



2024 Impact Report



Welcome!

Over the last academic year, we've continued to introduce new approaches that help each student advance toward their academic, professional, and personal goals while abroad. Our commitments to inclusive excellence, individualized learning, intercultural agility, and enduring impact are foundational to this important work—and evident throughout this report.

Each student's journey is unique. As such, we strive to support every individual, nurturing engagement with new cultures, communities, and perspectives through our distinctive Roadmap for Learning and thoughtfully designed programs.

The stories of transformation, innovation, and resilience on these pages reflect the heart of IFSA's mission and our efforts to create education abroad experiences that inspire, challenge, and empower. We're proud to share these insights with you.

Thank you for taking time to catch up on where we've been. We're energized about where we're going and look forward to sharing this exciting journey with you, our valued partners.

Heather Barclay Hamir
Heather Barclay Hamir, Ph.D.
IFSA President and CEO



Engagement: The keystone to learning success

Students learn and grow when they're engaged. That's why we're intentional about creating environments that encourage connection, discovery, and reflection with a blend of support and independence. Year after year, we do this by grounding our work in IFSA's four pillars—**inclusive excellence**, **individualized learning**, **intercultural agility**, and **enduring impact**.

These interconnected commitments inform our **Roadmap for Learning**, the distinctive framework we use to foster student engagement outside the classroom. We invite you to see how these efforts lead to experiences that drive academic, professional, and personal growth, and create new perspective—ultimately changing lives and our world for the better.



2023-2024 by the numbers

Enrollment +37%

Driven by robust Spring and short-term program growth.

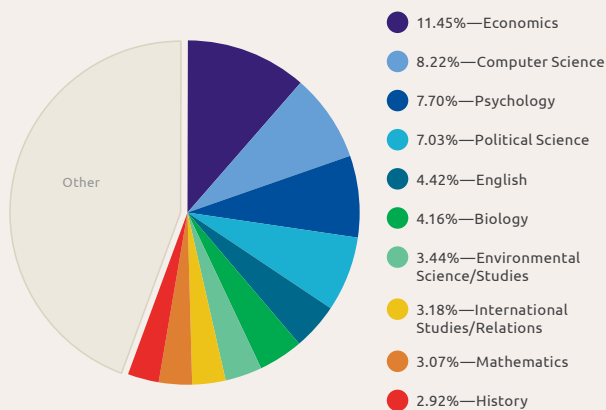
Top 10 majors

As STEM students continue to show more interest in studying abroad, we responded with new programs that suit their goals, including IFSA Biosciences Career Accelerator and IFSA Health Sciences Career Accelerator. We have also expanded our selection of computer science classes in London, added more data science classes in Prague, and added health science classes in Buenos Aires.

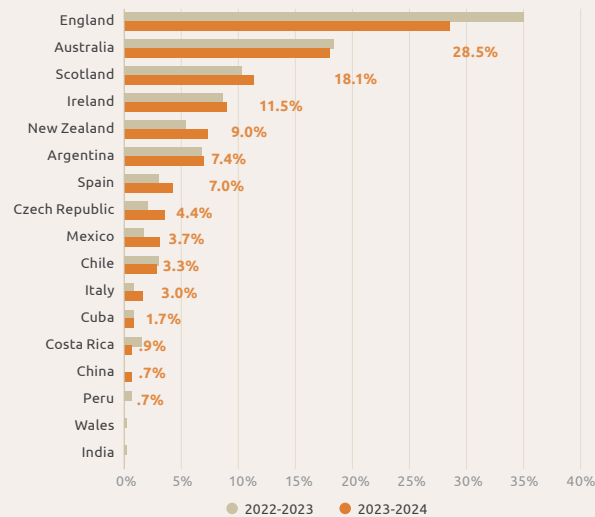
Custom Programs: Year-over-year growth continues

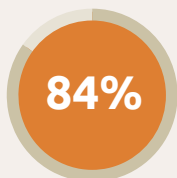


Top 10 Majors



Top Student Destinations





would recommend
IFSA Custom Programs

Tailored programs that meet institutional needs

Students who feel supported are more likely to engage as active learners, gaining more insights, knowledge, and growth. Each year, we also evaluate our custom programs to make sure we're creating this impact. We strive to deliver academic rigor even in the compressed format of a short-term program.

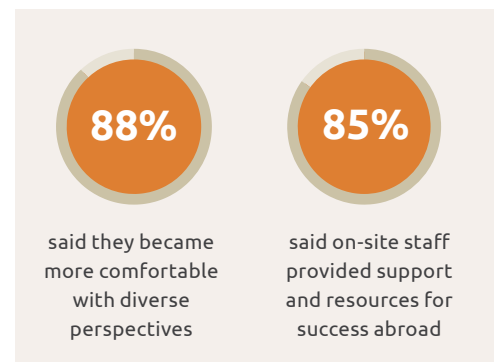
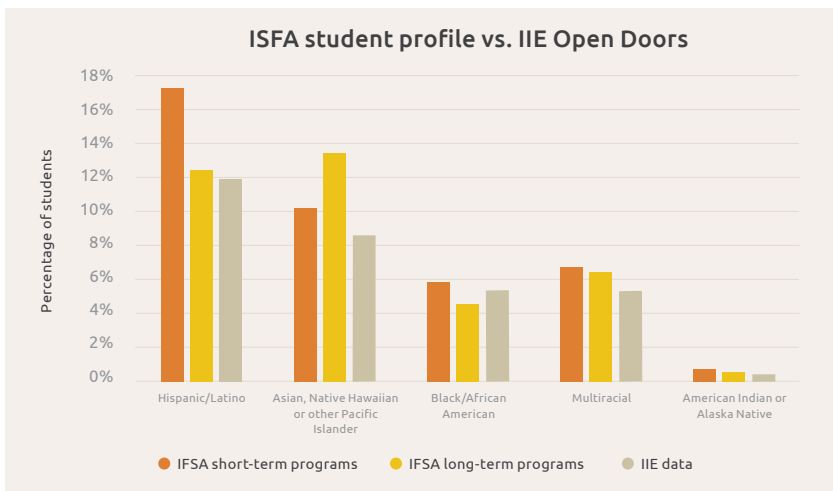
📍 Mérida, Mexico



Learning happens when students feel like they belong

Over the last three years, **nine out of every 10 IFSA students** consistently reported feeling welcomed and valued. Metrics naturally fluctuate over time as student interests, needs, and goals shift, but monitoring them and watching for trends ensures we're connecting with students and creating an environment that supports the whole student, in and out of the classroom.

confident
comfortable
encouraged
supported
valued
welcomed
respected
capable



Left: Enrollment continues to reflect a more diverse group of students than national averages.

Targeted support that meets students (and parents) where they are

The needs of students and their families are changing. Here are some of the ways we've responded in the past year:

- **Financial.** During the last academic year, IFSA delivered **\$1.22M in scholarships and grants**, based on a rubric that's heavily weighted toward financial need. We also simplified our scholarship application process to support this.
- **Communication.** As numbers of heritage students bound for Latin America increased, we launched prearrival sessions for their parents, conducted in Spanish.
- **Personalization.** To prepare students and ease pretravel anxiety, we added more touchpoints. New preapplication and predeparture virtual and face-to-face sessions with individual colleges and universities support goal setting, program selection, and visa procurement.



"IFSA provided just the right amount of cushion where I felt secure stepping foot in a new country, and enough freedom where I could learn from new experiences."

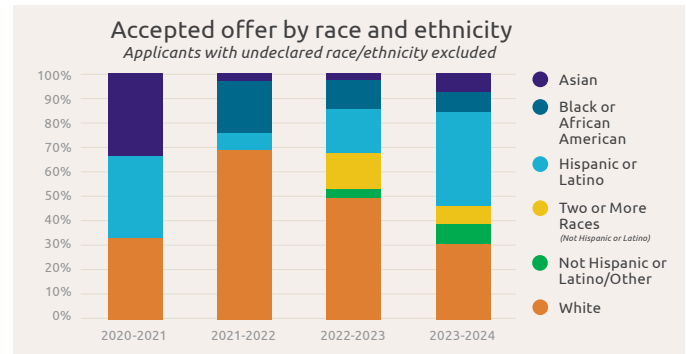
Gayle Janira | Columbia University | Queen Mary, University of London, Spring 2024

Nurturing inclusion from within

Supporting students properly begins with cultivating an inclusive workplace culture at IFSA. Efforts we began with our 2020 You Belong Here initiative continue, led by a working group that strives to improve empathy, understanding, and inclusivity at every level.

Based on results from our bi-annual climate survey, we **expanded our professional development program**, IFSA Foundations. New courses on identity in the workplace and leadership help us continue to cultivate an inclusive workplace culture.

We also **increased staff diversity**, through ongoing efforts to improve hiring practices.



Finally, we're making **strides toward balanced representation** among IFSA leaders:

- IFSA Leadership: 50% women, 12% people of color
- IFSA Board of Directors: 50% women, 46% people of color



Expanded mental health support for a fuller experience abroad

Mental health distress is by far the leading reason students withdraw from study abroad programs, according to data collected from June to January 2023 by The Forum on Education. In response, we enhanced support for students abroad, empowering them to engage more fully and maximize the benefits of their experiences:

- **Shared best practices.** With the goal of improving mental support abroad for all students, we launched a series of professional workshops, held at Lehigh University, Macalester College, Pomona College, University of Michigan, and two NAFSA conferences. We'll continue the series in 2025.
- **Added resources.** Launched the Support Our Staff (SOS) program to equip on-site crisis managers with essential resources and personal support. This initiative provides on-call mental health assistance, debriefing, and post-incident care, ensuring that staff who support students in crisis are well prepared to navigate challenging situations while maintaining their own wellbeing.
- **Spread knowledge.** To help all students benefit from new mental health support practices, IFSA health and safety leader Jennifer Fullick, Ph.D., joined The Forum's new working group to improve mental health abroad and contributed to *Convergence of Litigation, Policy and Standards*.



Providing critical health and safety support

Our full-time regional Health, Safety, and Wellness managers in Europe, Latin America, and Asia Pacific **support 10 new incidents per day** each semester. This structure prepares us to meet students where they are, so learning can continue with minimal interruption.

Takeaways from the last academic year:

- Managed **3,200+** student incidents—about **300** per month
- **3%** of all incidents were high-risk, according to The Forum on Education Abroad criteria
- **Nearly 70%** of all incidents involved physical or mental health
- Mental health distress was an issue in **every incident** that resulted in a student withdrawing

The COVID-19 crisis may be over, but persistent health and safety needs continue to underscore the importance of expert student support, from predeparture through return home.



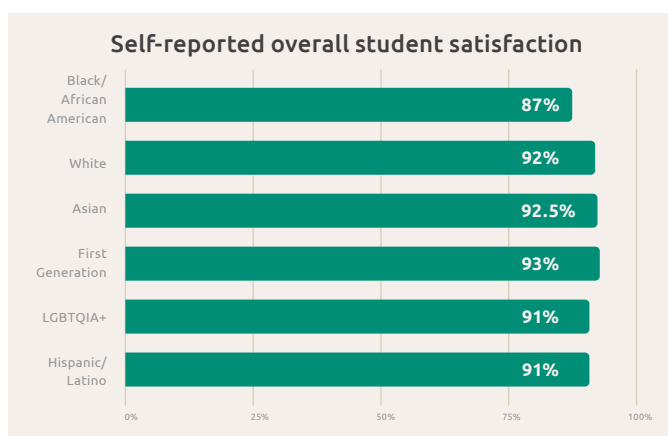
"I really appreciated Gaby's* support. When I had a family emergency, she came to my home immediately to help me figure out next steps and I always felt so comfortable reaching out to her." (*Gabriela Corrales, IFSA Program Director for Costa Rica)

Shayla Rose-Brown | Soka University of America | Costa Rica, Universidad Nacional, Spring 2024



Focused on experiences that drive impact

Like our institutional partners, we are firmly committed to rigorous standards that create meaningful learning experiences for students. Monitoring student perceptions of all aspects of their education abroad journey is one way we gauge student support and engagement, enabling learning in the classroom and beyond. We evaluate student feedback both as a whole and disaggregated by identity group to understand where the intersection of identity and student experience differs abroad. These deeper insights allow us to continue evolving our approach and create truly inclusive learning environments.



"An incredibly established and helpful program. IFSA helped me make the most out of my time in London."

Nikhil Saldana | Amherst College | Queen Mary, University of London, Spring 2024



Personal support that helps students set and reach goals

Individual student learning plans are foundational to our Roadmap for Learning framework. These plans help us engage students, working one-to-one to help them set, review, refine, and reach their academic, professional, and personal goals, before and during the student journey.

Learning plans deepen immersion

In Costa Rica, for example, student goals included immersion in local culture, improving Spanish language skills, volunteering to support local education, and exploring the country’s incredible natural beauty. Learning plans and check-in sessions helped students accomplish “all this and more, with amazing results,” said Gabriela Corrales, Program Director for Costa Rica.

Check-ins provide a safety net

In New Zealand, Student Experience Coordinator Megan Baker reports students consistently show up for optional check-ins, even when progress toward goals is on track. They’re “helpful as a reminder that we had you as a resource,” said one student.

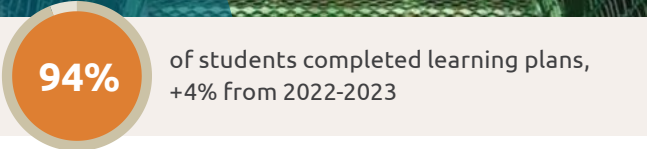
“I totally found them helpful, especially with getting in the swing of things and approaching finals time,” reflected another student. “It was nice to have a time and place to focus on getting things organized in my brain and feel on top of school stuff.”

Helping students leverage growth

Before students head home, they complete a summary workshop, the last element of the learning plan. These workshops help students articulate new skills that will continue to serve them and refine goals they can continue to pursue.



Monteverde, Costa Rica



“I loved the opportunity to understand day to day life in China, as well as spend so much time with students also interested in Chinese culture.”

Anna Arriola | Grinnell College | IFSA Study in Shanghai: Social Sciences, Spring 2024

IFSA students pursued passions and interests all over the globe



Mexico

Amherst College student Jacinta Smith **explored folk art**, guided by art historian Marisol Pardo Cue, examining how *artesanías* (handcrafts) reflect Mexican identity at different historical moments and how they are valued in the 20th century.

Spring 2024, Mérida Universities Program

After a semester in Mérida, Mexico, in fall 2023, Jennifer Mata from University of St. Thomas in Minnesota returned for the IFSA Summer Internship 2024 program, gaining **experience in global hospitality** with an international hotel chain. Now with bigger goals, she plans to return with IFSA in 2025, to a place where “culture, heritage, and expectations are all challenged in unique ways.”



Cuba

Students got an inside look at **life as a young Cuban activist** during a workshop on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in Havana, led by two local young women.

Spring 2024, Universidad de La Habana Partnership



Spain

Students Kaden Nguyen and Joyce Dihii **co-published their findings** with IFSA social psychology professor, Aida Mehrad. Their article, *Social Cognition Approach: Using Observation and Interview Methods via Qualitative Research*, appears in the *Journal of Education for Sustainable Innovation*.

Fall 2023, IFSA Study in Barcelona



Chile

Robin Stump from Lewis & Clark College completed an internship at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, where she hosted international visitors as a **bilingual guide**.

Spring 2024, IFSA Chilean Universities Program, Santiago



Argentina

Sara Hoffer from Colorado College completed an **internship with the Red Cross** in Buenos Aires. This included office work, taking a first-aid class in Spanish, and providing hands-on support at an Ironman Triathlon, a pilgrimage, a polo match, and HIV testing clinics.

With directed research, Victor Swezey analyzed literary reactions to Argentina's foreign debt after 2001, work he **expanded for his final thesis** at Columbia University.

Fall 2023, Argentine Universities Program

“I loved getting to join societies and having classes that weren’t just full of American exchange students.”

Lauren Solecki | Vanderbilt University | University of Edinburgh, Spring 2024





England

At University of Cambridge's Pembroke College, a cohort of IFSA students **embraced British sporting tradition** by filling an entire crew boat. Meanwhile, during his year at University of Oxford's Worcester College, Chris Zhang from Bowdoin College helped the men's second boat to a summer regatta victory.

London, England

Butler University student Liam Crowe **studied keys to success in professional football**, examining ownership structure, history, financial decisions, and the role of the fan community at AFC Wimbledon and Wrexham AFC.

Spring 2024, IFSA Study in London



Italy

In Rome, students **connected with Italian peers and young immigrants** through soccer. After friendly play, students listened to the migrants' stories and interviewed staff from Joel Nafuma Refugee Center about their work and topped the day with a meal and more conversation, sharing hopes and challenges, and reflecting on inclusivity.

Spring 2024, IFSA Custom Program for Butler University

Sydney, Australia

University of Cincinnati student Ryan Lannoye brought his passions for design, sports, and art to Sydney, for a three-month internship at Metakosmos, a start-up that designs spacesuits for commercial spaceflight. As he developed valuable professional skills, Ryan **designed a system that dramatically reduces spacesuit build-time** and was offered ongoing work with the company.

Summer 2024, IFSA Custom Program for the University of Cincinnati with the Global Career Center

When students were looking for opportunities to meet Australians, pitch in, and **gain experience by volunteering**, our Australia team organized a day with the nonprofit, Kids Giving Back. After an urban walk led by a once-homeless father, students helped prepare meals and wrote messages to recipients, then gathered to reflect on the experience.

Spring 2024, University of Sydney Partnership



Melbourne, Australia

Naomi Fina from Carleton College deepened connections with students from Australia and other nations by **joining the university Ultimate**

Frisbee team, where she was elected team mediator and invited to the 2024 UniSport Nationals in Canberra.

Fall 2023, University of Melbourne Partnership

New Zealand



Students were **introduced to Māori values** through the Tiaki Promise (a commitment to care for people, place, and culture), flax weaving, and learning stars that herald a new year. "Without this initial instruction, it would be easy to glance over Māori culture in New Zealand," said Corey Hart from Tulane University.

Spring 2024, University of Canterbury Partnership

After a semester at University of Otago in 2023, Gracie Mathis was eager to explore international opportunities. She **joined our team** as an Institutional Engagement intern during her senior year at University of Puget Sound. "After IFSA, I am thinking about international education," she says. "Studying abroad has proved to be the best decision I ever made, and I would love to help others share a similar experience."



Language learning: A powerful key to cultural understanding

Communicating in the local language is key to deep cultural connections that unlock learning and understanding. To ensure quality instruction at

IFSA, we expanded language assessment from our programs in Latin America to include Seville, Spain, in Fall 2023.

84%

of students improved proficiency

+0.65 points

average gain per student on TrueNorth scale

TrueNorth Score

Description

>1

Handles simple greetings. May know a handful of other words

5-5.9

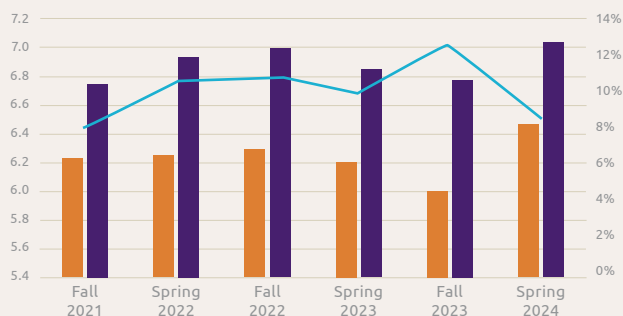
Participates in conversations on familiar topics in everyday situations. Occasionally talks about events and experiences in various time frames and handles situations beyond everyday life.

9-10

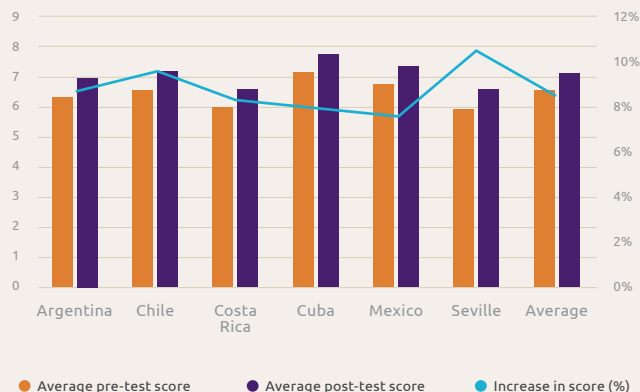
Communicates with ease, accuracy, and fluency. Participates fully and effectively in discussions on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings. Discusses complex issues at length by structuring arguments and developing hypotheses.

Adapted from [emmersion.ai.com](https://www.emmersion.ai.com)

Gains over time



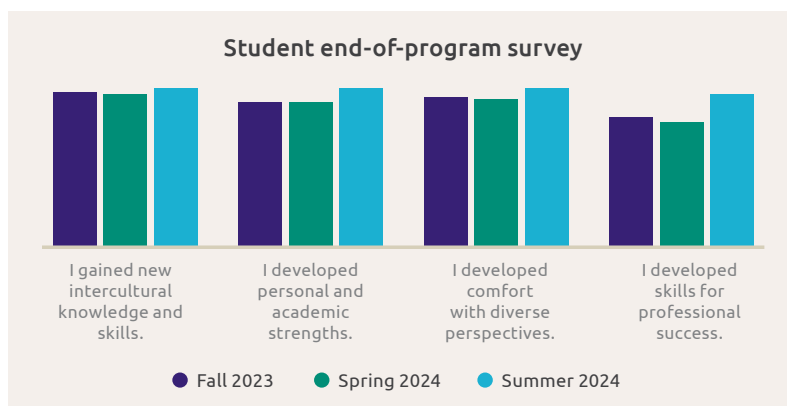
Gains by location





Students realize immediate gains and long-term benefits

Surveys completed by students at the end of our programs consistently show strong positive responses regarding growth and learning. We review these reports carefully, looking for trends that signal where to lean into or refine our practices.



"I got to see an impressive amount of places within and outside the city that I wouldn't have been able to access without IFSA's organized excursions and I practiced a ton of Spanish."

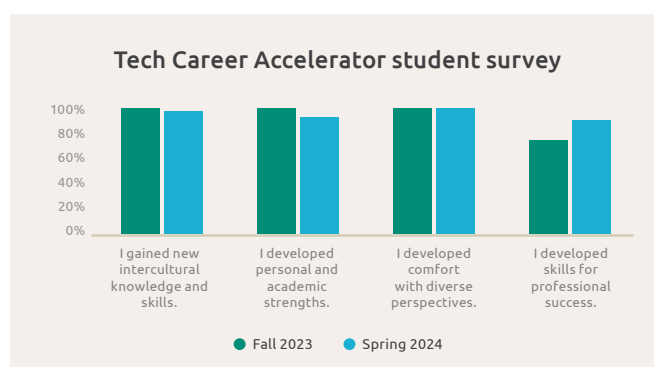
Sophia Bianco | Whitman College | Mérida Universities Program, Spring 2024



Expanding career-focused learning opportunities

Our growing portfolio of **Career Accelerator programs** prepares students for life after college with unique study abroad experiences that combine career-focused academics, immersive industry exposure, and leadership development.

- IFSA Tech Career Accelerator, Prague
- IFSA Biosciences Career Accelerator, London (2025)
- IFSA Health Science Career Accelerator, London (2026)
- IFSA International Business Career Accelerator, Barcelona (2026)



In Prague, students in our Tech Career Accelerator program consistently report the positive impact of the experience on future-focused knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

Special thanks to our Career Accelerator development partners

- Butler University
- Bentley University
- Elon University
- Georgetown University
- Lehigh University
- Skidmore College
- Tulane University
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- University of San Diego
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Vanderbilt University



"Engaging with young computer science students is key for us, due to our focus on creating advanced digital products and our commitment to nurturing the next generation of tech professionals."

Kateryna Timanova | Creative Dock | IFSA Tech Career Accelerator employer-partner



"The directors are outgoing, friendly, and very supportive. They jump through hoops for you to succeed and there are a lot of resume-building opportunities, such as working with companies and multiple company visits."

Jimmy German | University of Cincinnati | IFSA Tech Career Accelerator, Spring 2024



Reentry Workshops help students build on growth

In every location, IFSA hosts Reentry Workshops, designed to help students recognize and articulate skills, growth, and perspectives gained through study abroad.

- “I’m better at putting myself out there and doing things I’m not 100 percent sure about.”
- “I learned different approaches to mental health.”
- “I’ve become much better at research, and it has motivated me to go to graduate school.”

“I gained a better sense of myself and where I want to go in my career.”

Erin Vieths | Arizona State University | University of Edinburgh, Spring 2024



Travel
- Learned about different cultures



"I valued the various activities and excursions that exposed me to cultural elements that would've been hard to identify and arrange by myself."

Eddie Wei | Claremont McKenna College | University of Edinburgh, Spring 2024



"I enjoyed learning the culture through a family dynamic while living with a host family. I feel that this cultural experience was extremely valuable and unique."

Madi Gesse | Purdue University | Chilean Universities Program, Valparaíso, Spring 2024

IFSA Council recommends strategy to advance U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

In its inaugural year, the IFSA Strategic Advisory Council—referred to as the IFSA Council—focused on equipping students to engage with and contribute to sustainable strategies and solutions. Building on successful pilots in Italy and New Zealand, this work is advancing on two tracks:

1. Enhancing the IFSA Roadmap for Learning:

The team integrated learning objectives and activities that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). A new pilot, launching in Spring 2025 in New Zealand, will set the stage for a global rollout in the following academic year.

2. Embedding UNSDG-focused learning:

The IFSA Council recommended incorporating UNSDG-centered curriculum to foster greater student awareness and agency. As a result, academic and experiential curriculum will anchor a new credit-bearing class to be offered in Mérida, Mexico, and Rome, Italy, starting in Spring 2026.

Through these initiatives, IFSA continues to strengthen its commitment to sustainability and global citizenship, preparing students to lead with purpose in an interconnected world.

Up next: Enhancing inclusivity

The IFSA Strategic Advisory Council's work in the current academic year focuses on our commitment to inclusive excellence, identifying opportunities to create a more inclusive, welcoming environment for our students from the beginning of their education abroad journey until they return home.

"Whether we're discussing how best to incorporate U.N. Sustainable Development Goals or strategies to deepen inclusive excellence, I feel optimistic that the work the Council is tackling will benefit students and inspire them to become lifelong learners and engaged global citizens," said IFSA Council member Danielle Scugoza, Georgetown University.

2024-2025 IFSA Strategic Advisory Council Members

Pardip Bolina, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Scott Carpenter, Columbia University

Nicole Desjardins Gowdy, Pomona College

Jenny Elsey, Ed.D., Seattle Pacific University

Shanti Freitas, Macalester College

Nasha Lewis, College of William and Mary

Susan Lochner Atkinson, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Jill McKinney, Butler University

Katie Radande, Lehigh University

Jill Reister, Ph.D., University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Lauren Ruszczuk, University of Maryland, College Park

Danielle Scugoza, Georgetown University

Chair: Scott Wilson, Ph.D., Sewanee: The University of the South



"IFSA has done a great job creating brave spaces to dig deep and encouraging blue sky thinking."

Danielle Scugoza | Georgetown University | IFSA Strategic Advisory Council member

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