

MOVING BEYOND THE BOOKS

THERE'S GREAT VALUE TO OFFERING INTERNATIONAL OPTIONS OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS.



A college student studying viniculture, the cultivation of grapes for winemaking, recently gained invaluable hands-on experience in his field through the World Endeavors International Internship Program. He spent a semester in Tuscany, Italy, working at a vineyard, doing everything from harvesting grapes to making strategic decisions on how to package and market the wine.

For 13 years, World Endeavors has offered immersive international programs, including internship and volunteer programs. "Whereas a lot of organizations have an academic study abroad focus, our programs are more on the experiential side," says Thomas Peden, founder and executive director of World Endeavors. "Participants learn through experience."



While traditional study abroad programs have value, more universities are offering alternatives to students who want to travel internationally, but aren't attracted to standard programs. More than 22,180 U.S. students participated in non-credit work, internships and volunteering abroad in 2013-2014, according to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors report. In addition, 326 institutions reported offering these opportunities, up 5.5 percent from 2012-2013.



TERRADOTTA

“People in the international education field feel an urgency to grow the number of students participating in study abroad,” says Eric Anderson, vice president of admissions for Up with People. “But we can’t think we’re going to increase the number of people going abroad if we continue to provide them with the same old study abroad experiences. There are many young people looking for leadership programs, volunteer programs and performing arts programs.” Up with People combines all three, sending 17 to 29-year-olds on 20-week world tours to perform musical shows and volunteer in the communities where they travel.



A RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL OPTIONS



10-week voyage



10-week launch



20-week internship



Cody Hartley

UNCOLLEGE

When it comes to international programs, there is no “one size fits all” approach. “There are still such a small percentage of young people who take the opportunity to study abroad. The number is growing, but it can be so much bigger,” says Cody Hartley, director of admission at the UnCollege Gap Year Program. “As more and more programs offer innovative new configurations, students have more choices for their outside-the-classroom learning than ever before. It’s really about helping each student connect with the experience that fits them best.”

UnCollege is a gap year program with three phases—voyage, launch and internship. During the 10-week voyage portion, participants volunteer in a foreign country. The next 10 weeks are the launch phase, where participants are mentored and attend workshops in San Francisco to gain real-world skills. The program’s final 20 weeks feature an internship.

While gap semester and gap year programs may not yet be mainstream choices, Hartley says programs such as UnCollege empower people to take control of their

education and gain practical skills. Some participants who take time away from college finish the 40-week program with a renewed sense of purpose and return to campus with a clear vision for their future. UnCollege plans to name an academic partner and begin offering college credit for its program later this year.

Other programs are structured to combine study abroad with alternative experiences. For instance, Up with People offers a study abroad component where eligible students can enroll in three 4-credit courses through its academic partner Florida Southern College. Courses range from principles of management to intercultural communication. About 25 percent of Up with People participants take advantage of this option, says Anderson.

Alternative options also are ideal for students who “catch the travel bug,” says Peden. In addition to its volunteer and internship programs, World Endeavors offers traditional study abroad programs. “Oftentimes, we have students who have studied abroad, earned college credits, then come back home with the desire to go abroad again,” he says. “They got the bug and look at alternative types of programs.”

ADVICE FOR PURSUING ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Alternative international programs aren't meant to replace standard study abroad programs. Instead, they can augment a school's offerings. If you would like to move beyond literature classes in London or foreign language immersion in France, consider these three tips from alternative international education providers:

- **Pick your partners wisely.** "Find an expert—a company that has a wide range of options already available," says Peden. Most schools don't have the resources to create and manage a variety of programs, so teaming with an experienced company is a smart tactic.
- **Take a practical approach.** "Create programs where young people can build the skills that the market rewards," says Hartley. These include effective communication, problem analysis, self-advocacy, networking and solid work habits.

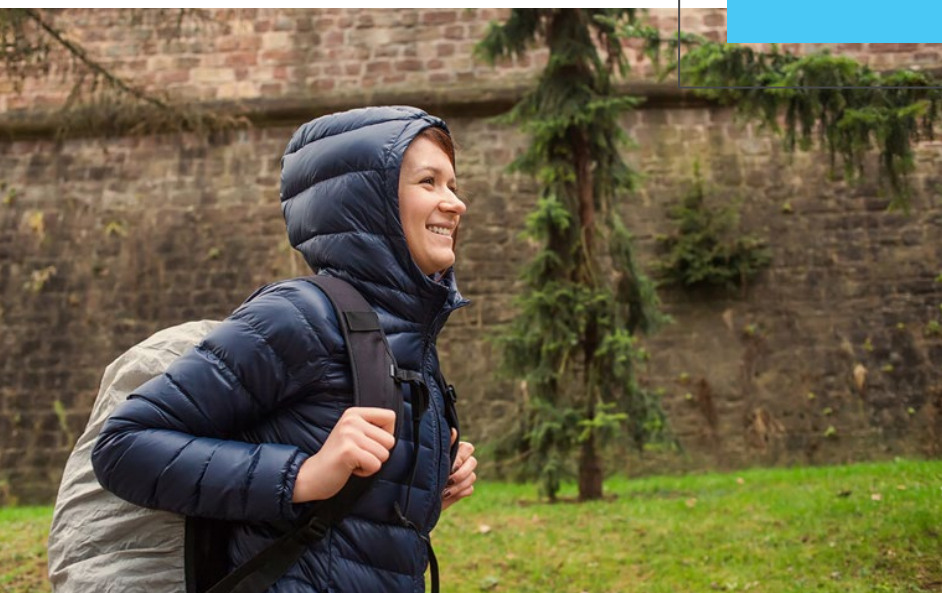
- **Remain open-minded about the field** and the many ways young people can have an intercultural, international experience, says Anderson. He sees too many schools setting restrictions on programs, dictating that they last at least a semester or include immersion in a foreign language. "I get it, but you can go to a small town in Texas and have an incredible cultural experience," says Anderson. "It really comes down to facilitating that cultural experience."

Alternative international programs may be off the beaten path, but that's often the allure. And these programs—just like traditional study abroad—can be incredibly transformative and life-changing.



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5 ALTERNATIVES TO ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

"If study abroad departments at universities want to fortify their position as service providers for young people at their institutions—who have many options—they need to build out programs that have value beyond just cultural or language immersion," says Cody Hartley, director of admission at the UnCollege Gap Year Program.

There are hundreds of alternative programs, providing students opportunities as varied as volunteering in a wildlife reserve in South Africa to teaching English in China. Here are five program areas—and examples of providers—that highlight the breadth of options available.

INTERNSHIPS—ELI Abroad is a non-profit organization that offers both volunteer and internship opportunities. Internships are available in 24 countries, ranging from graphic design work in Ireland to dental internships in Nepal.

OCEAN TRAVEL—Sponsored by the University of Virginia, Semester at Sea is a multi-country study abroad program that combines academics with hands-on field experiences. Students travel via ship around the world for 100-plus days.

VOLUNTEER TRIPS—Since 2002, ISV has specialized in student volunteer travel. The organization's most popular program combines a two-week volunteer project and a two-week adventure tour in countries such as Australia, Costa Rica and Thailand.

FIELD STUDIES—The School for Field Studies offers environmental field studies abroad, including sustainable development studies in Costa Rica, Himalayan studies in Bhutan, rainforest studies in New Zealand, marine resources studies in Turks and Caicos, and more.

ADVENTURE TRIPS—The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) takes students on remote wilderness expeditions, where they learn about outdoor skills, leadership and environmental ethics.



T E R R A D O T T A

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