

Standing Out from the Crowd: Opportunities for Research and Work Abroad in Engineering

Dr. Kathleen Condray, University of Arkansas

The benefits of an experience abroad are indisputable; students can improve language skills and cultural fluency, learn to think in new ways, and experience world masterworks of art, architecture, and engineering first hand. Obviously, these benefits also make students more attractive to potential employers. Time abroad can also help universities with retention as the students return with a renewed sense of purpose after encountering such life-changing experiences. Because engineering students face a rigorous plan of study, however, few students are able to realize the dream of going abroad.

Using German as an example, this paper will outline how students can both stay on-track in their engineering curriculum and gain valuable work and study abroad experience in the summer which will help them in their job search and in their careers beyond graduation. Programs discussed will include RISE (Research in Science and Engineering) of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), in which students receive paid fellowship positions in university doctoral laboratories, CDS (Carl Duisberg Society), in which students work in paid internships in offices in their field at companies such as Porsche and Siemens, and ICE (International Cooperative Education), in which students complete paid internships in factories in their field of study, such as assembling cars for BMW in Munich.