better, according to University data on the new freshman classes.

The resounding vote of confidence from high academic achievers is even outpacing the University record enrollment growth on a percentage basis. CUNY's fall 2008 enrollment is at 242,898, up 4.3 percent from fall 2007. This is the ninth consecutive year of enrollment gains. More students are seeking degrees and studying at campuses across the five boroughs

than at any time since the mid 1970s.

"In difficult economic times, students and their families especially appreciate the high value of an education at a CUNY college," said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. "We are investing in CUNY by attracting world class faculty, building modern facilities and creating innovative academic programs in the most exciting city in the world. The University today is among the best values in higher education."

Other notable enrollment trends this fall include increases in both full- and part-time study at the undergraduate and graduate levels; in professional training and in degree programs that offer flexible modes of learning.

The fall 2008 enrollment data show the University building upon a wave of student increases that began in 2000, when CUNY implemented administrative and academic reforms that have boosted its reputation nationwide.

In addition to the outstanding new faculty teaching at CUNY, the University continues to strengthen its science programs in part by expanding Ph.D.-granting authority to two science-focused senior colleges, City and Hunter; by modernizing science facilities in all five boroughs, and it has hewed to its mission to expand educational opportunities for one of the most diverse student populations in the world.

Every CUNY sector, from senior colleges to community colleges to graduate programs,

posted notable enrollment increases compared with fall 2007.

Among CUNY's graduate schools and programs, which saw a 5.6 percent overall increase, the School of Professional Studies – which includes the popular and flexible CUNY Online Baccalaureate degree – reported a 39.1 percent leap. At CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, now entering its third year and offering an innovative journalism, broadcast news and new media curriculum culminating in

colleges, the William E. Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, the Graduate School and University Center, the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, the CUNY School of Law, the CUNY School of Professional Studies and the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education. The University serves 243,000 degree-credit students and more than 240,000 adult, continuing and professional education students. College Now, the University's academic enrichment program for 32,500 high school



a Masters of Arts degree, enrollment increased by just over 10 percent.

The City University of New York is the nation's leading urban public university. Founded in New York City in 1847 as the Free Academy, the University's 23 institutions include 11 senior colleges, six community

students, is offered at CUNY campuses and more than 300 high schools throughout the five boroughs of New York City. The University offers online baccalaureate degrees through the School of Professional Studies and an individualized baccalaureate through the CUNY Baccalaureate Degree.

TARA FROST**Rotary Youth Exchange student in Brazil and Bold Schooler**

The Frost family is dedicated to study abroad. Tara Frost's parents had studied abroad, and her sister had done a Rotary Exchange year in Chile. Tara decided on a Rotary Exchange in Brazil, and she spent her junior year in high school following her family's footsteps.

Her family decided to move abroad, and the first stop was their "starter country" Mexico, where Tara took classes through the local Mexican community college and graduated from high school a year early.

She was accepted to Mount Allison University in Canada, but bitten by the wanderlust bug, she checked out Mount Allison's study abroad programs, and chose a program in Marburg, Germany, where she took classes in German and the E.U. economy and then did some travelling. In 2006, she went to Mount Allison, but wasn't satisfied with their international relations faculty. "It was hard for me to justify spending two years—which is the time it would take me to graduate because of all my extra international credits—in a small town with a small international relations faculty because I felt I wouldn't get a well-rounded education," she says.

Back in Argentina, she got into a private university and took some courses in public relations. Searching for a college that would accept her international credits, she ended up getting her degree at Portland State University, culminating in two internships for credit in New York City at a bilingual advertising agency and the International Department of Programming and Operations at MTV.

"If you aren't willing to think outside the box, you don't get the opportunity to meet different people," she says. "When I went abroad, I didn't spend time with American students for a while, and I came to understand that there is a point in learning. We strive in this country for A's, but I think a lot of the time what we miss out on is really learning. Even if you get a C, and you really tried, you learn."

Her experience abroad gave her a lot of confidence and taught her how to take care of herself. "I wasn't there for the experience of living away from my parents. I had done that. I was there to learn, to go to every single class and have perfect attendance. It was hard to transfer those credits, so it taught me to take advantage of every situation. We're not one for failure in the Frost family. We may move around, but we don't fail."

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the end of their journey," says Les McCabe, Semester at Sea's President of the Institute for Shipboard Education. Countries are a mix of developed and developing that are considered significant in terms of the world and the global economy, as well as countries that are emerging markets and countries that are struggling, "so that students can understand the differences amongst and between these various places and better understand how the world operates and what's at play."

Cristy Stewart was accepted to Semester at Sea in 1999, and lived aboard what she and her friends called "the Mothership." It was a last minute decision, and she went alone with no preconceptions or plans. "I highly recommend that people go by themselves because the people who go with their friends stay with their friends and they don't really get a chance to get out of their shell," she says.

The learning experience in this type of environment is markedly different from the experience of taking classes on a college campus. "I learned so much more in that semester than I had probably learned in my entire first year of college. When you go to school in a normal environment, you go home and you're easily distracted, but when you're abroad, you're always learning. Every day is a constant adventure and every day is something new."

The experience gave her a lot of confidence, and she says it still continues to change her. "There's only so much you can learn by reading about it in a book. Just to be there and walk the steps that other people have walked gives you a perspective on not only how young this country is but how much culture other people have that we lack," she says.

Students spend their time on the ship in a regular full day of course work and preparation for what they're going to experience in the ports of call, and then there's reflection on that experience when they get back to the classroom. When students are in the countries, there are extensive field programs. These range from university exchanges where students can meet with students from host universities, tour trips to sites of importance, and international field programs, such as Habitat for Humanity in South Africa and Missionaries of Charity Orphanage in India.

Considering everything that's been written about the Millennials and their sense of entitlement, it's noteworthy that the field programs are the programs that fill up first. In the past, students and parents would be upset when they didn't get into the



more tourist-oriented trips, such as the Great Wall of China or Machu Picchu for example. Today, Semester at Sea's staff is hearing from families when students don't get into the field service program of their choice. "I think there's a part of this generation that feels compelled to engage more directly with people, to give back, to have more meaning behind what it is that they're doing," Mr. McCabe says. "They want to be less of a tourist and of an observer and more of a participant."

Over the past year, Semester at Sea's enrollment is up despite the economy and the cost of the program. "College students are starting to figure out that what happens in one place dramatically, in some cases, impacts people in other places as well," Mr. McCabe says. "Folks are beginning to really understand that having a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship of all countries of the world is critical to their success."

Beyond College

Students are graduating today into an extremely challenging job market. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the number of unemployed people increased by 2.7 million last year. The National Association of Colleges and Employers recently released a report stating that in a poll, responding employers expect to decrease their hiring levels by 1.6 percent, and 52% said that they were going to adjust their college hiring downward. Today's graduates are finding that good grades and campus clubs aren't enough to land a job.

"We're hearing from a lot of our students who find that when they apply for jobs and employers are looking at transcripts, they'll see 25 resumes from the same school and they all look alike," Les McCabe says. "They have strong G.P.A.s and activities and involvement, but the one that stands out is the one for the student that went on the Semester at Sea because the employer knows that this person took initiative, took risk, and has a fair working knowledge of the world."

Jennifer Kushell counsels students to be open-minded in

Students prepare to depart on their voyage around the world on Semester at Sea's MV Explorer.

their job search. "If you look at international markets in addition to our own markets, there's a lot of opportunity out there," she says. "And there are also a lot of U.S. companies that are looking to grow globally and need great talent from the United States who are a lot more globally savvy than the average person." Her company recently conducted a study of graduating students from 50 countries, and 55% of them said that they were looking for jobs outside of their home country. She believes that American students are significantly more insulated than students abroad, and because of that, foreign students tend to be more globally knowledgeable.

Associate Dean Jane Edwards has spent years talking to employers, C.E.O's, and human resources personnel. "The first thing someone looks for in a new employee is their skills set," she says, "but the second thing is what can be characterized as flexibility or adjustability in dealing with the world as it is today. And we know from people who hire that study abroad is an experience they feel really helps with that." Study abroad simply makes people more marketable.

"We really need to shake up U.S. students and let them know that international kids are going to start to eat their lunch soon," Ms. Kushell says. "You have kids coming out of countries all over the world who are so hungry to find opportunities and to explore the world, who can talk more intelligently about our own political system than many of us can. It's really important for students to start to recognize that we are falling behind. Young people in the United States are not staying on top of things in the world like our counterparts are. And it's going to catch up with us very soon."

As the song goes, "There's so much that we share/That it's time we're aware/It's a small world after all." For college students, study abroad may be the most powerful vehicle to an increasingly complex

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