Education Abroad & Career Competencies: Conveying value to employers

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Objectives:

• Contextualize the demand for skill imperatives in the world of work.

• Realize some of the dynamics of student reflection in understanding their learning and building a portfolio of transferable skills.

• Practice some techniques to stimulate reflection and skill articulation.
CONNECTING WITH EMPLOYERS: CAN YOU TELL YOUR STORY?
It’s ALL About Skills! Really!

- Developing professional competencies
- Communicating effectively
- Solving problems
- Balancing work and life
- Embracing change
- Working effectively in a team
- Working in a diverse environment
- Managing time and priorities
- Navigating across boundaries
- Acquiring knowledge
- Thinking critically
- Performing with integrity
Skill Usage: The Funnel

- Apply Learning
- Writing Effectively
- Teamwork
- Grasp Workplace Realities
- Acquire Learning
- Demonstrating Initiative

- Communicate Orally
- Think Analytically
- Acquire Learning
- Evaluate Alternatives
- Creative Solutions
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Utilize technology
- Grasp Realities
- Demonstrate Initiative
Competencies: *They are moving!*

- Build working relationships
- Analyze, evaluate and interpret data
- Engage in continuous learning
- Communicate through justification and persuasion
- Plan and manage a project
- Create new knowledge
- Seek global understanding
The Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Eng FT 5 yrs ago</th>
<th>Eng Intern Today</th>
<th>Non-engFT 5 yrs ago</th>
<th>Non-engIntern Today</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicat.</td>
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<td>Teamwork</td>
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<td>Customer Ser.</td>
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<td>Global</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project</td>
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<td>46%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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What skills do employers value from employees who have studied or interned abroad?

**Skill Group #1**

45% + employer response range

- Interacting w/ people who hold different interests, values, perspectives (60%)
- Understanding cultural differences in the workplace (53%)
- Adapting to situations of change (50%)
- Gaining new knowledge from experiences (45%)

**Skill Group #2**

All clustered in 30% employer response range

- Ability to work independently
- Undertaking tasks that are unfamiliar
- Applying information in new or broader contexts
- Identifying new problems/alternatives solutions
- Working effectively with co-workers

T-Shaped Professionals (Both Deep and Broad)

Boundary Crossing Competencies
- Communication, teamwork, networks, critical thinking, global understanding,
- Perspective, organizational culture, project management, etc

Many disciplines (understanding & communications)

Many systems (understanding & communications)

Deep in at least one discipline (analytic thinking & problem solving)

Deep in at least one system (analytic thinking & problem solving)

Adaptive Innovators

Jim Spohrer, IBM Labs
Let’s Unpack
Think back for a moment.

Recall a significant learning experience abroad.

Provide an example of a skill you developed or enhanced during that experience.
The P-A-R-K Method

Problem or need

Action(s) you took

Result(s) you achieved

Knowledge or skills gained
If learning demands context, what kind of context do these student comments suggest?

What do I need \{insert dept & course #\} for?

Why would I take an elective? Does it count?

If I take 20 credits each semester I can be done in 3 years.

But I completed all of the assignments, I should get at least a 3.0.

Learning abroad will look really good on my resume.
Imperative to ask contextually meaningful questions

- Stimulates critical thinking
- Advances integration of student learning
  - *Helps them connect the dots!*
- Builds toward discovery and advancing knowledge essential for the emerging economic paradigm
Reflective Learning Model

**LEARNING CATALYST**
- Academic courses
- Life in residence
- Volunteer & Service-learning
- Internships, co-ops, practica
- Study Abroad
- Organizational and leadership experiences
- Other life events

**REFLECTION**
- Learning
- Self awareness
- Critical thinking
- Skill identification
- Planning
- Decision-making

**INTEGRATION**
- Transition awareness
- Skill development
- Problem solving
- Ability to contribute

Your turn to unpack!
Skills exercises
“The questions we ask determine where our thinking goes.”

~Michael Scriven and Richard Paul
The Power of Perspective
Engage in experience
Describe experience objectively
Examine per category
- Personal growth
- Professional growth
- Specific skill(s)
- Knowledge gained

Articulate Learning

Modified from Clayton, P (2010) PHC Ventures
Unpacking with a purpose
A video case example in identifying transferable skills through reflection

http://ciber.msu.edu/unpacking/
But what do I know about career development?

- No matter what our role, each of us can help foster students’ career development.
- All we need is to ask the right questions.
Tips for Practitioners

• Establish a context for student reflection relative to their future life plans (i.e. employment field, graduate school).

• Ask questions that provoke students to make connections. Why? How?

• Use a novice approach. Ask questions to build your understanding or technical competence in the field

• Push the envelope. Students make important realizations and associations when they stretch their limits.
“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.”

~Eugène Ionesco
References


