

## **International Careers: U.S. Undergraduates' Motivations and Concerns**

Katherine Puntenev

*Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (USA)*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*Despite the consensus among industry leaders, policymakers, educational institutions, and students themselves that it is essential that U.S. college graduates be prepared for international careers, little attention is given to understanding the dynamics that encourage or dissuade students from such a pursuit. A survey administered to U.S. undergraduates reveals that key factors motivating students include love of travel, interest in other cultures, the possibility of earning a high salary, and the potential for opportunities in the major discipline. Key concerns include leaving family and friends and a lack of foreign language ability. It is argued that the internationalization of career advising is vital and urgent and that administrators, international educators, career centers, and academic departments must all take purposeful action*

### **Keywords:**

Career counseling, international careers, internationalization

---

**T**he growing interest among U.S. students in international careers is substantiated by a nationwide survey of more than 1500 college-bound high school students (American Council on Education, 2008). In the study, 35% of respondents indicated interest in participating in international internships while in college and 37% said they were very

---

interested in acquiring career-related work experience in another country. Recognizing the increasing interconnectedness of the worlds' economies and cultures, and perhaps as a response to student interest, many institutions of higher education are committed to internationalizing their institutions. A survey of more than 1,000 U.S. colleges and universities found that 51% of U.S. colleges and universities refer to international education, global education, or internationalization in their mission statements (American Council on Education, 2012). According to the same survey, 52% of the institutions report that international education or internationalization is among their top five strategic priorities.

This article reports on a subset of a larger dissertation study for the purpose of advancing the discussion on the internationalization of higher education. The study shows that the prevailing approaches to internationalization do not adequately address the internationalization of career advising. The study also shows that an initial step in internationalizing career advising must be to understand the motivations and concerns held by students as they consider whether or not to pursue international careers. This study begins that conversation by asking undergraduates at a U.S. institution, "What makes you *likely* to pursue an international career?" and "What makes you *unlikely* to pursue an international career?"

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Comprehensive Internationalization

While there are varied interpretations of internationalization, Knight's (1994) definition remains the basis of most definitions today: "the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college" (p.3). The term "comprehensive internationalization" has evolved from the earlier concept of "campus internationalization" to acknowledge that internationalization affects not only traditional international departments such as study abroad, international student services, foreign languages, and the international relations department, but also entire institutions and even surrounding communities (Hudzik, 2011).

Organizations leading the charge to internationalize U.S. higher education have published key documents that guide educators through the process of comprehensive internationalization. However, these key documents never address the internationalization of career advising or specifically prepare students for international careers. For example, the American Council on Education study *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* (2012) is the most comprehensive source for both current and longitudinal data on steps U.S. institutions are taking to internationalize. The report addresses study abroad, international students, ESL programs, foreign language education, internationalizing the curriculum, faculty international research, international partnerships, and overseas branch campuses among other topics. Yet, despite the highly detailed nature of their inquiry into internationalization, the data tables include no mention of the internationalization of career advising, preparing students for international careers, or alumni working in international careers.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators has published two detailed and substantial documents for practitioners on steps and strategies for internationalization (Hudzik, 2011; Hudzik & McCarthy, 2012). Both of these articles address the same focal areas as the American Council on Education report, and they add substantial context and strategy recommendations for building stakeholder support. However, they do not address the internationalization of career advising beyond the acknowledgement that today's graduates are likely to be employed in global workplaces and that all campus departments that serve students should be involved in internationalization. Leading scholars in the internationalization have published articles critiquing the current state of internationalization (e.g. Knight, 2011; Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011). Despite the profound insights shared, characteristic of the body of internationalization literature, these critiques typically also fail to address the internationalization of career advising.

## **International Careers**

In the same dissertation study from which this article's data is drawn, the author found a high level of U.S. undergraduate interest in international careers, with 80% of surveyed students indicating moderate to high interest in international careers. In addition, the

students indicated that they would like their institution to offer information on international career opportunities and steps for pursuing an international career (Puntoney, 2012). These students are perhaps recognizing that the nature of global work itself is that it is no longer just the largest multinational corporations that are global in scope. Even small and medium organizations are likely to have some combination of foreign suppliers, partners, employees, shareholders, or customers (Caligiuri, 2006). Carr, Inkson, and Thorn (2005) envision a future in which “it will become normal to live in other countries for periods of time, and to travel between them in careers that are cumulative and cosmopolitan. Talent will flow regularly between countries. Individuals may be able to retain a sense of national identity, but more and more will become dual or multiple citizens, or even conceptualize themselves as citizens of the world, with careers that are...truly global” (p. 395).

The career counseling and career development fields have engaged in the discussion of internationalization over the past 20 years (Pope, 2000). The National Career Development Association and the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, among others, have been exploring the status and context of career counseling across nations, the effective training and education of career counselors, the resources and infrastructure needed to deliver effective career counseling around the world, and the transferability of theories and models for career guidance across cultures (Hartung, 2005; Savickas, Van Esbroeck, & Herr, 2005; McMahon & Yuen, 2009). However, this emphasis on understanding career counseling in context around the world and the transferability (or lack of transferability) of theory and method, leaves out discussion of how to advise students for work that may be outside their home countries.

### **Students’ Motivations and Concerns**

The business, human resources, and career development literature describes pathways to international careers, almost entirely from the perspective of those already in them. A meta-analysis of 114 journal articles on international career choice, challenges, and consequences, found only articles using current professionals as participants, with the closest tie to the study of U.S. undergraduates

being two studies using Master of Business Administration (MBA) alumni as the sample (Shaffer, Kraimer, Yu-Ping, & Bolino (2012)). The meta-analysis found that professionals based abroad in long-term expatriate assignments typically have the option to accept the assignment or not, while professionals assigned to short-term projects abroad typically had to accept the assignment or risk losing their jobs. This finding reinforces the importance of preparing all undergraduates for international careers, because, as graduates, they may find themselves working abroad whether they want to or not.

Shaffer et al. (2012) identify a combination of factors that cause professionals to accept international work opportunities. The extrinsic factors they identify are the appeal of the location, the perceived security and safety, personal and family responsibilities, work-life balance, and financial rewards. The intrinsic factors they describe are perceptions of opportunities for personal and professional growth, past international experiences, and the degree to which the experience is expected to be enjoyable. A study of academics working internationally demonstrated that younger professionals were more likely to choose to work internationally for reasons of adventure, career, and money (Selmer & Luring, 2010). What we do not know is what the many respondents in these studies were motivated by or concerned about while they were students. We also do not know whether or not there were educational interventions that affected their career paths or about the motivations of those who did not follow international career paths.

Exploring how institutions of higher education can best support students to be prepared for international careers, not to mention the international job search, can be approached from many angles. As discussed above, the human resources and business literature has started documenting the pathways to international careers, though perhaps with a bias towards the corporate sector (e.g. Shaffer et al., 2012; Vance, 2005). Small-scale studies and individual articles focus on career pathways in specific international fields (e.g. Mowchan, 2011). Additional potential topics for scholarship include looking at cultural differences in job search strategies and examining how to develop the knowledge and skills of career counselors in this area.

As institutions of higher education seek to develop students' global competencies, the emphasis traditionally has been on developing students' knowledge and skills. Widespread efforts to internationalize curricula have resulted in a multitude of courses expanded to include international content and perspectives. However, the literature has not adequately addressed ways for higher education institutions to prepare students to engage professionally in the international arena, a shortcoming that this study takes a step to address. This study starts with the simple premise that to be prepared to advise students about international careers, educators need to have some knowledge of the motivations and concerns that affect students' international career choices.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The data presented in this article is part of a primarily quantitative doctoral dissertation study conducted by the researcher, in which surveys were given to the same students near the beginning and end of a semester in order to gauge students' levels of interest in and knowledge of international careers. Surveys were given twice to measure the effectiveness of a curricular intervention in increasing student knowledge of and interest in international careers. The quantitative data demonstrated a statistically significant increase in student knowledge of international career options through inclusion of an international career module into the curriculum (Puntoney, 2012).

In addition to the quantitative data collected in the study, the beginning and end of the semester surveys both asked two open-ended short-answer questions, "*What, if anything, makes you likely to pursue an international career?*" and "*What, if anything, makes you unlikely to pursue an international career?*" These questions provide insight into students' motivations and concerns with regard to pursuing international careers. Based on student responses, this article addresses these research questions: *What factors motivate students' interest in international careers? What factors deter students from pursuing international careers?* This report also contrasts its findings with the findings in the human resources and business literature.

## Setting

The research was conducted at a master's degree granting public institution located in the western United States. The majority of the campus' 16,000 students are enrolled in bachelor degree programs. The institution is a residential campus located in a small college town approximately 90 miles from the nearest major city. All undergraduate students are required to take one internationally related course to complete their degrees. The institution's mission statement refers to international education, approximately 3% of its student body is comprised of international students, approximately 3% of students study abroad, and there is no foreign language requirement. When compared to the national data on internationalization published in *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* (American Council on Education, 2012) and *Open Doors* (Institute for International Education, 2014), these statistics demonstrate that this campus is fairly average in its progress towards internationalization.

## Participants

All undergraduate students at the institution are required to take one upper-division (junior/senior level) social science general education course. These courses may or may not be international in content. The participants in the study were students in three upper-division social science general education course sections: one economics course and two Asian studies courses. The economics course focused on U.S. labor markets and was not international in its curricular content. The Asian studies course met the general education requirement that all students enroll in one internationally oriented course. The majority of students enrolled in the course in order to meet this requirement, rather than because they had an innate interest in Asian studies. Ninety-one students completed the two surveys. General education courses were chosen for this study in order to get a broad cross section of students and, particularly, a diversity of majors.

Demographic information was requested from participants in regard to gender, ethnicity, international student status, age, year in school, and major. The demographic data is presented in Table 1. As shown, the majority of respondents were in their early twenties and in their third or fourth year of their studies. The largest demographics were U.S., white, and male, though a variety of nationalities, genders,

and ethnicities were represented. As intended, a diversity of majors was also represented.

**Table 1: Participant Demographics (N=91)**

Demographic	Number of participants (percentage of total)
<b>Course Enrollment</b>	
Economics	25 (27.5%)
Asian Studies	66 (72.5%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	25 (27.5%)
Male	66 (72.5%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Asian	11 (12.1%)
Black/African-American	1 (01.1%)
Hispanic/Latino	6 (06.6%)
White	48 (52.7%)
Other/Prefer Not to Say	3 (03.3%)
Multi-Ethnic	10 (11.0%)
No response*	12 (13.2%)
<b>International Student</b>	
Not Int'l Student	76 (83.5%)
International Student	15 (16.5%)
<b>Age</b>	
18 to 21 years	27 (29.7%)
22 to 25 years	50 (54.9%)
26 to 29 years	9 (10.0%)
30 years or older	5 (05.5%)
<b>Year in School</b>	
Freshman	2 (02.2%)
Sophomore	6 (06.6%)
Junior	27 (29.7%)
Senior	55 (60.4%)
No response	1 (01.1%)
<b>Major</b>	
Behavioral/Social Sciences	14 (15.4%)
Business	21 (23.1%)
Communication/Education	8 (08.9%)

Engineer/Computer Science	23 (25.3%)
Humanities/Fine Arts	11 (12.1%)
Natural Sciences	5 (05.5%)
Interdisciplinary	3 (03.3%)
Multiple Majors	3 (03.3%)
No response	3 (03.3%)

---

*\*Due to a survey design issue, many of the international students did not indicate ethnicity.*

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Prior to in-person administration of the surveys, the author verbally defined “international career” as a series of jobs, either in the students’ home countries, in outside countries, or both, that are substantially international in nature. This definition was also printed on the surveys. The surveys were paper-based surveys in which students provided short-answer responses, typically offering one to three sentences per question per student.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach, a process of classifying and analyzing text to elicit meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is characterized by identifying recurring themes in the text, and the sorting of those themes into discrete, emergent categories that provide new understanding of the topic being studied (Merriam, 1998; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The author conducted the analysis of the data using an open-coding qualitative approach followed by a closed-coding qualitative approach. Open coding requires reading responses line by line, identifying key words and themes and then formulating a list of categories, distinct from each other. Then, using a closed-coding process, the author reviewed all responses, clustering responses within the categories established during the open-coding process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Descriptive statistics relating the frequency of the responses in each category were tabulated. Also, representative examples of each category were identified. The most frequently reoccurring responses, with examples, are reported in this article. In the analysis process, the author compared responses between the three general education classrooms of students that participated as well as comparing responses from the beginning of the semester and end of semester

surveys, to identify differences in the patterns of responses.

### **Limitations**

The major limitation of this study is that all respondents were enrolled in the same university. Even with this limitation, the study provides important insights because the institution used in the study is similar to many other institutions in terms of its progress towards internationalization. Therefore, the results of the study may provide a representative, though incomplete, picture of all institutions in a similar situation. The study also faces the limitations of any survey in that the data is self-reported. Students may have self-censored their information, though the surveys did not ask students' names, and there was no reward or penalty for participating. Students were asked to respond candidly and honestly.

## **RESULTS**

The most common short-answer responses offered by students are listed below. Each section includes samples of representative student responses in their own words as well as the percentages of students who offered each response. In many cases, students gave more than one response – for example a student who said “I love to travel and want to learn about other cultures” would have his or her response counted in two categories: love of travel and interest in learning about other cultures.

**Top Motivations.** Analysis of student responses to the question, “*What, if anything, makes you likely to pursue an international career?*” yielded four most frequent responses (frequencies in parentheses, with results from the beginning and end-of-semester surveys, respectively).

**Love of travelling (30%, 31%).** Many students expressed their desire to travel and to see the world. Several students commented on the appeal of the adventurous nature of travel:

- *The ability to actually get out and see the world! Traveling to various different countries is much more appealing than just sitting in one office all day.*
- *If anything, it would be to expand my horizons and to make myself a more rounded person. I also love traveling and meeting new, diverse people.*
- *I think it would be an amazing experience that I would probably cherish forever. It would be an exciting break from the monotony of everyday American life.*

**Possibility of earning a high salary (27%, 31%).** A sizable number of students indicated that a primary motivation was the opportunity to earn a high salary:

- *It's a great experience and great opportunity to learn more. Money is also a factor, international careers usually offer better financial options.*
- *Money will make me go anywhere.*
- *If I were offered an extremely lucrative position, then I probably would.*

**Interest in learning about other cultures (23%, 26%).** The opportunity to learn about other cultures and people was a motivator for many students. Some students also indicated an interest in learning about themselves and their own culture through the process:

- *I love immersing myself in another culture, having experiences outside my country, and seeing new lands.*
- *Broaden horizons by delving into different cultures; expand perspectives of human interaction. Personal growth and development.*
- *Diversify my ideology and cultural base.*

**Opportunities within the major (14%, 14%).** Students indicated that they were interested in international opportunities connected to their majors:

- *Much engineering has to be done at the international level in order to have successful products.*

- *Later on in my career as a construction manager, there may be opportunities to work in another country.*
- *For a long time, I wanted to travel and see the world. If I could get a job in another country that was closely related to political science or economics, then I would take it.*

**Additional Motivations.** Other repeated, but less frequent, responses included an interest in a specific country, previous experience of living or studying abroad, the opportunity to use or develop foreign language abilities, and the chance to help others.

**Interest in a specific country (8%, 3%).**

- *My ethnic background. I'm Chinese, therefore, I'd rather work in China than U.S.*
- *I have had a strong interest in the country of Brazil for a large portion of my life. I enjoy its culture, people, and other aspects. I have only recently considered working for a business in Brazil.*

**Opportunity to use or develop foreign language abilities (7%, 7%).**

- *Wanting the experience of living abroad, and learning a foreign language and experiencing another culture.*
- *I speak several languages.*

**Previous experience living or studying abroad (5%, 3%).**

- *I studied abroad and that got me excited about an international career.*
- *I have gone abroad in the past and done volunteer work, and I plan to go and study abroad next semester and I hope to find an internship while I am there. My experiences abroad would help me to determine whether I would enjoy an international career.*

**Desire to help others (3%, 4%).**

- *Being able to help less fortunate populations.*
- *Opportunity to create a better environment for those in need.*

- *The experience and humanitarian support that I can give.*

**Top Concerns.** When asked “*What, if anything, makes you unlikely to pursue an international career?*” participants most frequently cited the difficulty of leaving family and friends and their lack of foreign language capabilities.

**Difficulty of leaving family and friends (34%, 41%).** Many students indicated the difficulty of leaving family and friends if they were to pursue international careers:

- *I would not like being away from family and friends for extended periods of time.*
- *Working in another country does sounds fun and exciting, but being away from friends and family would be a big deal.*
- *Family and significant other, these things are very important to me and are the only thing holding me back.*

**Lack of foreign language ability (15%, 18%).** Many students remarked upon their concerns about language barriers:

- *I’m not fluent in any other languages besides English.*
- *Don’t have much experience in other languages. It would be difficult to work abroad because everything would be so different.*
- *I hate planes and I am terrible at foreign languages.*

**Additional Concerns.** Other repeated, but less frequent, responses included fears of being lonely or homesick, fear of the unfamiliar, not knowing anyone, professional certifications that do not transfer easily, and the possibility of having a partner or children who do not want to, or are unable to, move abroad. Respondents also cited a lack of information about international possibilities and concerns about safety abroad.

**Fear of loneliness, homesickness, or the unfamiliar (10%, 14%).** A few students indicated apprehension about being lonely or homesick. Some students indicated a fear of the unknown and the challenges of leaving a familiar environment:

- *Some fear of unfamiliar environments.*

- *Being away from my comfort zone. Not knowing anyone.*
- *I would miss the U.S. and some of the things that come with it such as football. It would also be a frightening experience with the culture and language barriers as well as not knowing my way around where I am at.*

**Partner or children do not want to go abroad (8%, 9%).** Some students mentioned obstacles related to personal relationships:

- *Disagreements with my girlfriend as to whether we want to live abroad. (She has stronger ties to her family than I do to mine.)*
- *Having a family. I would really like to raise my children in home.*
- *I have children that I share time with their father. I wouldn't want to create so much distance within my family.*

**Safety concerns (5%, 8%).** A few students mentioned concerns about their safety internationally:

- *The country is chaotic, or in civil war, no life guarantee.*
- *Feel less safe.*

**Professional certifications do not transfer (8%, 3%).** Students in certain fields suggested that it would be difficult to have their credentials recognized abroad:

- *It may be difficult to work in the medical industry because my education (certification) was completed in the U.S.*
- *The transferability of my job (law enforcement) and not knowing the language.*
- *My major, being H.R., would be different if I was doing it in another country.*

**Lack of information about possibilities (3%, 1%).** Students mentioned not having enough information on international career opportunities. It should be noted here that some of the students in the study were given specific information about international career opportunities mid-semester, potentially affecting their likelihood of offering this answer on the end of semester survey.

- *I don't have too much information on what it would take to achieve an international career.*
- *Not aware of what steps I would need to take in order to find a job internationally.*
- *Not knowing where to get more information.*

**Comparison of Responses Across Categories.** Responses were examined across the three classrooms that participated. There was no significant difference in responses between students in the two Asian studies courses and the economics course. The similarity of responses in the three courses likely means that a cross-section of the university population was captured as intended and that the motivations and concerns that arose are common to many students.

The author also compared responses to the beginning and end of the semester survey and found that the top motivations and concerns, as well as the second tier of motivations and concerns, were the same in both surveys. The similarity between survey responses conducted several months apart likely indicates that the motivators and concerns indicated by students are enduring and were not swayed by fleeting influences such as major news stories or particular world events.

**Summary of Results.** The study shows that the motivations most frequently reported by students were love of traveling, interest in learning about other cultures, the possibility of earning a high salary, and opportunities within the student's major. Also mentioned, though less frequently, as key motivators were interest in a specific country, previous experience living or studying abroad, the opportunity to use or develop foreign language skills, and the desire to help others.

The chief concerns cited by students were the challenge of leaving family and friends and the lack of foreign language ability. Other concerns included fear of loneliness, homesickness and the unknown, professional certifications that did not transfer, partners or children that did not want to go abroad, a lack of information about the possibilities, and safety concerns. Table 2 summarizes the motivations and concerns most frequently reported by the participants.

**Table 2: Summary of Results (N=91)  
with Percentages of Participants Indicating Each Motivation or  
Concern**

	Beginning of semester survey	End of semester survey
Top Motivations		
Love of travelling	30%	31%
Possibility of earning high salary	27%	31%
Interest in learning about other cultures	23%	26%
Opportunities within the major	14%	14%
Additional Motivations		
Interest in a specific country	8%	3%
Opportunity to use or develop foreign language abilities	7%	7%
Previous experience living or studying abroad	5%	3%
Desire to help others	3%	4%
Top Concerns		
Difficulty of leaving family and friends	34%	41%
Lack of foreign language ability	15%	18%
Additional Concerns		
Fear of loneliness, homesickness, or the unfamiliar	10%	14%
Partner or children do not want to go abroad	8%	9%
Safety concerns	5%	8%
Professional certifications do not transfer	8%	3%
Lack of information about possibilities	3%	1%

*Note: Percentages rounded off to the nearest whole number*

The motivations and concerns reported by the students in this study correlate with the career choice literature based on professionals already working internationally. Like professionals in international careers, students were motivated by the appeal of particular locations, the potential for enjoyment, professional opportunities, and financial rewards. At the same time, students, like professionals, were concerned with safety and family obligations. In addition, the findings

demonstrate that the motivations that are most important to young professionals of adventure, career development, and money are also important to undergraduates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With the majority of four-year institutions in the United States pledging through their mission statements to prepare students for success in a globalized world, it is imperative that their actions and approaches to campus internationalization include a commitment to assist students in exploring international career options. To do so effectively, campuses must address students' hopes and fears.

Encouraging, motivating, reassuring, guiding, and advising students on international careers is a responsibility shared by the academic departments, the study abroad office, and the career center. None of these entities typically makes guidance on international careers a core mission because all of these offices face the challenge of having a wide range of responsibilities and heavy workloads. Yet, the need to prepare students for professional engagement in an increasingly globalized world is both vital and immediate.

**Campus Leadership.** Ultimately, the campus leadership bears responsibility for ensuring achievement of the institutional mission, and therefore must take responsibility for ensuring that students are supported in their efforts to explore international careers. Because this is an area that has traditionally not been central to the work of any campus department, campus leadership would be wise to include international career preparation in its internationalization plan and to articulate the responsibilities of each relevant unit on campus. Administrators must also allocate funding to support these initiatives, as well as monitor progress and student outcomes. Ultimately, the institution will be able to promote the success of graduates in the international arena in its publicity materials, providing a benefit not just to students, but also to the institution.

Foreign languages were notably both motivators for students and an area of concern. Those students who spoke foreign languages were motivated to work internationally to use and improve their language abilities, while those students without strong foreign

language capabilities expressed reluctance to engage internationally because of the language barrier. Campus administrators should consider whether or not it is possible to effectively prepare students for an interconnected world without foreign language study. Though the current trend is toward cutting language programs and eliminating language requirements for undergraduates, this strategy should be carefully considered in light of effects on students' career pathways.

**Career Center.** Career counselors are in the unique role of providing one-on-one career advising to students. As this study shows, students sometimes lack confidence in their ability to be successful in international careers and fear the unknown environments they might encounter. Accordingly, they might not express their interest in international careers. Counselors are advised to ask each student whether he/she is interested in an international career. This question provides an opening for the student to express interest and raise any concerns. The counselor may then address the concerns by helping the student identify preparatory or exploratory actions they could take such as enrolling in a foreign language course, researching a particular country, or talking with professionals in the field. Counselors can also discuss with students the ways in which modern technologies can help keep them in touch with family and friends. Consistently asking students about their interest in international careers will also help the counselor to gauge the level of interest in international careers at the institution.

Career center staff can play a key role in connecting students with information and resources. Counselors are encouraged to continually build their knowledge of international career opportunities, so that they may share this information with students. Respondents in this study reported similar motivations and concerns to those expressed by working professionals in the business and human resources literature, suggesting that staying abreast of these bodies of literature would be helpful to those career counselors trying to educate themselves about international careers.

The study found that one deterrent to the pursuit of an international career is students' lack of resources that would aid in their job search. Career centers are encouraged to include links to international job listings and databases and provide information on

international formatting of résumés and the norms of job searches in cultures around the world. Career counselors may also be able to collaborate with the alumni office to identify alumni working in international fields, and encourage networking with current students. Workshops and speaker series on international careers would also be of benefit to students and would help raise the profile of institutional efforts. In this study, several students also expressed concern that their academic credentials might not be valid in other countries. While this may often be the case, the career counselors can research and inform students about opportunities where the credentials do transfer, such as teaching in an international school, working for the U.S. Department of State abroad, employment with a U.S. based multinational firm, or similar options.

**Academic Departments.** Academic departments are encouraged to continue to internationalize their curricula through inclusion of international topics, perspectives, and materials. Faculty are encouraged to incorporate international career exploration into the curricula, talking to students about study abroad, international internships, and international careers. Faculty are uniquely positioned to motivate students and build their confidence about the prospects of international careers relevant to their discipline by sharing their own international experiences, bringing in guest speakers, or arranging for a presentation by career center staff.

**Study Abroad Offices.** As the results of this research demonstrate, past experience with study abroad makes students much more likely to consider working abroad, while lack of familiarity with foreign cultures and fear of the unknown makes students reluctant to pursue international careers. Therefore, encouraging study abroad is clearly a meaningful step on the way to an international career. Another valuable opportunity is the chance to gain international work experience while abroad. Increasingly, study abroad offices are incorporating international internships into study abroad programs by offering part-time internships in addition to formal coursework during the school term or by offering an additional summer internship following a semester or year abroad.

Study abroad offices are encouraged to include programming based on international careers in their re-entry orientation programs. Many students returning from study abroad will seek opportunities to continue their involvement in the international arena. Through collaboration with the campus career center and alumni office, study abroad offices can assist students in expanding their knowledge and professional networks, and build on the motivation and enthusiasm generated through a successful study abroad experience.

## CONCLUSION

Despite strong student interest in international careers and agreement among educators that graduates of U.S. colleges must be prepared for professional and personal engagement in an increasingly interconnected world, campus internationalization efforts nationwide typically do not include explicit reference to preparing students for international careers. This study identifies factors that motivate or deter students and argues that campus administrators, academic departments, career centers, and study abroad offices can all contribute in substantial ways. The results of this study suggest that additional attention needs to be given to understanding those factors that motivate or deter students from pursuing international careers, and deliberately addressing them. Only through an intentional process of encouraging, reassuring, advising and guiding students about international careers, will institutions be able to achieve the lofty promise of their mission statements.

## REFERENCES

- American Council on Education (2008, January). *College-bound students' interests in study abroad and other international learning activities*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=3997>
- American Council on Education (2012). *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/news->

room/Pages/2012-Mapping-Internationalization-on-U-S--  
Campuses.aspx

- Brandenburg, U., & de Wit, H. (2011). End of internationalization. *International Higher Education*, 62. 15-17.
- Caligiuri, P. (2006). Developing global leaders. *Human Resource Management Review*, 16. 219-228.  
doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.03.009
- Carr, S.C., Inkson, K., & Thorn, K. (2005). From global careers to talent flow: Reinterpreting 'brain drain'. *Journal of World Business* 40, 386-398. doi:10.1016/j.jwb.2005.08.006
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I. & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Hartung, P. J. (2005). Internationalizing career counseling: Emptying our cups and learning from each other. *Career Development Quarterly*, 54(1). 12-16. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-0045.2005.tb00136.x
- Hsieh, H. & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9). 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687
- Hudzik, J. (2011). *Comprehensive internationalization: From concept to action*. Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Retrieved from [http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/NAFSA\\_Home/Resource\\_Library\\_Assets/Publications\\_Library/2011\\_Comprehen\\_Inter-nationalization.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/NAFSA_Home/Resource_Library_Assets/Publications_Library/2011_Comprehen_Inter-nationalization.pdf)
- Hudzik, J., & McCarthy, J. S. (2012). *Leading comprehensive internationalization: Strategy and tactics for action*. Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Retrieved from [http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/Chez\\_NAFSA/Resource\\_Library\\_Assets/Publications\\_Library/Leading%20CIZN.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/Chez_NAFSA/Resource_Library_Assets/Publications_Library/Leading%20CIZN.pdf)
- Institute of International Education. (2014). *Open doors*. New York: Institute for International Education. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/research-and-publications/open-doors>

- Knight, J. (1994). *Internationalization: Elements and checkpoints*. (Research Monograph, No. 7). Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Bureau for International Education.
- Knight, J. (2011, Winter). Five myths about internationalization, *International Higher Education*, 62. 14-15.
- McMahon, M., & Yuen, M. (2009). Career counseling and internationalization. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 16(2). 91-111.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mowchan, E. (2011). *Career paths into international development*. (Thesis). University of Minnesota. Retrieved from [http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/107529/1/Mowchan\\_Career%20Paths%20into%20International%20Development.pdf](http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/107529/1/Mowchan_Career%20Paths%20into%20International%20Development.pdf)
- Pope, M. (2000). A brief history of career counseling in the United States. *Career Development Quarterly*, 48(3). 194-211. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2000.tb00286.x
- Punteney, K. N. (2012). International careers: The gap between student interest and knowledge. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(4). 390-407. doi: 10.1177/1028315311430354
- Savickas, M. L., Van Esbroeck, R., & Herr, E. L. (2005). The internationalization of educational and vocational guidance. *Career Development Quarterly*, 54(1). 77-85. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-0045.2000.tb00286.x
- Selmer, J., & Luring, J. (2010). Self-initiated academic expatriates: Inherent demographics and reasons to expatriate. *European Management Review*, 7(3). 169-179.
- Shaffer, M. A., Kraimer, M. L., Yu-Ping, C. & Bolino, M. C. (2012). Choices, challenges, and career consequences of global work experiences: A review and future agenda. *Journal of Management*, 38(4). 1282-1327. doi: 10.1177/0149206312441834
- Vance, C. M. (2005). The personal quest for building global competence: A taxonomy of self-initiating career path strategies for gaining business experience abroad. *Journal of World Business* 40. 374-385. doi:10.1016/j.jwb.2005.08.005

---

**KATHERINE N. PUNTENEY**, EdD, is assistant professor of international education management at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Her teaching and research focuses on internationalization, international careers, intercultural competence, and international student services.

Email: [kpunteney@miis.edu](mailto:kpunteney@miis.edu)

*Manuscript submitted: **March 10, 2015***  
*Manuscript Revised: **September 25, 2015***  
*Accepted for publication: **October 4, 2015***

---