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Studying Abroad Has Positive Effects on Students

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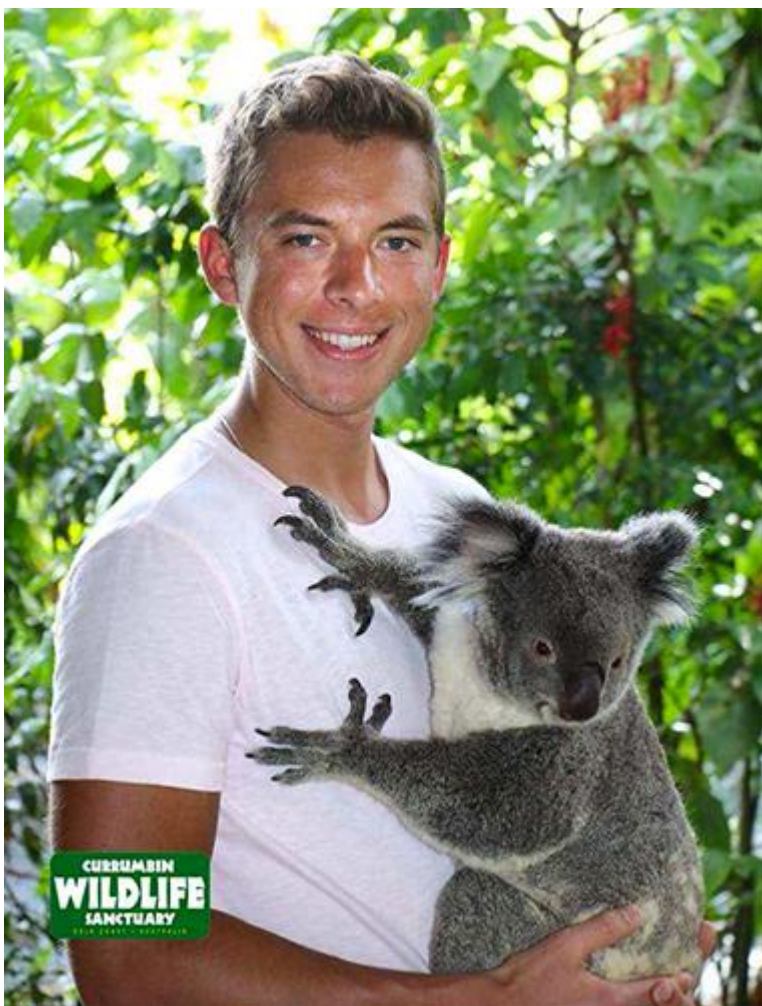
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Studying Abroad Has Positive Effect on Students

Before coming to St. Norbert, siblings Joe Kools '18 and Jason Kools '20 had different thoughts about studying abroad. Jason, the younger and more extroverted of the two, always planned to head out somewhere. But Joe, the older and more introverted brother, wanted to stay put. Ultimately, both opted to study abroad.

*Here, Jennifer Kools, their mother, discusses how the experience was a huge positive for both. Joe attended **Bond University** in Queensland, Australia, while Jason attended **Anglo-American University** in Prague, Czech Republic.*



Joe [pictured with koala] initially said, “No way. I’m not traveling abroad.” He’s our one who doesn’t think outside the box. We said never say never. Then all of a sudden, his sophomore year, he said he was interested in going to Australia and we almost dropped over. That was the farthest place away he could go! He’d heard people talking, though, and started to think, “Hey, I can do this.”

Jason [pictured below] always wanted to study abroad. He had no place in mind, so he spent a long time investigating places and looking at YouTube videos. He decided on Prague after reading the **Honest Prague Guide’s blog**.

Joe went with two other good friends. He would not have gone if they weren’t going, so all three helped each other in making that move. While they kind of hung together, Joe spent a lot of time alone. The other two had super-hard classes and Joe did not. Plus, he could work fast. So he did a lot of exploring on

his own, and it was very nice to see him do that.

Jason didn’t want to go overseas with any friends, so he went completely alone. He did not know anyone, and he’d never traveled overseas before. But he knew it would be a lot of work in Prague, with a different language, and he wanted to prove he could be independent and go for it.

While Joe was in Australia, I could tell [from our conversations] that he was becoming more mature and coming into his own more. He’s a really quiet guy, so when he’d be telling us all about where he went and what he did, and he was so excited about it, it was really amazing.

While Jason was in Prague, his program didn’t include food service. So he began telling us things like how he made pasta with vegetables for dinner and went to the farmer’s market. I was shocked – in a good way!

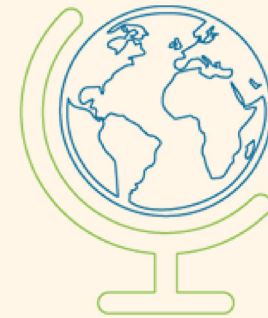
We never FaceTimed before, but we tried to do that once a week with Joe. And we’d text. It was very reassuring to text and get a quick note back. It was easy to get a hold of Joe, because he was 16 hours ahead of us. So we could talk to him at 7 p.m. and reach him in the morning there.

It was harder to reach Jason to FaceTime than Joe, because he was seven hours ahead of us. But we texted a lot.

The first time my husband, Ed, and I traveled abroad together was to visit Joe in Australia. We went when he had three weeks left, and he was cherishing those last few days. He did not want to leave. I swear, I thought he was going to move there!

We had the opportunity to visit Jason at the end of his trip. He showed us all of his favorite places, but he was eager to come home. He missed his friends and St. Norbert.

The first thing Joe said when he got home [to Waukesha, Wis.] was, “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe how ugly it is



Health and Security Insurance

St. Norbert provides every student who studies abroad **health and security insurance**. The plan, administered by ACE American Insurance Co., is considered the nation’s gold standard in terms of what is offered, says Gail Gilbert, director of study abroad and off-campus programs.

Also in This Issue

This article first appeared in the December 2019 issue of Parents of St. Norbert College. Other features in this edition included:

Studying Abroad Has Positive Effect on Students

Q&A With New Campus Safety Director

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here!” We’d had a late snowstorm in April and he couldn’t handle the cold. In Australia, he never once put on long pants or a jacket, and he said they had blue skies every day.

updates via @St. Norbert.

When Jason got home, he kept saying he was so tired, so wiped out. I think it was because although his classes were in English, the professors had a very strong accent and it was hard to understand. Plus, their accounting system was different than in America, so that class was very hard for him.

After Joe got back, he was bolder and did more self-advocating. He was more willing to go outside the box and try new things. He was more aggressive in his life.

We could see Jason’s confidence had gone way up once he was home. He was so proud of what he’d done.

Joe now works at JPMorgan Chase in downtown Milwaukee. During his interview, both recruiters asked him a lot about his time studying abroad.

Jason had a job interview recently, and he wasn’t even nervous. In the interview, they were so impressed that he went alone to study abroad. They brought it up three times.

Jennifer Kools’ advice to parents

- There are plusses and minuses to every program. “Jason’s didn’t have food service, for example, so he had to cook for himself. But food cost next to nothing there. Australia was super expensive.”
- Do your homework. “We watched a lot of YouTube videos, like how to handle money. You never get money in Prague’s main square or in the airport, we learned, and you never have open alcohol on the street.”
- Get your paperwork in early. “Jason had loads of paperwork for Prague. And if you don’t have it perfect, they’ll send it back. Our bank screwed up one letter, and we panicked.”
- Trust your gut, and let them spread their wings and fly. “We knew this would be a life-changing experience for both boys, and we just had to trust in the way we’d raised them and trust they’d be safe. It was hard, but well worth it.”

Dec. 13, 2019

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