

Semester Abroad—Valuable Academic and Professional Experience

Samuel Cook, Senior Undergraduate Electrical Engineering Student

Advised By: Olga Crombie, Assistant Director, UB Study Abroad and Dr. Josep Jornet, Assistant Professor, UB Electrical Engineering

Abstract

Employers and graduate schools offer opportunities for undergraduate students that are becoming more and more competitive. Students recently out of university are looking for ways to make themselves stand out among their competition.

Participating in a study abroad or exchange program is a terrific way to gain a new academic experience, adapt to a new and exciting culture, and strengthen your résumé. Students taking advantage of such opportunities are faced with challenges of living in a foreign country—learning a new language, understanding and adapting to cultural differences, and being away from their friends and family. Students will not only leave with an unforgettable and life-changing experience, but they will have an edge over other graduating students because they will have demonstrated they can adapt to a very new environment.

Academic Experience in Rome

University of Rome La Sapienza offers a wide range of majors including humanities, engineering, and biomedical sciences. Exchange students take classes in English in the master's level programs.

Taking courses in a foreign country tests one's ability to adapt. First, most students do not know English as well as you do, as the primary language isn't English. Collaborating among peers brings the challenge of learning a new language. Next, the course structure is highly different than courses offered in the United States. An exam is given at the end of the semester for each course, forcing the student to be accountable for all of the course material with no interim progress checks.

Due to such factors, academic experiences abroad help students adapt to and grow in unfamiliar environments.



Advantages of Studying Abroad

Study abroad experiences offer a wide range of opportunities. It's a chance to explore a new part of the world. Through experiencing new educational styles and interacting with new people abroad, a better understanding of the culture will be attained. In Italy, I realized that the culture was very laid back, but there was less to keep myself accountable. Those living in Italy are taught to be self-sustaining, rather than to depend on something external to remain accountable with responsibilities.

In a new country, it's easy to discover new interests. You might discover that you enjoy learning a new language or that you have an interest in art. I found that expanding my interests in Rome was very easy because of its rich culture of arts, history, architecture, and religion.

Career Value

Employers today are recognizing and hiring students who have demonstrated success in new environments. Successfully completing a study abroad program, and enjoying it, demonstrates several important characteristics to companies.

Participating in a study abroad program shows adaptability: learning a new language and integrating into a new culture is very challenging. Furthermore, students are removed from their typical support system that is available back home, which often allows them the ability to be truly independent for the first time in their lives. A successful experience results in increased responsibility and self-confidence.

Having international experience also shows an ability to work and interact with those very different from yourself. Employers value team working abilities, which requires a level of understanding of those with whom you work.

Sapienza – Università di Roma

Founded in 1303 by Pope Boniface VIII, University of Rome La Sapienza is one of the oldest universities. Sapienza is the largest European university by enrollment, and its buildings and campuses are located throughout Rome.

Sapienza has 65 academic departments and strong research programs in engineering (particularly communications and electronics engineering), natural sciences, and biomedical sciences.



City of Rome

The city of Rome is the largest and most densely populated part of Italy, and is also the country's capital. Vatican City, which is its own country, is located within the city limits of Rome.

The history of Rome spans more than two thousand years, and control of the city has changed hands several times through the years. It is considered one of the birthplaces of the Western Civilization.

Rome is internationally recognized as a cultural center for the performing arts, architecture, language, history, politics, religion, fashion, and cuisine.

