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## JOURNAL REPORTS: WEALTH MANAGEMENT

# Students Look Abroad for Internships

International work experience can bolster a résumé, but the price tag can be significant



Chase Therrien (left), a student at the University of Texas at Dallas, says his eight-week internship in Madrid last summer matched his entrepreneurial focus. PHOTO: CHASE THERRIEN

By Cheryl Winokur Munk

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For many college students, domestic internships are a rite of passage. Now more undergraduates are seeking international work experience, too, betting it will make their résumés pop and help them stand out in a job market that increasingly values multiculturalism.

An internship abroad can help students develop certain sought-after skills—such as heightened cultural sensitivity and multilingualism. There also is the personal development and flexibility that comes from living and working in a foreign country. These skills, some college officials say, may give recent graduates an edge in hiring decisions.

“As we live in an increasingly globalized world, there is a strong chance that many students will embark on an international career, at least in some capacity,” says Nigel Cossar, director of the Penn Abroad program at the University of Pennsylvania. Recognizing this, Penn students across a variety of majors increasingly are looking for international opportunities, says Mr. Cossar, who expects to place 165 to 200 students in international internships this year, up from 32 when the program started in 2009.

## Growing demand

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), a nonprofit that designs international study, workforce training and leadership-development programs, the number of U.S. college students participating in internship programs abroad rose to 28,708 during the 2015-2016 academic year, up 21% from the previous school year. The number is likely much higher because the IIE figures don’t include the large number of students who arrange international internships on their own, says David Lloyd, chief executive and founder of the Intern Group, which offers work-abroad programs in places such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Colombia and Melbourne, Australia. Mr. Lloyd says interest is particularly strong in internships in business-related fields such as finance and marketing.

To meet this growing demand, many colleges and universities are expanding their international-internship programs, some in partnership with internship providers such as the Intern Group and the Academic Internship Council. Undergraduates also can work directly with firms such as the Intern Group to find internships abroad.

The University of Cincinnati has created new internship opportunities in six global locations since the fall semester of 2015 and provided global work experience for 95 of its students during that time, says Willie Clark, director of international experiential learning at the university. The university also has an international co-op program that places about 20 to 30 students annually, and roughly the same number find global internships on their own, he says. Locations include Singapore, Hong Kong, Cape Town, South Africa, Santiago, Chili and London, he says. The school also offers programs in Seville and Madrid, Spain, and in Berlin, Germany, among other locations. Costs vary depending on the location, duration of the program and other factors.

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### Things to consider

When evaluating these opportunities, students should think carefully about the expense and what they hope to gain from the experience, experts say. For example, students should ask themselves what skills they expect to develop by working overseas and what connections they might make to help further their career goals, says Mr. Lloyd of the Intern Group. They also should inquire about the type of support they'll receive before they go and while they're abroad, he says, and whether they will receive college credit for the program (often they won't).

Cost is another major consideration. Students typically work abroad during the summer of their junior year, anywhere from six to 12 weeks, depending on the program and the particular country's visa and employment regulations. Most international internships are unpaid and generally will cost the participant around \$3,000 to \$8,000 or more, depending on the destination, duration, cost of living in a particular location and the program. Some colleges and universities give students a stipend to help defray costs, and scholarships are available for some programs. But many participants are expected to shoulder the expense completely.

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Chase Therrien, a junior at the University of Texas at Dallas, participated in an eight-week internship for a startup social language-learning company in Madrid last summer, making him one of about 100 students at his

university who do international internships annually. The program through the Intern Group

cost him \$4,500 and he spent an additional \$2,000 or so on the flight, food and other incidentals. Mr. Therrien, 21, says he chose the opportunity in Madrid because the cost was “reasonable,” he had a decent grasp of Spanish and the job matched his entrepreneurial focus.

He says the cost was worth it because he received hands-on experience in sales, marketing and project management. “I have a drive to really want to work internationally now, and if I didn’t go on this internship, I don’t think I would have ever [gone] to Europe and explored [working in] another country,” he says.

### Preparation is key

Students interested in an internship abroad are advised to start planning well in advance. Visa requirements can be a major sticking point; while certain destinations allow candidates to enter visa-free or on a tourist visa for short-term internships, other locations have strict regulations, says Mr. Lloyd. For instance, students looking to intern in Hong Kong are advised to submit the necessary documentation four months before their desired start date to obtain a visa, he says.

Internship providers generally provide pre-departure and on-site orientations to help students acclimate to their new environment. This allows an opportunity to impart important cultural lessons. Students heading to Colombia, for instance, might learn about the importance of personally greeting their officemates in the morning and saying goodbye individually at the day’s end. Those heading to Singapore or Hong Kong might be told it’s considered impolite in these cultures to exchange business cards with one hand.

“It’s these little things that can make a big difference,” says Tony Johnson, president of the Academic Internship Council, which offers internships in multiple locations.

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