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International Engagement

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Half of IWU students study abroad. For many, the experience has inspired even deeper explorations of global opportunities.

Stories by KIM HILL

Students who study abroad typically describe the experience with remarks such as, “It encouraged me to be a more global citizen,” and, “It absolutely changed my life.” National research shows international experience while in college has a positive effect on depth of learning and interpersonal skills. Maybe that’s why surveys of recent IWU alumni reveal that “Study Abroad” ranks among their top two academic experiences.

The total number of Wesleyan students who have studied abroad now comprises over half of each graduating class. As alumni, most are content to relive their college international experiences with photos, Skyping former roommates or occasional travels abroad. But for many, the experience inspired them to continue living, studying and working overseas after graduation.

In a recent informal survey of Illinois Wesleyan alumni who studied abroad as students, 44 percent of those responding either now work overseas or pursued graduate degrees outside the United States.

From a business major now employed by a marketing firm in China to a political science graduate helping children go to school in war-torn Congo, these alumni sometimes yearn for the familiarity, conveniences and comforts of home. But while they may acutely feel the pain of separation from their stateside family and friends, the trade-off of experiences they’ve gained has, they say, made a world of difference.

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