One of the unexpected surprises of working at the University at Albany has been the opportunity for international travel and work, which has expanded my academic, scholarly, and professional perspectives in ways I never imagined possible. I discovered along the way that international work is by nature complex and multifaceted, with myriad implications. The personal intertwines with the professional, and opportunities for intersectional learning occur at every possible moment. The resulting transformation and growth is tremendously exciting. It is easy in most disciplines (particularly in an applied field like social work) to become lost in the narrow focus of the local, state, or even national levels. We often work in ways that reinforce parochial thinking and that view our findings as applicable solely to a domestic context. International travel and work widens perspective, stimulates new ways of thinking, creates opportunities for collaboration, emphasizes connections, and expands impact.

My international experiences have occurred at the nexus of the three pillars of academia: research, teaching, and service. For me the first opportunity arose in 2005 through an invitation from colleague Hal Lawson to give a training workshop in Indonesia immediately following the Southeast Asian tsunami of late December 2004. I was fortunate to collaborate with Indonesian government officials, local leaders, and community members in ways that have led to lasting impact. Together with two colleagues from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Ohio State University, we worked to develop community interventions using sports and physical activity to address the social and mental-health needs of children and youth orphaned as a result of the tsunami. I returned to Indonesia two years later, in 2007, to work with a local foundation in Bandung addressing issues related to poverty and youth homelessness. To say the trips to Indonesia were life-altering would perhaps be cliché, but the lasting impact of expanding one’s worldview into the global arena is indeed transformative. In each trip, I collaborated closely with several Indonesian universities, which provided a fascinating glimpse into the world of higher education in Southeast Asia.

In spring 2013, I spent a full sabbatical semester as a visiting scholar in social work at the University of Edinburgh’s School of Social and...
The critique is often made that notwithstanding the immense amount of training involved in earning a doctorate, faculty are generally not taught how to teach. Colleges and universities try to compensate for this deficit by offering a variety of workshops on teaching and learning. The advent of online technologies has opened up new pathways to teaching, and with them, new strategies that can be employed in using this medium to convey disciplinary content with which faculty are well versed to their students. But are these efforts enough to assure that students will be adequately prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century?

The dominant paradigm of the 21st century is globalization, expressed most profoundly in the interdependence and interconnectedness of nations. In practically all dimensions of human experience, including the economic, political, social, cultural, and knowledge spheres, globalization has left its conspicuous mark. The accelerating use of information, transportation, and communication technologies means that there is no turning back from the path we are on, and the increasing mobility of goods, services, people, ideas, and even disease means that our lives will be further constrained and enabled by globalization. We have now entered an era in which the major challenges facing humankind are global in nature, and where finding solutions to these challenges requires the pooling of resources—intellectual, financial, and otherwise—on a global scale. In effect, in the age of globalization, international collaboration is indispensable to survival and success.

What, then, does all of this mean for higher education in general and faculty in particular, especially when one considers that globalization is the most important factor shaping international higher education? The 2017 edition of Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses (Helms, Brajikovic, & Struthers, 2017) indicates that almost three-quarters of institutions responding to the survey confirmed that internationalization has accelerated, and particularly salient is the finding that “an increasing percentage of institutions are implementing academic and co-curricular policies and programming that facilitate on-campus global learning on a broader scale and among a broader base of students” (p. vii). Comprehensive internationalization is higher education’s response to globalization, and if the findings from this mapping survey are to be believed, it is clear that colleges and universities are beginning to recognize the need for strategic readjustments in, among other things, how they deliver teaching and learning.

The curriculum is the one and only area where there is a chance to implement strategies that can touch all students in the service of preparing them to succeed in a globalized world. Preparing students to be globally competent requires that faculty teach from a global perspective. To do this well, however, faculty members themselves must have their own international experiences from which to draw. It turns out that international research and teaching can be incredibly transformative for faculty. Thousands of American faculty who have had these experiences through just the Fulbright experience, for example, would attest to this reality. Faculty who have been so engaged find that there is much to learn from the practices and insights to be found in other developed and developing countries. According to Jon Mandle, one of the contributors to this issue, they have a chance to improve their beliefs and learn more about themselves and the world from encounters with different perspectives. International experiences can broaden a scholar’s research program and even improve teaching skills, according to David Rousseau, another contributor. Eric Hardiman says it most completely when he confirms that “international travel and work widens perspective, stimulates new ways of thinking, creates opportunities for collaboration, emphasizes connections, and expands impact.” These are really important outcomes for faculty, arising out of experiences that could not have been acquired at home, but they cannot be ends in themselves. These outcomes must be translated, in very intentional ways, into providing a broader and richer learning experience for all students. Indeed, doing so actually gives students a global learning opportunity.

It is my hope that the stories in this semester’s issue can inspire faculty across the campus to grapple more deeply with the responsibility of preparing our students to be globally competent graduates. To do this most effectively, faculty must gain firsthand experience themselves. My hope is that they will take advantage of the extensive and growing list of opportunities for teaching and/or research abroad, some of which may be found at http://www.albany.edu/international/77974.php, with the objective of returning the insights they gain from their own experiences back to the classroom.

Harvey Charles, Ph.D
For the past 18 years, I have had the privilege of conducting international research. This is in some ways surprising; I grew up sheep ranching in rural Montana, and my first trip overseas only came after I graduated from university. I traveled to South Africa as a volunteer field assistant to work on a wildlife disease project, an initial experience that catapulted me through an MS, PhD, two postdocs, and now research as an assistant professor at the University at Albany, all with an international focus. It’s safe to say that my international experiences have been transformative, shaping the person I am, the career path I followed, and the strong value I place on supporting diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

With international fieldwork in Namibia, and collaborations with scientists from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the United States, my research has solved several mysteries regarding how anthrax infections are transmitted in wildlife populations. The anthrax bacterium, *Bacillus anthracis*, is a fascinating pathogen. It forms hardy spores that can persist in soils for decades, awaiting contact with a new host. Unlike many other disease agents, anthrax has to kill to get from one host to the next. To manage this, it has evolved to be deadly, killing its hosts in just a few short days from infection. But its Achilles heel is that the doses required to kill a host are high—so high, in fact, that scientists have long puzzled over how and where animals could ever encounter a lethal dose.

My research focuses on the three main players in anthrax outbreaks: hosts, pathogen, and environment. By exhaustively documenting pathogen concentrations at suspected infectious areas over time (in soils, plants, water sources), and how hosts interact with these potentially infectious areas and materials, my fellow researchers and I have been able to demonstrate which reservoirs, transmission pathways, and species are important for anthrax transmission and which are not.

When I began working in Namibia, I made connections with scientists at the University of Namibia (UNAM) to develop a collaborative relationship and to help build local research capacity. I wanted our time spent conducting research to be mutually beneficial to citizens of both countries. Because of this effort, our group hired three Namibian students as full-time technicians for several years each and 15 additional students for weeks to months. Most of these students were recent graduates of UNAM with degrees in environmental sciences or microbiology, and all are from groups underrepresented in STEM. This experience was an important form of personal growth for these students, many of whom had never visited their country’s flagship national park, had never seen the iconic African wildlife in person, and had little to no research experience. These students were critical to the success of our research program, and have gone on to jobs in government or industry or to graduate degree programs.

This summer I spent six weeks in Namibia conducting research in Etosha National Park, accompanied by two PhD students from UAlbany’s ecology and evolutionary biology graduate program. Yen-Hua Huang is a Taiwanese veterinarian.
Anthrax Infections  (continued from previous page)

developing a project on how host ecology and behavior alter anthrax transmission rates. Zoe Barandongo is a Namibian and former MS student of mine who started at UAlbany this fall with an interest in molecular biology of B. anthracis. We initiated projects to discover how elephants acquire anthrax infections, and how phenotypic and genetic variation in the pathogen can influence transmission dynamics. We also added an eighth year of data to a long-term project I am conducting on B. anthracis persistence at zebra anthrax carcass sites—the longest-running data set of its kind.

Conducting collaborative international research has truly enriched my life, both personally and professionally. I have spent a considerable amount of time working with and living among local government scientists and wildlife managers, and with foreign and local academics and their students. Early on I learned the many benefits of developing strong, collaborative relationships with local scientists, and of helping to develop research capacity. My research has been made possible by the support of many U.S. federal programs specifically fostering international collaborations (including Fulbright, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and Fish and Wildlife Service), supplemented by smaller foundations and programs that also value the international exchange of peoples and ideas. International research has made me who I am today, and I hope to continue conducting research on wildlife diseases in southern Africa for many years to come.

Wendy Turner is assistant professor of Biological Sciences

Personal, Professional and Institutional Gains  (continued from page 1)

Political Science. I worked closely with faculty and students in Edinburgh, and immersed myself in the learning environment to further revise how I engage in research and scholarship here in the United States. Following my initial experience in Scotland, I wanted to share the transformative possibilities of international travel and work with my students from the University at Albany. In two separate study tours to Scotland (2015 and 2017), I returned to Edinburgh with a total of 30 UAlbany graduate students in social welfare. Leading these tours had the unexpected consequence of extending my international experience in new and wonderful ways. Many of the students had never traveled outside of the U.S. before, and described the trip as the highlight of their educational experience at UAlbany. Through close interactions with Scottish people and institutions, they were able to see firsthand how their learning extends beyond the classroom and to envision their own ability to engage in innovative future work around the globe.

My partnership with the University of Edinburgh enabled the students to engage in an intensive learning experience that for many was described as the academic and personal highlight of their time at UAlbany. My students and I collaboratively learned about the social welfare system in Scotland, and spent our days meeting with local providers, visiting social service agencies, working closely with students and faculty from Edinburgh, and gathering with government officials (including members of the Scottish Parliament). We also spent valuable time on each trip with policy organizations such as the Scottish Association of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. In addition, the UAlbany students socialized with Scottish graduate students, finding commonalities and developing friendships that can only be made in person. As an educator, I have found that facilitating and watching students interact across culture and geography is both rewarding and inspiring. During the March 2017 trip, for example, students were able to examine the political, social, and cultural implications of Scotland’s adjustment to the post-Brexit landscape of the United Kingdom. I feel lucky to have witnessed the incredible personal transformation that occurred in our UAlbany students as they expanded their worldviews and took on new perspectives.

As technology continues to move forward and facilitate communication around the globe, it is easy to lose sight of the value of physical travel, human interaction, and international learning. Students and faculty alike experience the power of transformation through international education, collaboration, and research opportunities. Serving as an informal ambassador for UAlbany has also added to my own experience, with countless opportunities to expand international awareness of the university’s excellence and impact. International travel and collaboration has shown me that to maximize scholarly impact and growth we must reach beyond our own world and strive to develop global connections and partnerships whenever possible.

Eric Hardiman is professor in the School of Social Welfare
While I am originally from Mexico and spent time in Europe as part of a study-abroad program in college, I started doing more focused academic research abroad in graduate school. This research included preliminary, pre-dissertation work in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela, and then more intense, longer-term study in Brazil and Mexico for my dissertation. Later, after completing my PhD, I conducted research in Mexico and the Caribbean, which included stays in Barbados, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. In total, I have spent more than two years abroad carrying out interviews and field observations, visiting archives and examining local documents, and gathering data for larger quantitative studies.

I consider myself very fortunate to have spent a substantial amount of time pursuing research outside the United States. These experiences have transformed the way I teach, the way I supervise my students’ research, and the way I conduct my own research.

Many of these opportunities were possible only as a result of my having applied for and received funding, including support from the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, and the Social Science Research Council. Because of my own experiences, I encourage students to consider seeking funding for their research and to apply for any financial support that might advance their objectives. Indeed, I would encourage students reading this—undergraduate and graduate alike—to review the many experiences that Fulbright makes possible. Faculty can also apply for support to teach or conduct research abroad, even late in their careers.

My earlier research outside the country has created professional opportunities for additional work abroad that would not have been possible otherwise. Some of my research abroad was part of a larger, government-funded project in which I was contracted as a consultant to advocate for and/or study a particular reform, such as advising several times on projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Additionally, these experiences blend academic scholarship and practical, applied policy change and development work in a way that can be both immediately satisfying professionally and very compelling in the classroom. For example, when I am teaching about justice reforms in Latin America, I can facilitate a highly academic discussion of the topic based on my scholarly experiences while also guiding a very practical, applied conversation grounded in my own personal experience working with governments engaged in the actual process of reforming justice institutions.

These research opportunities have transformed my professional networks in ways that would be hard to imagine if I had not done work abroad. I have become friends with colleagues in other countries whom I would not otherwise have encountered (some are now friends), and I have joined larger communities of scholars associated with the organizations that funded my work or hosted me while I was abroad. If I am teaching a subject that is unfamiliar, I have a wide network of contacts on which to rely for information, and if I’m advising a student traveling abroad, I have a similarly broad network of contacts that I can depend on to help my student. These relationships also work in the opposite direction. Some of the people I met during my research abroad now have students who want to study or do research in the U.S., and these young scholars contact me for advice and support about how to make the transition in order to complete their research here.

In short, there are multiple ways in which my experiences doing research outside the U.S. transformed my current teaching, supervision of students, and research. I have a hard time imagining what my professional world would look like had I not spent that time abroad.

Matthew Ingram is associate professor of Political Science
I

find cities exciting, with new possibilities to explore. Behind
every wall, around each corner, there can be something new,
or old, as happens in my favorite city, Florence, Italy. After
teaching a course at the University at Albany titled “The City
and Human Health” for about 20 years, I finally was able to take
the course into the field and teach our students using the reality
around them. About half of the course is chronological, tracing
the changes in cities from their origin some 10,000 years ago
to today, and relating those shifts to changes in the disease
and health profile of people who occupied those cities. You can do
that to some extent in Albany. Where did people live in the 18th
century? How did they deal with the essential requirements of
cities that influence health, such as a supply of food and water?
Why are there almost no wooden structures left in downtown
Albany from before the mid-19th century? While the 17th, 18th,
and 19th centuries are interesting periods in the history of urban
health in Western cities, there was so much before that. I wanted
to show the students how to find that history in front of them and
fit the pieces together. In showing them, I also found new pieces,
and new ways they fit together.

Florence is an ideal place to experience that history because
it's all around. The city has preserved much of its premodern
past, and the remnants that pertain to health are there, but only
if you know how and where to look. Combining the readings
and classroom discussions with field trips in the medieval streets
transformed the students’ learning. The quaint narrow streets,
tower houses with their odd, regularly placed square holes,
and tall walls that surrounded the city and towers with massive
gates were converted in the students’ minds from colorful tourist
attractions into remnant examples of the city’s health history.

Getting to this point of teaching UAlbany students in the city
required early preparation. I took several trips abroad to identify
examples in Florence that could illustrate the conceptual part of
the course. I also observed that Florence is a manageable city that
students can explore on foot.

Offering the “right” course seemed essential to garnering the
enrollment required of faculty-led programs. First, it had to be
publicized. During study-abroad fairs in the lecture center, I stood
at a table with inviting pictures to capture students’ interests as
they walked by. I visited classrooms to give my pitch. This wasn’t
hard: I am extremely enthusiastic about the city and many of my
colleagues have been generous in letting me speak to their stu-
dents. Over the course of perhaps three months, students signed
up and eventually put down deposits. Sometimes I spoke to wary
parents concerned with letting their sons or daughters go abroad.

The concerns are real. There are some 16 million tourists who
visit Florence each year, including a large population of American
students. Many of these students are living away from their famil-
ies or the security of dorm life for the first time. There are many
opportunities for mischief against tourists generally. Fortunately,
the program contracted with a local company that took care of all
the things I could not: finding excellent apartments in the historic
city, arranging classroom space and technology. It also provided
logistical support for our trips and dealt with the authorities and
the medical system when needed; none of these are my strengths.

All of the students loved the program, and seeing their enthusiasm
for the course material and life abroad has been more rewarding than
any class evaluations I have received in the usual way. The program
transforms the students, their learning style, and their understanding
of our society and the world. Teaching abroad transformed my love
of my subject as well. Developing new field-based modules for the
course caused me to broaden the scope of the course while making
the concepts more tangible. My own research on cities and health
received a boost, too, as I brought my Florence field examples into
my article writing, by illustrating the intricate relationship between
the urban environment and the health of its human population.

Lawrence Schell is director of the Center for the Elimination of
Minority Health Disparities; professor, Department of Anthropol-
ogy; and professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
My main area of research is political philosophy. More specifically, I study theories of social justice. I ask questions like this: Which principles should we use to evaluate social institutions and policies? Notice that this is a “should”—or evaluative—question. To answer this type of moral query, it is not enough simply to understand how social institutions are actually organized or what most people think about them. We need standards of evaluation to answer these questions, but we cannot establish these standards simply by observing existing practices or common opinions.

Because philosophers are not limited to describing the institutions and attitudes that already exist, it is sometimes noted that they have their “heads in the clouds” (as was said of Socrates) or that their work belongs in an “ivory tower.” This is indeed a risk, but the way to resist it is to engage one’s beliefs in dialogue with a wide variety of different perspectives. As the philosopher John Stuart Mill explained, although we are all fallible, we can identify our errors and make progress and improve our beliefs—including our moral beliefs—through discussion with others who have different points of view. To be effective, he emphasized, we must “be able to hear [these perspectives] from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them.” This is why it is so important for philosophers to engage with people who have had different experiences and who have different viewpoints. There is no guarantee that we will come to an agreement on any particular issue, but we can come to understand one another better, and this, in turn, helps us to reflect critically on our own perspectives.

I have been fortunate to present and discuss my work with philosophers and students in many different countries. Most recently, during a five-week visit, I taught an undergraduate and a graduate course in Shandong University in Jinan, China. Lecturing on Western philosophy, I had a rare opportunity to discuss this material with students who had been raised in a different tradition. Many things that I took for granted were not at all obvious to these students, and their questions helped me think about the subject in a new way. But it was not only in the formal setting of a philosophy class that this was done. When I was with students and colleagues in more relaxed settings, such as the local coffee shop or in public parks, we would compare life in China to that in the United States. While touring the burial grounds of Confucius in Qufu, we discussed how philosophy informs our lives. And at an underground rock club in Beijing, we witnessed the mixing of American and Chinese cultures in a surprising and powerful hybrid when we heard a heavy-metal band that included traditional Chinese instruments (loudly amplified, of course).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, I came away from my trip with a new appreciation of Chinese culture and hospitality. What I found more surprising was the sheer diversity of the people that I met. One woman—a PhD candidate in philosophy—told me that her highest aspiration was to get married, while another young woman bitterly resented her grandmother’s pressuring her to find a husband. Some students were resolutely secular, while another prayed to his ancestors at every opportunity. My friends and I had a great time at the rock club, while others told me that they preferred more traditional music. It is sometimes said that China is more “communitarian” than the “individualistic” United States. That may be true in some ways, but it is no less diverse. My time in China transformed my understanding of the need for principles of justice that treat all citizens fairly, especially when those citizens hold a wide diversity of values.

Philosophy can sometimes travel into high abstractions. But it begins from reflection on the problems that we face in ordinary, lived experience. We consider what can be said for and against the beliefs and practices that we often take for granted. By learning about and experiencing different perspectives, we put ourselves in a position to make the critical judgments that can improve our beliefs, ourselves, and our world.
HOW SPENDING TIME ABROAD CAN IMPROVE TEACHING APPROACHES AND EXPAND RESEARCH PROGRAMS

BY PROF. DAVID ROUSSEAU

I have always found studying, research- ing, and teaching abroad to be transformative experiences. As an undergraduate student majoring in economics, I traveled to the London School of Economics and Political Science for a yearlong study-abroad program during my junior year. With the excep-
tion of travel to Canada to play hockey as a youth, I had never been outside the United States. I found the experience electrifying. My classes were filled with students from around the globe, and each of them brought a unique worldview to the conversation. Outside the classroom, I watched as Margaret Thatcher survived an IRA bombing, coal miners violently clashed with police and the National Coal Board, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) staged massive protests in London and Greenham Common. I learned more about myself and the world from this stay than I have at any other time in my life.

My junior year abroad experience changed the course of my life. I shifted my focus from economics and went on to earn a master’s degree in public policy focusing on international security, and a PhD in political science focusing on international relations. Since becoming a professor, I have had several additional opportunities to study, research, and teach abroad. Each experience changed me by introducing new and interesting topics, expanding my professional network, exposing me to novel arguments, and improving my teaching. Two of these experiences stand out.

In 2005, and again in 2010, I spent eight weeks teaching at the International Summer Campus at Korea University in Seoul. In addition to engaging with a number of Korean faculty members, I found living in international housing for two months with interdisciplinary faculty from across the globe to be a remarkable experience. Every morning over breakfast I had a chance to discuss pressing issues with economists, sociologists, political scientists, and historians. The experience contributed to my writing a research article with a Korean colleague. But the biggest impact of the trips was on my teaching. In 2005, I felt discouraged that many of the native Korean students seemed passive and resisted engaging with other international students. Upon my return to Albany, I began experimenting with a number of active learning techniques, including Team Based Learning (TBL). In 2010, I returned to Korea and taught using a fully implemented TBL format (i.e., readiness assessment tests and challenging group application exercises). The results were fantastic! Each team was a mixture of students from around the globe and the intragroup interactions broke down barriers and inspired students to engage with each other.

The second experience relates to my involvement with an online international-relations program at the Free University of Berlin. The project began in the late 1990s, with about 15 European universities (and my American university) participating in semester-long virtual student exchanges. Students wrote essays on common topics, and then shared and responded to essays from students at other universities. When the Free University of Berlin began creating a graduate program in international relations, several of us from the earlier project designed online modules and wrote original essays for the modules. I then taught in the program for five years, beginning with a week of in-person instruction and then 15 weeks of distance learning. One year we taught the face-to-face portion in Dubai, with about half of the students coming from the Gulf region. The experience transformed my thinking about distance education. In one class I had an international banker from London, a Danish peacekeeper stationed in Lebanon, a German diplomat from the foreign ministry stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan, and a retired Saudi Arabian naval officer. Although the technology never allowed us to replicate exactly the rapid flow of ideas in a traditional classroom setting, I learned that students from a diverse array of backgrounds will produce an extraordinarily rich exchange of ideas with the right teaching techniques. I was delighted when two of my former doctoral students went on to participate in the blended learning program as faculty members after obtaining their PhDs at the University at Albany.

International experiences have enriched my life, broadened my research program, and improved my teaching. One of the reasons I recently returned to the faculty from the administration is so I can plan my next extended trip!

David Rousseau is associate professor in the Department of Political Science as well as in the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity
I was pre-med when I started college, but during my first year of classes I found that I really enjoyed my English courses. The more literature I read, the more I began to want to find a way to study abroad. The work of writers from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Kundera and García Márquez made me long to travel beyond the borders of the United States. When I discussed study abroad possibilities with my college advisors and my parents, however, they didn’t see how I could go abroad for a semester and complete all the remaining pre-med requirements. A semester away, they argued, would harm my chances of getting into medical school. At the time, I believed them. So I stayed around, though I did arrange to take a six-week summer course in London on England’s National Health Service.

During those weeks in England, I spent time doing my assigned work, but I spent much more time pursuing my own eclectic literary studies. I wandered through bookstores on Charing Cross Road. I hopped on trains and took my copies of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake to the Lake District. I carried my copies of Joyce and Yeats on a ferry to Ireland. I didn’t fully understand it at the time, but my experience abroad was forever transforming my educational career.

When I returned to the U.S., still thinking I might be pre-med, I signed up to take the MCAT not once but three separate times. Each time, as the test date approached, I found myself much more committed to writing a short story or an essay than to reviewing the little I remembered from organic chemistry, biology, and physics. Finally, after I didn’t take the MCAT the third time, I realized I was no longer pre-med. I prepared myself for the GRE and went off to pursue a PhD in English.

More than 30 years after that transformative summer in London, study abroad continues to inspire every aspect of my work as a writer and a professor. One recent example: I was on sabbatical during the 2016–17 academic year and I spent almost half of that time in Europe as Writer-in-Residence at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg (HWK), an Institute for Advanced Study in Delmenhorst, Germany. Maybe it’s not surprising that I was part of a program called Fiction Meets Science; I never went to medical school, but I remain a writer who is fascinated and inspired by science. I am currently working on a novel that explores the life of a German astronomer named Karl Schwarzschild, who lived from 1873 to 1916 and is in large part responsible for the discovery of black holes. During my months in Germany, I was able not only to research the history and science behind Schwarzschild’s discoveries at observatories in Göttingen and Potsdam, but also to discuss his work with experts in the field. At the HWK, artists and scientists from all over the world work together, sharing insights about their research and teaching. Again and again, the conversations we had emphasized how inspiring and transformative global collaboration across the disciplines could be for everyone on our respective campuses. We agreed that our work as teachers, writers, and researchers—our work, that is, as lifelong students—grows stronger and more nuanced the more we reach out across disciplines and around the world.

With the memory of the HWK still fresh in my mind, I am more than ever before encouraging my students and colleagues to find ways to transform their own careers by spending time studying abroad.

Edward Schwarzschild is associate professor of English
A LESSON ON TEACHING FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

BY PROF. SUSANNA FESSLER

I spent the fall 2016 semester teaching and researching at one of our study-abroad partner schools, Kansai Gaidai in Hirakata, Japan. I taught a class on Japanese travel literature to two dozen students from all over the world: North America, Europe, East Asia, Australia, and Central America. That’s a diverse group. Of course, we have a diverse student body at the University at Albany, too. So how was this experience different from being in the UAlbany classroom? At UAlbany, the students are diverse, but the pedagogy is dominated by American standards and expectations. We expect our students, regardless of where they are from, to conform to our curriculum and perform in accordance with our classroom norms. It’s easy to become insular without realizing it; we forget that education is not the same everywhere in the world, and that North American standards are just that—North American, not global.

Teaching at Kansai Gaidai helped me remember that the student experience is—and should be—a vast sea of possibilities. Would it be right for me to impose North American standards on Europeans in a Japanese classroom? I decided that it would not. Just because “we do things this way” in the United States does not mean that “this way” is superior, or that it can be easily grafted onto a one-semester experience for an exchange student. Approaches and goals in education vary widely. Europeans tend to focus on field specialization, Americans on personal exploration, and East Asians on competence certification.

In the East Asian case, this means that classroom discussion rarely, if ever, happens. Students are taught that interrupting the instructor or asking questions is rude, and should be avoided. Moreover, they are taught that self-expression on a topic is not valuable, but mastery of a set of materials is good.

Isn’t this ultimately bad? Doesn’t it contradict one of the characteristics of SUNY Gen Ed courses that we uphold: “General education emphasizes active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to become producers as well as consumers of knowledge”? Most UAlbany professors I know would think so, and thus conclude that the East Asian model is “wrong.” I hasten to point out that millions of East Asians are educated in this way, and succeed in life. And they’ve been doing it for centuries.

I’m not saying that innovation in the classroom and in pedagogy is meaningless. My point is that in our constant search for something better, we should stand on the shoulders of not only our predecessors but also all those who are doing something different but successful, even if it seems counterintuitive. The best way I know to do this is to diversify our experiences.

“… in our constant search for something better, we should stand on the shoulders of not only our predecessors but also all those who are doing something different but successful, even if it seems counterintuitive. The best way I know to do this is to diversify our experiences.”

Because I am a professor of East Asian studies with more than two decades of teaching to a diverse student body under my belt, you’d think that all this would be no revelation to me. But although dealing with the American and East Asian students was old and familiar, dealing with the learning styles of the other students pushed me back to a starting point. So, even for this veteran, teaching abroad provided a reminder and a lesson.

Susanna Fessler is professor of Japanese
GIVING AND RECEIVING:
Outcomes of the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program

BY PROF. GILBERT A. VALVERDE

The Fulbright Senior Specialist Program has provided me with an outstanding opportunity not only to learn and grow in numerous capacities, but also to meaningfully serve scholarly, professional, and policy communities outside the United States.

I successfully applied to the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program in 2006 and was honored to be selected and added to the roster of specialists that same year. During my time in the program, I was the recipient of two awards—two opportunities to collaborate with institutions in Uruguay and in Argentina. In 2006 I made two trips to Montevideo, Uruguay, and later, in 2011, I traveled twice to the city on the opposite bank of the Rio de la Plata: Buenos Aires, Argentina. Each trip lasted for a little over two weeks, which is the norm for these awards.

For my first Fulbright award, in 2006, the Universidad Católica de Uruguay (UCU) requested my expertise and assistance. Although I had never been to Uruguay, a country that is not often visited, even by people who specialize in Latin America, I cannot overstate the richness of this experience. I met with and advised ministers, legislators, and many other government decision makers as well as the U.S. ambassador and cultural attaché. I also engaged in rewarding conversations with university presidents, faculty members, teachers’ union leaders, school administrators, classroom teachers, and students. In each interaction, I learned about the educational futures they aspired to, the role they hoped policy and advocacy could play, and what they considered the responsibilities and rights of their various institutions in pursuing those goals. All in all, I took advantage of a tremendous opportunity to help these individuals and their country in a variety of ways, involving analysis, collaboration, counsel, and communication. I left Uruguay with lasting and vibrant scholarly and professional networks that went beyond my participation as a Fulbright Specialist. Today I maintain my connection with that country in various capacities: through serving as a principal foreign technical advisor to the Uruguayan testing agency; sitting on the editorial board of one of their education research journals, Páginas de Educación; and continuing to regularly collaborate with Uruguayan scholars, policymakers, and educational evaluation specialists.

In my second award, in 2011, my experience in the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program brought me to two top private universities in Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés and Universidad Torcuato di Tella. In contrast to my prior work in Montevideo, the Argentinian federal, provincial, and municipal governments (and a civil society increasingly skeptical about government transparency and data) were at loggerheads regarding participation in large-scale international tests, the uses (and abuses) of standardized testing, and their impact on education quality and outcomes within their schools.

Accordingly, I taught an intensive course on educational system evaluation; delivered academic and public lectures; spoke with leading thinkers and policy entrepreneurs within think tanks and newspapers; and met with key decision makers at the federal level as well as officials in provincial and municipal governments within Buenos Aires. Again, this proved to be a rewarding experience, and I left Argentina with new professional and academic networks, fresh insights into my field, and reinvigorated enthusiasm for my scholarly agenda. I continue to serve on advisory boards at both universities, and collaborate with university scholars and policy analysts in non-governmental think tanks in Argentina.

“...My participation in the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program has been beyond fulfilling and rewarding: I have been allowed to serve scholarly, professional, and policy communities within Uruguay and Argentina as I enrich my own intellectual, professional, and personal life.

My participation in the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program has been beyond fulfilling and rewarding: I have been allowed to serve scholarly, professional, and policy communities within Uruguay and Argentina as I enrich my own intellectual, professional, and personal life. Moreover, I have gained a greater appreciation for the power and potential of citizen diplomacy, the rewards of personal global engagement, and a better understanding of the diverse challenges that countries face in creating new educational futures. Fulbright has programs for scholars at every stage of their career, enabling educators like me to contribute to international development while I bring to the graduate education of University of Albany students, both domestic and international, an enriched set of real-world experiences, specific examples of cutting-edge innovations, and firsthand knowledge of important policy needs and challenges. The rewards from participation in the Fulbright program can be world-changing.

Gilbert A. Valverde is a professor in the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND SERENDIPITOUS ENCOUNTERS INSPIRE NEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS

BY PROF. SAMANTHA FRIEDMAN

S pending the 2014–2015 academic year in Turkey as a Fulbright Fellow has broadened my horizons as a researcher and teacher in the field of population studies, more commonly known as demography. Through the Fulbright, I had the opportunity to work at the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HIPS), the only academic unit in Turkey that offers graduate degrees in demography. In collaboration with Professor Ismet Koç, I studied the impact of income inequality on household housing outcomes and residential location in Turkey and the United States.

Little research has examined income-based differences in housing outcomes, and the existing studies are inconclusive because they differ in their findings as to whether the affluent attain significantly better outcomes than those of middle-income households. Our study found that the U.S. and Turkey are similar in that the most affluent groups are significantly more likely than their respective middle-income peers to own their homes and to live in larger and newer dwellings, and among owners, in homes of higher average value, controlling for relevant factors. We also examined the residential segregation of households according to educational status in the U.S. and Turkey, and found that there is more segregation between the most- and least-educated groups in Turkey as compared to those in the U.S. But in both countries, the rate of segregation by educational status is lower than segregation by income status.

During my stay, I also learned that smoking rates are high in Turkey, but I was most surprised by discovering that smoking was prevalent in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods and in retail establishments. This prompted me to examine what data had been collected on smoking in that country. From my research, I found data from the Global Adult Tobacco Study (GATS), which confirmed my anecdotal evidence that smoking rates are greater among more highly educated groups compared to the least-educated portion of the population. This pattern is exactly the opposite of that found in most other countries, and little research, to our knowledge, has been done to understand this anomalous pattern. The GATS data are limited and do not provide information on many demographic variables that are important in uncovering why this unexpected pattern exists in Turkey.

This research collaboration with Professor Koç at HIPS has had important influence in shaping my career since I returned from my Fulbright experience. During my stay in Turkey, I learned about the availability of many data sources there while also fully engaging in the culture and learning about a variety of social dimensions of that society. As a result, Professor Koç and I, in conjunction with a graduate student from Turkey in our doctoral program at Albany, Aysenur Kurtulus, are researching this issue using alternative data available in Turkey. If it weren’t for my stay there, I wouldn’t have come across this important research focus. Our preliminary results have shown that gender is the critical factor in shaping this anomalous pattern: Women are the ones who exhibit this counterintuitive arrangement those who are more educated are more likely to smoke than those who are less educated. For men, the conventional pattern emerges, and those who are more educated are less likely to smoke than those who are less educated.

My Fulbright experience also influenced my teaching. In Turkey I had the opportunity to conduct three seminars on professional topics for the graduate students at HIPS: “Tips for Finding an MA Thesis or PhD Dissertation Topic”; “Presenting at Professional Academic Conferences”; and “Publishing in Academic Journals.” These seminars exposed me to the students there, and since then several have asked me for advice and information about pursuing studies in Albany and the U.S. I’m hoping that in the future, graduate students from HIPS will be interested in coming to Albany to pursue predoctoral and postdoctoral work.

Back to my work in Albany, I always include a global perspective so that the students and I can discuss the concepts and theory from an international point of view. This is particularly useful when I teach undergraduates in my introduction to sociology class about culture and the dimensions that make up a culture. Norms that guide behavior in each society incorporate both similarities and differences. From my time in Turkey, I learned not only about the smoking habits and housing demographics of that society, but also about familial relations and linguistic distinctions. My Albany students take great interest in the many aspects of life that I am able to portray through what I learned firsthand in my own international travel and study.

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Samantha Friedman is associate professor in the Department of Sociology
It was January 2011 when I first set foot in Stockholm, Sweden, with my wife and two small children (ages six and eight at the time). For my semester-long sabbatical, I had arranged to spend six months at the Aging Research Center (ARC), a multidisciplinary research organization established through a collaboration between the Karolinska Institute and Stockholm University. I remember those first few days in Sweden quite well. We were all thrilled to be discovering a new country, but we were blind to what lay ahead. We certainly had no idea that within just a few years, Sweden would become something of a second home for us, on both the professional and the personal levels.

On a professional level, my time in Sweden has been nothing short of transformative. After my initial six-month stay in 2011, I have returned every single year. Several researchers from ARC have become my closest collaborators in ongoing projects aimed at advancing our understanding of the social determinants of health in aging populations. Working closely with this group of social scientists has exposed me to new research approaches, and new ways of thinking about population aging and its societal implications. Moreover, the data that my Swedish colleagues have contributed to our research are wholly unique, as they have been tracking the lives of nationally representative cohorts of aging adults, prospectively, since 1968. We have no such comparable data in the United States, so my collaboration with ARC has afforded me an extraordinary opportunity to contribute new knowledge to our understanding of aging and health. Within the past six years, I have traveled throughout Sweden, Europe, and the United States to present our work with the Swedish data, and together with my Swedish colleagues, we have so far published nine new peer-reviewed articles on this topic. It is not an exaggeration to say that I have become a better, and more successful, researcher because of my collaboration with ARC.

On a more personal level, my regular visits to Stockholm, some of which have included my wife and kids, have resulted in my family falling deeply in love with Sweden. We love the beauty of Sweden’s nature, its architecture, and its design, and we are also enamored with Sweden’s forward-thinking and egalitarian social-welfare system, the positive effects of which are in plain view every day throughout the country. We also love Swedish Fika, a social tradition that we have managed to bring back to the U.S. (stop by the Department of Health Policy, Management, and Behavior at the School of Public Health on any Wednesday at 2:30 in the afternoon to experience Fika for yourself!). Most importantly, over the years my Swedish colleagues have turned into good friends who regularly invite us into their homes, and with whom we have spent many weekends hiking and biking around Sweden. My children have also made lifelong friends in Sweden; now, as teenagers, they are able (and more than willing) to maintain those friendships via Instagram and other social media.

Back home in Albany, I never hesitate to recommend to my colleagues that they explore the possibility of establishing collaborations abroad. I would not trade the intellectual, professional, and personal gains that I have received from my collaborations in Sweden for anything.

Benjamin Shaw is director, Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, and professor, Department of Health Policy, Management, and Behavior
I "study" around the world in many different ways. For example, in October I am going to Hong Kong where I am an external examiner for several departments at the University of Hong Kong, including the Department of Social Work. In that role, I help ensure that the curriculum is sound and that student evaluation methods capture the goals articulated for student learning. In March, I am conducting a series of workshops on leading therapeutic groups in Singapore. The in-depth workshops are for seasoned mental health professionals and related direct care staff, but some supervisors and administrators will also attend. I also go to international conferences, give keynote talks and other presentations around the world, where I learn about, and grapple with, how social service skills and issues are affected by cultural, political, and other contextual issues. All of this brings me into contact with colleagues from around the world who have a great depth of experience and knowledge.

Whatever I do abroad, I always learn a great deal from the experience. The kind of work that I teach about and do, makes my interactions with students and community workers during workshops particularly interesting and intensive because we are dealing with sensitive topics such as serious mental health problems, conduct disordered behaviors, mental and physical abuse, neglect, violence, and many other difficulties in coping with life. I also have the opportunity to see how concepts like oppression, power, privilege, and social justice manifest themselves in other countries. This, in turn, helps me to reflect on how larger cultural and social issues affect social services here at home.

In all my studies abroad, I have the pleasure to meet with and learn from a wide range of international faculty colleagues from departments that are similar and different from my own. For example, it is very helpful to learn about the proportion of lecturing, small group exercises, presentations, films and other methods used to teach helping skills in international settings. I focus on teaching people to help others and I am also a helper myself, working for a few hours each week at a family service organization. Therefore, it is particularly striking in my studies overseas, to see and learn about the variations in helping processes. Culture, setting, government policies and many other related factors are highlighted, making me reflect on the practices in my own country, and opening me to new ways of helping.

It is a challenge to be truly helpful to audiences abroad because I know less about the overall context of helping processes than I would in my country. However, while engaging with this challenge, I learn a great deal that I use in my own teaching, and in committees and team meetings with colleagues on my own campus. It is exhilarating to learn from others about different, often innovative, helping theories and supervisory processes in the countries I visit.

While I learn a great deal from doing workshops, talks, and in other roles abroad, I have also learned a great deal by attending international conferences. There, I learn from colleagues from around the world. Often I find that we in the United States are ahead of the rest of the world in terms of our helping methods and technologies which makes me proud of my nation, and thankful for our rich resource environment. At the same time, however, there is still much that is new to learn from the way services are organized and delivered in other places. For example, while giving workshops in China and the Netherlands about working with people with advanced dementia, I learned to my surprise, that both countries have less sophisticated dementia care units in nursing homes and fewer residential care options. At the same time, I learned that families and communities in China are better able to integrate people with dementia in community setting thereby aiding aging in place, and that in Holland sensory stimulation rooms and other specialized services for people with dementia are more sophisticated than in the United States.

Overall, it has been very affirming to me as an educator and practitioner that we in the United States have advanced knowledge and skills about how to help people cope with life’s vicissitudes. At the same time, it was humbling to learn that we have some of the same limitations in terms of resources and coverage of people in need as in developing and developed nations, and that many countries have services and educational technologies that we can learn a great deal from. For example, in Singapore, two-way mirrors are routinely used to enhance and polish workers’ skills. This would be a wonderful addition to our own skill building efforts for social work students here in the United States.

Ronald W. Toseland is Distinguished Professor in the School of Social Welfare
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The program transforms the students, their learning style, and their understanding of our society and the world. Teaching abroad transformed my love of my subject as well. Developing new field-based modules for the course caused me to broaden the scope of the course while making the concepts more tangible. My own research on cities and health received a boost, too, as I brought my Florence field examples into my article writing, by illustrating the intricate relationship between the urban environment and the health of its human population.”

— PROF. LAWRENCE SCHELL