

# Concept

*a powerful, intriguing, inspiring, or perhaps odd idea distilled to its essential elements*

In our interconnected age of globalization, less than 1 percent of Americans study abroad. One of the best ways to open one's eyes to the broader picture encompassing the world is to take your eyes outside of their geographical boundaries—and I don't mean a spring break trip to Cancun. I mean an extended stay in a foreign culture and a foreign way of living: studying abroad.

I spent six months of my junior year in college living, studying, and traveling throughout Argentina. Aside from being a life altering experience rich in adventure, culture, and language, it was a daily exchange of ideas and perceptions with people I met. Good and bad, I learned what it's like to be an ambassador for my country, its views, and its foreign policies. I was able to foster relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds, and political and religious ideologies, because the people I met and the friends I made came from all over the world.

With numerous options available, if one can afford college tuition, one can find an affordable study-abroad program. I've observed two main reasons college students don't want to study abroad: They're afraid to leave their comfort zone or don't think they're smart enough to handle the experience. Since when did adventure have a negative connotation? And being smart is about making the most

of your knowledge, understanding your limits, and knowing what works best for you. It's maximizing your potential and working hard to make the most of your goals. Studying abroad gives you the opportunity to immerse yourself in new surroundings and prove to yourself that you can survive outside of your comfort zone.

At a time when such aspects of American culture as McDonald's are invading the lives of people with very different beliefs, we need to show the real image of the United States—our cultural diversity, intellectual curiosity, and openness as a society. The bonds formed by people of different cultures through an academic exchange promote understanding on all levels. That understanding can be used to make a difference in the world, resolve conflicts on national and international levels, and help drive a war-torn world into a peaceful, harmonious land safe for our children, our children's children, and beyond.

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## Opening Doors, Crossing Cultures

**"Perhaps the greatest power of such intellectual exchange is to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations."**

**—J. William Fulbright**



By Tim Wright