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SHOULD NU MAKE INTERNATIONAL TRIPS A REQUIREMENT FOR EVERY MAJOR?

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By Alayna Wood and Kelly Grant

Photo Courtesy of Rachel Joseph



International Trips are required for some majors, but not others. Should this be the case?

Yes – Alayna Wood

I remember my first international trip as clearly as if it were yesterday. I remember weaving my way through market stalls filled with food, hand made crafts, and brightly colored fabric as far as the eye could see.

I felt completely overwhelmed as my senses were assaulted by the sounds of horns blaring, the sight of African women wearing their Kitenge dresses in every color of the spectrum, the scent of barbecued meat for sale, and the cacophony and chaos of the city.

It was in this moment, I realized this place would forever be part of my story and I would never be the same.

There are thousands of quotes from famous authors, poets, and philosophers on the benefits and beauty of travel. Unfortunately, not even the most eloquent or profound quotes could accurately convey the deep impact one gets from the first hand experience of traveling abroad.

Northwest University encourages students to take this time in their lives to see the world by providing countless travel opportunities. Many of these opportunities such as international field trips, mission trips, and study abroad allows students to gain international experience within their fields of study and develop their passions.

While some of the trips are mandatory for specific majors and many students have to raise their own money for these experiences, many would agree by the end that they were completely worth it.

"My time abroad was foundational for me because I found new friends and gained key experiences that taught me how to live better and deeper within my chosen field and within the international community," said Haley Moutier about her experience in Oxford, England.

Stepping foot onto new soil marks you and changes you from the inside out. It draws you outside of yourself and forces you to engage with the world around you. It broadens your worldview and transforms you from a singular person to a citizen of the world.

As time goes on, the world is contrarily becoming bigger and yet smaller as our technology advances and cultures continue to mingle together. International study allows us to remain competitive and relevant to the world around us. As we enter the job markets, we will end up working with people from diverse backgrounds. Traveling allows us to live with sensitivity and appreciation for those with whom we will work, which will ultimately help promote worldwide cooperation and peace.

Travel benefits us by teaching us humility with regard to our own culture and limitation. It strips us of the baggage we may carry from

day to day and forces us to look inward into ourselves at our flaws, prejudices, and insecurities. When we have nothing to distract us, we learn the true extent of our strengths, weaknesses, and our fullest capabilities.

Travel is a growing process and it is painful and messy, but once we see the person we become on the other side of the journey and allow the world to see what more we can offer, all the growing pains become completely worth it.

No – Kelly Grant

International travel can certainly be a positive and enriching experience for students, but it's not the right choice for everyone at Northwest University.

Adjusting to college life is a difficult task; you are removed from your family, friends, and home. Experiencing this all over again on a semester abroad is a daunting idea for many. I am a transfer student, so study abroad for me would mean adjusting to a third university for only a short amount of time, and then readjusting to life at NU all over again. Students that feel this way should not be required to experience this stress.

Some students have aspects of their lives that are integrated into the NU community. Many students have jobs to help pay their way through school. Required study abroad would mean they would have to quit that job; it is unlikely that the position would be available when they return. A required mission trip or an international field trip would highly decrease the chance of a student getting a job for the summer. Even a few weeks of work can be significant when it comes to paying for school.

Additionally, some of the trips available at NU add a significant amount to the already sweltering cost of receiving a college education. The Bible Lands Trip is an experience required for all College of Ministry majors, except for intercultural studies majors who go on a separate trip. This trip costs \$3950 even after students receive a \$2000 scholarship provided by the school for all students required to take this trip. The required cross-cultural nursing and ministry trip for students in the Nursing program costs \$3,960. More often than not, students do not receive additional assistance from the school to pay these finances.

Many students at NU are in the first few years of their marriages or have children, and to be taken away from their families could be more stressful than helpful. They already have to balance married life and school life; adding another element would make things more problematic.

A number of students at NU participate in sports. Although there are student athletes who do study abroad, not all of them want to miss a whole season of the sport they have put their time and energy into for years. A mission trip or international field trip could prevent an athlete from getting some of the vital summer training they need to be successful in their sport.

Those who would benefit from an international experience will take advantages of the opportunities that NU provides; those who wouldn't benefit shouldn't be required to.