

## STAGE 4: RETURNING

The last stage of your journey sounds deceptively easy; all you have left to do is return home. However, as you know from your Pre-Departure Topics for Study Abroad course, it's not that simple. You'll remember that you considered the coming-home part of the process before you even left. In fact, re-entry often happens just as you've finally started really adapting to your host culture.

People who have lived abroad often find that the adjustment to living in their home country again is more challenging than their adjustment to the host culture was. One expects to have some difficulty when one goes to a new place, speaks a different language, or learns the rules of a different culture. Many do not expect to have difficulty adjusting to a place where they have spent most of their lives.

**"I returned home from my one-year study abroad in Germany to an America that was amazingly ignorant and indifferent about the rest of the world; an America that thought its way was the only way; an America of superficial, plastic people who couldn't carry on a political discussion to save their lives; an America that was unbelievably wasteful and careless with the environment. This wasn't the same country that I had left just one short year ago, was it? What had changed?"**

*-Study abroad student quoted on the University of Missouri-Columbia Web site*

Many students do not realize how their experiences abroad have changed their perceptions, values, and habits. When experiencing homesickness abroad, we often unintentionally cultivate an idealistic notion of home. The difficulty comes when reality does not equal the picture we have. Or, as illustrated in the quotation above, we feel distanced from and sometimes even disgusted by the negative things we've noticed about our home culture while we were away. After returning home from abroad, many students report feeling isolated from their family and friends—especially if those family and friends have never traveled or lived abroad. Gradually the feelings of disorientation and frustration will fade, though things will never be exactly as they were before. Consider this a positive thing! Growth is almost always accompanied by a degree of uneasiness. And the process of intercultural education is a continuum; we journey along from a place of no knowledge of other cultures to, eventually, a place where we can value aspects of all cultures.

The same is true with study abroad. Your study abroad experience has promoted mental growth and will bring unlimited personal benefits. Students who study abroad become more independent, more aware of international issues, more sensitive to differences in people, and frequently more competent in another language. Becoming active internationally at Birmingham-Southern College will help you integrate your experiences abroad into your routine back at home.

Here are some of the organizations at BSC that promote international interests:

- Global Gatherers
- United Nations Organization
- Le Cercle Français
- BSC Japan Club
- Hispanic Heritage Committee
- Multi-Cultural Awareness Organization
- Religious Life Fellows (Interfaith Organization)
- Muslim Student Association
- Jewish Student Association
- International Tutoring (Service-Learning)
- I-Floor (International Theme Housing)
- Conversations without Borders

Join BSC's Sklenar Center for International Programs' Facebook Page to keep up with events and alumni networking!



Get involved! Your international experience brings a new and exciting dynamic to campus life. Offer to talk to students, faculty and staff about your experience abroad. Investigate careers abroad. Get more involved in Birmingham's international community. Keep learning about your host culture while back in Birmingham. Actively engage others with the skills that you have learned and integrate them into your life. And, don't forget that you are returning to a diverse campus community enriched by the presence of international students studying abroad at BSC from countries all over the world.

#### Sklenar Center Projects

- ❖ Study Abroad Fair
- ❖ Re-entry Conference
- ❖ Revising Study Abroad Handbook
- ❖ Photo Contest
- ❖ Sklenar Center News Reporter (Alumni Network)
- ❖ Selling T-shirts
- ❖ Preview Day Speakers
- ❖ Hosting Visiting Scholars
- ❖ International Student Orientation
- ❖ Promoting Study Abroad (Advertising)
- ❖ Academic Tutoring of International Students
- ❖ Recruiting International Students with Admissions
- ❖ Working with Financial Aid
- ❖ Global Gatherers Representative

## Returning Checklist

- ✓ Bring syllabi and course materials home in case a BSC professor wants to review them for course approval.
- ✓ Make changes to your Transient Course Form If you need to make changes to your transient course form, you must revisit your study abroad profile at the website below  
<http://csunx2.bsc.edu:8080/TravelApplication/servlet/startup?mode=TravelApplication>
- ✓ Complete the online Study Abroad Evaluation before grades will transfer  
<http://www.bsc.edu/academics/oip/study-abroad/form-evaluation.cfm>.
- ✓ Get involved in Global Gatherings with students of like-minded interests. Contact the Global Gatherer Representatives (2009-2010) Ms. Grace Balinda ([igbalind@bsc.edu](mailto:igbalind@bsc.edu)).
- ✓ Develop a project to assist the Sklenar Center If you want to share your experience with others, we value your participation. *Recipients of Sklenar Center study abroad scholarships will be asked to develop a project to assist the Sklenar Center with the internationalization of BSC (see page 67 for a list of sample projects).* You will be contacted by someone in the Sklenar Center soon.
- ✓ Give Faculty your e-mail login and the link below for course approval. The text box can be cut and pasted into an e-mail that you can send to each professor whose signature you are requesting.

### Faculty Instructions for Transient Course Form for Study Abroad Courses

Link: (Control key + click on link)

<http://csunx2.bsc.edu:8080/TravelApplication/servlet/startup?mode=CreditApplication>

After clicking on the link, a faculty member will need to provide his or her BSC e-mail login and password as requested. The next page will offer the option to “Sign an Application” or “Terminate Session.” Click “Sign an Application” and then the system will ask for the e-mail I.D. of the student making the request for course credit approval. The student’s login will open that student’s Transient Course Form for Study Abroad and from there a faculty member can scroll down to the course intended for review and approval.

Once a Faculty member has made the appropriate changes and has accepted the course for BSC credit, the faculty member should scroll to the bottom of the course form and click the signature as faculty member. A record of a faculty member’s approval for the course will be indicated and if there is anything a faculty member would like to note about the course, this can be done below the signature. If faculty members require any assistance, they are asked to contact Anne Ledvina ([aledvina@bsc.edu](mailto:aledvina@bsc.edu)) at 226-7722.



## A. Study Abroad Evaluation Form

Upon your return to BSC, remember to fill out the study abroad evaluation form to complete the transfer of grades from your courses abroad. The evaluation form is on the Sklenar Center study abroad Web site at <http://www.bsc.edu/academics/international/study-abroad/evaluation.htm>. Also feel free to stop by the Sklenar Center any time to talk about your experiences abroad.

## B. Opportunities for Further Connection

Students returning from study abroad often change their majors to reflect their experiences and new interests. There are several areas of study that particularly appeal to students with international interests. BSC's curriculum offers a major in [International Studies](#); majors and minors in [Asian Studies](#), [French](#), [German](#), [Spanish](#), and [Urban Environmental Studies](#); and minors in [Latin American Studies](#), [Environmental Studies](#), and hopefully, International Human Rights.

Courses in these areas are designed to provide students with a deeper cultural understanding of a region's language, history, economy, and politics. Students may also study other foreign languages not currently offered at BSC through the BACHE program. The [Birmingham Area Consortium for Higher Education \(BACHE\)](http://www.bache.app.uab.edu/) (<http://www.bache.app.uab.edu/>) is a consortium of Birmingham-Southern College, Samford University, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Montevallo, and Miles College. Full-time students who are in good academic standing at their home campus may, with written permission from their academic advisor and dean, take a course at another BACHE campus at no additional charge. Foreign languages offered through the BACHE program include Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, and Thai. All of these majors and minors are strongly encouraged to study abroad.

To learn more about our curriculum options, please visit the Sklenar Center Web site:

[http://www.bsc.edu/academics/Sklenar\\_Center/maj-min.htm](http://www.bsc.edu/academics/Sklenar_Center/maj-min.htm).

BSC and other members of BACHE also host a re-entry conference to help study abroad students with their transition back home and with their future careers. Check the Sklenar Center events page ([http://www.bsc.edu/academics/Sklenar\\_Center/events.htm](http://www.bsc.edu/academics/Sklenar_Center/events.htm)) for more information about the re-entry conference.

See Appendix 10 below for a list of resources for re-entry.

## Appendix 11 – Resources for Re-entry

*List adapted from research done by International Programs at Carleton College*

Kauffman, N.L., Martin, Weaver and Weaver (1992). *Students Abroad: Strangers at Home*. Yarmouth, MN: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Kundera, M. (May 20, 2002). "The Great Return." *The New Yorker*. 96-105.

LaBrack, B. (1991). *The Return Home: A Re-entry Reader*. Stockton, CA: University of the Pacific.

Lim, P., Jr. (1994). "Homecoming." *Global Cultures. A Transnational Short Fiction Reader*. Ed. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. Wesleyan UP; 90-96.

Smith, S.L. (1998). "Identity and intercultural communication competence in reentry." *Readings in Intercultural Contexts*. Ed. J. Martin Nakayama and L. Flores. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield Publishing; 304-314.

Storti, C. (2001). *The Art of Coming Home*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Weaver, G.R. (2000). "The Process of Re-entry." Boston, MA: Pearson Publishing.

### Web Sites:

#### Abroad View Magazine

Readings and writing contest for publication of students' experience after study abroad; Re-entry packet on-line of combined resources from other publications

<http://www.abroadviewmagazine.com>

#### Asia Society Initiative

Resource to improve teaching and learning of other world regions for K-12

<http://www.internationaled.org>

#### Returning Student Experiences - Readings

<http://www.theglimpse.com/newsite/frontpage2.asp>

#### Transitions Abroad

Resource for a variety of work and volunteer opportunities abroad

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/>

#### E-Diplomat

The website for diplomats

<http://www.ediplomat.com/>

#### SIT: Returned from study abroad

<http://www.worldlearning.org/5367.htm>