

# Gaining a Competitive Edge through International Experiences

The Technique – Georgia Tech's Student Newspaper  
January 25, 2010

As a world-class institution, Georgia Tech strives to make sure that we are globally competitive. Part of that process is preparing you – our students – for a world economy that is becoming more interconnected as technology continues to break down barriers. With this goal in mind, we have a number of programs designed to equip you with the comprehensive knowledge and perspectives needed to compete in our global environment.

Whether it's a semester abroad in France or studying in the United Arab Emirates, Georgia Tech provides opportunities for cultural enrichment and education that will poise our graduates to be international leaders and global citizens.

I am proud that approximately 40 percent of our undergraduates participate in an international program by the time they graduate. While part of our discussion of the strategic plan, our near-term goal is to increase this number to 50 percent.

Traveling beyond the borders of the United States gives you a unique opportunity to view your discipline and your world from a different vantage point and develop an appreciation for different cultures. Experiencing new viewpoints can serve as a catalyst for creativity and innovation and help you identify new problems and challenges. The inspiration and level of firsthand engagement provided by these international experiences can also enlighten you to new entrepreneurial opportunities and result in life-changing realizations.

Besides the obvious advantages of studying and working abroad, those of you who have participated in our global outreach programs glean benefits that may not readily come to mind. For example, nothing can quite take the place of the experience you garner studying and training in another language, more vital than ever in a growing international economy.

Working abroad also affords you opportunities to interact in the global workplace, sharpening your technical writing, speaking and presentation skills as well as learning the cultural dynamics unique to different places in the world. In addition, understanding and being able to discuss your cross-cultural experiences will increase your employability in a wide variety of careers. Georgia Tech was recently recognized by the Institute of International Education with the [2010 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education](#), awarded to Georgia Tech for its International Plan and excellence in making science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields more global. In its fifth year, the [International Plan](#) is a challenging four-year program that works in tandem with your undergraduate academic curriculum, utilizing existing study, work and research abroad opportunities. It encompasses 25 out of 35 undergraduate majors at Georgia Tech, including eight of the eleven engineering majors. Since its inception, 661 students have participated in the program, with half of the participants coming from the College of Engineering or the College of Computing. Upon successful completion of the program, students receive a special "International Plan" designation on their Georgia Tech diploma and transcript.

Georgia Tech is working to assist you in developing a global perspective through more than 80 exchange programs and 20 faculty-led group programs that send 1,000-plus students abroad each year. Many of these international programs are offered at the same price as a semester of tuition in Atlanta. And with many of these programs, you are also able to stay on pace for graduation.

While the diverse nature of our campus certainly enriches your academic experience – our student body is now close to 20 percent international – it is not a substitute for traveling abroad and experiencing new cultures firsthand.

In the current economic climate, your challenge is to find ways to set yourself apart from other graduates entering the workforce. I believe the benefits of multinational environments and cultures will not only enrich your college experience and help you become good global citizens, but will also improve your job prospects upon graduation. I encourage you to explore Georgia Tech's global opportunities by contacting our office of International Education. More information is available at [www.oie.gatech.edu](http://www.oie.gatech.edu).