

How Students Can Get Ahead: What Colleges And Companies Want

(NAPSA)—If your family is like most, you want a college education for your children—today, 75 percent of Americans have their eyes set on a college education. That's a good thing. Over a lifetime, college graduates average about a million dollars more than high school graduates.

A problem is that most colleges haven't significantly increased the size of their freshman classes. As a result, acceptance rates are declining to as low as 5.69 percent.

What Colleges Want

Many admissions officers look at the "whole student," trying to determine character, creativity, leadership, sense of humor and moral fiber. Qualities like these can't be conveyed in grades and test scores, so more weight is being given to letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities and essays.

So if you were to have, say, a compelling story about how you traveled the world and connected with other cultures, it's likely you'd get that experience noticed by admissions officers.

What Companies Want

After college, the right sort of educational travel can also boost your career. A recent study led by professor William W. Maddux of the international graduate business school INSEAD reveals that those who travel may enjoy more job opportunities. He discovered that an MBA student's intercultural experiences predicted the number of job offers received, even when controlling for such variables as demographics, personality and the like.

Students who adapted to and learned about new cultures demonstrated more openness and initiative. They were seen as being able to bring seemingly unrelated ideas together into meaningful wholes. As a result, they were better able to navigate the interview process and received more job offers.

In an article for management-issues.com, Dr. David Livermore, president of the Cultural Intelligence Center, explained that some of the most promising correlations



College admissions offices and prominent employers recognize the value of cultural intelligence, which educational travel can foster.

found between international travel and job prospects are:

1. Strong Sense of Self: Travel helps you become aware of your own values and priorities. Organizations want to hire professionals who are self-aware.

2. Increased Trust: Another study found that how much you trust a stranger is positively correlated to the number of places you've visited. Companies want team members who can develop trusting relationships across virtual and international borders.

3. Creativity and Problem Solving: In a new environment, everyday tasks have to be done differently and you might even pick up new approaches to common problems. A proven ability to innovate makes for a strong advantage in a job search.

Travel by itself, however, won't ensure improved cultural intelligence (CQ™) or increased job offers. There are important variables:

•**The nature of the experience:** Those who venture out to discover the food, transportation and people of the places they visit are likely to enhance their CQ.

•**The number of experiences:** Individuals with multiple experiences in a variety of places see more of the benefits of travel.

•**Age:** Exposing kids to other places can be very influential, helping them build their sense of self and a unique worldview.

•**The cultural interpreter:** If a trip's leaders focus on the negative aspects of a culture, CQ can actually decrease. The individual who interprets what's going on plays a large role in bringing about positive effects from travel.

•**Reflection and debriefing:** Many study abroad programs emphasize pre-trip training but the most important insights come from reflecting in the midst of the experience and upon returning home.

Simply listing international travel as a part of your résumé is unlikely to yield many benefits. But using travel to expand your view of self, integrate ideas from different cultures and creatively solve problems helps you to stand apart from other candidates.

Business leaders seem to agree. An IBM survey of 1,500 CEOs worldwide found the quality they most prize—and that's most lacking in the workforce—is creativity or innovation.

Stephan Turnipseed, president emeritus of LEGO Education North America, advocates fusing the traditional 3 Rs with the 4 Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. Those skills, Turnipseed says, often blossom beyond the classroom. In particular, he cites People to People Ambassador travel as an activity uniquely suited to spark students' global thinking and creative problem solving.

Turnipseed notes, "To be successful in People to People, you're going to need to collaborate—not just with your peers and leader, but with host families," as well as service providers, experts and other students encountered during travel.

People to People has been a leader in guided educational student travel for over 50 years, helping students experience new cultures and encounter new places.

Learn More

To learn how your child can be a People to People Ambassador, check out an information meeting near you. Visit www.PeopletoPeople.com or call (800) 669-7882 for meeting dates and locations.