The Journey of Re-Entry:
The Good, the Bad and the Confusing: Being Back at Colby

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

Nelson Mandela

Welcome Back!
We hope your time abroad was both academically and personally fulfilling. We also hope that you will continue to use what you learned through your experiences abroad here at Colby and in your future endeavors.

Returning home, and to Colby, from study abroad can be a challenging and difficult time. For some, readjusting to life at home can be as difficult as adjusting to life in your host culture abroad. This period of re-adjustment can also be the time when you learn the most from your cross-cultural experience. As you re-adjust to the culture of the United States and to the culture of college life, it may be helpful to know a little more about what you are going through and some positive ways of dealing with it.

Understanding what kind of frustrations you may be facing is important; and even more important is to know that you are not alone in these feelings.

We would like to help you make your re-entry as positive a learning process as possible. This booklet is intended to give you a sense of the challenges and point you to some resources that can help you cope with this transition and beyond. We hope that the resources in this handbook and on the Off-Campus Study website will be helpful to you.

Feel free to stop by our office. We are always interested in hearing stories of your time abroad and seeing your photos.

Nancy, Juliette, and Sue
Off-Campus Study
offcamp@colby.edu

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Returnee Events Calendar
(See OCS Homepage Events Calendar)

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Assuring A Smooth Transfer Of OCS Credits

Program Evaluation
Complete and submit the online OCS evaluation at http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/evals/takeeval.cfm.

SIT ISP approval
Have your SIT ISP reviewed and approved for credit by a Colby faculty member.

OCS transcript
Notify or request your off-campus study program or university to send your transcript to Colby’s Off Campus Study office, 4500 Mayflower Hill, Waterville, ME 04901.

Course Approval
You may still be able to get courses approved to count towards your major(s), Minor(s) or distribution requirement. http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/students/upload/OCS-COURSE-APPROVAL-FORM-FOR-M-M-Dis-credits-2013-14.pdf

A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.”
– Oliver Wendell Holmes
Do you find that you…

- Feel that campus feels strange and full of new people?
- Want to talk about it but realize that others don't always want to hear very much about it?
- Have trouble explaining your experience abroad or its importance to you?
- Have the sensation of being "out of place" despite being home?
- Experience "reverse homesickness" for the place where you studied abroad?
- See that relationships with family and friends have changed?
- Feel that others misunderstand your growth, or see the "wrong" changes in you?
- Assess your home in a way that is judgmental or overly critical?
- Feel that your experience abroad is lost or cut off from the rest of your life?

It is likely that at least one of these questions pertains to you. You're most definitely not alone in the frustrations you may be having.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On a Good Day</th>
<th>On a Bad Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have the flexibility to fit in anywhere. I adapt easily. I feel horizontally rooted.</td>
<td>I don't seem to fit in anywhere. I resist change. I feel rootless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am bilingual/multilingual.</td>
<td>I am semi-lingual in two or more languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can empathize with multiple viewpoints.</td>
<td>I am frustrated by the narrow-mindedness of people at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect cultural differences.</td>
<td>I become impatient with monoculturalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have tolerance for ambiguity.</td>
<td>I am frequently indecisive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel challenged/empowered by new experiences.</td>
<td>I feel bored by the mundane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of global issues (news, politics, media, resource distribution, etc.).</td>
<td>I am uninformed about local issues and unable to apply what I’ve learned about the larger world to my life at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I accept challenges to my lifelong beliefs and values.</td>
<td>I am becoming resocialized into U.S. patterns of thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a more complex/defined sense of self.</td>
<td>I have a more fragmented sense of conflicting identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act more socially responsible.</td>
<td>I act judgmental and self-righteous in the face of others' social choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy a personal connection to the larger world; I feel like a &quot;global citizen.&quot;</td>
<td>I feel disconnected/alienated from my home environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take risks and embrace the unknown.</td>
<td>I feel overwhelmed by the known and the unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am curious and eager to learn.</td>
<td>I feel depressed and reluctant to engage.</td>
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From Transitions Abroad
http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0507/coming_home_from_study_abroad.shtml
Top Ten Reentry Challenges
(faced by most study abroad participants- No, you are not alone.)

Boredom
After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends, and old routines (however nice and comforting) can seem very dull. It is natural to miss the excitement and challenges which characterize study in a foreign country, but it is up to you to find ways to overcome such negative reactions – remember: a bored person is also boring.

No One Wants to Hear about this
One thing you can count on upon your return: no one will be as interested in hearing about your experience as you will be in sharing about them. This is not a rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, any further interest on your audiences’ part is probably unlikely. Be realistic in your expectations of how fascinating your journey is going to be for everyone else. Be brief.

It is Hard to Explain
Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be at least a bit frustrating to relay them coherently. It is very difficult to convey this kind of experience to people who do not have similar frames of reference or travel backgrounds, no matter how sympathetic they are as listeners. You can tell people about your trip, but you may fail to make them understand exactly how or why you felt a particular way. It’s okay.

Reverse Homesickness
Just as you probably missed home for a time after arriving overseas, it is just as natural to experience some reverse homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to as a student overseas. Feelings of loss are an integral part of international experiences and must be anticipated and accepted as a natural result of study abroad.

Relationships Have Changed
It is inevitable that when you return you will notice that some relationships with friends and family will have changed. Just as you have altered some of your ideas and attitudes while abroad, the people at home are likely to have experienced some changes. These changes may be positive or negative, but expecting that no change will have occurred is unrealistic. The best preparation is flexibility, openness, minimal preconceptions, and tempered optimism.

People See the "Wrong" Changes
Sometimes people may concentrate on small alterations in your behavior or ideas and seem threatened or upset by them. Others may ascribe “bad” traits to the influence of your time abroad. These incidents may be motivated by jealousy, fear, or feelings of superiority or inferiority. To avoid or minimize them it is necessary to monitor yourself and be aware of the reactions of those around you, especially in the first few weeks following your return. This phase normally passes quickly if you do nothing to confirm their stereotypes.

People Misunderstand
A few people will misinterpret your words or actions in such a way that communication is difficult. For example, what you may have come to think of as humor (particularly sarcasm, banter, etc.) and ways to show affection or establish conversation may not be seen as wit, but aggression or “showing off.” Conversely, a silence that was seen as simply polite overseas might be interpreted at home, incorrectly, as signaling agreement or opposition. New clothing styles or mannerisms may be viewed as provocative, inappropriate, or as an affectation. Continually using references to foreign places or sprinkling foreign language expressions or words into an English conversation is often considered boasting. Be aware of how you may look to others and how your behavior is likely to be interpreted.

Feelings of Alienation
Sometimes the reality of being back “home” is not as natural or enjoyable as the place you had constructed as your mental image. When real daily life is less enjoyable or more demanding than you remembered, it is natural to feel some alienation. Many returnees develop “critical eyes,” a tendency to see faults in the society you never noticed before. Some even become quite critical of everyone and everything for a time. This is no different than when you first left home.

Mental comparisons are fine, but keep them to yourself until you regain both your cultural balance and a balanced perspective.

Inability to Apply New Knowledge and Skills
Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, technical, linguistic, and practical coping skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant at home. To avoid ongoing annoyance: adjust to reality as necessary; change what is possible; be creative; be patient; and above all, use the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist your own reentry.

Fear of Loss/Compartmentalization of Experience (Shoeboxing)
Being home, coupled with the pressures of job, family and friends, often combine to make returnees worried that somehow they will “lose” the experience. Many fear that it will somehow become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen! Maintain your contacts abroad; seek out and talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours; practice your cross-cultural skills; continue language learning. Remember and honor both your hard work and the fun you had while abroad.

“I have been to another world and come back. Listen to me.”
Mark Helprin, Winter’s tale

Adapted from “What’s Up With Culture” by Bruce LaBrack, University of the Pacific.
What is Reverse Culture Shock?

Broadly defined, reverse culture shock is a reaction, often manifested by feelings of frustration, alienation, and occasionally depression upon re-entry (return home).

Just as you will have had to brace yourself for a period of psychological disorientation when you leave your home country, you should know that after your time abroad, you may also have to prepare yourself for a parallel period of readjustment when you return ‘home.’ Why? Simply because, if you have had a full experience living and learning overseas, you are likely to have changed some, while you have been away, so the place you return to may itself appear to have changed, as indeed it might have.

"Once I realized I was never going to go back to being a certain way, it really helped with who I was and how I fit in here."

While many students anticipate feeling culture shock when entering a new country for the first time, many don’t realize that similar feelings can be felt upon return to your own country after being gone for an extended period of time. During your abroad experience, you are likely to change and grow, adopt new perspectives, reexamine your priorities and reconsider your values. If culture shock is severe, students may choose to seek counseling to help them through this process of readjustment.

Often students who are experiencing reverse culture shock have a disparity in what they expected to find when they returned home and what they actually found; you may idealize home when you are abroad, and when you return, you may be disappointed by what you find. Students also often expect nothing to have changed while they were gone, but just like they have, the places and people from home will have changed in the time they were gone. You also may be irritated with American culture and longing for parts of your host country’s culture that you can’t find here. To combat this, seek out exciting activities here, just like you did abroad. Weekend trips are not just for overseas. Find interesting places around your hometown or college town to explore. Rediscover your surroundings with a newfound appreciation. Look up events calendars, restaurants, museums, hikes, etc. to try to help fill the void that is left when you return home. Also, you might try to interact with the international students at your college.

Another common problem that students who have traveled abroad experience is a disappointment in the lack of interest their friends and family have in their stories and pictures from abroad. While they may exhibit interest for the first few weeks you are home, they will tire of you talking about your experiences much more quickly then you will. To counteract this, keep in touch with friends that you went abroad with, or other students who have also traveled abroad. They will understand your need to talk about your memories and experiences. Also, consider submitting photographs to Colby’s Off-Campus Study photo contest or other publications that accept travel entries.

The most important thing to do is to incorporate the positive aspects of your international experience with the positive aspects of your life in the U.S.

What is Re-Entry?

Re-entry can be defined as the often unexpected and sometime difficult experience of re-adjusting to life in one's home culture after living abroad. Some study abroad returnees do not find re-entry to be difficult; however, most returnees experience some degree of stress upon returning home. In fact, for many students the process of re-adjusting to home after study abroad is even more difficult than adjusting to the host culture! Re-entry is different for everyone, just as your experience abroad was unique and special.

"The problem is this word home. It suggests a place and a life all set up and waiting for us; all we have to do is move-in." But home isn’t a place we merely inhabit; it’s a lifestyle we construct (wherever we go), a pattern of routines, habits and behaviors associated with certain people, places and objects—all confined to a limited area or neighborhood. We can certainly construct a home back in our own culture—just as we did abroad—but there won’t be one waiting for us when we arrive…In other words, no one goes home; rather we return to our native country and in due course we create a home."

Craig Storti on "The Art of Crossing Cultures"
Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment

Culture shock and its effects can occur in a number of stages. However, culture shock is not an exact step-by-step process; every student doesn't experience culture shock the same way or at the same time. The following 10 steps of cultural adjustment outlined by Steven Rhinesmith show how culture shock can be like a roller coaster ride of emotions:

1. initial anxiety
2. initial elation
3. initial culture shock
4. superficial adjustment
5. depression–frustration
6. acceptance of host culture
7. return anxiety
8. return elation
9. re-entry shock
10. reintegration

Riding the roller coaster of culture shock, a student actually follows a natural pattern of hitting peaks and valleys. The high points of excitement and interest are succeeded by lower points of depression, disorientation, or frustration. Each student will experience these ups and downs in different degrees of intensity and for different lengths of time. The process is necessary in order to make the transition from one culture to another; it helps a student or traveler to balance out and adjust.

Stages 7 through 10: Leaving a new culture behind

As a student becomes integrated to the ways of the country of your choice's culture, the more difficult it may be to re-adapt to the United States upon return home. The United States just won't look the same way it did before leaving to study abroad in the country of your choice; a student may see home with new eyes and may also be more critical of U.S. cultural traditions once thought to be "normal". This is called reverse culture shock. Fear of experiencing reverse culture shock should not deter students from trying to integrate as fully as possible while in the country of your choice. No matter how integrated a student becomes while abroad, he or she will probably still be "shocked" by differences noted at home after so much time spent in the country of your choice and the other countries to which you will be traveling. However, over time, a student will learn to re-adapt and reintegrate into his or her home culture.

From: StudentsAbroad.com, Student Handbooks: How to get there and back, The Center for Global education
Stage 1: Disengagement/Departure from Host Country:
As your time in your host country nears its end, it’s natural to begin to think about moving home, your friends, your family, and all those things you have missed while abroad. You begin to disengage from the work that you are doing with your host organization, finishing up projects you have been working so hard on. Then you are quickly swept up with all the good-byes, packing, and preparing for your flight. With all this hustle-and-bustle you may not have time to reflect on all your emotions and experiences, and before you know it you’re on a plane back home. This can often make people feel sad and frustrated for leaving new friends and a life you have made is never easy, and with so much to do you might begin to feel overwhelmed.

Stage 2: Euphoria/Honeymoon upon Returning Home:
Upon your return home you may feel excited and happy to see all of the people, places and things that you have missed… and others may be equally delighted to have you back. You will want to share your experiences with them; however, you may be disappointed or hurt when you find that they are soon ready to move on to the next topic of conversation and only seem to politely listen.

This stage is intrinsic to an understanding of reverse culture shock as it deals directly with the two most influential elements: (1) an idealized view of home, and (2) failing expectations. During your time abroad, and often without you realizing it, your perceptions, habits, and maybe even values changed as part of adjusting to a new culture. (3) At the same time, you have probably talked about and carried around a wonderful mental image of your home environment (hence all those people and things you missed while you were away). Unfortunately, this image is often idealized and greatly differs from the reality you experience when you return home, which is often the first failed expectation.

Stage 3: Alienation/Irritability/Hostility
Stage 2 often transitions into Stage 3 as you begin to feel dampened feelings of euphoria often followed by feelings of alienation, loneliness, disorientation, frustration and anger. You might quickly become irritated or critical of others and especially of your home country’s culture, as your idealized vision of home does not meet the reality. Feeling like an outsider or a foreigner in your own country, and longing to go back abroad are not uncommon reactions. You may also feel less independent than you did when you were abroad. This is the second major failed expectation, we expect to experience some difficulty in adjusting to a new place when we go abroad.

Stage 4: Gradual Readjustment:
Though this stage might seem far off at first, gradual readjustment to being home will occur as you begin to find an appreciation for the positive aspects of each culture, at home and abroad. You might even begin to fall back into some old routines and things will begin to feel a little more normal, but things still won’t be the same as when you left them. Hopefully you have grown, developed new attitudes, beliefs, habits, personal and professional goals, all of which will cause you to see things differently now. Again, remember, it’s the ability to incorporate the positive aspects of both cultures that is the important thing, not trying to make things how they were. Change is positive!

Shock or Mild Surprise?
There are a number of factors that may determine how great or small your adjustment challenge may be including:
1. The degree of cultural difference you experienced
2. The degree of cultural immersion
3. Length of time you were away
4. Previous travel experience (in area and in general)
5. Amount of contact maintained with home
6. Whether or not you enjoyed time abroad
7. Traveled alone or with others
### Going Home: Styles of Re-entry by Margaret D. Pusch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Style</th>
<th>Free Spirit</th>
<th>Detached</th>
<th>Reassimilator</th>
<th>Integrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactions to Home Culture</td>
<td>Some estrangement and rejection (ranging from Discontent to Alienation)</td>
<td>Reluctance to go back to old patterns and home culture, but not alienated</td>
<td>Reassimilation; delighted to be back, may even exaggerate cultural norms, often downplays foreign experience</td>
<td>Positive Integration blending old and new pragmatically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Concern</td>
<td>Continue experience of being different</td>
<td>Survival, comfort</td>
<td>Easy reentry, fitting into home culture and prior roles</td>
<td>Finding best fit with the home culture without losing past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Commitment</td>
<td>Being &quot;unique&quot;</td>
<td>Creating comfortable environment for self (and perhaps family)</td>
<td>Home culture; life as it has always been, cheerfully readaptive</td>
<td>Continuing to change and develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role One Seeks (or Attempts) to Play</td>
<td>Eccentric</td>
<td>Detached but tolerant participant</td>
<td>Total participant</td>
<td>Leader or Mediator, Contented Believer, Advocate, Expatriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REENTRY “WORM”

- Initial Excitement: Enjoy being at home
- Balanced Re-adaptation: Integrating the experience abroad with living at home or finding other ways to cope with reentry.
- Realization Stage: Noticing significant changes at home and in oneself.
- Judgmental Stage: Nothing at home seems good; finding fault.
- REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: Frustration

© Margaret D. Pusch, 1997
Top Ten Reentry Tips

Being aware of the reentry process and following some advice from those who have already returned can facilitate your reentry. First, say goodbye. Then:

Mentally prepare for the adjustment process before you leave
The more you consider your alternatives, think about what is to come, and know about why returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful.

Allow yourself time
Reentry is a process that will take time, just as adjusting to a new foreign culture required a period of acculturation. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.

Understand that the familiar will seem different
You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological responses to being home. Everyone does.

There will be some "cultural catching up" to do
Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment, and current event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even major social changes may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture.

Reserve judgments
Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first, and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place after allowing some time for thorough reflection.

Respond thoughtfully and slowly
Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom in the returnee can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations; prepare to greet those that are less predictable with a calm, thoughtful approach.

Cultivate sensitivity
Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is a sure way to reestablish rapport. Much annoyance with returnees results from the perception that returnees are so anxious to tell their stories and share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home. This is ironic because one of the most common frustrations reported by returnees is that those at home only ask superficial questions (e.g., So how was it?) and want short answers. Returnees see this as a lack of opportunity to express their feelings fully. In such circumstances, being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing and you may need to practice those skills upon return.

Beware of comparisons
Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after residence abroad. However, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to others.

Remain flexible
Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-socialize totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between resuming and maintaining earlier patterns and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.

Seek support networks
There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own reentry process and both understand and empathize with a returnee's concerns. Returnees may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience such as academic faculty, exchange students, Peace Corps volunteers, international development staff, diplomatic or military personnel, church mission officials, and those doing business internationally. University study abroad and international student offices may also be places where returnees can find support and empathy as they go through the reentry process.

I went through a similar reverse culture shock myself when I returned to my campus from a semester in Costa Rica, and I know just how trying that semester was. I even considered transferring just to rid myself of the feeling that I didn't belong on campus anymore. It was through the support of a woman in our off-campus study office that I was able to gradually feel at home on my own campus again, and her assistance was invaluable.  

Ellen Doble (Admissions)

Adapted from materials originally developed by Dr. Bruce La Brack, School of International Studies, University of the Pacific for the Institute of International Education, San Francisco. What’s Up With Culture: http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/
Keep Your Experience Alive
&
Integrate Your International Experience Into Your Life Back Home

There are many positive ways of coping with the challenges of re-entry. Here are some ideas of things you can do to help yourself process your experience:

Volunteer! Volunteering is a good way to extend your abroad experience, share your new knowledge and give something back:
- Be a resource to other students planning their own study abroad experience. The Office of Off-Campus Study is always looking for student volunteers:
  - Share your experience at the sophomore info session in September
  - Join us to help at the OCS Fair in early October
  - Participate in a department or program info session in October
  - Join the Homecoming Weekend student panel
  - Organize your own event in coordination with OCS
- Be a contact for prospective study abroad students
- Represent Your Program at the Off-Campus Study Fair or volunteer to help OCS at the fair
- Participate in or organize an informal regional pre-departure sharing. Talk with students who are going to the same country/program. You can give a student's perspective on everything from courses to what the food is like. It's nice to have somebody to ask who's been there and done that.

OCS Volunteers get an OCS T-shirt as a thank you!

Share your experience with the Colby Community:
- Share your photographs for the Photo Contest in September
- Join the International Club
- Go to an international coffee hour
- Participate in the International Food Festival and/or International Extravaganza
- Continue to meet with other returnees, keep it informal or create a club. Talk with people who understand what you are feeling.
- Write a story for The Echo
- Publish an article in one of these online magazines:
  - http://abroadviewmagazine.net
  - http://www.transitionsabroad.com
  - http://glimpse.org/
  - GoAbroad’s Next Great Travel Writers Contest! http://www.goabroad.com/writer-contest
- Contribute your experiences on RealAbroad.com http://www.beta.realabroad.com/#/
- Surround yourself with understanding and encouraging people

Integrate and build upon your experiences abroad by incorporating your new interests, knowledge and skills into your current and future academic studies:
- Find ways to use the knowledge you have brought back and the new perspectives you have acquired.
- Select courses that deal with issues you became interested in while abroad. Use your experiences abroad as references for class assignments and research papers.
- Enroll in courses with an international focus: be sure to let your professors know that you were recently abroad—your input and first hand experience will add to class discussions.
- Talk to your academic advisor and other faculty members you are close with. Tell them about your experience and ask for their advice about how to build on that experience. They might have helpful suggestions for courses, internships or careers related to your interests.
  - Consider an independent study, senior thesis, or special project to continue exploring an area which is not covered by existing courses.
  - Talk to Faculty about finding fellowships and funding for special projects.
  - Attend lectures and events related to the areas from which you have just returned.

Speak the language:
- Continue taking language courses
- Participate in the Language Tables: take advantage of this opportunity to not only speak in your language of study, but to also share your stories from abroad.
- If Colby doesn't teach the language formally, contact the Language Resource Center.
- Start a new language! It is never too late to start something new!
- Continue to push your comfort zone as you did when you were abroad. Keep trying to find new ways to interact with those who are different from you.
- Stay in touch with friends you made abroad.
- Continue to correspond with your friends and home stay family in your host country.

Continued on next page
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
—T.S. Eliot

**Keep Your Experience Alive**
**&**
**Integrate Your International Experience Into Your Life Back Home (Cont)**

*Continued*

**Connect with the international community beyond campus:**
- Visit the Colby Volunteer Center
- Volunteer: share your experience with local school children or read to them in your language of study
- Volunteer to give a presentation about your experience at local schools or churches
- Help organizations that support community service and development. Groups working with immigrants, refugees, or the elderly can often use your skills of listening, patience, and empathy.
- Continue being a multi-cultural person. Seek out situations in which international experiences and perspectives are appreciated. Use your international perspective and skills to work on issues in the United States.
- Take a class that involves community interaction

**Plan for the future:**
- Think about your career plans. Visit the Career Center.
- Participate in the *How to Market Your International Experience: Unpacking and Translating Your Skills For the Job Search* workshop offered each semester by the office of Off Campus Study and the Career Center. This workshop will help you identify, unpack, translate, and market the skills and abilities you gained from your time abroad in a way that is meaningful for future employment or graduate school. Get some tips on incorporating your study abroad experience into your resume and interviews, regardless of whether or not you are seeking an international job.
- Research other ways to get overseas again including graduate studies or employment abroad, the U.S. Peace Corps, or visiting host families and friends.

**Go abroad again !**
- For Jan Plan, summer, or after graduation
- Research scholarships through Academic Departments, Career Center, Off-Campus Study office
- Do an International Internship (see Career Center)
- Work or Volunteer abroad
- Visit the Career Center for resume help and to use the resources there such as Going Global [http://web.colby.edu/careercenter/](http://web.colby.edu/careercenter/)
- Check out the OCS web page for examples of organizations which sponsor work, volunteer, and teaching opportunities abroad
- Consider graduate school abroad
- Travel!
The return to Colby can be overwhelming. The demands of classes, career planning, and reconnecting with family and friends can leave you feeling exhausted or stressed. Reverse culture shock can generate feelings of alienation, depression, apathy, or the sense that college has lost its meaning.

**Mental Health**

If you are having a hard time finding people to listen or you are confused by your own feelings, the staff at the Counseling Center is available to help you reflect on and talk about your experience. The Counseling Center is staffed by counselors who are trained to help you understand and work through your personal concerns. The key to moving past these emotions is understanding their source.

**Physical Health**

Returning from study abroad is a time of transition and bouts of diarrhea, colds, and other minor discomforts are common. Scheduling a checkup with a family physician or the Health Center is always a good idea and especially encouraged if you returned from a developing country or are experiencing more than the minor discomforts. Don't take any risks with your health!

**On-Campus Contacts**

The Faculty, Staff, and Students listed on the **On-Campus Contact List For Students Returning From Abroad** have volunteered their openness to talk to students on a variety of personal, academic, or career-related issues. Don't hesitate to reach out to them or others on campus.

See list at [http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/students/returning-to-campus.cfm](http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/students/returning-to-campus.cfm)

**Other Resources**

Much has been researched and written about the re-entry phenomenon. You can access these resources for understanding and discussion via the Colby library and OCS website [http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/students/re-entry-challenges-and-reverse-culture-shock.cfm](http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/ocs/students/re-entry-challenges-and-reverse-culture-shock.cfm)

- Videos on re-entry
- Articles and books on re-entry and reverse culture shock
- Websites on cultural understanding

**Plan To Go Back!**

- Go abroad again for Jan Plan or Summer
- Research international Scholarships and Fellowships
- Consider graduate study abroad
- Work, teach or intern abroad after graduation

(See Off-Campus Study and Career Center for information, databases and lists of opportunities)
ON-CAMPUS CONTACT LIST
FOR STUDENTS RETURNING FROM ABROAD

The individuals listed below have volunteered their openness to talk to students. Don’t hesitate to reach out to them or others

- Hideko Abe (East Asian Studies-Japanese)
- Joe Atkins (Dean of Students)
- Kim Besio (East Asian Studies)
- Todd Borgerding (Music)
- Tasha Bradley (Dean of Students)
- Audrey Brunetaux (French)
- Michael Burke (English)
- Gail Carlson (Environmental Studies)
- Johanna S. Cliff (English Department)
- Cathy Collins (Biology)
- Ellen Doble (Admissions)
- Nancy Downey (Off-Campus Study)
- Patrice Franko (Global Studies)
- David Freidenreich (Religious Studies)
- Arthur Greenspan (French)
- Natalie Harris (English)
- Walter Hatch (Government)
- Eric Johnson (Counseling Center)
- Paul Johnston (Dean of Students)
- Kristina Katori (Athletics, softball coach)
- Kim Kenniston (Campus Life)
- Arne Koch (German)

James Kriessel (Italian)
Maggie Libby (Art, Special Collections)
Laura Meader (Alumni Relations)
Sue McDougal (Dean of Students)
Luis Millones (Spanish & Latin American Studies)
Mary Beth Mills (Anthropology)
Juliette Monet (Off-Campus Study)
Barbara Moore (Dean of Students)

Kurt Nelson (Dean of Students, Religious and Spiritual Life)
Kelsey Park (Colby Class of ’14)
Tarja Raag (Psychology)
Maple J. Razsa (Global Studies)
Katie Sawyer (Health Center)
Sandra Sohne-Johnston (Admissions)
Teresa Spezio (Environmental Studies)
Judy Stone (Biology)
Mark Tappan (Education)
Winifred Tate (Anthropology)
Jed Wartman (Campus Life)
Vivian Wood (Modern Languages Department)
Jing Ye (Counseling Center)

Self-Assessment
Positive Long-Term Outcomes from an International Experience

This self-assessment exercise is designed to help you identify areas of personal growth and new skills and abilities you may have gained from your international experience. These changes and skills can have applications in all areas of your life including great potential for future employment.

As you read the following statements, place a check mark by each change that you believe has occurred in you. Be honest! There are no right or wrong answers, only statements that you agree do, or do not, apply to you.

Intercultural/communication skills
- I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others and to tolerate other people’s actions and ideas that may be vastly different from my own.
- I am more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle.
- I have improved my ability to communicate with people in a second language (or understand better the variety and peculiarities of a version of “World English”).
- I have a greater ability to empathize (i.e., to sense how an event appears and feels to someone else).
- I understand that there are many ways to accomplish the same task and that those approaches are only “different,” not necessarily better or worse.
- I have learned to improve interpersonal communication through increased abilities in listening well, speaking clearly, and paying attention to nonverbal cues.
- I have more curiosity about, and respect for, new ideas.
- I am more flexible and able to adjust to changes in others.
- I am more tolerant of ambiguous situations, that is, of situations that are confusing and open to differing interpretations.
- I realize why stereotypes can be so harmful and hurtful, both to others and myself.
- I have learned how to recognize when I have made a cross-cultural mistake and can use culturally appropriate language and measures to repair any damage.
- I understand and appreciate how much educational systems can differ across cultures.
- I have a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed.
- I can adapt and cope in vastly different settings.
- I am more able to accept as valid others values and lifestyles.
- I am more balanced in my judgments (i.e., less likely to judge things as “good” or “bad,” “right” or “wrong”).
- I think more critically: I am more discriminating and skeptical, particularly of stereotypes.
- I have generally improved my observation skills.
- I realize the importance of time to be alone to think.
- I find myself regularly reflecting about the overseas experience and its meaning for me.
- I am confident that I can meet and make friends abroad.
- I have an increased motivation to go abroad again.

Continued on next page
### Self-Assessment (cont)

#### World view
- I understand better another country’s role in world affairs.
- I have a better understanding of how and why political policy differs abroad.
- I have the ability to see situations and issues from more than one perspective.
- I understand more clearly how US-Americans and the United States are viewed overseas.
- I see the world as more interconnected than ever before.
- I value human diversity and respect others from a variety of backgrounds different from my own.
- I have greater sympathy for the struggles of international students and immigrants as a result of my experience.
- I have a deeper understanding of the common problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet.
- I have greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.
- I seek out international news and want to know what is going on in the world more than ever before.
- I am aware that cultural changes can have unexpected consequences.

#### Personal capabilities
- I understand more fully my own strengths and weaknesses.
- I feel more confident in undertaking new travels or projects.
- I can accept failures and shortcomings in myself more easily.
- I am more confident and assertive when facing new situations.
- I have become a more patient person.
- I am more willing to share my thoughts and feelings with others, and to be open when others wish to share theirs with me.
- I am less afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at than I used to be.
- I can see myself more objectively (i.e., I see my own day-to-day problems in a broader, more realistic context).
- I have increased my perseverance and self-discipline.
- I can "analyze" a social situation more quickly than before (i.e., figure out what is going on and react appropriately).
- I am more deeply committed to an idea, cause, or goal.
- I have the ability to create personal peace and satisfaction in my life.
- I have a greater sense of responsibility for other people.
- I am more able to express deep emotions freely.
- I am more able to ask for and receive help from others.
- I have increased my capacity to experiment and take risks.
- I have a clearer notion of what I wish to do with my life.
- I am more aware of opportunities in life that are open to me.
- I feel greater respect and appreciation for my natural family.
- I am more independent in my relations with family and friends.
- I can accept the shortcomings of my family members in an understanding way.
- I think that I need fewer friends but deeper (more intimate and more trusting) friendships.
- I am more aware of the way I use and structure time.
- I am interested in, and capable of, making long-range plans.
- I am more determined to develop fully my skills and talents, especially those recently gained through overseas living.
- I feel a greater need to have diverse experiences and friends.
- I feel that being abroad helped clarify my goals and values.
- I am more likely to do things spontaneously (i.e., to do things without undue concern about possible consequences or any advanced planning).
- I am more capable of solving life’s day-to-day problems and accomplishing necessary tasks.
- I can set more realistic priorities, both short-term and long-term, for myself.
- I am more confident about the decisions I make.
- I have a greater appreciation for what I have.
- I have the ability to make clear personal choices and goals for my life rather than complying with what others expect and want from me.
- I have learned to place a lower value on material things.
- I want to be able to use my skills in future work and can articulate what those are to a prospective employer.

#### Own culture
- I see my own cultural values more clearly and understand how and why they differ from others.
- I can evaluate advantages and disadvantages of my own culture and society more objectively (i.e., from the perspective of an outsider).
- I am sensitive to subtle features of my own culture that I and a clearer critical sense of its limitations and problems.
- I have a deeper understanding of (if not necessarily commitment to) the values and lifestyle of my native community.
- I appreciate US-American efficiency, but miss the different pace of life abroad.
- Other:
  - Other:
  - Other:

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The Importance of Reflection

Setting aside the time to think in-depth about study abroad sets the stage for better understanding of the impact it has made and how it might influence you in the future. Reflection can often facilitate clearer ideas of the qualities and skills you have developed, more precise views about what is important to you, your communication, and leadership styles. You can usually begin to see yourself and your home culture in a wider global context and operate with more relevant standards for your personal, educational and career goals.

In other words, participating in study abroad is just one component of the experience. Evaluating your experience and determining its contribution to your development is another and this component is just as important as living the experience. Interestingly enough, reflection may continue long after you return to campus, and even after graduation. In this way, study abroad may be with you for years to come.

Journaling is a great way to explore reactions, thoughts and insights that revolve around your experiences abroad. The questions below may help you begin to examine your time away from the College.

We hope you find these helpful!

• What did you like most about your host country? Why?
• What did you like least? Why?
• What do you think is the most important thing you learned about other cultures and societies?
• What were some of the challenges you faced? What surprised you?
• What did you expect to get out of this experience?
• In what ways did your program meet your expectations?
• In what ways did it fall short?
• What was the most difficult thing to adjust to? Why?
• What personal values, opinions, or decisions changed during this experience?
• How have the friends, instructors, or contacts from study abroad influenced you?
• How were you different/similar than others at your site?
• In what ways did being different help/hinder the group?
• Did this experience impact your thoughts about your major, minor, or honors research topic? Why or why not?
• What skills, knowledge, and attitudes did you gain?
• How can you take what you have learned and use it in the future (in courses, in “real life,” in relationships, etc.)?

Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind.
-- Seneca

“The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one’s own country as a foreign land.”
– G. K. Chesterton
Some Advice:

- Accept that you have changed and that things are not going to be the same as when you left (and that’s okay!)
- Don't isolate yourself.
- Take care of yourself physically as well as mentally: Maintain a healthy diet, including exercise. This keeps your stress levels low.
- Don't brood.
- Focus on how you are now better off from the experiences you had and what you have learned.
- Try new things. If you return to the same place a different person, redefine the place. Take up a new hobby, residence, sport, mode of transport.
- You may need to “rebuild” relationships, not merely “resume” them.
- Don't dwell on the past.
- Keep your memories alive – don’t store them away in a shoe box. It wasn't a dream and it was important.
- Write down what you thought was great about the US while you were abroad.
- Use your cross-cultural skills to observe your own culture.
- Keep in touch with people you met abroad.
- Stay spontaneous. Be flexible and expect the unexpected. Remember that this helped you get through the difficult times abroad.
- Don't let failures in your home culture be any less a learning experience than they would have been while you were abroad.
- Continue to reflect on what you learned abroad.
- Look for the good in the present situation.
- Don't be upset if people seem indifferent to your experience abroad.
- Don't talk about what happened abroad unless your listener wants to hear it.
- Recognize that things at home have changed while you were away and respect those changes.
- Find people who want to hear about your experiences abroad.
- Rekindle the spirit of adventure you had abroad. Explore home.
- Meet up with people who have had similar experiences, such as other returnees or international students.
- Go out of your way to make new friends, just as you did abroad.
- Let yourself be sad and miss the people and places that you left.
- Give yourself TIME!

*Many thanks to the Clark University, Tufts University, Middlebury College, Kalamazoo College, and Wheaton College study abroad offices for providing the inspiration and some of the content for this booklet.*