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Returning Home

For many students, one of the most unexpected challenges of studying abroad is the process of returning home. Even if you have been abroad many times before, returning home can still be a challenge. While abroad, you likely encountered a multitude of new experiences, emotions, relationships, and newfound interests and worldviews. You will learn a lot about yourself as you reintegrate into your home community, and while this transition will be a great opportunity for growth and development, there will also be many highs and lows. This handbook is designed to supplement our re-entry webinar, and to help you navigate and understand the re-entry process in the weeks and months following your summer with CLS.

What is Re-Entry?

Re-entry is a term used to describe the process of coming back home after an experience abroad. Getting back into the swing of things can often be difficult and may lead to negative feelings about life in the US and nostalgia for your host country. Re-entry includes these emotional aspects of returning home (often referred to as reverse culture shock), as well as the challenges of staying connected and involved, continuing your language learning, and incorporating your overseas experience into your professional and academic goals.

While the re-entry process is not the same for everyone, we hope that some or all of the resources in this handbook will help you readjust to life at home and work to integrate your experience abroad with your future goals. We also hope that you will revisit these resources in the coming months as you may find that they resonate with you in different ways as you continue to integrate your CLS experience into your life.

The model below is widely used by international educators to represent the highs and lows of cultural adjustment that occurs while abroad and when returning home. Though it plots positive and negative emotions (vertical) across time (horizontal), the degree and timing of these highs and lows will vary for everyone.

![Image](https://insights.missouri.edu/the-reality-of-studying-abroad/)

Image retrieved from https://insights.missouri.edu/the-reality-of-studying-abroad/
Top Ten Re-Entry Challenges

Professor Bruce La Brack from the University of the Pacific has compiled a list of what he believes to be the top ten challenges students will face upon re-entry from their time abroad. You may experience one or all of these challenges in the weeks and months after you return to the U.S.

**Boredom** – After spending time abroad in a new place with new things to experience every day, home might seem dull in comparison. You can work to overcome this feeling by looking for new activities and experiences in your community.

**No One Wants to Hear** – Unfortunately, it is unlikely that anyone will be as interested in hearing about your adventures as you will be in sharing them. This is not a rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, any further interest on your audience’s part is probably unlikely. Be realistic in your expectations of how fascinating your journey is going to be for everyone else. Be brief.

**You Can’t Explain** – Relaying your experiences coherently or in a way that allows the listener to know how you truly felt will be difficult – if not impossible. It’s ok if people don’t understand your entire experience. Also, taking time to reflect on your experience will make it easier to articulate over time.

**Reverse “Homesickness”** – Just like you missed your home community while abroad, you will miss the people you met and the routine you grew accustomed to in your host country. Keeping in touch with your CLS contacts may help, but feelings of loss are an integral part of international experiences and must be anticipated and accepted as a natural result of study abroad.

**Relationships Have Changed** – It’s important to remember that your friends’ and family’s lives did not stop while you were abroad, and that they have gone through changes as well. Make an effort to show that you are interested in them and their experiences if you want to maintain your relationships. Be flexible and try to maintain minimal preconceptions.

**People See the “Wrong” Changes** – Some changes in your behavior or worldviews may upset those around you and may be considered “bad” traits that you picked up while abroad. Often times these moments are motivated by jealousy or feelings of superiority or inferiority and pass quickly. Try to monitor yourself and be aware of the reactions of those around you.
People Misunderstand – People may misinterpret any new ways of speaking or acting that you picked up while abroad. Referring to foreign places or using phrases from the host language may be interpreted as showing off. A silence that was seen as simply polite overseas might be incorrectly interpreted at home as signaling agreement or opposition. Be aware of how you may look to others and how your behavior may be interpreted.

Seeing with “Critical Eyes” – Sometimes the reality of being back home is not as natural or enjoyable as you expected it to be. Many people develop a more critical view of U.S. society while abroad, and this can lead to becoming judgmental of those around them for a short time after coming home. Being critical is a symptom of culture shock, just as you may have experienced while abroad. Making comparisons is fine, but avoid being overly-negative until you regain both your cultural balance and a balanced perspective.

Inability to Apply New Knowledge and Skills – Many students are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply new linguistic or social skills gained while abroad. Be creative and patient during this time; recognize that you will need to adapt as necessary and that the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired while abroad can help you adjust to life at home.

Loss/Compartmentalization of Experience – Being home, combined with the pressures of work, school, family, and friends, often conspires to make returnees worried that they might somehow “lose” the experience. Some fear that it will become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen: maintain your contacts abroad; seek out and talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours; practice your cross-cultural skills; continue language learning. With a little effort, you can integrate your overseas experience into your ongoing life and activities.

The strategies outlined in the following pages of this handbook are provided to help you overcome these and other challenges you may face.
Strategies for a Successful Re-Entry
Reflect on Your Experience

Be purposeful about taking time to reflect on your experiences, what they mean to you, and how they will continue to influence you. However you choose to process your experience – in writing, in conversations, or just in thought – reflection is an important and necessary step in re-entry. Taking the time to reflect will allow you to frame what you learned during your time abroad and decide how to move forward in a more meaningful way.

Possible strategies for reflection:

- Start or continue a journal for yourself
  - If you kept a journal during your time abroad, look back on it for inspiration
- Start or continue a blog to articulate your experience and how you are moving forward
- Post photos from your experience on social media
  - E.g. your next #tbt post on Instagram can be a good moment to highlight a particular experience or lesson from abroad
- Make a video or slideshow to tell a story about your experience
- Create a vision board using magazine clippings to organize your goals
- Talk with other CLS or study abroad alumni about your experiences

What did you miss most about home? What did you miss least?

What do you miss most about your host country? What do you miss least?

How has your perception of the U.S. and the world changed?

What challenges did you overcome? What was your proudest accomplishment?

Have your perspectives or values changed? How?

What did you learn about yourself during the CLS experience?

What skills, other than language, did you gain from studying abroad?

Did you meet your goals? How has CLS influenced or changed your goals for the future?

There is room in the workbook section at the end of this handbook to take notes on the following prompts for reflection. These can be used to develop longer journal entries or blog posts when you find yourself having more to say.
Keep In Touch
Among the things you may miss most from your time abroad are the relationships you developed with others in your CLS cohort and in your host city. Reaching out to these contacts may be a good strategy when nobody at home seems interested in hearing more stories, or when you want to talk to someone who may have a better understanding of your experience.

Possible strategies for keeping in touch:

- Schedule Google Hangouts, Facetime, or Skype dates
- Join [CLS Alumni Facebook Group](#) and stay active in the CLS Facebook group for your language
- Plan a reunion trip with your CLS cohort
- Plan a local meeting or an event for any previous CLS alumni in your area
- Start an email chain or group chat with your CLS cohort
- Send a postcard or letter to your host family, language partner, or another friend you made
- Attend a regional re-entry conference to meet other study abroad alumni (your campus may host re-entry events, or you can check out [Lessons from Abroad](#))

Get Involved
As a part of the CLS alumni community, you now have access to a variety of programs and resources created specifically to help you share your experiences with future participants and strengthen the impact of your CLS summer.

Join the CLS Alumni Society
The Critical Language Scholarship Alumni Society (CLSAS) is organized by and for CLS alumni. The society serve as an advocate for the continued advancement of critical language studies and cultural exchange in the U.S. and abroad. CLSAS provides alumni with avenues for professional development, community engagement, and language retention. Visit their website, [www.clsas.org](http://www.clsas.org), and fill out a [membership application](#) if you are interested in becoming a member and getting more involved.

Participate in New Alumni Discussion Groups
New Alumni Discussion Groups provide a semi-facilitated opportunity for alumni from the most recent cohort to discuss their experiences and process their learning in the months following their return to the U.S. These discussion groups offer an alternative to engaging in reflection on your own.

Apply for the Alumni Development Fund
The Alumni Development Fund (ADF) provides small grants opportunity for alumni to continue their language learning, pursue career development goals, and participate in community outreach related to CLS languages and their corresponding world regions. Individual applicants may apply for grants up to $700, pending funding from the U.S. Department of State; group projects may be funded up to $2,500 depending on the scope and type of event, project, or activity. Alumni from all years are eligible to apply for grants, however
preference is given to recent alumni and those who have never received an ADF grant before. The application for this year’s ADF will be available this fall.

Enter the Alumni Photo Contest
Each fall, the CLS Program organizes an alumni photo contest calling for photographs from recent returnees. The winning photos are featured in CLS promotional materials. Going through your photos is also a great time to reflect on your experience!

Both captions and photos are evaluated during the selection process. Winning photos are selected based on visual impact, content/composition, and technical quality. More information about entering the alumni photo contest will be sent directly to new alumni in late August.

Become an Alumni Ambassador
The CLS Alumni Ambassadors are a select group of CLS alumni representing the diversity of the CLS Program who take active leadership roles as volunteers for a one-year period. As representatives of the CLS Program, CLS Alumni Ambassadors are called on to mentor prospective CLS participants, provide feedback to CLS program staff, assist in coordinating and planning alumni initiatives and events, and represent the CLS Program in their community and to the general public. The CLS Alumni Ambassador will be available in late fall.

Sign Up for the Alumni Support Network
As an alumnus or alumna, you can sign up to mentor next year’s cohort of CLS participants. A survey will be distributed in the spring asking if you’d like to be listed in the Alumni Resource Directory and whether you’re interested in serving as an individual mentor. In addition to supporting new CLS participants by sharing your experience and advice, these programs will allow you to connect with people who have similar interests and goals.

Share Your Experiences in Your Community
- Post and/or publish your stories so that others can read them
- Participate in online forums to offer advice on different topics
  - Some great starting points include International Exchange Alumni website, CLS Alumni Facebook Group, and Official CLS Alumni Group on LinkedIn
- Find and contact CLS advisor on your campus to find out how you can help recruit for study abroad
- Reach out to newspapers on campus to submit a written piece about your time abroad
- Host an information session about CLS on your campus or another campus in your community
- Get involved with the international student community on your campus

Betty Nen (Indonesian 2017) representing the CLS Program at 2018 Asian Studies Student Symposium at University of Wisconsin-Madison Madison.
Stay Internationally Engaged
Just because your time abroad has come to an end doesn’t mean that you can’t continue to be internationally engaged. The suggestions below are just a few of many ways you can continue learning beyond CLS.

Stay Connected with the Culture
- Visit museums, concerts, and art exhibits
- Look for international restaurants and grocery stores in your community and the surrounding areas
- Volunteer with cultural organizations
- Join international clubs and attend events
- Keep in touch with your host family and other contacts in your host community

Continue Language Study
- Join or start a language club on your campus or in your community
- Connect with international students on your campus or in your community to engage in language exchange
- Sign up for a class on campus, at a language school, or online
- Set up Skype dates with a fellow CLS participant or your language partner
- Read books, newspapers, and online stories in your target language
- Watch movies and listen to music and news radio in your target language
- Practice journaling or blogging in your target language

Internationalize Your Studies
- Take an elective course in area studies
- Connect with staff and/or faculty who may be able to relate to your experience and help you connect it with your studies
- Do independent research to find out what your field of study is like in other cultures
- Consider another study abroad program: [https://studyabroad.state.gov/](https://studyabroad.state.gov/)

Explore the International Exchange Alumni Community at the Department of State
The International Exchange Alumni website (IEA) is for alumni of the U.S. government sponsored exchange programs to build on their exchange experiences, network with fellow alumni, and find grants and funding opportunities. You will receive an email with IEA login information upon completion of post-program requirements. Go to [alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov) to join the Exchange Alumni community and gain access to the following membership benefits.

- Read latest academic research through the eLibrary
- Search events posted by other international exchange alumni in your area
- Access a grants database with funding opportunities
- Compete in the annual Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund
- Connect with more than 100,000 global alumni
- Find Alumni Associations in more than 100 countries
• Post Alumni Updates to share news with fellow alumni

Returning Abroad
After the CLS Program, you may be eager for another international experience. Before you return abroad, think about what you hope to gain from the experience. We recommend doing online research, including reaching out to the CLS alumni community through Facebook and LinkedIn. Many of our alumni have diverse experiences working, studying, and living abroad after the CLS Program. You can also connect with alumni from other U.S. Department of State programs at alumni.state.gov.

Graduate School
If you’re considering the opportunity to continue your education, you may consider thinking internationally when researching programs. This can include looking at domestic schools with internationally-focused programs or components, or looking at institutions abroad. Some resources to get your search started are included at the end of this handbook.

Scholarships and Fellowships Opportunities
Alumni of the CLS Program are be eligible to apply for special scholarships in the following programs:

• Middlebury Institute of International Studies
  https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/admissions/scholarships/partners/critical-language
• The Hopkins-Nanjing Center U.S.-China Exchange Scholar
  https://www.sais-jhu.edu/graduate-studies/campuses/nanjing-china#Exchange
• Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University
  https://thunderbird.asu.edu/students/financial-assistance

You can find more information about fellowship opportunities such as Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship and Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship at careers.state.gov

Volunteer, Work, or Research
As you’re probably well aware, the professional world is becoming increasingly globalized. Employers are looking for culturally competent employees and more international opportunities are available across multiple fields. If you’re interested in volunteering or working abroad, we encourage you to think about your career goals and how they may fit into the options listed below. There are hundreds of international opportunities out there, and these resources are simply meant to serve as a starting point for your own personal research. Again, additional resources are articles are provided at the end of this handbook.

• Domestic employers with international positions
  o This may include private companies, NGOs, or higher education institutions.
• International employers
• Government positions
  o There are many government agencies, including the U.S. Department of State, that offer international careers. Start your search at USAJOBS.gov and careers.state.gov
  o Department of State maintains a list of government agencies related to international careers and working overseas.
  o This guide provides a comprehensive overview of international jobs in government.
  o Explore diverse career paths at the U.S. Department of State:
- **Consular Fellows Program**
- **Foreign Service Specialists**
- **Foreign Service Officers**
  - Reach out to the **Diplomat in Residence** in your region who can discuss other opportunities
  - Sign up at this link to receive career-related information from the Department of State
- **Volunteer opportunities**
  - Build Abroad offers “The Ultimate Guide to Volunteering Abroad”
- **Teaching opportunities**
  - “How To Find a Job Teaching English, All Over the World”

My World Abroad also provides a large list of resources depending on your goals for returning abroad.

### Study Abroad and Career Development

While some employers understand the value of your participation in a study abroad program and the transferrable skills you likely developed from the experience, you will need to be able to articulate what you gained to really differentiate yourself from other applicants. There are three main avenues where you should plan to identify and express the skills you gained and strengthened while abroad: on your resume, in cover letters, and in interviews.

For individualized assistance on how to integrate your study abroad experience into your resume and cover letter, we recommend you contact the career center on your campus. These centers often extend services to recent alumni if you have already graduated.

### Resume

While every resume should be tailored to a specific job posting or application, you can include the CLS program in a section about education, awards and scholarships, or international experience. In addition to listing the name of the program, also consider including some basic information about the program model. If your academic and professional goals for participating in the CLS program are related to the position to which you are applying, be explicit in making this connection with specific examples of the skills you gained or the content you mastered.

Here are a few examples of how you may present the CLS Program on your resume:

**INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Gwangju, Korea (Summer 2018)

- Studied advanced Korean in an 8-week intensive language program
- Lived with a host family and adhered to a Korean-only language policy
- Completed a final presentation on public health in Korean, which included interviewing local doctors in Korean
- Post-program ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview score: Advanced-Low
Awards and Honors

U.S. Department of State - Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)  
June - August 2016

Group-based intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experience in Jaipur, India with the target language of Hindi.

EDUCATION

U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship Program (Vladimir, Russia)  
June-August 2015

- Completed an intensive 8-week Russian language program in an immersion setting, including 20 hours per week of classroom instruction
- Strengthened oral Russian communication skills through regular meeting with native-speaking language partner

You can also incorporate your language proficiency into your resume, whether it be under a specific section for languages or communication, or under a section for additional skills or qualifications.

Here are a few examples as to how you may write this on your resume:

LANGUAGES & SKILLS

Hindi (Intermediate), Spanish (Beginning)  
Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite  
Limited Working Proficiency in Adobe Creative Suite

Language Skills

Spanish (Native)  
Turkish (ACTFL OPI Score: Intermediate-Mid)

Non-Competitive Eligibility

Under Executive Order 13750, alumni who successfully complete the CLS Program are eligible for 12 months of Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) hiring status within all agencies of the U.S. government to apply for Civil Service jobs, with the possibility of an extension up to three years if certain criteria are met. Alumni of the CLS program will automatically be issued a letter confirming this status upon successful completion of their post-program requirements.

If you are interested in working with the U.S. government and want to take advantage of your NCE status, more information is available through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and in the packet you will receive with your NCE letter.
LinkedIn
Adding your CLS experience to your LinkedIn profile is similar to adding it to your resume. You may choose to add CLS to one of many sections on LinkedIn, including Education, Experience, and Awards & Honors. You can also add language proficiency to your LinkedIn profile.

We also encourage you to join the CLS Program - Official Alumni Group. By joining, you can:
- Easily indicate your status as a CLS alumnus or alumna on your profile
- Search the group membership for networking opportunities and career advice
- Participate in group discussions and learn of opportunities posted by CLS staff and fellow alumni

Cover Letter
Similar to a resume, your cover letter should be tailored to a specific job posting or application. Within each cover letter you write, it is important to use concrete examples of your experience to highlight relevant skills based on the job description. Your cover letter should not simply summarize your resume; it is your opportunity to explain why you are interested in a specific role with a specific organization and how your experience makes you the best candidate for the position.

Be sure to connect the skills you gained through study abroad with the relevant skills listed on a job posting as much as possible. Being able to articulate the value of your experience abroad in terms of a direct benefit to potential employers and their organizations will make both your resume and cover letter significantly stronger.

Your career goals may also have shifted, expanded, or completely changed because of your international experience. If your experience abroad influenced your decision to pursue a certain career or field of work, you can also mention this in your cover letter.

Skills and Qualities Gained Abroad
Some of the skills that you may have developed or utilized on the CLS Program that could be used in a resume, cover letter, or interview may include:
- Foreign language proficiency
- Overall communication skills
- Intercultural competence; experience working across cultures
- Flexibility and ability to adapt to rapidly changing situations
- Open-mindedness and ability to understand different points of view
- Ability to learn quickly and act independently
- Experience working with people of different backgrounds
- Perseverance
- Time management skills
Interviews
In most interviews, you will be asked to describe situations or give examples of times when you demonstrated particular behaviors and skills. This is a great opportunity to use your experiences abroad to stand out to an employer. It is important to remember that for a job interview, it is not necessarily the most interesting stories that you should plan to share, but rather experiences that will reflect a certain skill you gained or strengthened while abroad that relates to the question. It’s a good idea to collect examples ahead of interviews so that you have a few answers ready to go. Hiring managers are looking for concise yet descriptive responses.

Some common interview questions that could be answered with stories from study abroad include:

- Can you give an example of a time you overcame a challenge or unexpected obstacle?
- Tell me about a time you set a specific goal and about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to think quickly resolve a difficult situation.
- Give a specific example of a time you had to function in a new or unknown environment. How did you adapt?
- Can you give an example of a time when you had to handle a very stressful situation? How did you cope?
- Please describe an experience when you worked in a group or on a team. What were your strengths and weaknesses within the team?
- Describe a time when you had to resolve a conflict based on misunderstandings or cultural differences.

Keep in mind that you won’t want ALL of your examples to be from your time abroad; balance your CLS stories with other specific experiences and examples.

To better articulate your experience abroad in an interview, we recommend the S.T.A.R. (situation, task, actions, result) approach, outlined in the workbook pages at the end of this handbook.

Additional Resources
Want to learn more about re-entry and strategies for adjusting? The following list is not exhaustive, but will give you a starting point to learn more!

Re-Entry & Culture Shock
- “My reverse culture shock: returning from a year abroad is tough” by Frances Carruthers
  https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jul/20/reverse-culture-shock-tough-adjusting-home-studying-abroad
• “Reverse Culture Shock: Expectation Vs. Reality” by Danielle Desimone
  https://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/reverse-culture-shock-expectation-vs-reality

• “Dealing with reverse culture shock” by Tas Anjarwalla

• “What’s up with Culture: Module 2-Welcome Back! Now What?” by the University of the Pacific
  http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/

• “A Readjustment Manual for Parents: A guidebook for parents of students returning home from studying abroad,” by Leonore Cavallero

• Department of State Overseas Briefing Center: Reverse Culture Shock
  https://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c56075.htm

International Education

• Funding opportunities for education and research abroad: https://studyabroad.state.gov/us-government-resources/programs/programs-us-undergraduate-and-graduate-students

• Lessons from Abroad list of graduate schools abroad and internationally-focused degree programs in the US: http://www.lessonsfromabroad.org/resources/graduate-school/

• Diversity Abroad “Fast Facts About Degree Abroad” http://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/graduate-degrees-abroad/fast-facts-about-degree-abroad

• GoAbroad.com Masters Degrees Abroad: http://www.goabroad.com/degree-abroad/search/masters/degree-abroad-1

• Association of Professional Schools in International Affairs: https://apsia.org/

Working Abroad

• Making Global Impact: Guide to International Jobs in Government

• “Seven Tips for Becoming an International Aid Worker,” by Alexandra Talty

• “Six Strategies for Moving into Academia,” by Robert DiGiacomo
  https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=515

Volunteering Abroad

• “The First Timer’s Guide to Volunteering Abroad,” by Natalie Southwick
  https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/first-time-volunteer-guide-to-volunteering-abroad
Study Abroad & Career Development

- “Effective Marketing of Your Study Abroad Experience to Employers,” by Martin Tillman  
  [http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/effective-marketing-of-your-study-abroad-experience-to-employers.aspx](http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/effective-marketing-of-your-study-abroad-experience-to-employers.aspx)

- “Studying Abroad: A Cost Effective Alternative,” by Amanda Rugger  

- “3 Steps to Adding Study Abroad to your Resume,” by Julia Dunn  
  [http://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/3-steps-to-adding-study-abroad-to-your-resume](http://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/3-steps-to-adding-study-abroad-to-your-resume)

- “Study Abroad Could Give You an Edge in the Job Market,” by Jareen Imam  

U.S. Government

- U.S. Department of State Careers: [https://careers.state.gov/](https://careers.state.gov/)

- United States Government Jobs: [https://www.usajobs.gov/](https://www.usajobs.gov/)

- Non-Competitive Eligibility FAQ: [https://alumni.state.gov/member-resources/job-center/non-competitive-federal-employment](https://alumni.state.gov/member-resources/job-center/non-competitive-federal-employment)

- Diplomats in Residence, for information about Foreign and Civil Service careers, internships, and fellowships: [https://careers.state.gov/connect/dir/](https://careers.state.gov/connect/dir/)
Workbook Activities

The following pages contain activities designed to help you reflect on your experience and articulate its value for various audiences, including potential employers.

Reflection Activity

1. What did you miss most about home? What did you miss least?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

2. What do you miss most about your host country? What do you miss least?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

3. How has your perception of the U.S. and the world changed?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

4. What challenges did you overcome? What was your proudest accomplishment?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
5. Have your perspectives or values changed? How?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

6. What did you learn about yourself during the CLS experience?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

7. What skills, other than language, did you gain from studying abroad?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

8. Did you meet your goals? How has CLS influenced or changed your goals for the future?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Sharing Your Experience
Welcome back! We love it when CLS alumni return from the summer happy, healthy, and feeling excited about their language-learning experiences abroad. We love it even more when they want to help spread the word about the program.

Because CLS is a relatively young initiative, there are still many qualified students at schools across the U.S. who have not heard of the program. We rely heavily on CLS information sessions to help get the word out to these students, as well as to the faculty and staff at their institutions who will help to promote the program to new students for years to come.

As much as the CLS staff likes to travel, we can’t go everywhere every year. Alumni presentations help to give CLS a voice all across the country; plus, prospective applicants love to hear stories from and ask questions of program alumni! Hearing about your first-hand experience on the program can be far more impactful for a prospective applicant than reading about the program online or in a brochure.

We have put together this short guide to help you represent the CLS Program, but are also available to answer any questions or provide further information. Please email us at clsalumni@americancouncils.org if you want to get in touch.

We thank you for your enthusiasm!

Where to Start
Applicants for the CLS Program must be enrolled in a degree-seeking program, so most of our outreach happens on college campuses, including community colleges, public and private universities, and minority serving institutions. In addition to spreading the word on your own campus, we recommend reaching out to other schools in your area, especially those that may not have a study abroad or scholarships office to share opportunities like CLS with students.

There are probably several offices on any campus that would be interested in helping you share your experience on the CLS Program, and we recommend that you reach out to them to offer to conduct an information session or attend an upcoming study abroad or scholarships fair. It will make your planning much easier, and it will help you reach a bigger audience. If there’s someone who told you about the program or helped you with your application, that’s a great place to start. If not, try reaching out to some or all of these people:

- **CLS Campus Advisor** (search by institution here: [http://www.clscholarship.org/advisors](http://www.clscholarship.org/advisors))
- Office of **Study Abroad, Education Abroad** or **International Programs**;
- Office of **Scholarships, Fellowships**, or **Nationally Competitive Awards**;
- Undergraduate **Honors Program**;
- On-campus **Fulbright Program Advisor** (search [here](#) for yours);
- **Language departments** – either by language (e.g. Arabic Department, Russian Department), world region (e.g. East Asian Studies Department, Islamic Studies Department), or under a catch-all term like Department of Modern Languages or Foreign Languages. It is especially helpful to check with these...
departments if any of the 15 CLS languages are offered at your school, but you can check with them even if the language offerings do not include CLS languages;

- Language Lab or Language Learning Center;
- Office of Multicultural Affairs;
- Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs;
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion;
- LGBTQ Resource Center;
- Campus Writing Center or Tutoring Center.

People in these offices can help you set a time and reserve a space on campus for an information session, spread the word, and serve as follow-up contacts for students who are interested in starting an application and want help with it. Don’t be afraid to email professors and administrators you don’t know personally, or to ask for help from people in departments and offices without a clear connection to CLS. University web sites usually have a faculty and staff directory where you can find contact information.

Remember that the CLS Program aims to attract diverse students from all areas of study, so feel free to email professors with whom you work in any department to ask for help setting up an information session or classroom visits and tell them about how CLS can benefit the students they work with. Fields like engineering, business, or fine arts may not be as obvious as foreign language classes, but CLS offers many languages at the beginning level and is interested in students from these departments, too!

These offices are doubly useful if you’re planning an information session at a school other than your alma mater, where it won’t be as easy for you to set things up alone or advertise your session by word of mouth.

When to Start
The CLS application is open from approximately mid-September through mid-November. The majority of our outreach happens at the beginning of this window so students have the most time possible to work on an application. However, CLS does outreach throughout the year to encourage students to plan to apply in the fall and to talk about the value of studying abroad through any program, not just CLS.

Getting the Word Out
In addition to collaborating with offices across a campus, there are several ways to let students know about your CLS information session. You can download CLS Program fliers from our website and print them out, or make your own flier announcing the date and time of the session. You can email professors to let them know, write information about the session on the board in language classrooms, or create a Facebook event. You can also let us know that you’re planning a session, and we’ll announce it on the CLS Facebook page and Twitter feed. Sample promotional materials are attached at the end of this document.

Structuring an Information Session
The easiest way to structure a CLS information session is to download the CLS PowerPoint from our website. The PowerPoint file has notes attached to each slide to help guide what you say. It also focuses in large part on providing a frame for you to share your experience of the CLS Program.
If you’re PowerPoint-averse, or if you’re presenting in a space that doesn’t have a projector, you might still want to look at the PowerPoint before you present, just to see what information it contains and how it’s structured. Many key points about the CLS Program are included in the PowerPoint. However, the focus should be on your story.

While attendees of an information session will be interested in all of the details about the program, all of that information is also available on our website and in our informational YouTube videos, so it’s ok not to focus too heavily on things like eligibility and the details of each language program. What you bring to the presentation is your personal experiences from abroad, and we encourage you to share those stories! Photos and objects from your time abroad are great for this. Students should walk away from your information session or classroom presentation excited about the idea of studying a language abroad and the benefits that are offered through a funded program like CLS.

Overall, a good length for your session is 20 to 30 minutes of presentation from you, followed by about 15 minutes for questions.

If appropriate, you can collect names and email addresses at your information session. Check with the offices you worked with on campus to see if they would like this information to follow up with interested students; you may also send it to us at clsalumni@americancouncils.org.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*Can I give an information session even if I’m planning to apply for the program again?*

Yes, of course! There is nothing bad about an information session presented by someone who liked the program enough to want to do it again.

*Can I give an information session if I participated in CLS a few years ago?*

Yes, alumni from all years of the CLS Program are welcome to give information sessions. We recommend that you spend some time on the [CLS website](http://www.cla.org) to become familiar with what might have changed about the program since you participated, and of course, you can [email us](mailto:clsalumni@americancouncils.org) with questions.

*Should I tell you about my information session?*

Absolutely - [email us](mailto:clsalumni@americancouncils.org) and let us know. Ideally, you’ll tell us about it before it happens, so we can help you advertise it. If that doesn’t happen, please tell us afterward, so we know how to explain the sudden uptick in stellar applications from your college or university! Please also send us photos of you presenting if you are able to get any.

*Can I co-host my information session?*

Sure! You can check the [CLS alumni database](http://www.cla.org) to see if there are other CLS alumni at your institution or at nearby schools. You can also co-host with a faculty or staff member from one of the departments or offices we mentioned above. Another option is to speak at a study abroad fair or an information session for other study
abroad or fellowship opportunities. Check with your study abroad and fellowship/scholarship offices for schedules of these events.

**Can I give information sessions at other universities?**

Yes! The CLS Program is interested in attracting applicants from the full range of American colleges and universities, so we encourage alumni to present at large public institutions, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, institutions with a technical or engineering focus, and minority-serving institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, tribal colleges, and institutions with high minority enrollment. If you’re interested in traveling to a nearby campus to present, please send us an email. Depending on funding and on approval for your trip, we may be able to reimburse you for expenses such as gas and mileage or public transportation fares.

**I don’t have a printing budget for CLS fliers. Can you send me some?**

We have a limited budget for print materials, but please contact us to check whether we have some available to send you.

**What do I do if someone asks a question I don’t know the answer to?**

Don’t panic! It’s totally normal to have this happen, because we don’t expect you to become an expert on CLS before you give a presentation. If the question is something you have experience with, you’re welcome to share your experience. This may not help answer the question fully, but it does give your listeners a little bit of personal perspective. For example, in answering a question about how often alternates for the scholarship are promoted to finalist status, you might share that you were an alternate who was promoted in mid-April, while also emphasizing that you don’t know that statistic offhand.

If you don’t have experience to share, a simple, polite, “I’m not sure about that, and I don’t want to give you incorrect information” is fine. The first line of defense against tough questions is to direct applicants to the FAQ on the CLS website. You should also have our general email address, cls@americancouncils.org, ready to provide to attendees.

**I have other outreach ideas. Want to hear them?**

Yes! Please email us.

**Promotional Materials**

2019 CLS PowerPoint

CLS Informational Flyer
- [https://clscholarship.org/assets/resources/CLS_One_Pager.pdf](https://clscholarship.org/assets/resources/CLS_One_Pager.pdf)

CLS Blank Event Flyer
Civic Engagement
How to be a good advocate

- You want to inform decision makers about your issue and let them know directly what you need.
- Throwing out lots of facts and figures during the meeting will not be effective; this should be more like a conversation where you use your personal experiences to humanize the issue at hand. Don’t overwhelm or overload them with information. Include hard data in your conversation, but use it sparingly.
- These meetings are all about building relationships, which takes time. Talk about what you know. Be informative, concise, and clear. Know your key messages and what you want to get out of the meeting.
- Start off with a quick elevator pitch consisting of the most essential, need-to-know information about yourself.
- Tailor your message to whomever you’re speaking with. Make sure to answer the question “why should I care?”
- Always say “thank you” and follow up after the meeting.
- Make yourself a useful resource.

What to expect

- A Congressional Office operates similarly to a small business in that members of congress provide a service to their constituents (representing and advocating for the issues that are important to the constituents or, in this metaphor, stockholders).
- Congressional Staffers do a large portion of the ground work. They are generally young, smart, and hard-working. You will come across a lot of different temperaments and backgrounds when dealing with staffers.

Personal Impact
Consider:

- How did you come to participate on CLS?
- What did the program mean to you and how did it contribute to your education?
- Would you have been able to study abroad otherwise?

CLS can benefit participants:

- Financially
- Academically
- Professional
- In terms of personal growth and experience
National Impact

Broad talking points:

- Exchange programs support national security and foreign policy interests
- Exchange programs strengthen the economy
- Exchange programs increase mutual understanding

A few hard facts to strengthen your argument:

- More than 80% of employers agreed foreign language proficiency is an important factor to consider when recruiting young college graduates (Erasmus impact study, 2014)
- International students contributed $27 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013-2014 (according to a NAFSA study)
- Recent studies show that students who studied or interned abroad exhibited better problem solving skills, increased creativity, and more complex thoughts than their peers who did not (Time Magazine, 2014)

How to reach out to your representative

1. Find the representative for your voting district by entering your zip code here: http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/
2. Click on their name to visit their web site and look for a “Contact” link. Some representatives may have and obvious link to “Request a Meeting” or something similar. Within such a page, there may be a form and/or an email address. Here’s an example from State of Hawaii representative: https://hanabusa.house.gov/contact/scheduling-request
3. On this specific page, there is a form to fill out in addition to a direct scheduling email address. Either option is fine. If you can’t find a “Request a Meeting” page or something similar, just look for a general email address to get in contact.
4. Draft and send a letter based on the template below. Feel free to personalize it a bit, but keep it direct.
5. Follow up with a polite phone call if you don’t hear back in 2 or 3 business days.
6. If you receive any response (affirmative or negative), please let your Alumni Affairs officer as soon as you can and request for CLS information specific to your representative.
Sample email requesting a meeting

Dear Representative (OR Senator) [their last name],

My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am one of your constituents from [YOUR CITY/TOWN/COUNTY].

I am an [alumnus/alumna] of the Department of State funded Critical Language Scholarship Program and successfully completed the program in 2018.

I am writing to request a brief meeting with you on [DAY], [MONTH] [DATE] to discuss the value of study abroad and language learning based on my experience studying [LANGUAGE] in [CLS PROGRAM SITE]. I understand that your schedule may already be busy on this date, and I thank you in advance for your consideration.

I can be reached by phone at [phone number] or email at [email address].

I look forward to sharing my story with you and hope that we can arrange a time to meet. Thank you again for considering this request.

Best,

[Your Name]
[Your Home Address]

Resources for civic engagement

https://us.fulbrightonline.org/congressional-state-one-pagers

The Fulbright Program releases one-pagers that highlight the local impact of educational and cultural exchange programs funded by the U.S. Department of State each year. These will help you to highlight relevant local facts about exchange programs like the CLS Program and show how it is benefiting individual States and districts.

https://www.majorityleader.gov/2018-calendar/
https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2018_schedule.htm

Calendars for the house and senate are important to refer to when considering requesting a meeting. Usually, when Congress is out of session, congresspersons are available to meet in their home districts, which may be more convenient for you!
Activity: Creating an Action Plan
Writing down goals and making lists can help inspire action. Use the following pages to create your own action plan.

Stay Connected
*Relationships that I’ve developed that are important to me are...*

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Important Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

*My plan for maintaining my relationships is...*

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Get Involved
(see Handbook pages 6-7)

*I want to get involved by...*

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Stay Internationally Engaged
(see Handbook page 8)

*I plan to stay internationally engaged by...*

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Contacts needed for me to follow my plan are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Diplomat in Residence</td>
<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
<td><a href="https://careers.state.gov/connect/dir/">https://careers.state.gov/connect/dir/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Returning Abroad
(see Handbook pages 8-9)

My goals for returning abroad include...

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Programs I want to look into are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Program Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulbright</td>
<td><a href="http://us.fulbrightonline.org/">http://us.fulbrightonline.org/</a></td>
<td>US exchange program; - international graduate study; - advanced research; teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps</td>
<td><a href="http://www.peacecorps.gov/">http://www.peacecorps.gov/</a></td>
<td>volunteer projects in education, community development, health, business and information and communications technology, agriculture, and environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Career Development

Action Steps

- Revise your resume and cover letter to include your experiences abroad (see Handbook pages 9-11).

- Schedule an appointment with the Career Center at your university to get feedback on your resume and cover letter (they often welcome alumni, too, if you’ve already graduated!)

- Practice telling your story. Think about what stories you want to share in interviews and how they communicate skill and knowledge sets you developed. (See list on page 12 of the Handbook and the STAR interview activity in this workbook)

- Schedule informational interviews with program alumni and with professionals in the fields that you’re interested in pursuing (see the CLS Alumni Resource Directory for a list of alumni willing to chat with you, or reach out through the CLS Program - Official Alumni Group on LinkedIn, see the Informational Interview Worksheet in this Workbook).

- Attend panels, presentations, and networking events in the fields you’re interested in

- Join professional organizations in the fields you’re interested in
Career Activity: S.T.A.R. Interview Responses

The following method can be used to organize your answers to questions in an interview, like those listed on page 12 of the handbook. By incorporating each of the elements outlined below, you can use experiences (from abroad, from school, or from previous work) to showcase the skills and attributes employers are trying to assess during an interview.

S – Describe the specific **setting or situation** for which the experience took place.

**CLS example:** While studying abroad through an intensive Hindi language program in Jaipur, I found that my coursework was extremely different from what I was accustomed to in the U.S. I was used to a slower paced learning environment and having assignments due throughout the semester. However, CLS courses consisted of 20 hours a week and the entire grade was based on the midterm and the final. We also had to abide by a language pledge for the majority of the program.

T – Describe the specific **task or project related to the skill sought**.

**CLS example:** During that summer, I had to learn to maintain diligence to achieve my language goals, especially with my host family and language partner. I also had to learn to balance my time outside of the classroom in order to keep up with class assignments and assessments, since we participated in weekly local cultural excursions and scheduled meetings with our language partners.

A – Describe the specific steps or **actions** you took to complete the task or project.

**CLS example:** In order to stay on top of my assignments and learn as much vocabulary as possible, I formed a small study group with a few of my fellow classmates. We'd meet once a week and practice important concepts, and then put them into practice in the local community. For example, we spoke to rickshaw drivers and street fruit vendors to utilize quantities and numbers in our conversations. I had to take initiative to not fall behind and to receive a successful grade in the course.

R – Describe the **results or outcomes** resulting from the actions taken.

**CLS example:** I developed strong multitasking and time management skills because of the rigorous academic setting under CLS. By taking initiative with the study group and putting our weekly lessons into practice, I was able to earn high marks in my language classes. Additionally, I clearly executed a 20 minute presentation in Hindi at the end of the course about public health issues in Jaipur.

This is a typical STAR answer. It could be the answer to, “Give me an example of an accomplishment you are proud of.” If someone asked, “What’s your greatest skill?” you might answer, “I believe I can set goals and meet them,” and then give a story like the one above. Or, if the interviewer says, “Why should we hire you?” you can respond, “I am a good problem solver, for instance...” and give an example like the one above.
### S.T.A.R. Approach for Job Interviewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency/Skill</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific skill that you want to highlight</td>
<td>Descriptive story from your time abroad</td>
<td>Situation</td>
<td>Task/Goal</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This activity is adapted from the American Institute for Foreign Study’s “Marketing Your International Experience” workbook: [https://ccidcertificate.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/student-workbook-marketing-your-international-experience1.pdf](https://ccidcertificate.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/student-workbook-marketing-your-international-experience1.pdf)
Informational Interview Worksheet

Name of Interviewee: _______________________________________________________________

Position/Job Function: ______________________________________________________________

Organization: _________________________________________________________________

Skills necessary to be successful in position:

- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________

Qualities possessed by successful person in this position:

- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________

Typical working day of person with this position:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Activity</th>
<th>% of time</th>
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Opportunities to use language and intercultural skills in position:

- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________

Debrief: Am I interested in this field of work? Why or why not?

- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________________________