Thinking about studying off-campus? Fall term of your Sophomore year is an excellent time to be planning your study abroad experience. This edition of the SYE Newsletter is dedicated to offering you ideas, information, and perspectives about participating in an Off Campus Studies (OCS) program. Carleton values learning in its many varieties. OCS programs challenge students by providing them a vast array of experiences that have the potential to change life forever. We hope you will take a few minutes to read the three perspectives we offer about OCS.

To learn more about what OCS programs are available, please contact Helena Kaufman, hkaufman@acs.carleton.edu or Naomi Ziegler, nziegler@acs.carleton.edu in the OCS Office.

We asked Naomi Ziegler to share her thoughts about what sophomores can do to prepare themselves for studying off campus.

What Others are Saying
First off, why study off-campus? We recently surveyed alumni of Carleton’s Marine Biology Seminar which ran for 20 years under the directorship of Professor Gary Wagenbach. Over half of those who responded said that the program had a noticeable impact on their awareness of cultural diversity, overall liberal arts experience, intellectual curiosity, post-graduate educational choices, and careers.

Students who participated in other programs have said: “When I left for my program, I couldn’t have predicted what I would learn from the experience. The biggest thing I’ve gained is an incredible confidence that comes from figuring out how to survive and get around in a country where I didn’t speak the language at first and was generally clueless about the way things worked.”

“I care more about history and politics because I finally saw how dramatically they could influence people’s lives!”

“Oh this program I realized that I learned from EVERYONE, not just those who are intellectually superior.”

Of course, the decision to study off-campus is a personal one. There are always reasons to go as well as reasons to remain on campus. But, if you are considering joining the nearly 70% of Carls who study off-campus, here are a few tips for choosing, applying for, getting approved, and going on an OCS program.

Choosing a Program
First, consider the major variables such as location, academics, program type and duration, and program philosophy. Next, think about your dreams (we think dreaming can be a good thing to do). For example, have you always dreamed of going to New Zealand? Additionally, you may also want to consider how to enhance or fulfill your major? Do you want to be immersed in another University or would you prefer to take your classes with other American students while living with a local family? Do you prefer working with a small organization or a large one? As you consider these variables, we recommend you spend time reading brochures and websites, talking to past participants, reading evaluations from previous years, seeking advice from your academic adviser and OCS advisers. Gathering lots of information and sifting through it will help you make an informed decision.

Applying to Programs
If you decide on a Carleton program, you apply directly to the professor leading the program by the deadline advertised on the application. For
non-Carleton programs, you will need to apply directly to the sponsor and follow all of their specifications, including fees, deadlines, materials, etc. Being accepted into a non-Carleton program does not equal approval from Carleton; for that you need to petition the Off-Campus Studies Committee.

**Petitioning**
To get Carleton credit for a non-Carleton program you MUST submit a petition (and program review in some cases) to the OCS office by the third Thursday of the term before your program. For Fall 2008 programs, the petition deadline is April 17, 2008, but petitions are approved on a rolling basis, so don’t wait until the deadline unless you have to. OCS does not guarantee that late petitions will be considered.

**Prepating Yourself Mentally, Intellectually, Physically, Emotionally**
Preparing to study off-campus, especially overseas, requires a lot of detailed paperwork. Preparing yourself in less tangible ways may seem less pressing, but is equally important. You will likely receive a pre-departure reading list. Follow it. If you struggle with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues, work with your doctor or therapist to develop a self-care plan. Perhaps you have a physical or learning disability that you manage well at home, but may need special accommodations abroad. Talk with the program leader and tell them of your special needs. Many reasonable accommodations can be made with enough advance warning. Read travel books. Watch movies. Talk to people who have been there. Most importantly, work to open your heart and mind to the possibilities that await you, even though you cannot yet imagine or predict what they will be.

1. **Why did you decide to go on an OCS program?**
I think studying abroad is an important part of the undergraduate experience. It enables you to see and do things that you can't see or do in a classroom. I want to take a break from my academic routine and see a different part of the world while still having the security and support of Carleton with me.

2. **What do you hope to learn about yourself and the subject/focus of the program?**
I am pre-med, but I don’t want my career goal to limit what I explore and learn in biology. That’s why I’m going on an ecology program in Australia. The program is very much “hands on,” and I’m excited to combine work and play with fellow Carleton students. SCUBA diving and traveling with only a few other students before, during, and after the program will push me out of my comfort zone.

3. **What anxieties do you have about going on your OCS program?**
My anxieties are minimal. Being with the same twenty-six students every day for two and a half months could be great….or challenging. Our program will be moving around to different locations, so I don’t know that I’ll ever have the chance to feel settled. I’m also nervous about traveling in Australia and New Zealand outside of the program—I worry about getting lost, missing flights, etc.

We asked Biology major **Stephanie Thomas** of the Class of 2009 about her upcoming program in Australia and New Zealand.

We asked English major **Hannah Ebner** of the Class of 2009 about her program in Paris & Morocco.

1. **What did you learn about yourself through your OCS experience?**
My experiences in Paris, Morocco and traveling afterwards were just as memorable and life-changing as you would expect them to be. Little things built up my confidence--learning how to use the Paris metro system, learning the streets in my neighborhood, walking to school in the morning, ordering a sandwich without grammatical errors, making friends with Moroccan immigrants and laughing at their jokes.
in French are just a few examples. Living in a new, foreign place made me feel like I was learning all the time about everything I was doing. Basically, I learned to trust myself and that I learn the most when I’m pushing my limits.

2. What do you wish you had known before you left that you didn’t know about being overseas? Fortunately, I felt pretty prepared. For me, the most important thing is to bring things that would be really hard to get overseas (i.e., medications, contacts...). Finding your way through a new country without really knowing what you’re doing is the best part. It is when you start to figure things out that you realize you’re learning (and it’s amazing).

Further information available at:
http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/ocs/

Off Campus Studies Office Staff
- Phone: (507) 646-4332
- Fax: (507) 646-5614

Helena I. Kaufman
Director of Off-Campus Studies
Office: Leighton Hall 119D
Phone: x4349
Email: hkaufman@acs.carleton.edu

As director of OCS, Helena is responsible for coordinating Off-Campus Studies programming on campus, working with Carleton faculty on the development of Carleton seminars, advising students on program choices, and supervising the OCS office. Originally from Poland, she has worked at OCS since 2000 and holds a PhD in Luso-Brazilian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Naomi J. Ziegler
Assistant Director of Off Campus Studies
Office: Leighton Hall 120
Phone: x4031
Email: nziegler@acs.carleton.edu

Naomi works with several of the Carleton seminars, OCS events, and student advising. She holds a PhD in Comparative and International Development Education from the University of Minnesota and master’s degrees in counseling and French studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She joined the OCS office in 2006.

Leslie A. Vanderwood
Administrative Assistant for Off-Campus Studies
Office: Leighton Hall 119A
Phone: x4332
Email: lvanderw@acs.carleton.edu

Leslie serves as the administrative assistant. She works with students, faculty, and staff, providing support for Carleton and non-Carleton programs. Leslie has worked at OCS since 2000.

ESSENTIAL THINGS TO REMEMBER
There are horror stories about students who missed these deadlines.

- Passports take at least 8 weeks to process. Plan ahead. Without a passport, you can not board the plane.

- If you’re planning on studying on a non-Carleton, off-campus study program, you must submit a petition to the OCS office by the third Thursday of the term prior to the term you intend to be gone. Petition forms are available from the OCS Office. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, petitions are not accepted late.

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