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
Self-management
Networking
Leadership
Followership
Taking Initiative
Technical Competence
Cognitive Abilities
Organizational savvy
Teamwork effectiveness
Perspective
Show: Tell
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-engInt Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicat.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Ser.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
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<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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)

Jim Spohrer, IBM Labs

Adaptive Innovators
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

- **P** - Problem or need
- **A** - Action(s) you took
- **R** - Result(s) you achieved
- **K** - 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 \underline{completed} all of the assignments, I should get \underline{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


