

AGABROAD NEWSLETTER

International Programs in Agriculture

Study abroad leads to a career of adventure

By Myra Rademacher

Stranded in a Chinese airport, Purdue agricultural economics student Jacquelyn Brown found herself in a predicament.

She had a plane ticket in hand for her return trip to Hong Kong, where she was studying abroad for a semester, but the airline staff would not let her board. The ticket had been booked for the right day but in the wrong month, and Brown had to sort out the mistake with very limited Mandarin.

But Brown was not deterred. For this experienced world traveler, international travel challenges and mishaps were

opportunities for personal growth.

“All those experiences are what make it a learning experience and make the best memories,” she said.

Brown had always known she wanted to travel and gain international experiences, but she never imagined the life skills or career experiences she would gain from studying abroad.

Over her four years at Purdue, Brown partook in five study abroad programs. She spent three of her four spring breaks abroad in Ireland, Colombia and Cuba, one Maymester in Italy and Switzerland, and her senior fall semester in Hong Kong.

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“While in college, many people told me to take advantage of the opportunities to travel as it becomes much harder once you have a job,” she said. “I took that advice to heart and took full advantage of the study abroad opportunities.”

Brown said two of the most critical skills her time abroad taught her were independence and problem solving. Getting lost in a foreign city, navigating a subway station where nothing is in English and living independently in a place completely different from home helped prepare her for the challenges in life after college.

After her first study abroad experience, Brown was convinced she wanted to gain as much international experience as she could. When pursuing internship opportunities the following year, a partially international position with Land O’ Lakes Inc. caught her attention.

She applied and was accepted to the Land O’ Lakes Global Food Challenge, a program for exceptional college sophomores that includes learning about global food security and traveling to four countries in Africa to learn about international development.

She continued working for Land O’Lakes the following summer in another internship and transitioned into a full

time role after graduating from Purdue.

“I knew it was perfect for me,” Brown said. “Seeking out international opportunities after studying abroad is really what led me to my current career.”

Today, Brown works in a two-year supply chain rotational program with Land O’Lakes. She began after graduation in a Purina manufacturing plant in Nashville, Tennessee, and then spent six months in Minneapolis working on an internal consulting team. She is now living in Lilongwe, Malawi, for six months working with the International Development Division.

In this role, she works with small food processors to improve their food safety and quality programs so that they can sell their products in local markets and export to other countries.

Malawi is the third poorest country in the world, so life for Brown there is different from in

the United States. Herds of cattle on the road cause traffic jams as opposed to cars, but she describes it as a beautiful country with amazingly friendly people who have helped her feel at home, taught her how to cook the local food and are teaching her the local language, Chichewa.

From her time abroad, Brown has learned that each place and program is a unique experience.



Purdue Agriculture names new international programs leader

Courtesy of Purdue University

Gerald Shively, an agricultural economics professor who has been at Purdue University for more than two decades, has been named associate dean and director of the College of Agriculture’s International Programs in Agriculture.

“Gerald’s diverse scholarship and travel experiences will distinctively inform his work as associate dean,” said Karen Plaut, the Glenn W. Sample Dean of Agriculture. “We are fortunate that he will be assuming this key leadership position within the college.”

Shively has focused much of his research on the international arena, and his interactions with Purdue colleagues and graduate students on those projects drew him to this latest challenge.

“You might say that international agriculture is in my blood,” he said. “It seemed like a very natural thing after benefiting so many years from Purdue’s international legacy to be in this position so I can give something back. The College of Agriculture has done great work internationally through the years, and a big part of my job is to be a good

steward of that reputation and to try to grow and enhance the college’s global footprint...”

...Shively will work closely with associate deans in the college as well as partners across campus to increase IPIA’s profile and strengthen and enhance the college’s missions of research, engagement and outreach, and learning. He is particularly interested to find new ways to promote outreach efforts in the international domain and to expand study abroad offerings for students.

Read more in Purdue’s [online newsroom](#).



Study Abroad Programs:

- Semester in The Netherlands
- Spring Break: Agriculture in Ireland

Student Feature

Dane Chapman

Ag Business

Minors: Supply Chain Management and International Studies in Agriculture



Why did you choose the locations you traveled to? Where was your favorite place and why?

“I decided to study in The Netherlands for 4 reasons: it is a leader in agriculture production and designing innovative technology, it is centrally located in Europe which allowed me to travel easily, Wageningen University was and still is the #1 agriculture program in the world, and the semester aligned with Purdue’s. In terms of traveling for enjoyment while I was there, I was fortunate to visit many surrounding countries with friends that I made at school and solo on a few if there was something that I really wanted to visit and had the time to do so. Choosing my favorite location is extremely difficult because each had their special characteristics that made them unique. However, my favorite city was Berlin because of the rich history that engulfs the city.”



What skills did you gain from studying abroad?

“Many. Studying abroad stretched me in many ways that I never expected and the few main take-aways are: communication with others takes many forms but it’s imperative to understanding, it isn’t about the places you visit but rather the people that you meet along the way that make traveling so fun, you are capable of more than you think you are and especially so in challenging situations.”

How has your international experience influenced your internship opportunities?

“Traveling and experiencing different cultures has been immensely rewarding for me personally and professionally. It has caused me to think differently, listen to understand, and be more open-minded and willing to try new things. As it relates to my internship experiences, being more open-minded and realizing that there are many complexities behind the reasons for the way things are done has forced me to ask more critical questions and understand the purpose behind decisions and processes.”

What is a favorite story from your time abroad?

“There are many stories to choose from, but my latest memory was taking a spontaneous trip to Phi Phi Islands with a friend I just made the day before when I traveled to Thailand in March. I believe the story is a perfect example of being vulnerable, always looking for an adventure, and realizing that people are all kind and if you pay close attention to those around you. I must not generalize everyone, but I believe most people just want to have fun, be loved, and be surrounded by kindness.”

Can you please give a brief description of how you started Project Do Good in South Africa, its mission and what it accomplished?

“Last summer I had the opportunity to serve as a Land O’Lakes Global Food Challenge Emerging Leader which was a 9-month long internship that focused on global food security. During the summer portion, the team of 10 Emerging Leaders traveled to Malawi and South Africa for two weeks to learn first-hand about food security and global agriculture... It was in South Africa that our team had the opportunity to volunteer at Leliebloem Youth Group Home, an orphanage for abused and neglected children. We only spent a few short hours volunteering where it was needed, but we realized the house lacked many basic amenities... five of us decided to found Project Do Good; a 5-month long crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for the orphanage. We set a goal of \$20,000 and Villa South Africa, a wholly owned subsidiary of Land O’Lakes agreed to match any funds we raised up to \$20,000...Our team then divided and conquered across our campuses and communities and we ended up raising \$21,608 for the home...”



From the eyes of a scholar: life in Vietnam

By Myra Rademacher

Chelsea Maupin, of Kokomo, Indiana, believes that teachers are always learning from their students. In her months teaching in southern Vietnam, the Purdue College of Agriculture graduate has learned that her students have incredible imaginations and are deep thinkers.

“Even students in my lower-level classes show off their imaginations and sense of humor in class,” she says. “I had some people draw their ‘perfect homes’ as treehouses and there was a walking robot house!”

Maupin says her students also inspire her to think from new perspectives on the topics they cover in class. She teaches English courses to students in grades 10-12 at a gifted high school in Phan Rang-Thap Cham, Vietnam.

Maupin is spending a year abroad in Vietnam on an English Teaching Assistantship grant through the Fulbright Program.

“I was introduced to the Fulbright program by an invitation to apply...thanks to the National and International Scholarships Office,” she says. “I was wanting to go abroad and either teach English or serve with the Peace Corps to gain skills working internationally and within education...”

The former Sustainable Food and Farming Systems student is interested in development studies, and Vietnam is a rapidly developing country.

“I wanted to learn about the food systems here and see how everything is changing,” she says. “Or even do some gardening in an area with a different climate than my hometown in central Indiana.”

Maupin is a study abroad alumna who studied at Ecole d’Ingenieurs de Purpan in Toulouse, France for 8 weeks during the 2016 summer. She also spent the 2015 summer on a short-term faculty-led program, “China: Globalization, Agriculture and the Environment.” Finally, she studied for a semester at the University of Sussex in England.

In her months living and working in Vietnam, Maupin has observed many cultural differences between the southeast Asian nation and the United States.

“The vehicle of Vietnam is the motorbike, not cars, and yet people will move things which I would borrow a truck to move,” says Maupin. “The most surprising thing I’ve seen is a husband and wife moving five sheep, using large plastic baskets hanging from the sides of the motorbike.”

The influx of mosquitoes and neighbors enjoying loud evenings of karaoke have been some of the less thrilling aspects of Maupin’s time abroad, but one thing she has loved is how family-oriented the culture is.

“Families and friends spend a lot of time hanging out together, going out to have coffee or milk tea,” she says. “It’s not a personal question to ask if you’re single or married, students talk about their ‘crushes,’ and there’s an expectation to get married and have a family of your own someday.”

Next year, Maupin will search for a job related to food or farming and community development/education. She is also interested in attaining her masters in international agriculture development, food and development or agroecology. Eventually, Maupin hopes to work in international agriculture education or agriculture education in urban areas. Her dreams may land her back in production agriculture, as well.

Thanks to her Purdue degree, Maupin says, her options are wide and many doors are open.





Faculty Feature

Dr. Elizabeth Karcher

Assistant Professor of Animal Sciences

Study Abroad Programs:
- Produzioni Animali: Exploring Animal Production in Italy
- Food Security & Environmental Challenges in Vietnam

Dr. Elizabeth Karcher and her graduate assistant, Jacie Grant, led the 2019 Vietnam spring break program focusing on food security and environmental challenges and emphasizing intercultural development. Twelve students and four extension educators traveled to the southern part of Vietnam. Thank you, Bill Horan, Kelly Pearson, James Wolff and Sadie Davis for serving as mentors to three undergraduate students each and being part of their group projects. The four mentor-student teams focused on studying topics including saline intrusion, biosecurity and sanitation practices, food traceability and food safety. Each team presented a video highlighting what they researched, experienced, and learned throughout the the semester project and study abroad over spring break at an event open to the public. The [video](#) covers the topic of Saline Intrusion in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta. This topic was chosen by students because of their educational interests and its importance to the Vietnamese culture and food production. A lecture presented to the group on saline intrusion at Can Tho University during the trip provided relevant information that supported this group's research project.

What is one thing you've learned from your experiences teaching abroad? What is one thing you love about the experiences?

"I've learned that you need to be flexible with your program and always have compassion and empathy for the students traveling with you. I try to always remember that for many, this is their first time experiencing cultures other than their own and this can be shocking. My favorite part about study abroad programming is that it allows me to develop meaningful relationships with my students. I am fortunate enough to be able to guide the students on a program, that for some, is life-changing. As an educator, I place a high value on these connections and relationships."

How have the programs affected your view of the world and global agriculture? How have they affected your students' views?

"My research program focuses on the development of intercultural competencies in short-term study abroad programming. By gaining a better understanding of the pedagogies needed to support student intercultural development, I feel I am better able to select course

activities to promote this development. Traveling the world and viewing the various way countries are feeding their populations provides great insight into how [culture] impacts agricultural production. Traveling has increased my openness and curiosity towards other cultures. I strongly believe my students share similar benefits from participation in my programs..."



Why are international agriculture experiences valuable to students?

"As future leaders, agricultural students must have an awareness and understanding of the global nature of agriculture. International travel can provide students with the skills needed to navigate future challenges facing agriculture. Additionally, international travel can develop student interpersonal skills that are highly sought after by employers."

Of these programs, which had the most profound impact on you as a professor?

"Traveling with students is an adventure. Whether it be sampling the culinary delights of Italy, or watching Water Puppet Theatre in Hanoi, each program offers unique opportunities to explore the world with students. No two programs or experiences are alike. They do not always realize it, but each student has something unique to contribute to the program. The experiences and relationships have the greatest impact on me as a professor."



Thompson Scholarship part of a broader legacy

Courtesy of Purdue University

When Bob Thompson began his tenure as dean of agriculture at Purdue in 1987, one agriculture student in four years had studied abroad. When he left in 1993, 10 percent of Agriculture’s students graduated having had a meaningful international experience.

“That’s my proudest contribution as dean at Purdue and I think, probably my most lasting legacy,” Thompson says.

His commitment to study abroad laid the groundwork for the nearly 40 percent of Agriculture students who now graduate having studied abroad in hundreds of wide-ranging programs the college offers through the Office of [International Programs in Agriculture \(IPIA\)](#).

Thompson was so passionate about providing international opportunities to undergraduates that he and his wife established the Robert L. and Karen H. Thompson Scholarship to support students who participate in international study programs in agriculture.

Among its most recent recipients are senior agricultural communication major Sheradan Hill, who studied at Aberystwyth University in Wales for the fall 2018 semester. The Thompson scholarship allowed her to participate without taking out a loan, travel on weekends and manage unexpected expenses.

Sharing cultural experiences with new friends from England, Poland, Zambia, Norway and the Czech Republic gave Hill perspectives that she believes will benefit her career: “It gives you a competitive edge because you’re going to be working with people with different backgrounds in the workplace. You learn our way isn’t the only way, especially in agriculture.”

“I’m convinced that to be competitive in the 21st century, our students are going to have to have an international perspective,” Thompson told the audience at the 2019 [Ag Alumni Fish Fry](#). In his [remarks](#), he advocates for more international content in the curriculum through faculty “who gain international experience so they understand, use and teach technology and knowledge from around the world.”

Tony Hoch, a senior in Agricultural and Biological Engineering, spent his spring 2017 semester at Massey University in New Zealand. Hoch had never ventured far from Indiana, and the Thompson Scholarship helped cover his travel expenses.

Hoch joined Massey’s Outing Club for weekend adventures like whitewater rafting, hiking and climbing in rugged terrain. “The mental resilience to step into things I hadn’t tried before — I’ve taken that mindset into everything I’ve done since then, including internships and coursework.”

He’ll take it next to the Global Operations Leadership Development program at Catalent Pharma Solutions, where in his first two years, he’ll complete three rotations — somewhere. “Now I know it will work out if I try new things,” he says. “I think people who have gone abroad have an advantage in being comfortable in new situations.”

Thompson learned that firsthand when he studied abroad his junior year as an undergraduate at Cornell. Bachelor’s degree in hand, he worked as a volunteer agriculturalist in Laos before earning master’s and doctoral degrees from Purdue. An expert in agricultural policy, trade and development, Thompson was assistant secretary of agriculture under President Reagan.

As dean of agriculture, Thompson focused both on internationalizing the undergraduate experience and on reducing poverty and hunger worldwide through the development of environmentally sound agricultural policies.

The Thompson Scholarship reflects these priorities. “With broader perspectives, both our faculty and students will be better prepared for the global and scientific frontiers of the future,” he says.

