



**IFSA**  
INSTITUTE FOR  
STUDY ABROAD

# IMPACT REPORT

2025





## Stability in Uncertain Times

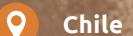
The past year brought a startling wave of change to higher education, creating significant challenges for our colleagues and our own organization. As we adapt to inevitable change amid a complex domestic environment and rapidly evolving global dynamics, one thing is certain. Our commitments to inclusive excellence, individualized learning, intercultural agility, and enduring impact are stronger than ever.

As a mission-driven, not-for-profit, these durable pillars guide our work, ensuring we do all we can to help students achieve life-changing growth that can make our world a better place. At the same time, our future-focused approach guides us to solutions that help our partner colleges and universities meet their strategic goals in the face of strong headwinds. In these pages, we're proud to share stories that bear this out.

Thank you all for your support and collaboration. Together, we'll navigate to smoother waters as we empower and prepare students through transformative study abroad experiences.

*Heather Barclay Hamir*

Heather Barclay Hamir, PhD  
IFSA President and CEO



Chile

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# SEE OUR ROADMAP FOR LEARNING IN ACTION

When the goal is to broaden perspective and foster connection, learning outside the classroom is as powerful as traditional academic work. That's why we carefully plan all co-curricular and extracurricular components with our framework, the IFSA Roadmap for Learning. From orientation to re-entry workshops, the Roadmap and our co-curricular syllabus engages students, encourages progress toward goals, and provides meaningful cultural experiences, supporting our commitments to inclusive excellence, individualized learning, intercultural agility, and enduring impact.

**Exploring milpa in Mérida, Mexico.** After learning about traditional medicine and food systems, students dig into local agricultural practices. In Maya communities like Izamal and Maní, they discover how traditional Mesoamerican intercropping and solar energy complement each other to yield more than good nutrition.



Mexico



New Zealand

**Embracing nature in New Zealand.** After an introduction to bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand, students sample how New Zealanders celebrate and connect with the natural world. Kayaking and mountain biking also invite students to leave their comfort zones and bond together. "The welcome at Te Hana gave us insight into the Māori culture and prepared us for the rest of the experience," noted Emma S., from University of Wisconsin at Madison.

**Getting the full measure of life in Argentina.** "Life there felt calmer and more traditional, and people were friendly everywhere we went," said Spring '25 student Benjamin W. after an excursion to Jujuy and Salta. "The scenery was amazing. The food tasted more earthy. In some villages, we learned about rituals to honor Pachamama (Mother Earth), which showed how strong the connection is to ancient traditions."

**Supporting individual goals in Australia.** Anna D. wanted to gain international experience and workplace skills while helping the community. As an intern with Your Angel Foundation in Sydney, she supported the NAO for Kids program, which uses robots to help children with developmental challenges build communication skills. Back at Whittier College, Anna added a second major to continue exploring community-driven work.

# BY THE NUMBERS: 2024-2025



## +4.3% Enrollment

Despite geopolitical challenges and sector headwinds, growth across our entire portfolio of program types fueled year-over-year growth. IFSA-Designed programs in locations such as London and Prague and Custom growth in Scotland and England led the way.



**IFSA-DESIGNED PROGRAMS  
EXPANDED AFFORDABLE  
STUDY ABROAD OPTIONS  
FOR STUDENTS**

## Who Are Our Students and Where Are They Going?

Last year's trend of attracting more STEM students to study abroad continued, fueled by our addition of more than 40 science and computer science classes to programs in London, Prague, and Buenos Aires. This year, we also met growing interest in study abroad from business majors by adding eight new business classes in Barcelona and Prague.

### Top Ten Student Destinations

1. England
2. Australia
3. Ireland
4. Scotland
5. New Zealand
6. Czech Republic
7. Argentina
8. Spain
9. Chile
10. China

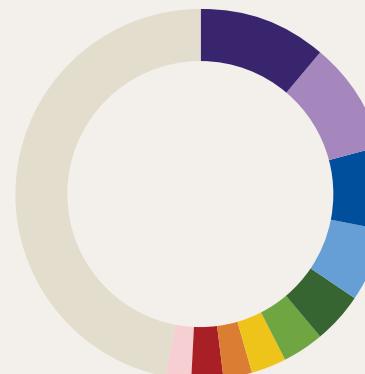
1. England
2. Scotland
3. Cuba
4. Spain
5. Ireland
6. Czech Republic
7. Australia
8. Mexico
9. Italy
10. Chile

### Top Ten Custom Destinations



## Top Ten Majors

Excluding Custom



- Economics
- Computer Science
- Psychology
- Political Science
- English
- Biology
- Environmental Science/Studies
- Mathematics
- History
- Neuroscience
- Other

**1,109**

Total class-matching requests completed since 2019.

## Aid That Sends More Students Abroad

**\$1.33M**

Provided in total through scholarships and grants.

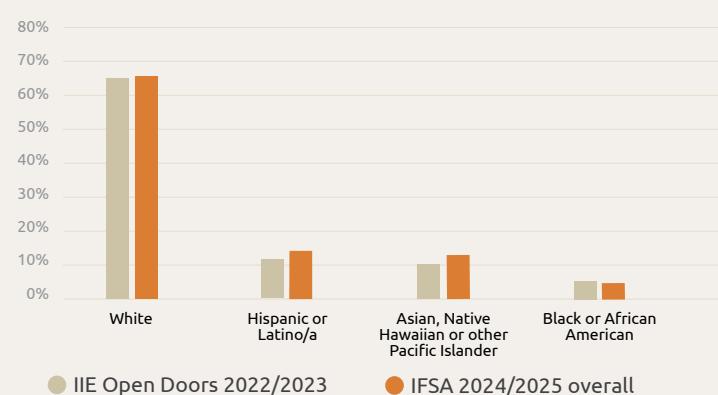
**+9%**

Increased funding from previous year.

**+14%**

Served more students than previous year.

## IFSA Student Profile vs. IIE Open Doors



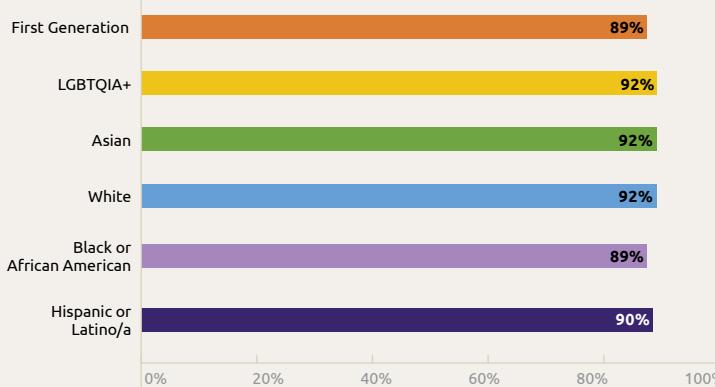
Like last year, IFSA continues to enroll a more diverse group of students than national averages.

# MEASURING FOR IMPACT

Bottom line: We want IFSA students to learn, grow, and progress toward the futures they imagine for themselves. One way we ensure this is to gather, measure, and analyze key feedback that indicates our ability to support students in ways that encourage growth and discovery. By watching trends and patterns, we aim to continually improve our learning environments, from classrooms to cultural sites and beyond.



## Overall Student Satisfaction



Self-reported data from all IFSA students shows consistently high satisfaction. Disaggregating this data can show key differences in student experience that help us adapt accordingly, supporting each student.

## Support That Encourages Learning and Growth

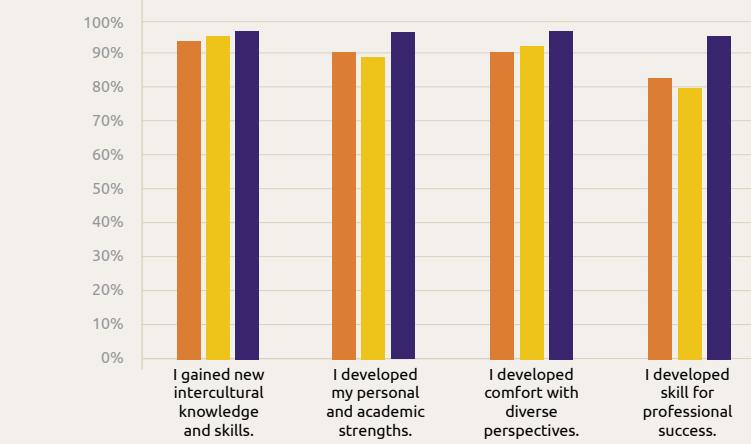


Data gathered in post-program student surveys. For four consecutive years, 90 percent of IFSA students have reported feeling welcomed and valued. This year, that number is even higher, with an average of 96 percent.

91%

**Nine in ten recommend our Custom programs.** Tracking this ensures rigor as well as student engagement that sparks insight and discovery. This measurement improved over last year, up from eight in ten students.

## Consistency Across Key Metrics



Source: Student end of program surveys

92%

**Completed learning goals.** When students complete learning goals before they embark, we believe they have more thoughtful, intentional, and fulfilling experiences with greater impact.



“

*The care IFSA put into coordinating and supporting the logistics of our program saved valued time and energy that could then be directed to our students' experiences and academic goals.*

*Their knowledge of the region and willingness to continuously seek out resources was invaluable.*

—Cindy Paige Desi, Goucher College, Performing Arts in Edinburgh, Scotland, Spring 2025

# HELPING STUDENTS PREPARE FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREERS

In Prague, IFSA Tech Career Accelerator continues to benefit students and their home universities with a unique combination of industry immersion, professional experience, and critical academics that keeps students on track for graduation and boosts employment metrics.

Now that we've welcomed our first students to new IFSA Career Accelerator® programs in biosciences and health sciences, we look forward to sharing their stories from London in next year's report.

Our traditional study abroad programs are also full of opportunities to gain experience and build critical workplace skills through internships and directed research. Combined with our carefully planned and curated cultural activities and excursions, these programs build the cross-cultural perspective required in global fields as students learn in professional environments.

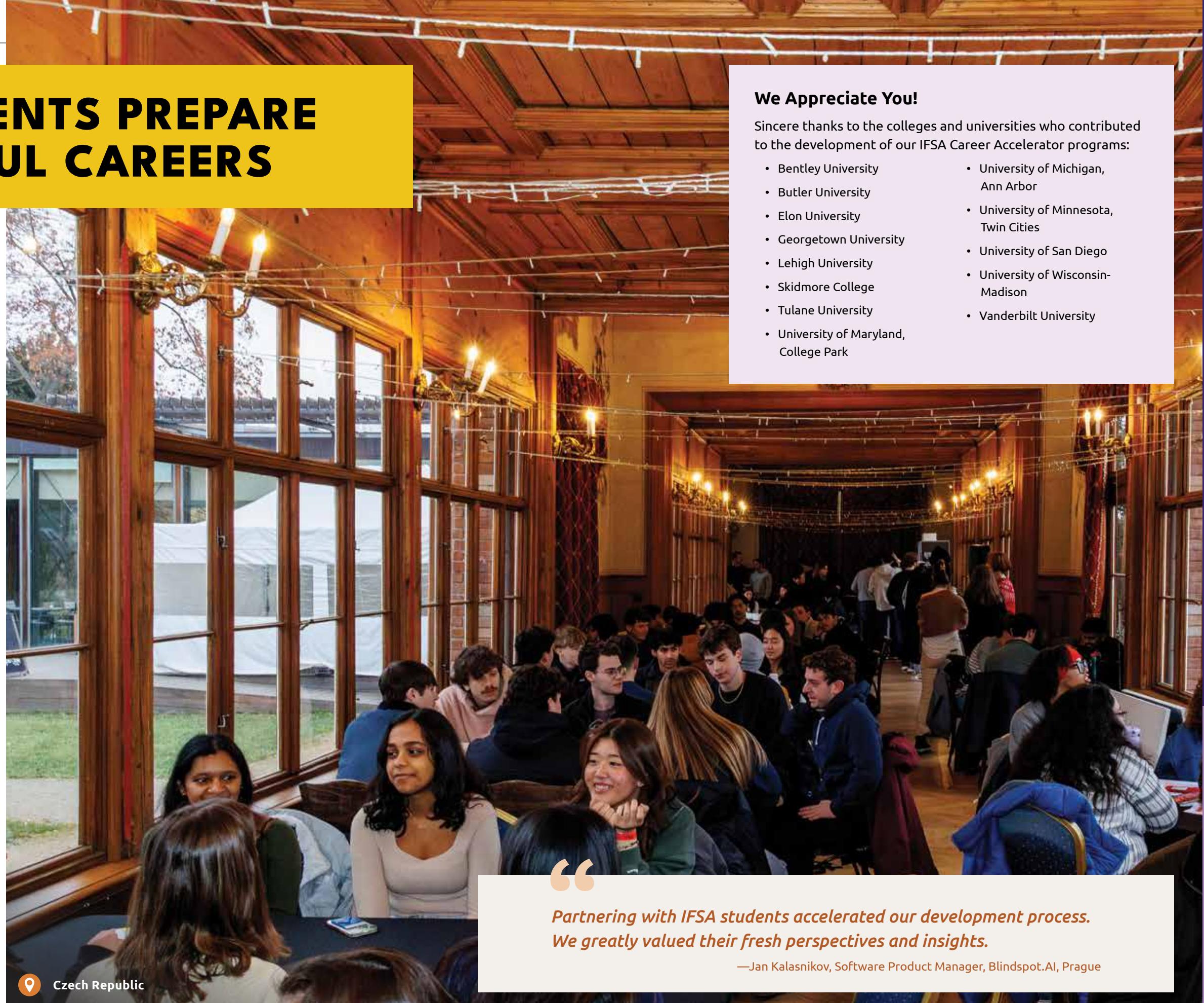


**STUDY ABROAD BOOSTS SALARIES FOR NEW GRADUATES BY MORE THAN \$4K.<sup>1</sup>**

**NINETY PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS VALUE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.<sup>2</sup>**

1. The Forum on Education Abroad, International Experience as a Career Asset, 2025.

2. WiFiTalents, Experiential Learning Statistics, 2025.



## We Appreciate You!

Sincere thanks to the colleges and universities who contributed to the development of our IFSA Career Accelerator programs:

- Bentley University
- Butler 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



*Partnering with IFSA students accelerated our development process. We greatly valued their fresh perspectives and insights.*

—Jan Kalasnikov, Software Product Manager, Blindspot.AI, Prague



# CULTURAL IMMERSION MEETS CAREER PREPARATION

## ARGENTINA



After **learning research protocols** for investigating neurodegenerative disease at Universidad Abierta Interamericana, Liliana W. returned to Arizona State University, where she is contributing to addiction research.

—IFSA Buenos Aires: Psychology and Neuroscience, Fall 2024

## CHILE



Bryn Mawr history major Audrey B. interned at The Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art to learn about curation, **building anthropological analytic skills** and cultural and social sensitivity.

—IFSA Chilean Universities Program, Santiago, Spring 2025

## CZECH REPUBLIC



In Prague, students **put theory to work**, tackling challenges in machine learning, back-end development, data testing, and more for 14 Czech-based companies. One team designed a matching feature for a networking app. Another built a solution to automate database updates. "Creating something that could have a real-world impact gave us purpose," said University of Michigan student, Georgia S.

—IFSA Tech Career Accelerator, Spring 2025

Nursing students **explored how culture impacts health care** in Havana. In addition to academic work with their professors and visits to health care facilities, they met local nursing students and learned about life in Cuba through host families and urban and rural activities.

—Health Care, Culture & Language in Cuba, a Custom program for Brandeis University, January 2025

## CUBA



Along with connecting with her godmother and advancing her Spanish-language skills, Pomona College student Marina S. **researched the impact of family dynamics** on agency in relation to health. Her work contributed to a long-term project conducted by two Mérida universities.

—IFSA Mérida Universities program, Spring 2025

## SPAIN



University of Texas at Austin student Evasophia L. **dove into environmental planning**, sustainability, and inclusive design at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her work advanced plans for a river corridor that supports ecological restoration, low-impact tourism, and quality of life.

—Summer Internships in Barcelona, 2025



Czech Republic

## HBCU PARTNERSHIPS CREATE NEW PATHS TO CAREER SUCCESS

In 2024, we launched an exciting initiative to help more students at historically Black colleges and universities study abroad. This effort was based on our shared goal of advancing career success following graduation, and IFSA's commitment to inclusive excellence. As a result, six inaugural HBCU partners joined our Global Leadership & Career Consortium and collaborated on the development of IFSA Career Accelerators. Our first cohort of HBCU students went abroad in January 2026.

### Thank You, Inaugural Global Leadership & Career Consortium Partners!

- Elizabeth City State University
- Howard University
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- North Carolina Central University
- Spelman College
- Tuskegee University



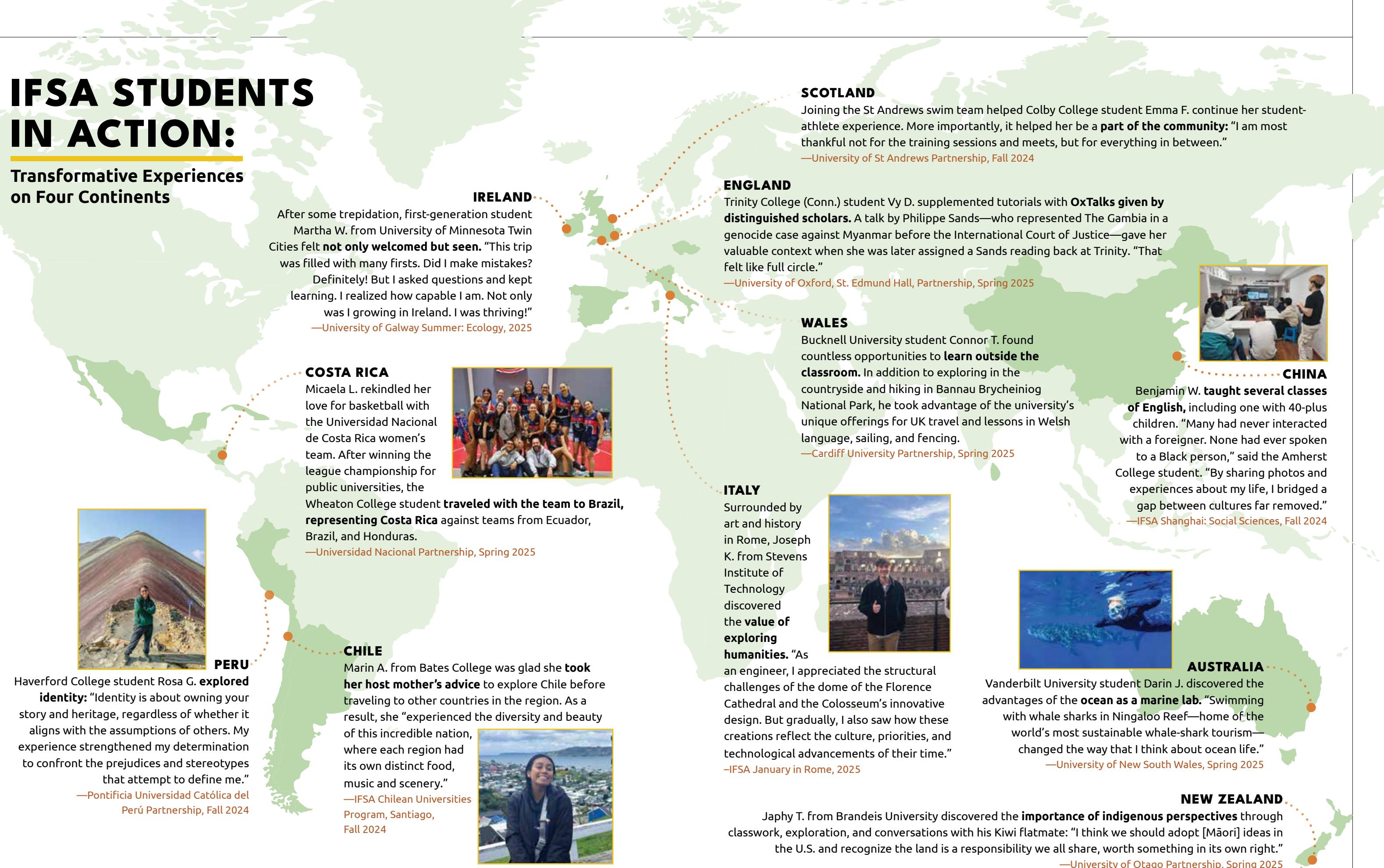
*I am particularly impressed by IFSA's engagement, providing syllabi, courses, and programs that match our goals and requirements.*

—Rhonda Collier, PhD, former Director, Tuskegee University Global Office, now at Alabama State University



# IFSA STUDENTS IN ACTION:

## Transformative Experiences on Four Continents





Spain

## EXPERT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THAT HELPS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE MORE

Helping students navigate mental health challenges while abroad continues to be critical, says The Forum on Education. Half the concerns that IFSA students raise before they travel involve mental health. Sixty-six percent of IFSA students who leave programs early do so because of a mental health crisis. While this number is less than the field average of 75 percent, it clearly indicates the importance of preparation and expert support.

Led by Jennifer Fullick, PhD—a member of The Forum’s working group on student mental health abroad—our Health, Safety, and Wellness team continues to help develop and share best practices.

### During the past academic year, this team has:

- Continued our series of professional workshops on how to bolster mental health abroad in collaboration with Pomona College, University of Georgia, and University of Michigan.
- Contributed to four Forum presentations on this topic and The Forum’s Guidelines for Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellness.
- Helped students go abroad with confidence in challenging geopolitical times with AlertMedia. When every minute matters, best-in-class tools with real-time capability and expert-informed protocols help us keep students and staff safe.

**LEADING-EDGE SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY MEANS WE CAN REACH STUDENTS INSTANTLY.**

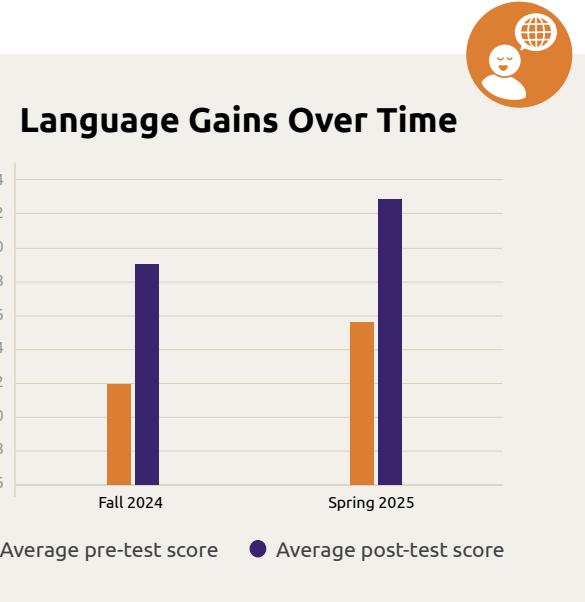


## LANGUAGE GAINS THAT UNLOCK UNDERSTANDING

Why measure and track language gains? This Smith College student summed it up perfectly, after her semester in Argentina:

“Being part of an immersive language program vastly improved my Spanish because every new word had real-world context associated with it.”

“Learning some of the regional dialect empowered me to feel confident speaking and putting myself outside my comfort zone. The more I challenged myself, the more I learned—and the better equipped I was to communicate and challenge myself more!”



**82%**

of students improved proficiency

**.76 POINTS**

average gain per student on TrueNorth scale



China

# OPENING DOORS AT THE WORLD'S TOP UNIVERSITIES

IFSA continues to lead the way in providing students with access to prestigious institutions such as University of Oxford. In 2025, we expanded our portfolio to ten colleges and again achieved an 80 percent acceptance rate.

"I enjoyed learning in a 1:1 environment with professors," said Jaclynn S. of Rice University, who attended Oxford's Mansfield College. "My tutors were incredibly knowledgeable, and I have developed so much as a writer and thinker."

## Opportunities for deeper immersion

Academics are just one aspect to explore. "I threw myself into the [Dramatic Society] scene and came away all the better for it," said Savannah B. of Trinity College (Conn.). "This year has changed so much about how I see myself and my future, which I don't think would have been possible in a different environment."

Wrap-around support helps ensure IFSA students can make the most of their time on campus. "From welcome meals to on-demand meetings, when something came up, I always had adequate resources in Oxford because of IFSA," noted Vassar College student, Nolan K.



## Beyond the university bubble

New this past year, we gathered IFSA Oxford and Cambridge students for a special excursion each semester. During "Oxbridge," students compare experiences and explore the UK.

One excursion included a critique of London's British Museum collections with a lively discussion of the ethics of representing culture and memory, plus visits to the Royal Observatory and Cutty Sark at Greenwich.

"The opportunities to explore with IFSA were incredibly helpful in getting a better sense of the UK as a whole," said Lafayette College student Nate R., who attended Pembroke College at Cambridge in Spring 2025.

Helping students experience the best of higher education is part of our commitment to individualized learning.

**EIGHT OUT OF TEN IFSA APPLICANTS ARE ACCEPTED AT OXFORD COLLEGES.**



*I was glad to have had IFSA orientation to go over expectations for UK coursework and give us advance help with how to best prepare.*

—Ella S., Duke University, King's College London, Fall 2024

# U.N. GOALS EMBEDDED WORLDWIDE

In the face of overwhelming world issues, we want IFSA students to know they can make an impact, and help them find ways to enact positive change. The IFSA Strategic Advisory Council (IFSA Council)—a collaborative steering group of IFSA team members and university partners—helps us do just that.

Over the last year, we made great strides, establishing foundational learning objectives focused on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (such as ending poverty and hunger, and improving access to clean energy) across all IFSA programs.

Our on-site teams now incorporate at least three such objectives in the extracurricular portions of every IFSA program. Through our Roadmap for Learning—the framework that guides extracurricular learning—we're engaging students with targeted activities, excursions, and workshops that equip them for awareness and action. For maximum impact, these components are



phased to occur throughout the program. Academic learning plays a role, too, with a new interdisciplinary class called Beyond Borders: Local Solutions Driving Global Sustainable Development. After our initial success, we're expanding the pilot, offering this rigorous, three-semester-credit-hour class to students in Costa Rica, Italy, and Mexico in 2026.

“

*Work in this area makes IFSA a better organization and contributes to the spread of sustainability principles to the next generation of decision-makers.*

—Scott Wilson, PhD, IFSA Council Chair, Provost and Professor, Sewanee—The University of the South

## Thank You, IFSA Council Members

We're grateful to the members of the 2025-2026 IFSA Strategic Advisory Council for their thoughtfulness and collaboration as we strive to empower students to act with purpose as global citizens.

- **Stephen Appiah-Padi, PhD**, Bucknell University
- **Pardip Bolina**, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- **Scott Carpenter**, Columbia University
- **Jenny Lei Elsey, EdD**, Seattle Pacific University
- **Shanti Freitas**, Macalester College
- **Nicole Gowdy**, Pomona College
- **Nick J. Gozik, PhD**, Elon University
- **Susan Lockner Atkinson**, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- **Jill McKinney**, Butler University
- **Katsuo Nishikawa, PhD**, Trinity University
- **Katie Radande**, Lehigh University
- **Jill Reister, PhD**, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- **Lauren Ruszczyk**, University of Maryland, College Park
- **Danielle Scugoza**, Georgetown University
- **Chair: Scott Wilson, PhD**, Sewanee—The University of the South

# WHAT DO STUDENTS LOVE ABOUT IFSA?

“Exploring the world but not feeling like a tourist.”

“Academics, culture, social scene, and exposure to global thought.”

“Hiking at the Blue Mountains, a show at Sydney Opera House, volunteer work at the beach.”

“The support we got from the IFSA staff for academic success.”

“Growing skills like communication, adaptability, leadership within a group.”

“Going home feeling like I didn't miss anything.”

“The sense of community and how connected I've been to nature.”

“Strengthening my Spanish skills, making new friends from Argentina and the U.S., taking classes at local universities.”

## THREE THINGS WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO

1

### Exploring the Middle East.

In January 2026, students from Spelman College joined an international cohort at Abu Dhabi University for a ten-day, multidisciplinary program. Highlights included a collaborative research project, company visits, and meetups with ADU students. And that's just the start!

2

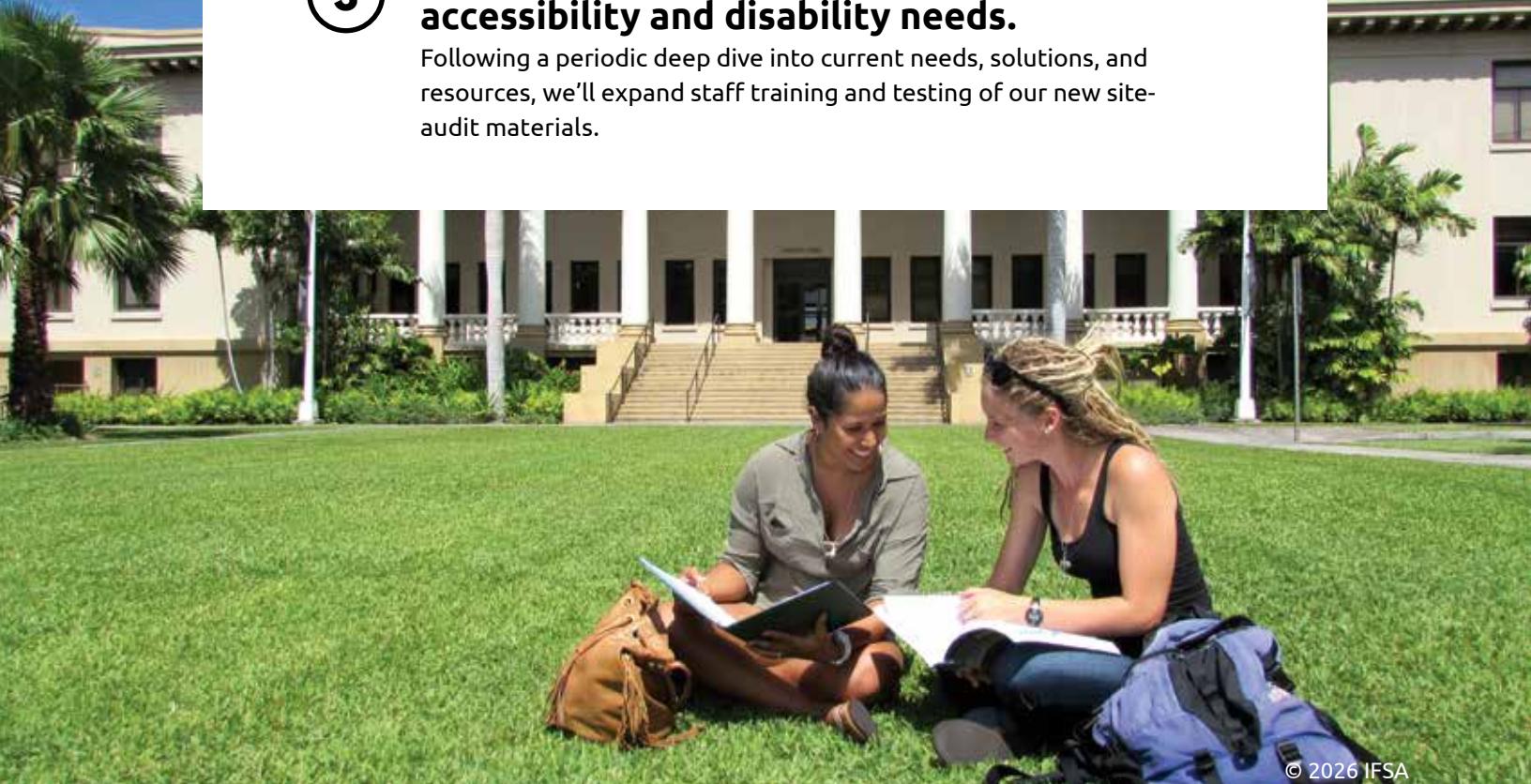
### Expanding summer options for busy students:

- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Summer
- IFSA Summer Tech Career Accelerator, Prague
- IFSA-Designed programs in Dublin and Edinburgh. Classes combine cultural perspectives with environmental studies, STEM, and business.

3

### Enhancing service for students with accessibility and disability needs.

Following a periodic deep dive into current needs, solutions, and resources, we'll expand staff training and testing of our new site-audit materials.



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