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For students considering studying abroad in France
Ansley Clark

When I arrived in Aix-en-Provence to spend a semester studying there, the director of our school asked all of us why we were in France. I replied, “For confidence.” And I’ve realized since then that I did gain a certain crucial confidence through studying abroad, a confidence that has stayed with me over the years. Looking back on my semester abroad in Aix-en-Provence, I would say that it was the single most important experience of my four years in college. Obviously, I improved my French and learned about a new culture through intense immersion. But beyond this, I felt like finally, for the first time in my life, a door was opening to the entire world. I returned to Linfield feeling both a new appreciation for a kind of blissful detachment from my old life there. In the most positive sense—nothing seemed to matter quite as much anymore after the realization that the world was so much bigger than America, let alone the American college culture. After graduating from college, I returned to France for eight months to teach English to elementary students. Because of my previous experience studying abroad in college, I was prepared for the challenges this position presented: I already knew I was able to handle the solitude of traveling alone to a foreign country, and I knew a little bit of what to expect from being an *étrangère* in a foreign culture. I formed relationships with teachers and students in the French school system. I grew as a teacher. I traveled extensively all over Europe. Now I am currently working at a Montessori school in Portland teaching French to toddler and preschool students. I speak with them mainly in French, and we sing songs and read books that I’ve gathered in my times abroad. The confidence I first learned while studying abroad is valuable to me in nearly every area of my life, no matter what my challenges might be. And I am looking forward to traveling internationally again. I expect that it will always be a lifelong addiction now.

