

Impact of Study Abroad Program

Where should I begin and how much time do you have?

I participated in USM's study abroad program while I was completing my MSW at USM. The location was Jamaica and involved health care in a developing country. While I learned much about other countries (even though I had traveled extensively previously), I never realized how much this experience would improve my view of the world.

In 2001 (and quite unexpectedly), my husband and I were transferred (his company, Chevron) to Kuwait. Had it not been for the experiences and education of the study abroad program, I would certainly have been shocked at the status and method of health care in that country. The experience of study abroad so widened my horizons that I was able to assimilate into the middle eastern culture much more easily. I was able to work effectively there, working with a multi-national team where I held an administrative post. We were in Kuwait for 5 years - through 9/11, various international terrorist attacks, and the invasion of Iraq.

We have now been relocated to Aberdeen, Scotland. Again, I am drawing upon my experiences (although not as heavily as before) to be able to assimilate into a culture much different than my own.

Whenever possible (especially when I speak to social work students), I emphasize the international aspect and the need to see beyond our own borders. It only adds to the diversity experience - which is much more than a black and white issue.

I am more than happy to correspond with anyone involved in the study abroad program as I am certainly not only value the experiences I gained, but have been able to actively incorporate the knowledge and experiences in my own life.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience.

Lynn Hagan