

A World of Possibilities

HOW EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL
IMPACTS STUDENT FUTURES

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Throughout the year, we receive feedback from proud, elated parents who picked up their child from the airport and immediately noticed positive changes in their son or daughter's confidence and overall demeanor.

These changes are powerful.

Through our teachers and group leaders, we hear about the immense and transformative power traveling on an ACIS tour has had on students' lives both professionally and personally. There's no shortage of feedback about how one trip shaped a student's personal development and career choice, how it ignited a lifelong passion for seeing new lands, how they feel more confident in making connections and building relationships, and how those travel experiences were fundamental in creating a well-rounded, global citizen of the 21st century.

It was this very feedback that inspired us to compile this ebook; to share the inspiring stories of past travelers. As you'll discover, many of them credit their ACIS tour abroad as a defining moment in their adolescence.

What can you expect to find in this ebook and how will it help you?

Expect to find facts that support a hunch you probably already have: that travel is an invaluable experience for middle school and high school students. The difference here is that we're making it easy for you to digest the travel changes lives philosophy and we do so through the eyes of former travelers. Whether you're an educator, a parent or a student we think you'll find something inside to inspire you.

In this ebook, we touch upon how travel has impacted current and former students in the following areas:

- **Language**
- **Education**
- **Career**
- **Personal Development**

Through quick stats and notable quotes, you'll discover – most often times from the most powerful voice of all, the student – how an early travel experience abroad helped them become the people they are today.

TRAVEL CHANGES LIVES.

At ACIS Educational Tours, we use this expression a lot. Over the years it's become our official motto, and for us, it's the second most important three little words we utter in the English language. We truly believe travel changes lives because we've seen it time and time again. We live it and breathe it, innovating new tours, building experiential learning opportunities into our itineraries, and perhaps most importantly, thanking and acknowledging the educators (in any way we can) who show countless young people what the world has to offer.



A Quick Note About Our Research

To create this ebook, we surveyed and compiled responses from nearly 930 former ACIS travelers.



[Watch Our “Travel Changes Lives” Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dj0XMi)

<http://bit.ly/1dj0XMi>





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Conclusion & Summary of Findings



“ During my senior year in high school, I had the opportunity to take an ACIS-led tour of France with my high school French class. At that time, I had been studying French for five years. Visiting France was a very important event in my life: it **helped affirm my appreciation for different cultures and paved the way to more international experiences.** One of my most cherished memories there was ordering slices of ham to make a sandwich in the gardens of Versailles; **I felt so confident** in my ability to exercise my language skills.

At Pepperdine University, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Shanghai, China, for one academic year. My experience abroad in France through ACIS not only **helped strengthen my application** for this opportunity but also **gave me the confidence to learn another language.**”

-Ari Marzban,
ACIS Participant

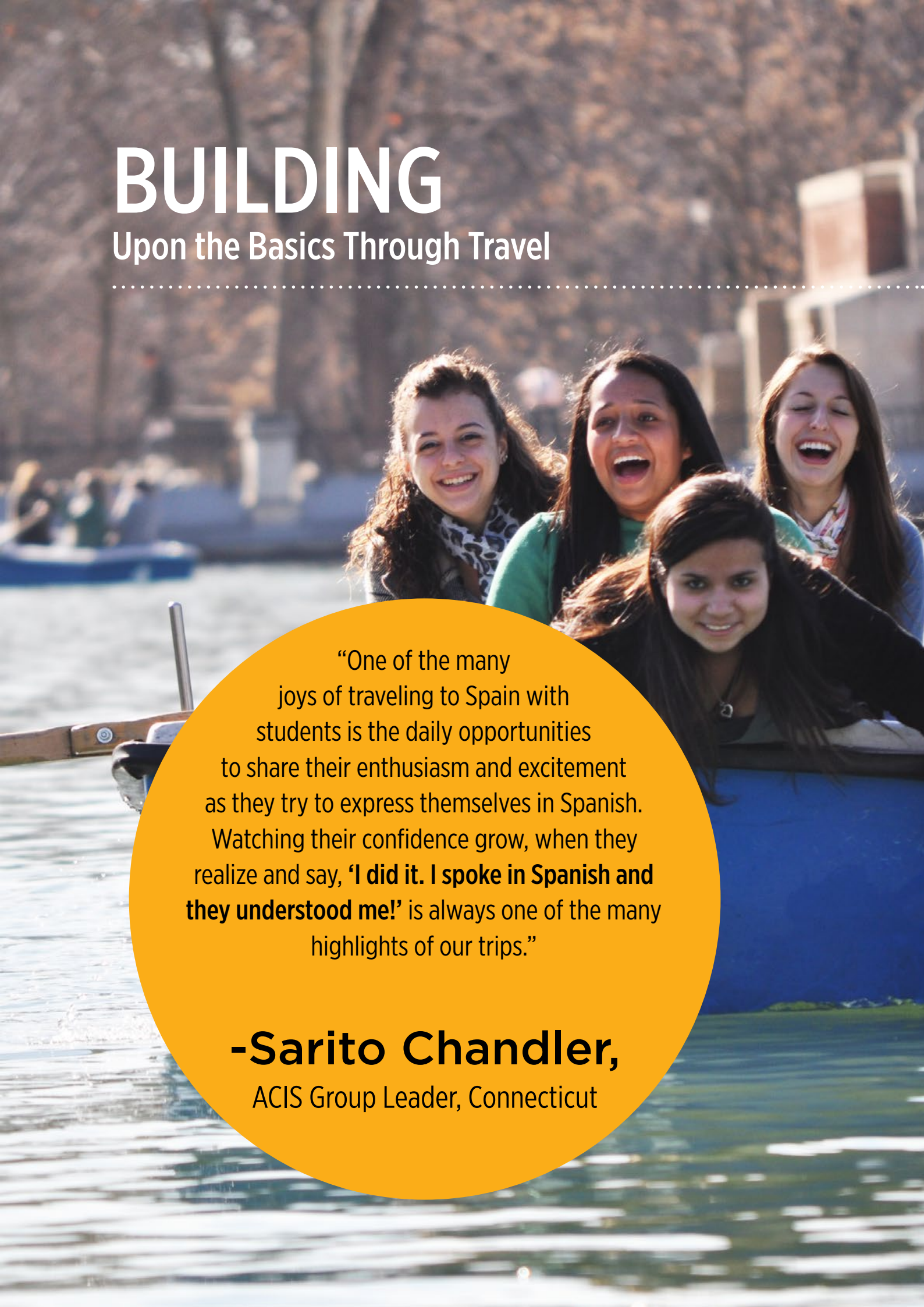
SECTION 1

The Bilingual Benefit:

Foreign Language Skills Make for
Unique Advantages

BUILDING

Upon the Basics Through Travel

A photograph of four young women on a boat, smiling and laughing. They are in the foreground, with a body of water and a cityscape in the background. The women are wearing casual clothing, and the boat has a blue hull. The background shows a city with buildings and trees, suggesting a coastal or urban setting.

“One of the many joys of traveling to Spain with students is the daily opportunities to share their enthusiasm and excitement as they try to express themselves in Spanish. Watching their confidence grow, when they realize and say, **‘I did it. I spoke in Spanish and they understood me!’** is always one of the many highlights of our trips.”

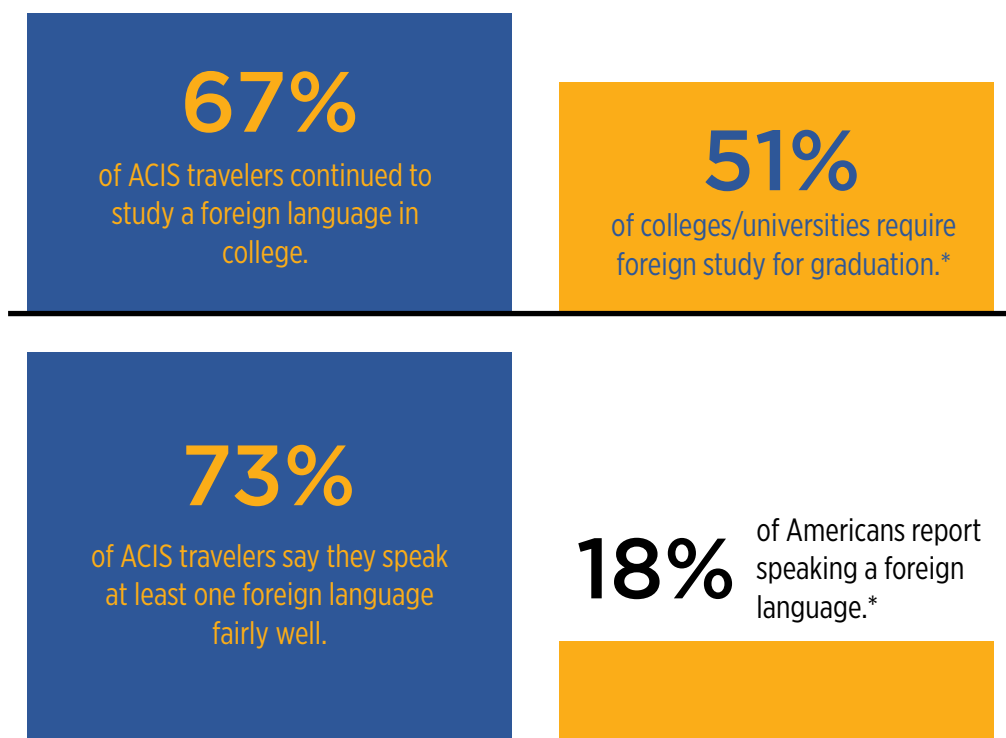
-Sarito Chandler,
ACIS Group Leader, Connecticut

Studying a foreign language and partaking in an educational tour are essential partners in helping students develop language skills, build confidence and create a lifelong love of language study. In fact, 60% of ACIS group leaders who traveled abroad with students in 2018 were world language teachers.

[Teachers know that the benefits for students are boundless.](#)

Conversing with locals, mastering differing dialects and colloquialisms, bouncing back from mistakes, and learning through necessity can propel students forward in their language learning.

QUICK STATS



* Source: Forbes

Several years removed from their trips, former ACIS travelers report they are still using the language skills they acquired and cultivated as students.

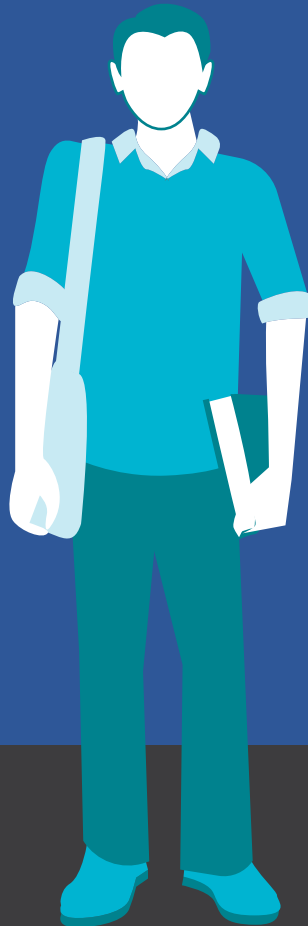


Today, they describe their proficiency in a foreign language as follows:

21%
Fluent

44%
Good

32%
Basic



Free Download for Educators:

[Global Citizenship Workshop](http://pages.acis.com/ACIS-Global-Citizenship-Workshop-Conferences.html)

<http://pages.acis.com/ACIS-Global-Citizenship-Workshop-Conferences.html>

SURPRISING

Ways to Use Foreign Language Skills at the Office

“I have been studying Spanish since high school and I have been using the language with my colleagues. I am now a manager and knowing another language helps me communicate, interact, and engage with the other employees.”

**-Angeli Marlyn
Lavilla,**
ACIS Participant

While English is widely considered a universal language, there are plenty of benefits to studying and learning a foreign language that go beyond travel. In fact, nearly 70% of our past travelers continued to study a foreign language in college, and many of those polled have found their language skills useful for internships and current careers.

Not surprisingly, those in the education field use these skills in a variety of ways including teaching abroad opportunities. On the flip side, we had an overwhelming response from former travelers who reported having a unique advantage over non-foreign language speakers in the healthcare industry, real estate and non-profits.



Former ACIS students have gone on to use their foreign language skills at an internship or job to communicate with coworkers, clients and patients.



Real Estate:

“I have used the French language as a real estate sales agent, assisting people from Europe to lease or purchase homes in Los Angeles.”

-**Ari Marzban**, ACIS Participant

Tourism:

“I earned a degree in foreign language teaching and I now work in the tourism industry serving a broad range of clients from around the world daily. I communicate in at least three languages a day.”

-**Carly Holbrooks**, ACIS Participant



Non-Profit:

“I translated documents from Spanish to English and vice versa at my internship at a non-profit organization.”

-**Anjelica Dalia Deliz**, ACIS Participant





Education:



“I worked in the development office for a bilingual charter school in Washington, DC. I utilized Spanish while speaking with some of the children, researching potential grants, and communicating with fellow employees. It was a great experience.”

-Kendall Young, ACIS Participant

Healthcare:

“I work in Emergency Medical Services and I’ve used Spanish numerous times to get patient information and to help assure them that we were going to help them”

-Zach Saxman, ACIS Participant



Student SPOTLIGHT:

Ryan Brissenden



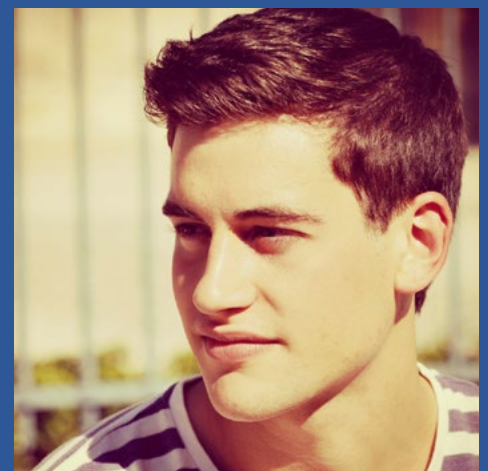
In his senior year of high school, Ryan traveled to France with ACIS from his hometown of Baldwinsville, NY. He went on to earn dual international business exchange degrees through Northeastern University in Boston and Reims Management School in France and credits his ACIS tour with validating his decision to study and work abroad.

As part of his time studying abroad in Paris, Ryan interned at world-renowned cosmetics company, L'Oréal, and was hired as a Global Project Manager in 2015. We interviewed him about his experience, and he shared his thoughts with us.

Tell us about your interview experience and how much did your bi-lingual skills influence the hiring managers?

When I began searching for an internship, I dreaded the idea of having to interview in French. Of course, the process is no easy task in any language. That said, the mere thought of needing to “sell” myself in a language not my own was incredibly daunting. At the time I may have thought my intermediate level of French to be a weakness, but now I believe instead that it was an opportunity. Being in France, actively learning to speak their language, and wanting to discover the world of French business were in fact my greatest assets.

After the assessment center I was given a second interview, this time with a marketing director. I met with three people in all, each equally as challenging. After much preparation, I managed to win them over with my *franglais*! While my native language may have been a strength, **it was my French that allowed me to get my foot in the door. Without it, I would have surely never been given such an opportunity.**



.....

Can you give us a brief overview of your responsibilities and any additional skills you gained from your internship?

During my six-month experience, I worked as an assistant project manager for the L'Oréal Paris skin care line. Our team of six was in charge of international product development. It was our responsibility to coordinate with the laboratories, industry managers, legal and our creative agencies.

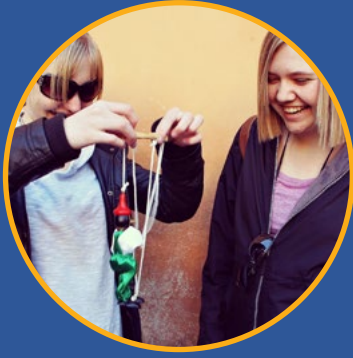
While I certainly developed business and marketing skills, I think my three most important takeaways may have been communication, confidence and adaptability. My level of French went from decent to exceptional. While I certainly have plenty more to learn, I am fully capable of sustaining an all-French conversation. Though exhausting at first, I now think in French, dream in French, and sometimes even mutter French expressions to myself!



In a very competitive job market, how do you think your experience working for an international company helped you after graduation?

I chose to pursue a dual degree from Northeastern and Reims Management School because I wanted to have an advantage domestically and internationally upon graduation. I love France—Europe for that matter! Of course, America is my home and my roots, but that doesn't mean I haven't thought about living and working abroad for at least some time. **This experience overseas, in my opinion, made me a better student, American, and person—ready for what has already become a dynamic 21st century.**





“

I had no clue if I wanted to go to college and if I did, what I wanted to study. I was very shy and not outgoing. **This was the first thing I did to step out of my comfort zone.** Going to France opened my eyes to the world and made me realize I wanted to travel with my job. I am willing to relocate anywhere for work now because of this trip. This year I leave for Germany for a year for a **dual-degree study abroad program** between Illinois State University and the University of Paderborn in Paderborn, Germany. If it wasn't for my ACIS trip, I'd have no clue where I would be today or what I would be doing. **This trip jump-started my college career.** If I could do it again, I certainly would. I would recommend this for anybody.”

-Jessica Riley,
ACIS Participant

SECTION 2

Making the Grade:

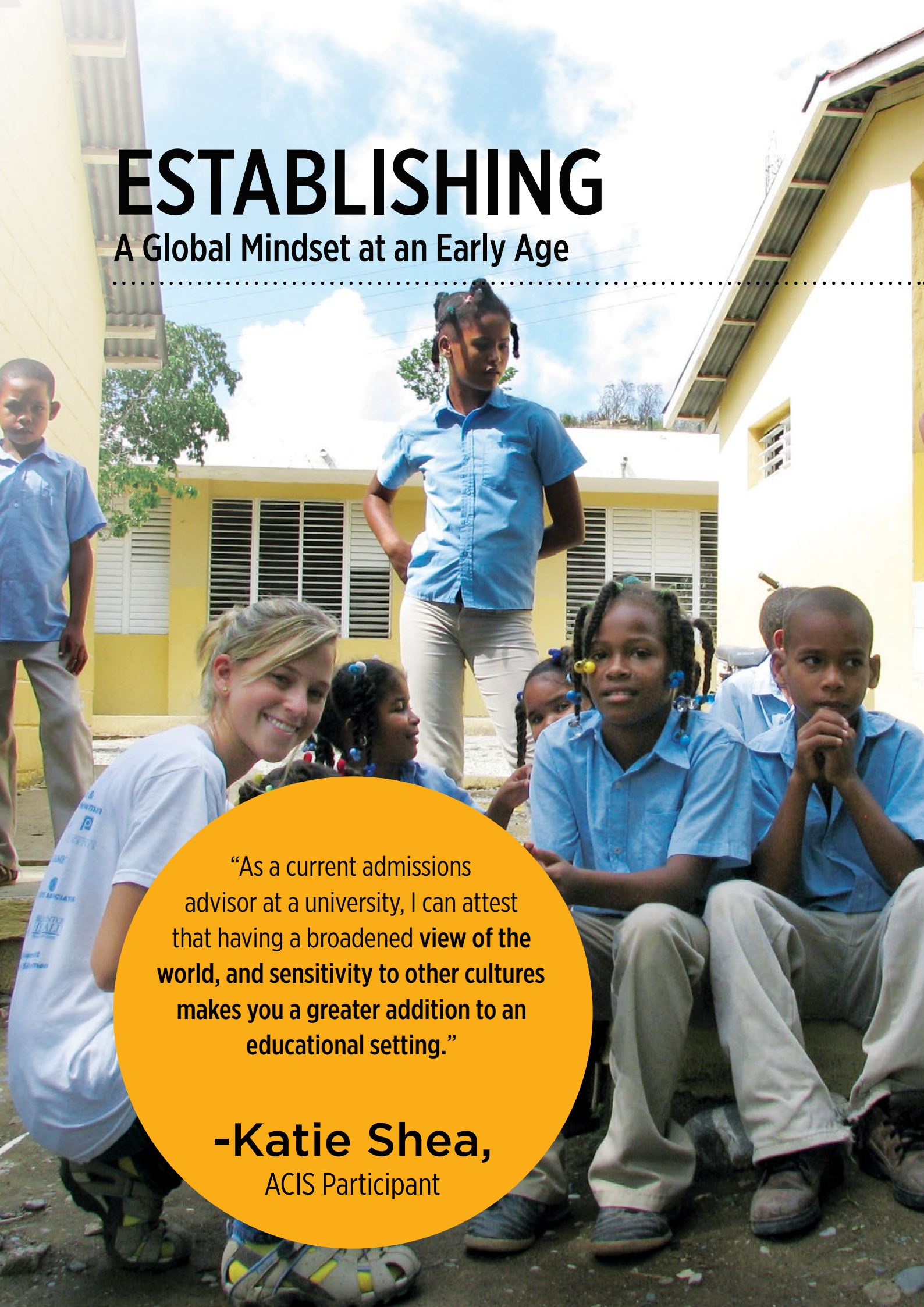
The Educational Advantages of Going Global Before College

IN THIS SECTION:

- The importance of establishing a global mindset
- Ways students can successfully reflect on travel experiences in the college admissions process
- How travel abroad prepares students for campus life

ESTABLISHING

A Global Mindset at an Early Age



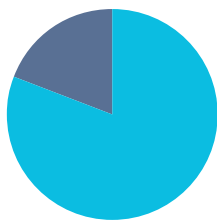
“As a current admissions advisor at a university, I can attest that having a broadened **view of the world**, and **sensitivity to other cultures** makes you a greater addition to an educational setting.”

-Katie Shea,
ACIS Participant

Colleges and universities around the U.S. are going global in big ways, from integrating international focuses into curriculum to seeking future students who possess the critical thinking skills to push outside the realm of their local communities.

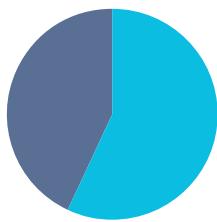
As a result of this global mindset in higher education, [traveling abroad at a young age](#) is a big step in the right direction to help students stay competitive among their peers in the classroom and beyond. When we asked our group of former travelers how their travel abroad experience influenced their path to higher education, many reported that travel motivated them on several fronts:

QUICK STATS



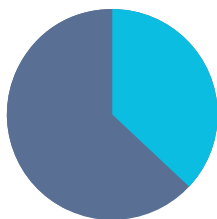
81%

of those that traveled in middle school or high school went on to pursue a college degree, compared to the [national average of 70% in 2016](#).*



57%

of respondents were motivated to study abroad during college.



37%

of travelers who went on to college said their travel experience influenced their field of study.

*Source: National average as reported by The National Center for Education Statistics

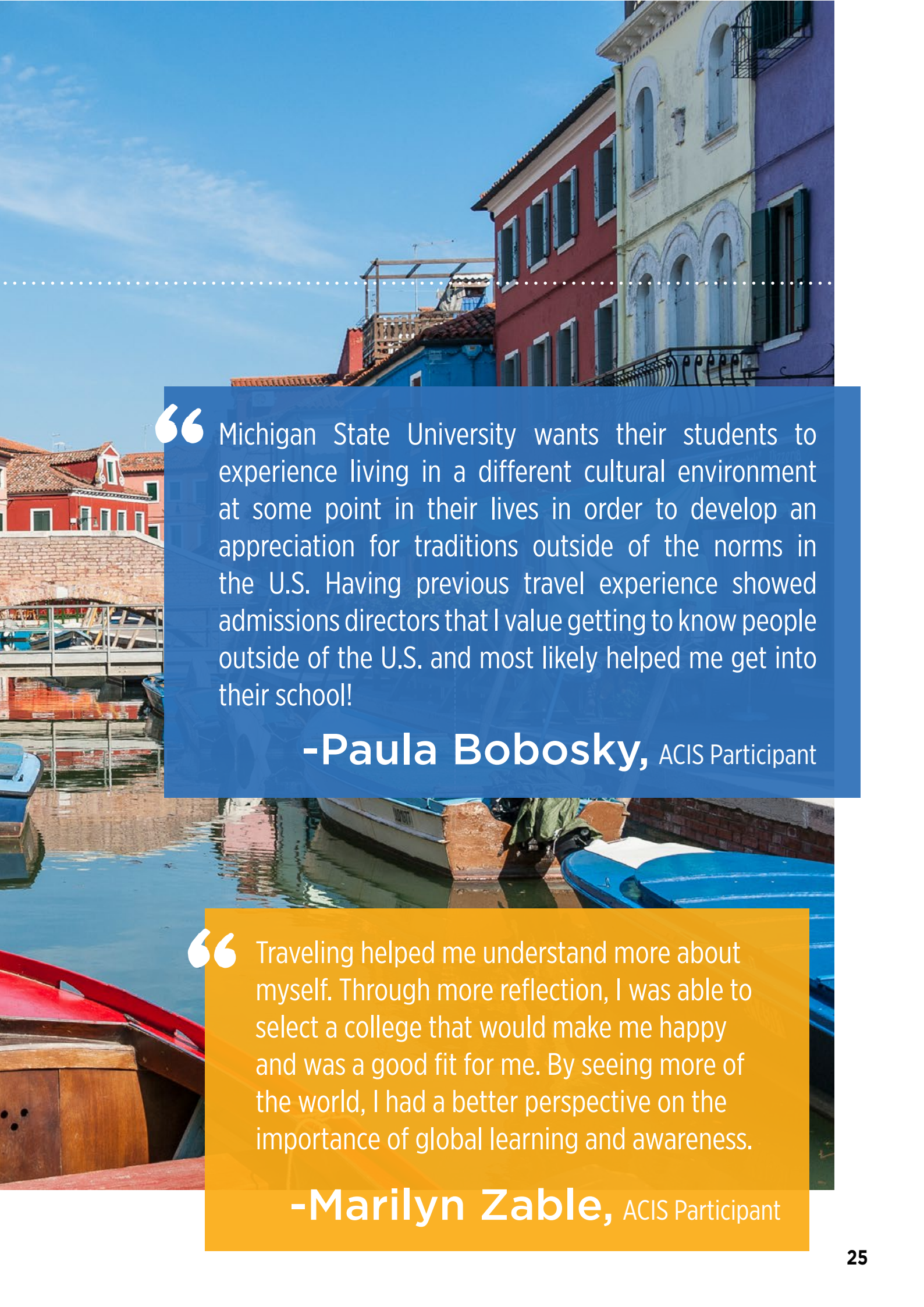
TRAVEL

As a Gateway to Higher Education




“ My ACIS travel experience exposed me first-hand to France’s culture and everyday spoken French, which I had been studying for three years at the time of my trip. In addition to making me a more confident admissions candidate with a more global worldview, my ACIS experience also allowed my high school French teacher — who would go on to write one of my college letters of recommendation — to gain a better understanding of who I am as a person outside of the classroom.

-Cara Lowry, ACIS Participant



“ Michigan State University wants their students to experience living in a different cultural environment at some point in their lives in order to develop an appreciation for traditions outside of the norms in the U.S. Having previous travel experience showed admissions directors that I value getting to know people outside of the U.S. and most likely helped me get into their school!

-Paula Bobosky, ACIS Participant



“ Traveling helped me understand more about myself. Through more reflection, I was able to select a college that would make me happy and was a good fit for me. By seeing more of the world, I had a better perspective on the importance of global learning and awareness.

-Marilyn Zable, ACIS Participant

REFLECTING

On Travel Experience in the College
Admissions Process

“When I applied to Boston College, my acceptance letter had a personal message from one of the admissions counselors, remarking how my description of my experiences and **attitude while traveling depicted me as a conscientious, capable student.**”

-Megan Hazel,
ACIS Participant

What's the magic formula for students to get into their top choice school?

There are a lot of qualities and attributes college admissions counselors and directors seek out in potential candidates, and it would be hard to map out a path with a 100% success rate. (That could be an ebook all its own.)

One thing is for certain, though; when we polled our former travelers, a great many reported ways they leveraged their international travel experience at some point in the admissions process. Through a well-crafted personal statement, an in-person interview, or repurposing trip photos in an art portfolio, students sharing their international experiences gave colleges and universities insight into the type of person each candidate was and has the potential to be in the future.



COLLEGE

Applications, Essays and Interviews



“ In my interview I was able to mention my first-hand knowledge of the importance of the environment and sustainability. I will be majoring in Engineering with a focus on automotive engineering. Not many people in the automobile industry are concerned with the environment/sustainable resources. My trip to Costa Rica made me stand out in my interview.

-Aedan Kinney McHugh, ACIS Participant



“ My class used this trip to study photography and many of the photos I took were used in a college application portfolio.

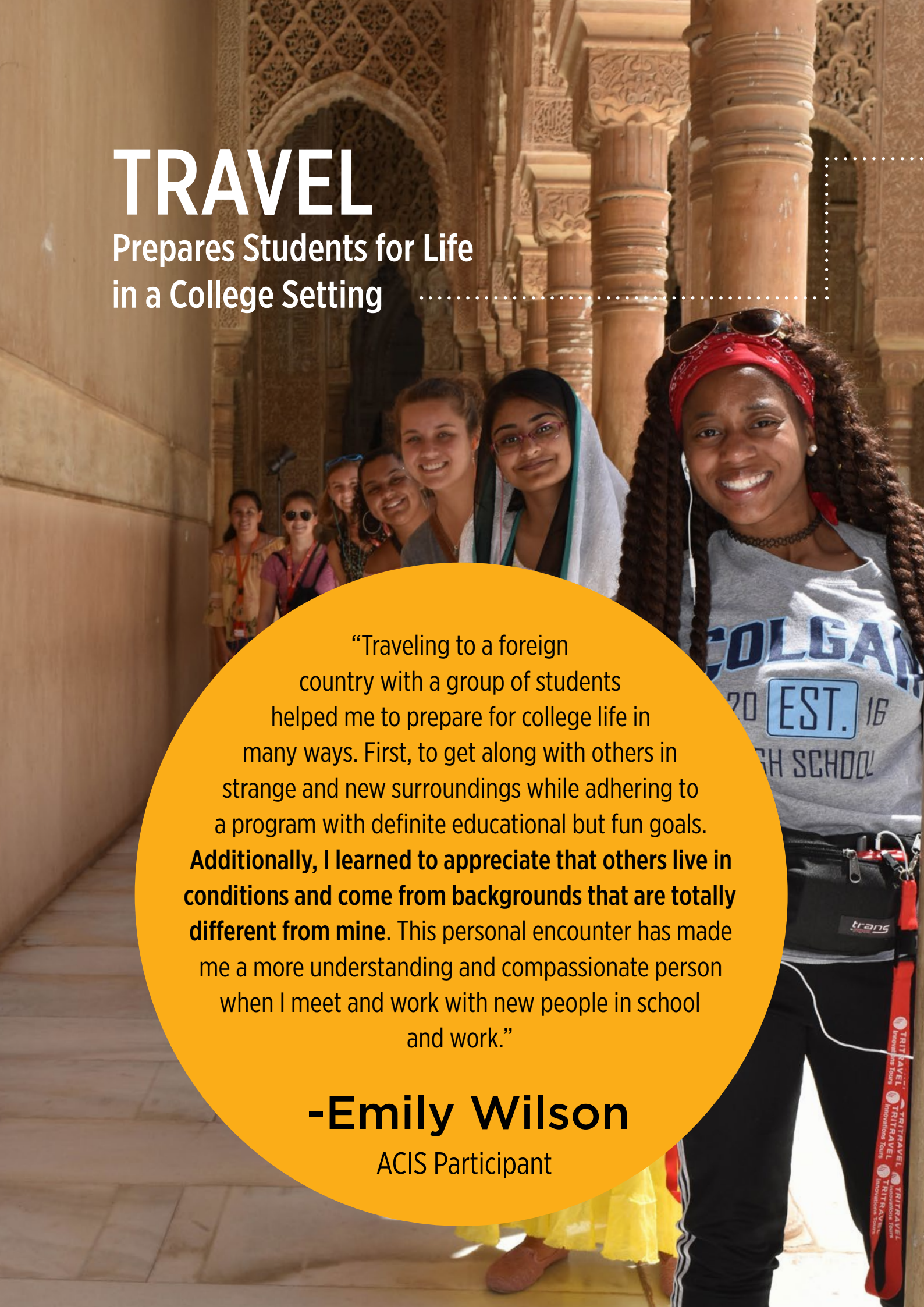
-Elise Greska, ACIS Participant

“ I talked about my travel experience in college interviews for both the Honors and Teaching Fellows programs, and I got accepted into both!

-Sarah Albritton, ACIS Participant

TRAVEL

Prepares Students for Life
in a College Setting



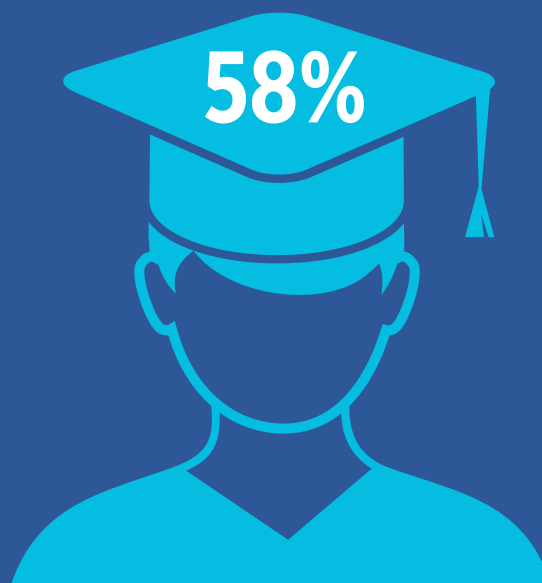
“Traveling to a foreign country with a group of students helped me to prepare for college life in many ways. First, to get along with others in strange and new surroundings while adhering to a program with definite educational but fun goals. **Additionally, I learned to appreciate that others live in conditions and come from backgrounds that are totally different from mine.** This personal encounter has made me a more understanding and compassionate person when I meet and work with new people in school and work.”

-Emily Wilson

ACIS Participant

Life at a university demands that its students quickly adapt to scenery, living situations, and learning environments, which can be a major transition for young adults who have left the comfort and normality of their families and community for the first time. We found that our former travelers felt more prepared to adjust to campus life as a direct result of their travel experience, many of which were able to “test” their adaptability on some level.

In addition, students reported that they felt more culturally aware on campus, more sensitive and empathetic to other people’s needs, had a better sense of how to compromise, and felt more confident overall.



of students believe their travel experience better prepared them for college life.

Additional Reading:

[The Power of Educational Travel:](https://bit.ly/2PHY4KC) <https://bit.ly/2PHY4KC>

[5 Leadership Qualities Students Gain From Traveling:](https://bit.ly/2sT83nA) <https://bit.ly/2sT83nA>

TRAVEL

Promotes Self-Reflection



“Traveling was a tremendous learning experience for me. Spending time in a foreign nation brings you out of your comfort zone much like college does. New surroundings can be refreshing and gave me a new appreciation for home.

-Michael Twomey, ACIS Participant



“

Just like going away to college for the first time, traveling to a foreign country exposes you to a whole new world of experiences. New people, foods, customs, rules, and the chance to explore something beyond your current realm are things you'd encounter while traveling or attending college.

-Lauren Pehnke, ACIS Participant





“I struggled to raise the money for my first educational tour abroad — working two jobs while in high school. Yet, I do not regret a single penny. **The experience changed me for the better.** I returned nostalgic for the memories and set on continued future travels. **I learned the value of hard work** saving for the trips and applied the same dedication to my college career where I studied International Affairs. To say that my high school experiences traveling abroad influenced my life would be a huge understatement. Rather, **these experiences defined my future.** I have since lived and worked abroad, and the courage and independence I gained from my initial trips allowed me to couchsurf and trek across the Caucasus into Turkey. It’s been four years since my first trip — I’ve completed my undergraduate studies, finished my graduate program, and have backpacked in four more countries. **Education and traveling will forever be a part of my life** and I owe that to those first tours abroad that sparked the passion for travel.”

-Katie Shea,
ACIS Participant

SECTION 3

A Global Workforce:

Transferring Skills into a Career



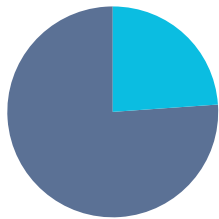
“Mentioning my travel experience on my resume helped SO MUCH in the interview process. I got to talk about **expanding horizons and increased self-responsibility, maturity, organizational skills, financial acuity, and independence.** I also had the opportunity to compare US and British healthcare systems while applying for a position at a healthcare company.”

-Sarah Mack,
ACIS Participant

While many of our former travelers live and work in the U.S., they've made it clear that having international experience has certainly helped them in their professional careers. Whether it's communicating with people in or outside the organization in a foreign language, being sensitive to other cultures, or simply understanding the key fundamentals in partnering with people abroad, there's no doubt that international experience provides a unique advantage for workers in today's ever growing global economy.

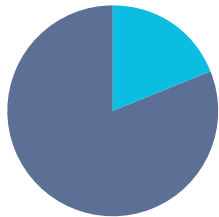
QUICK STATS

ACIS alumni in the first decade of their professional careers are already putting their global skills to use:



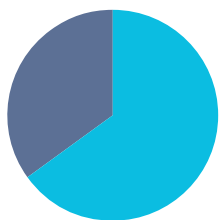
24%

report that their job requires communicating with coworkers or clients outside of the US.



19%

of those employed think their travel experience helped them land a job or internship.

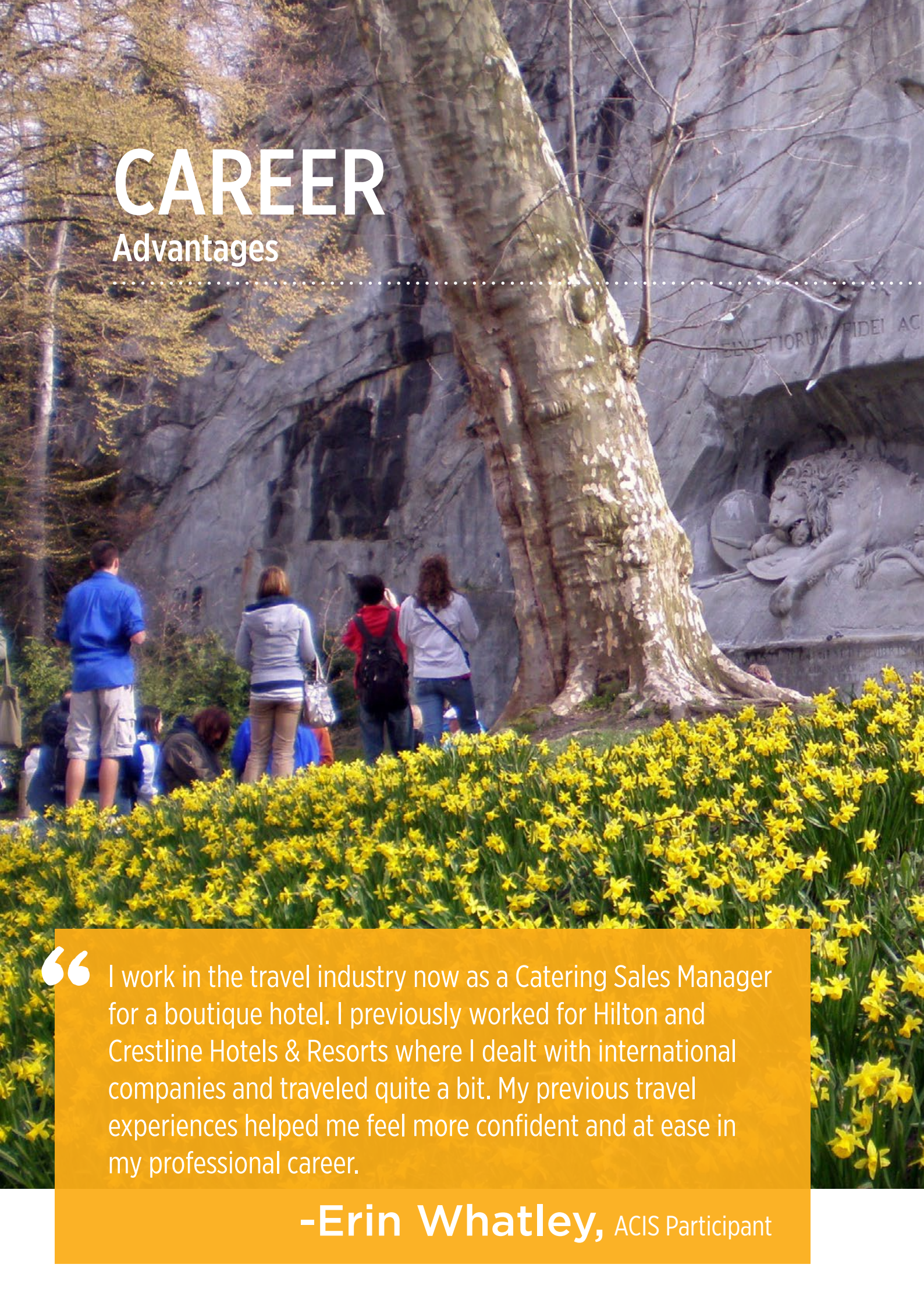


65%

have traveled overseas again since their ACIS trip.

CAREER

Advantages



“

I work in the travel industry now as a Catering Sales Manager for a boutique hotel. I previously worked for Hilton and Crestline Hotels & Resorts where I dealt with international companies and traveled quite a bit. My previous travel experiences helped me feel more confident and at ease in my professional career.

-Erin Whatley, ACIS Participant



“ My experiences living and traveling in France have helped me land jobs where my language skills have been integral to my position (as a writing tutor, French research assistant, English teaching assistant, and nanny). The maturity, confidence, interpersonal skills and sense of responsibility I’ve gained from travel and life abroad also helped me to land a job as a tasting room host at a boutique winery.

-Cara Lowry, ACIS Participant



“ During my interview I connected with one of the hiring managers whose husband is from Colombia. Our common knowledge of Latin America and Spanish helped to create a lasting impression.

-Jeff Reckamp, ACIS Participant

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Catching Up With Former Travelers

Michelle Shupp, Latin Teacher

Michelle Shupp first traveled with ACIS as a high school student in the mid-90s. Since then, Michelle has gone on to teach Latin at the high school level. She now leads her own ACIS tours overseas.



Tell us about your ACIS trip in 1995.

I never thought that my parents would be able to send me on this trip. Essentially, I asked them to humor me by coming to my Latin teacher's informational meeting. They came and the rest is history! It was absolutely a pivotal moment in my life. Frankly, it was an epiphany for me. This trip was the doorway to the rest of my life. Seeing the beauties of antiquity, experiencing the pace of Italian life, and hearing the tones of the language changed my life. I have never looked back since that moment. Since then, I have traveled to five continents and 25 countries. It changed the course of my life.

Was there something about this trip that influenced you to become a teacher?

Certainly, I realized that I wanted to become the person who would bring students on trips in the future. I don't understand how teachers of World Language (or any topic that involves interests beyond America's borders) can convey genuine depth in their topic without offering the companion to knowledge that is EXPERIENCE.



In general, how have you — as a person — benefited from your travel experiences?

Travel has changed my life, no question, but at this stage I am much more inspired by the changes I see in my students. Recently I received the following email from a parent about building relationships:

“Learning in the classroom is so dependent upon relationships. I think that you gave my daughter a passion for learning that I didn’t see before. She had a great senior year after the trip, which set her up for success in college.”

This is why I do what I do. How can I live on this earth without understanding its inhabitants? How can I teach my students about the world without sharing with them the continuity of human experience in places like San Clemente and Delphi? Travel has inestimable value.



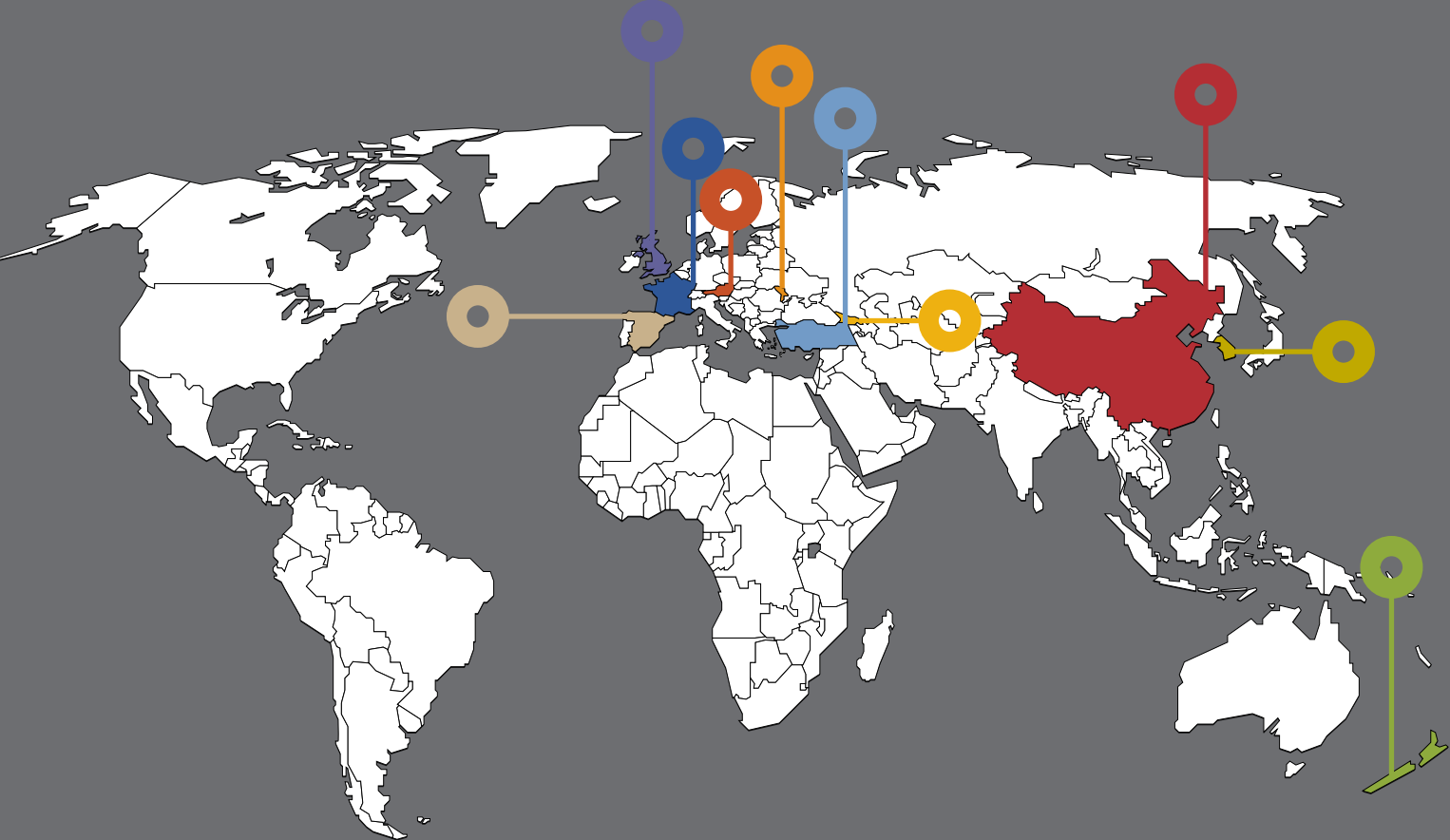
Watch here: <https://acis.wistia.com/medias/6uz7zpdio>

FROM WANDERLUST TO WORKFORCE:

Working Abroad



Our former travelers have some really fascinating jobs around the world! Here's a snapshot of where their careers have taken them:



- Parliamentary Assistant in London; Hospice care in England
- Assistant for a professor at a Spanish University
- Teaching English in France
- Teaching English in Austria
- Peace Corps volunteer in Moldova

- Teaching English in Turkey; Social Worker in Turkey
- Teaching English in Republic of Georgia
- Teaching English in China; Accounting tutor in China
- Teaching English in South Korea
- Agriculturalist in New Zealand



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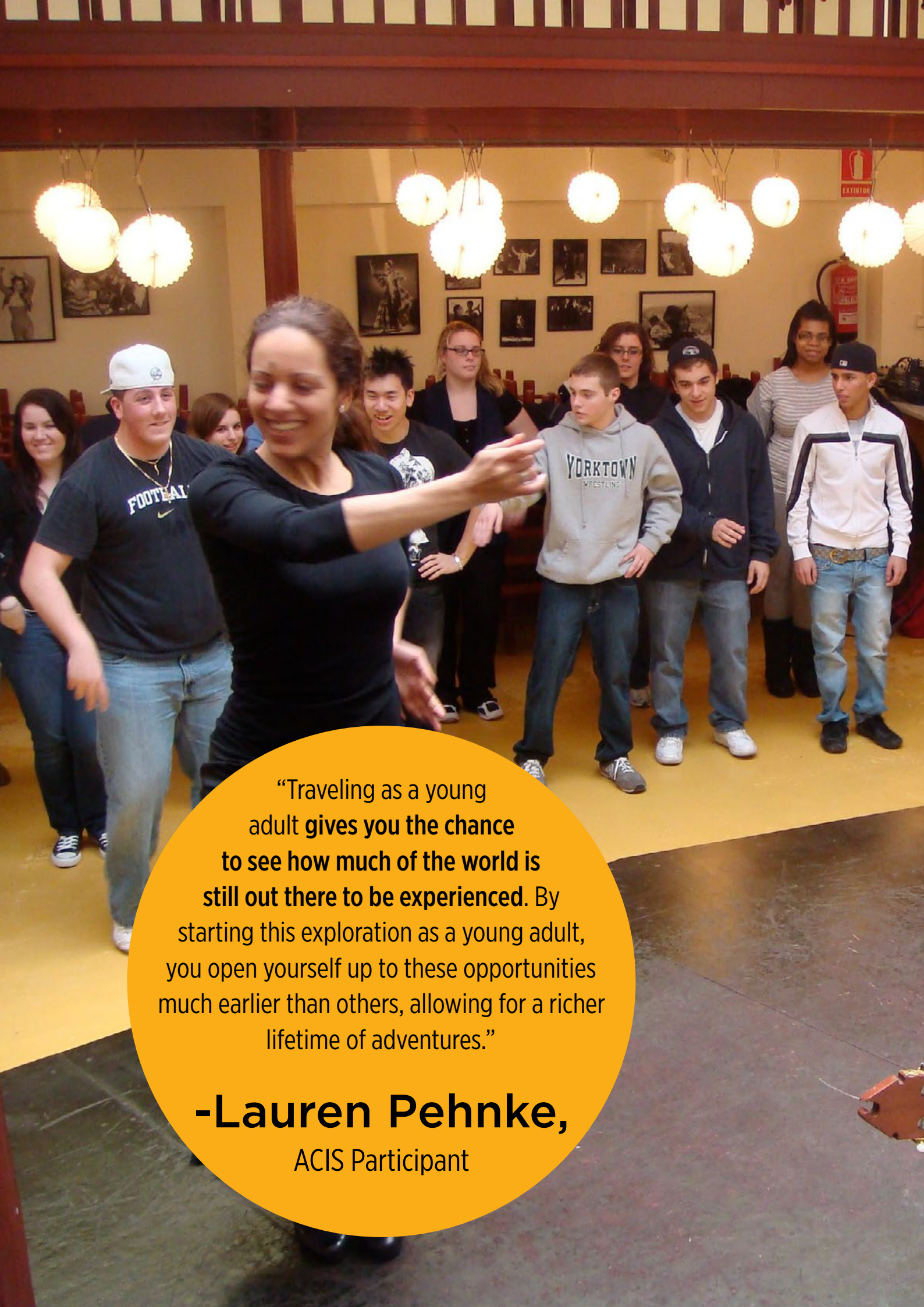
“I got back from being abroad with ACIS and I knew I had to keep learning because **everything I did from the smallest of gestures to the greatest of activities was a learning experience when I wasn't in my home country. I never want that learning to stop.** So I carefully chose a college that I knew had a good anthropology department and opportunities to travel abroad. I've since finished my college program **I know I made the right choice,** because not only has my past travel shaped me into a capable young woman able to tackle college without batting an eye, but it has also opened up a million thrilling different opportunities for me. Opportunities that I plan to seize. **I am fulfilling a lifelong dream of learning** as much as I can about ancient Greek and Roman civilization and am hoping to combine it with my love to travel in the near future! **I am beyond excited for what the future has in store and I can thank my travels as a young adult for how far I have gotten and will get in life.**”

-Melissa Velpel,
ACIS Participant

SECTION 4

Becoming Your Best Self:

How Travel Impacts Students'
Personal Development



“Traveling as a young adult gives you the chance to see how much of the world is still out there to be experienced. By starting this exploration as a young adult, you open yourself up to these opportunities much earlier than others, allowing for a richer lifetime of adventures.”

-Lauren Pehnke,
ACIS Participant



Regardless of age, travel has the power to open people up to new experiences, allows them to become more self-aware and worldly, and creates an environment for individuals to learn, grow and become better versions of themselves.

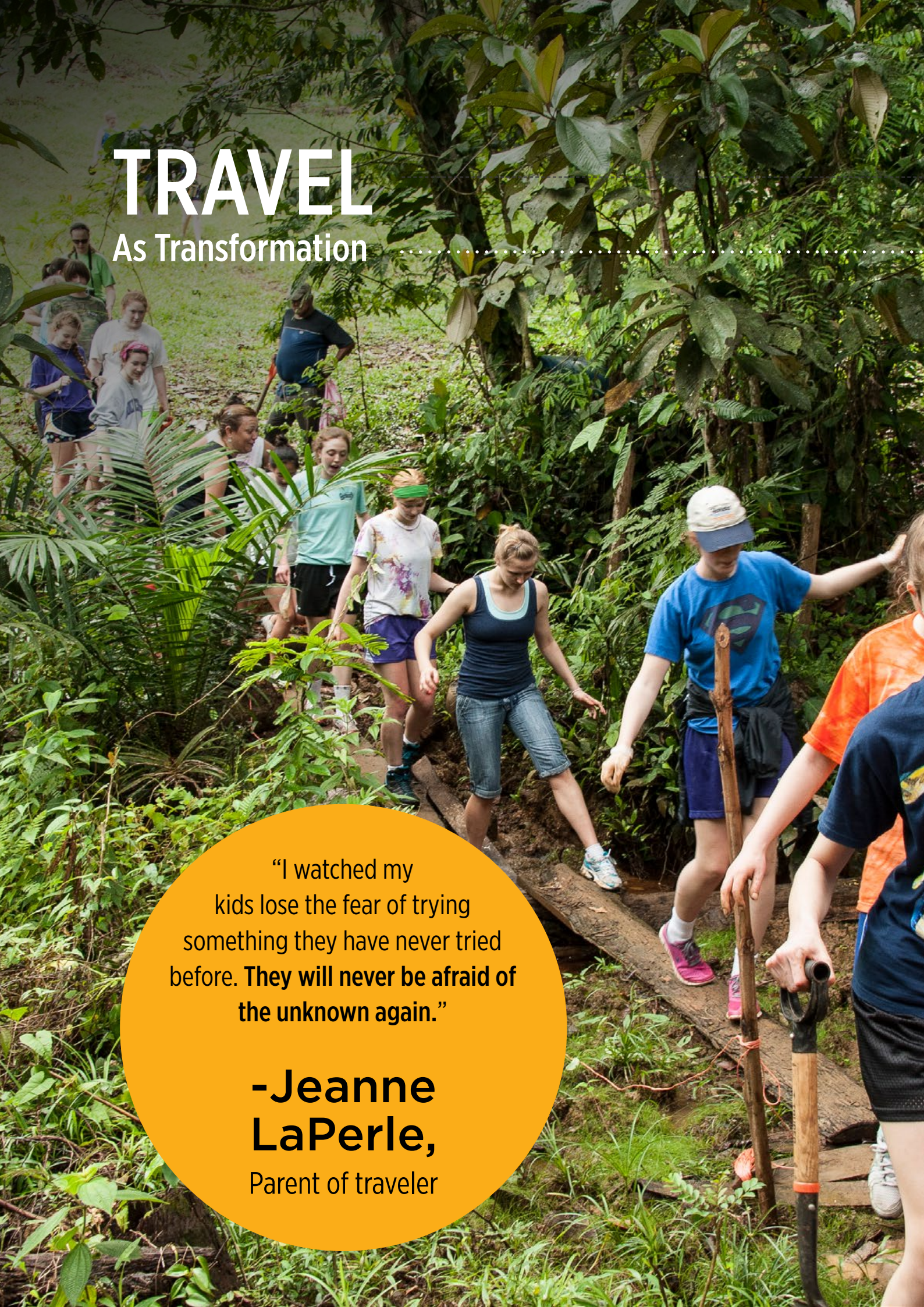
In educational travel, much is the same. Except imagine traveling with a group of your own peers – similar or different from yourself. Time and time again, we hear of the amazing bonds and friendships formed during these trips abroad. Together, students feed off of each other’s energy and enthusiasm for stepping outside of themselves and their comfort zones to try new foods, see new landscapes and be more open-minded about the world at large.

Student Essay:

[4 reasons traveling is so important:](https://bit.ly/2LMnJzW) <https://bit.ly/2LMnJzW>

TRAVEL

As Transformation

A group of people, including children and adults, are hiking on a narrow wooden plank trail through a dense tropical forest. The trail is built over a dirt path and is surrounded by lush greenery, including large ferns and various trees. The hikers are wearing casual outdoor clothing, and some are using wooden sticks for support. The scene is captured from a slightly elevated angle, showing the progression of the group along the trail.

“I watched my kids lose the fear of trying something they have never tried before. They will never be afraid of the unknown again.”

-Jeanne LaPerle,
Parent of traveler

Former travelers reported an improvement in many traits/skills as a direct result of their travel abroad experience:



Confidence
92%



Independence
94%



Maturity
91%



Organization
77%



Time Management
74%



Problem Solving
78%



Interpersonal Skills
92%

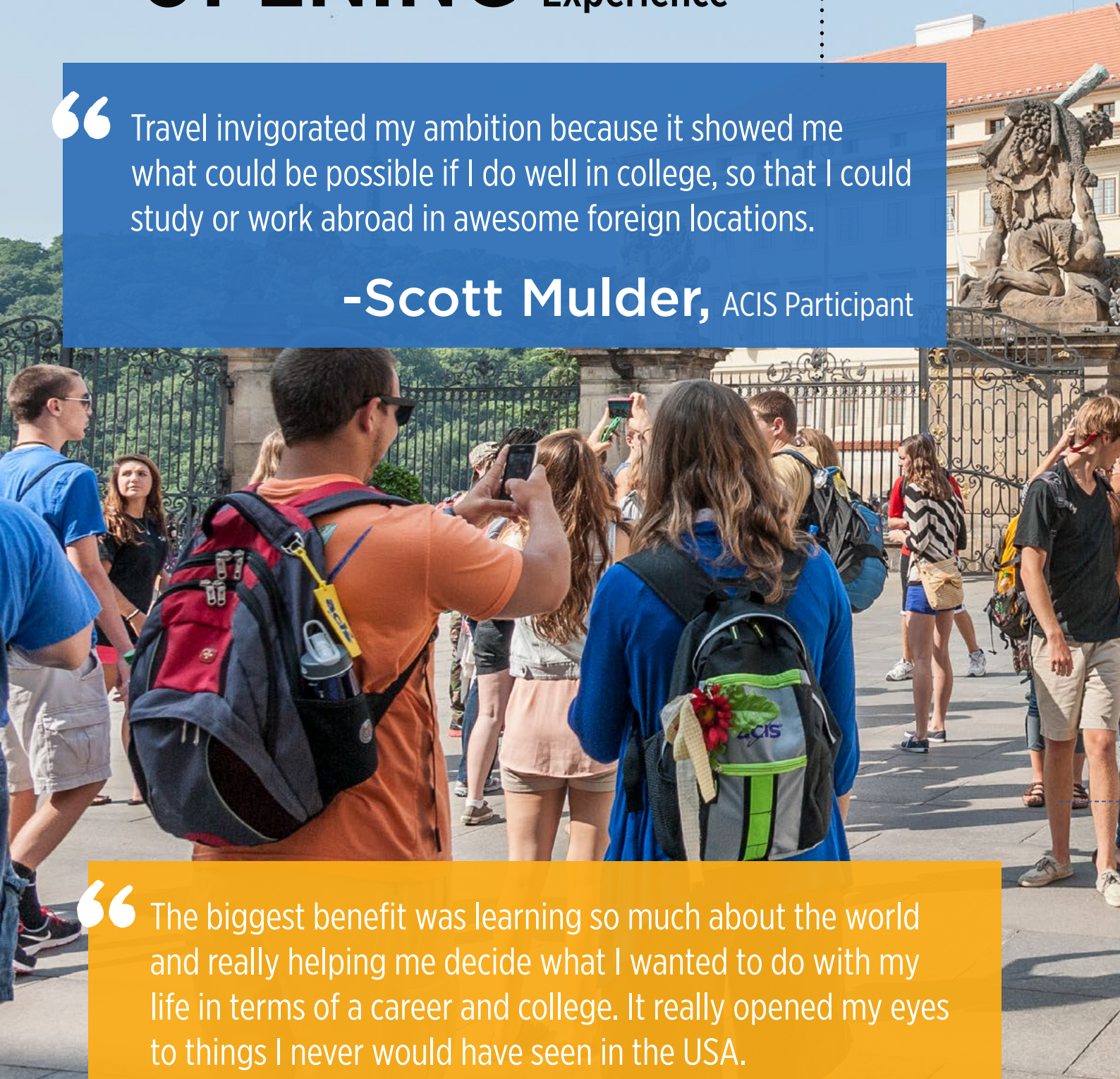
An **EYE** **OPENING** Experience

“ Travel invigorated my ambition because it showed me what could be possible if I do well in college, so that I could study or work abroad in awesome foreign locations.

-Scott Mulder, ACIS Participant

“ The biggest benefit was learning so much about the world and really helping me decide what I wanted to do with my life in terms of a career and college. It really opened my eyes to things I never would have seen in the USA.

-Melissa Vepel, ACIS Participant



“ I believe that studying/traveling abroad is fundamental to a well-rounded education -- my experience was transformational in and of itself, but also served as a catalyst for the success of my study abroad in college.

-Duncan Pregnall, ACIS Participant



“ It was one of the best experiences of my life spending a week abroad in Europe with my friends. It gave me a sense of independence and helped make new bonds and friendships.

-Yasmin Shahkarami,
ACIS Participant

“ I only spent one week traveling with ACIS in France, but I have more vivid memories of that week than I do the rest of my high school career combined. I cherish the experiences I had and I've dreamt of going back to France ever since I left! It was absolutely a life changing experience.

-Heather Eden, ACIS Participant



“My life has been so transformed by the positive memories of studying abroad in high school and college that my aspiration is to become a Humanities teacher in middle school or high school and take my students on trips just like how my teachers did with me. Traveling helped me understand that no matter how different people around the world may seem from us, we are all human, with the same stories, struggles, and emotions.”

Traveling helped me realize that the world may not be such a big and strange place after all.”



-Anjelica Dalia Deliz,
ACIS Participant

In Summary

HERE'S A RECAP OF OUR FINDINGS FROM ACIS TRAVELERS OVER THE PAST DECADE.

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Language Skills

67% of students continued to study a foreign language in college.

73% of ACIS travelers say they speak one foreign language fairly well compared with **18%** of the American population.

Education

81% of those that traveled in middle school or high school continued their studies at the college level compared to the national average of **70%**.

37% of travelers who went on to college said that their travel experience influenced their field of study.

57% of respondents were motivated to study abroad during college.

Career

24% report that their job requires communicating with coworkers or clients outside the US.

65% have traveled overseas again since their ACIS trip.

Personal Development

94% felt more independent after their trip.

78% saw an increase in their problem solving skills.

92% noted improvement in their interpersonal skills.



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