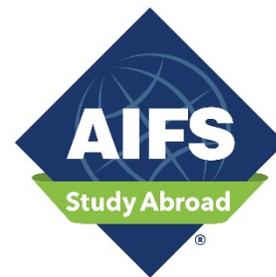


Creative Funding for Study Abroad

Students often cite paying for their experience to be the top reason they are concerned about being able to study abroad. Although a real concern, there are a lot of opportunities available for students to help fund their experience.



First, keep in mind **that less than 10% of the US college population studies abroad**, so having this international experience provides you an opportunity to differentiate yourself from your peers. This fact is especially interesting to family members who are thinking about your employability after graduation.

Before You Begin Fundraising

- Know your finances and how much it will cost for you to go abroad compared to spending that time at home
- Research scholarships, grants and other ways to pay for your program before you talk with them
- Talk with your financial aid office to see if your financial aid package and university scholarships can travel on the program

Scholarship Tips

- Apply for every scholarship you can. Keep in mind that a scholarship doesn't have to be specifically for studying abroad in order for you to use the funds on studying abroad. Always talk with the scholarship provider to see if funds can be used toward going abroad
- Keep in mind that scholarship deadlines often fall before program deadlines
- Some scholarships require letters of recommendation and/or signatures from staff and you need to give them plenty of time to complete the necessary forms on your behalf
- Some scholarships require service once you are back in the States
- Don't wait until the last minute to apply
- Make sure to spell and grammar check and have several other people read your essay
- Utilize resources on your campus, including the study abroad office and writing center
- Print off your essay and read it aloud. If you are unable to read it out loud smoothly, you need to edit more
- Pretend your scholarship will be the last to be read and make a compelling case with your first sentence

In addition to loans and scholarships, there are several ways for students to fund their time abroad. Below is a list of some basic activities to get you started. *Keep in mind that each campus has restrictions on the type of activities that are permitted on campus and you should consult with your study abroad office for more details on regulations, especially for events you want to host on your campus.*

Back-to-Basics Ideas

Sometimes rolling up your sleeves and getting to work is one of the best ways to raise money for your time abroad. Consider doing one or all of the following activities on and around your campus:

- Lawn mowing/yard work/snow removal
- Homemade food, smoothie stand or baked goods sale
- Bowl-a-Thon (or other types of "thons")
- Coordinate with a local store to offer giftwrapping services during the holidays
- Ask local restaurants to donate 10% of their profits on a designated night for your cause in exchange for encouraging supporters to eat there
- Coordinate with a local gas station to have volunteers serve as gas station attendants who pump gas and clean windshields for a donation for a day
- Get artistic. Is there something you can make (at a low cost) and sell at a profit? We had an art student who made posters about the World Cup and sold them to friends to help fund his experience
- Make business cards (with information on your crowdfunding site) and pass them out to everyone you meet

Lifestyle Changes

- "Keep the change" savings accounts that round up to the nearest dollar on your purchases and put funds directly into a separate savings account
- Review and alter your current spending habits (for example, if you drink four coffees from local shop, consider buying a coffeemaker for home and brewing your own)
- Ask families to give you money or travel-related gifts for holidays and birthdays
- Get a part-time job (if you are not already working)

Crowdfunding

One of the most popular creative fundraising ideas currently is crowdfunding, which is the practice of raising small money from numerous people to fund a project (in this case study abroad). Previous AIFS students have found success from this practice and have raised thousands of dollars toward their program fees.

Most sites charge either a per-donation or one-time fee for using their service and students should research the crowdsourcing platforms available online to determine which site best suits their needs. Once you have a personalized crowdfunding website you should share the link on your social media platforms to spread the word and consider getting business cards made that you can pass out to everyone. Strangers are often willing to donate to your cause if you have a compelling story and are only asking for \$2. Keep in mind that every dollar counts.

Letter writing campaigns

In an age where most people are inundated by emails, sending a handwritten note can make a big difference. It shows that you took the time to sit down, write the letter, get stamps and put it in the mail. Getting a handwritten request can make you stand out from the crowd (and junk mail) and help you reach your goal. Offer multiple ways that people can support your goal: sending a check, donating online or purchasing items you need for your trip (your passport, travel books or supplies). Make sure your letter details how this experience will impact your educational and career goals and offer to send them postcards from your travels.

- Reach out to companies and organizations you would like to potentially work for and explain how this experience abroad would be of benefit to you and them (as you hope to work for them one day)
- Family and extended family
- Co-workers
- Family co-workers
- Church
- Social organizations (4-H, Kiwanis, Rotary, etc)
- Greek organizations
- Students on your campus
- Friends at other universities

Use Your Network

- You can and should use your social media network to do more than just post funny cat videos
- Everyone you know should be aware that you are going abroad and how they can help to fund you
- Edit your cover photo on Facebook to include your funding information
- Include fun facts about the country and city you will be heading to, along with your funding website information
- Let them know how the funds will be used and why their donation makes a difference
- Be creative

Tips for Success

- Leave no stone unturned. The worst someone will say to your request is “no”
- Remember you get back the effort you put in
- Be creative
- Start as early as possible (little efforts over a long period of time can pay off in a big way)
- Use your network
- Play to your skills. If you have talents in a particular area, try to use that to help fund your cause

