Students at the University of Nevada, Reno are not only surrounded by an impressive international student body and faculty, the world itself is their campus with many opportunities to study abroad, a life-expanding experience they will always remember.

Logan Agee ’03 (Spanish) studied in Spain for a year with the University Studies Abroad Consortium, and is now a Spanish teacher with the Washoe County School District. “My USAC experience was phenomenal,” she says, using the widely used pronunciation of the acronym, “YOU sack.” “It really changed my life. I got to travel all over Europe. I learned how to speak Spanish fluently and now I’m a Spanish teacher. I encourage all students to do the same.”

Headquartered at Nevada, the consortium is a 27-year-old organization including 33 universities from across the United States that now sends some 2,500 students every year to 40 programs in 25 countries. Some 700 of those are Nevada students, which constitutes close to 5 percent of the student body. Since its inception, more than 8,000 Nevada students have studied abroad with the program. Besides being able to choose from so many different countries, students have a variety of living and learning options in the USAC program. (For more information please visit http://usac.unr.edu.)

USAC operates year-round, with programs that vary in cost from less than $2,000 per semester in the Bangalore, India program, to more than $13,000 per semester at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Program fees generally include tuition, fees, visa assistance, health insurance, transcripts and advising, but not airfare or housing. Summer courses, work study, internships, field study and volunteer work are also options available to USAC students. Some scholarships are available; USAC awarded $220,000 last year. Students who study abroad are entitled to receive aid from their home universities, thus may use Millennium Scholarship funds, for example, to pay for certain USAC program fees. Living accommodations vary from apartments to host families to dorms, but all are safe and thoroughly vetted by USAC staff.
Martin Markee '09 (geography) and his mother, Nancy Markee, director of the Academic Advising Center at the University, liked the host family that Nancy stayed with during her 2007 study abroad experience in Costa Rica so much that Martin stayed with them for his 2008 semester abroad.

Martin, who had never been out of the country before, says that his host family was wonderful, “When I got sick, they took me to the doctor,” and adds that the trip “was one of the best experiences of my life.” He had the chance to go to an international soccer game, a World Cup qualifier. “I got to see things I’d never seen before.”

Nancy says her USAC experience was “absolutely fabulous.” Being an undergraduate adviser, she had encouraged many students to study abroad, but began to feel “a little bit hypocritical that I had never done it myself.” She’d travelled abroad to attend conferences, but never had a prolonged stay, such as the six and a half weeks she spent in Puntarenas, Costa Rica.

Nancy applied for and won a Faculty International Development Award, which is awarded by USAC on a competitive basis.

CLOCKWISE: USAC students up close and personal at the Kerala Elephant Park in India. Students hike the step streets of the Basque Country’s St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port. Anjali Webster ’08 (second from left) and her USAC friends explore the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Nevada student, Ben Colton ’08, paraglides in the Swiss Alps near the mountain village of Gimmelwald, Switzerland. Nevada student Melissa Conn and her friends spend a relaxing trip in Montezuma, a popular surf beach in Costa Rica. On his second of four USAC programs, David Schacter ’09 finds the southernmost point of Asia.
to help faculty gain international experience. These professional development opportunities fund academic or administrative faculty/staff participation in USAC summer specialty programs as students, providing firsthand knowledge and understanding of the program and insight into what students actually experience while studying abroad. “This was the first time I really was outside my comfort zone,” Nancy recalls. She tried to have her experience mimic that of an actual student, so she lived with a host family like the other students. “My host mom spoke very little English and I spoke very little Spanish. She was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. She would quiz me at the dinner table, asking me, ‘What’s this? What’s this?’”

Nancy took courses in Spanish, Latin American history and tropical conservation biology. She plans to return to Costa Rica to teach a class in global climate change (her background is in environmental science) in San Ramón with the USAC program this summer. (Spanish literature), director of the University Studies Abroad Consortium since its inception, says the primary reason living and studying abroad is such a valuable experience is that it instills a sense of confidence students could not attain otherwise. “You can study something anywhere, but living abroad in a foreign neighborhood, learning foreign rituals, going to a local school and making friends provides students with an extraordinary level of confidence and belief in themselves that they know they are able to function anywhere in the world at any time,” he says.

Just like Nancy Markee found it valuable to challenge herself in a foreign environment, Urza says that “the most important benefit of studying abroad is to challenge oneself to step out of one’s comfort zone.” “Of course,” he adds, “you also learn a foreign language and you take that with you.” In addition, being in a foreign country contributes to being less “American-centric,” Urza says. “You get to see the United States from a different perspective when you are living in another part of the world. This is extraordinarily important. You understand that people do things differently and they have different values and they organize their societies differently, and yet they are every bit as valid as the way we organize our societies,” he says.

University President Milton Glick echoes this sentiment, and notes that in a global economy with global competition, it’s imperative that we educate students to succeed in a “global” life: “We live in an era of unprecedented career mobility, where an individual’s adaptability and creativity are put to the test each day in an
increasingly globalized world. Over the past several years, it has become obvious that one of the greatest challenges facing higher education in America today is how do we prepare our graduates for such a dynamic, interconnected world? It’s not only a question of holding our ‘market share’ as universities in China and India press forward with an ambitious science and engineering education agenda. It’s a question of creating ‘complete’ graduates who are at once competitive and compassionate, who have the bottom-line tools to succeed and who also have the heart to reach beyond the borders of their nation to make the world a better, safer and more educated place.”

President Milton Glick

Among the many students who, through their study abroad experiences, have developed the heart and confidence to reach beyond known borders is Jonathan Bailey, an undeclared junior, who studied in Prague, Czech Republic and Bilbao, Spain: “I never branched out much until I studied abroad. It was amazing. I learned a lot about life and myself. I didn’t realize how different the rest of the world can be.”

Bailey enjoyed his experience in Prague so much that he stayed another semester in Spain. “Two completely different places. Two completely different experiences,” he notes, adding, “Now I’m addicted and want to keep traveling.” He’s now applying for an internship in South Africa.

Scott Hinton ‘01 (art), now a photography research associate in the art department, traveled with art professor Peter Goin to Mexico in 1999 and again 10 years later. In a journal written for the first trip, he says: “Travel with Peter Goin in Mexico is more than a leisurely exploration but a fast-paced bombardment of culture and life. Our first full day was in Mexico City, our itinerary was filled with experiences that you only get traveling with someone who knows the area. Centro de la Imagen, the Anthropological Museum, a man dressed like the movie character Rambo at the park, side streets, soda in a bag and a ride on the subway. All before a quick flight to Oaxaca and a late dinner.” (For the full text of Hinton’s journal excerpt, visit www.unr.edu/silverandblue/.)

Goin, like many other Nevada faculty, has served as a USAC faculty member, teaching not only Nevada students, but students from the other universities in the consortium. (For more on what it’s like to travel with Goin, see journal excerpts on page 6.)
Miriella Melara, associate professor and chair of foreign languages and literatures, taught a French culture class and an introduction to French literature class in Pau, France in spring 2009. “It was a wonderful experience,” she says, noting that, for her students, it wasn’t just book learning, they were experiencing French culture firsthand. “It was wonderful to exchange cultural knowledge that they were learning day by day with their host families. It was a great forum to talk about those cultural experiences that they may or may not have understood.”

USAC students have high retention rates, graduating on average within 4.5 years, the
same rate as Honors students. They also trend toward the top academically, with an average GPA of 3.4.

**THE WORLD COMES TO NEVADA**

While Nevada students can springboard from campus to the world stage with relative ease, the home campus also brings the world to them.

In fall 2009, 672 international students—representing about 4 percent of the total student body—from 72 countries studied at Nevada. China and Japan brought 250 students alone, according to Susan Bender, director of the Office of International Students and Scholars, which oversees all international students and faculty, as well as exchange programs.

"By coming to this institution and the state of Nevada, you can interact with hundreds of students from 72 different countries, and that doesn't count all the international researchers and faculty," Bender says.

The top countries represented at Nevada in order are: China, Japan, India, South Korea, Nepal, Turkey, Taiwan, Iran, Canada and Sri Lanka. The top three undergraduate majors are business administration and management, psychology and journalism, while the top graduate majors are civil engineering, chemistry and mechanical engineering. There are more male international students, 53 percent, than female, 47 percent, a discrepancy possibly due to the fact that many of the top majors, such as civil engineering, are traditionally male, Bender says.

About 55 percent of the international students are in graduate programs, 33 percent are undergraduates, and 12 percent are studying in the Intensive English
Language Center. International students have fantastic retention rates: 95.8 percent five-year graduation rate for graduate students and 90.7 percent for undergraduates in 2007. The University’s six-year, overall graduation rate in 2007 was 46.3 percent, according to The Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based independent nonprofit organization. This rate is normal among Nevada’s peer institutions in the United States.

“They pay a lot of money to go here,” Bender notes, adding that the average international undergraduate student pays about $30,000 per year in tuition and fees. “They tend to really load up and try to get through as quickly as possible,” she adds. Graduate students may help offset the cost of their education by taking on a graduate assistantship position. U.S. laws are strict regarding work permits and work is limited for most international students, another motivating factor to get done quickly. An additional factor that contributes to their high retention rates is that the majority are older than their traditional student counterparts.

Exchange programs, in which Nevada has an agreement with a foreign institution to “swap” students or faculty on a one-to-one basis for a semester or a year, are also common. Unlike traditional international students who are earning their degrees at Nevada, foreign exchange students remain part of the student body at their home institution and continue on their degree paths at home, just like Nevada students studying overseas in an exchange program remain on track here. These agreements can have economic benefits for both sides, since in a typical arrangement students simply pay their tuition at home as usual and faculty continue to receive their pay from home. For students from poorer countries, this can be the only way they can afford an international education.

Jessica Pacheco ’09 (journalism), an American student, heard from associate professor of history Hugh Shapiro that an exchange opportunity to the National Taiwan Normal University was available last summer, so she applied and, to her delight, was selected. “I never had the money to study abroad before,” she says. Although responsible for her airfare and food, “food was incredibly cheap” in Taipei, so affording it wasn’t a problem. Her three months abroad changed her entire future: “It really revolutionized the way I want to lead
University Studies Abroad Consortium students and faculty pose in the newly remodeled USAC offices, located in the Virginia Street Gym on the Reno campus. FRONT: Jonathan Bailey, an undeclared junior who studied in the Czech Republic and Spain; Nancy Markee, director of undergraduate advising for the University, Costa Rica. SECOND ROW: Tamara Valentine, director of the Honors Program, China; Allison Conkey, English senior, Japan; Miriella Melara, chair of foreign languages and literatures, France; Tyler Bowman, finance and economics junior, Spain; Logan Agee ’03 (Spanish) Spain; Martin Markee ’09 (geography) Costa Rica. BACK: Megan Berner ’03 (art), Mexico; Peter Goin, art professor, Mexico; Scott Hinton ’01 (art), Mexico.

the rest of my life,” she says, adding that she now plans to study Chinese medicine in mainland China, as well as travel to Japan.

Shapiro himself has an extensive résumé of international travel and teaching in Taiwan, Japan and China.

“I think students in the 21st century can gain valuable experience and knowledge by studying foreign languages and by studying and living abroad,” Shapiro says. “International understanding is an essential aspect of today’s university student’s education.”

Coming to America on an exchange program can be equally life-changing for an international student. Swetlana Elert, an undergraduate majoring in international management, met Yvonne Stedham, professor of managerial sciences, while Stedham was teaching in Germany at the Ingolstadt School of Management at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Elert asked Stedham if she could come to America to study at Nevada. Elert, who has also studied in Russia, says that studying in the United States makes it possible for her to study courses not offered at her home university, which broadens her academic profile. Although an exchange semester “can be challenging,” she says it forces her to “adapt to new situations and requirements” which in turn will help her be “highly flexible in the working environment.”

Research shows, she notes, that studying abroad not only brings academic advantages, it helps students develop “emotional intelligence.”

“I can totally support the statement that the sum of new situations, problems, challenges—negative as well positive experiences—faced during an international study exchange builds personality, develops skills that can not be learned in a purely academic environment, and is a growing up process that made me the person I am now. And it’s also fun.”

“One of the parts I enjoy the most about my semester abroad is the possibility of meeting fascinating people from the host country, as
well as among the other international students, and making many new friends. At the University, I appreciate the beautiful campus and recreation opportunities, such as cultural or sports events on campus.”

Stedham has also taught in Taiwan, been a USAC “student” in Italy on a faculty development award, and hosted many German executives and Brazilian MBA students who come here for 10 days to learn American business practices and tour local businesses.

“When Swetlana returns to Germany, she will be a great ambassador for Nevada,” Stedham says. “She’s an excellent student and speaks three languages fluently.”

While foreign students tend to excel in languages and show great interest in the affairs of foreign countries—while teaching German students in Germany, her native country, Stedham taught in English and the students were required to write papers in English—American students tend to show less interest in issues that pertain to foreign countries, Stedham notes. But bringing exchange students here and encouraging Americans students to study abroad reaps huge returns, Stedham, whose primary area of research is cross-cultural management studies with a focus on ethics, adds.

“What is more satisfying than anything is teaching American students and finding at the end of the semester that a bunch of them want to study abroad. This might be the first time they’ve actively considered that other countries do things differently and that the world is not just the United States. They get inspired to travel abroad and now they travel like crazy,” Stedham is herself an international faculty member on campus, has not only taught in Germany, she has held workshops for graduate students in Taiwan, as well as worked with students on research in Italy, Taiwan, Germany and Brazil. While hard to enumerate, one has only to go a stone’s throw on campus to encounter other high caliber, international faculty such as Emma Sepúlveda, professor of foreign languages and literatures. She hails from Chile and Argentina, was the first Latina to become a full professor at Nevada and has recently been appointed to an Obama Administration commission to study the development of a new, national museum of United States Latino art, history and culture. (See story on page 26.)

President Glick notes that the internationality of the campus has increased over the years to the benefit of everyone: “I believe our campus has made great inroads in

“The sum of new situations, problems, challenges—negative as well positive experiences—faced during an international study exchange builds personality, develops skills that can not be learned in a purely academic environment, and is a growing up process that made me the person I am now.”

Swetlana Elert, graduate exchange student
internationalizing itself over the past several years, whether it is welcoming students and faculty from foreign countries, inviting international scholars for visits, sending our students to study abroad, or actively cultivating research and ideas in areas such as our internationally known Basque Studies program. Put all of these pieces together, and one can see that the more we internationalize, the more a complete University we become.”

Professors such as English professor Scott Slovic, who through relationships with colleagues in Japan was asked to start the first Japan-Nevada exchange program in 1998, have increased Nevada’s international presence. The pairing was natural since Nevada boasts a strong Japanese language program and has long had strong student body representation of Japanese international students. Former Japanese professor Mimi Yu “had a large group of students hungry to go to Japan, just waiting for the existence of such a program,” Slovic says. The result was an exchange program with Hiroshima University that continues to this day. Slovic has also forged exchange programs with the University of Ryukyus, in Okinawa, and Kanazawa University.

Building on past successes, the College of Business and Extended Studies will offer students three international summer study programs in 2010.

International business will transform from a classroom concept into real-world experience for College of Business students traveling with University faculty to global business centers in London, Toronto and New York this summer. Global Business: International Summer Study Programs in Toronto, London and New York offer University courses for undergraduate or graduate credit enhanced by trips and tours to businesses, cultural centers and government offices in three of the world’s centers of commerce and culture.

“We view our Global Business program as a tremendous opportunity for our students to experience learning in a different way than they would on campus,” says Greg Mosier, dean of the College of Business. “Our Toronto and London programs allow students to interact with foreign business leaders and government officials to enhance the concentrated coursework. Our New York program changes perceptions of leadership, examining how culture and art shape foundations of leadership.”

2010 marks the second year the College of Business Summer Study in London program—offered June 21-July 16—will give students an opportunity to travel to the University of London for a four-week program focusing on global management, technology and economic policy. Students will earn six undergraduate credits. In addition to classroom sessions, select afternoons will be designated for corporate and governmental visits.

Combining online instruction offered May 24-June 5, 2010, with a trip to New York June 6-12, the newly developed Advanced Seminar in Management: New York melds traditional management science with great works from the humanities. Students will explore the fundamentals of management and leadership by attending and discussing films, plays, museums, galleries, readings, lectures and more in addition to visiting businesses and government offices.

“Combining online instruction with an international experience, our students are exposed to a variety of ideas and perspectives,” Mosier said. “The classes are designed to provide an opportunity to learn business in a new setting with the backdrop of an international environment.”

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