The Cultural Fund: Broadening Students’ Experiences Overseas
Kelsey Mesher, Cultural and Social Anthropology, ’09, studied at Stanford in Florence last fall and winter quarters. Here she tells us of her and others’ appreciation for the benefits of the Bing Cultural Fund.

The day we visit the tiny hilltop town of Sant’Anna is unusually windy. We board the small buses alongside the Arno in Florence—shivering from the cold, anxious about the long and emotionally heavy trip. For two hours we will be traveling through the Tuscan countryside and eventually up a hidden mountain road. On one bus I sit with my human rights class and our special visiting guest, Helen Bing, preparing with our professor for our visit to the WWII massacre site.

Four days later we are dressed to the nines, sitting in the most famous opera house in the world. We are like restless kids in our fancy box seats, squinting for the lights of Milan’s La Scala to dim. We watch Cenzo de Bergrac with wide eyes, laughing and reading along with subtitles in English and Italian. After the curtains close we are quickly escorted to a small room, tucked away from the crowds. The esteemed tenor, Placido Domingo, emerges from his dressing room to greet us. We give him a Stanford t-shirt.

The Bing Cultural Fund was created with events like these in mind—experiences that would be culturally enriching, personally fulfilling, and academically stimulating. It is widely agreed upon by students from all programs abroad that the Bing events are among the most memorable experiences.

There are three main types of events sponsored by Helen and Peter Bing each quarter at each center—a cultural event within the city like an opera or play, an academic “field trip” to a city or in some cases, a different country, and of course, an authentic meal that presents the cuisine of the country.

Students mark their calendars in anticipa- tion of the notorious “Bing Dinner.” Girls make trips to Zara to buy new dresses; boys pull out dress shirts—sometimes even full suits—packed carefully into these suitcases for this one special night.

“I really liked the meals,” remembered Paul Ricketts ’09, who spent two quarters at Stanford in Australia. “Their gifts allow students like me—who have never traveled around the world and couldn’t conceive of such a fancy, wonderful night—the chance at an unforgettable experience.”

The Bing Overseas Studies Program

Kelsey Mesher and Helen Bing before attending the opera at La Scala

BOSP Announces New Director in Kyoto
Andrew Horvat has been named to succeed Terry MacDougall, who is retiring, as Director of the Stanford Center for Technology and Innovation (STI) in Kyoto, Japan. Dr. Horvat’s career has been largely in journalism and non-profit administration. He completed his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of British Columbia and has published academically and been a Fellow at several universities including the Center for East Asian Studies here at Stanford. He brings significant experience in internship placement for the Henry Luce Exchange Program, administered through the Asia Foundation, and has authored a well received volume, Japanese Beyond Words, for students of Japanese.
Ceilieckis, 62 ’62, MS ’64, and PhD ’66 (all in Engineering) and a member of the first group in Florence (September 1960–March 1961) answers a question that was central to many students during that time. “I have brought each of my parents and extended to my family, and over the years that is. If someone had told me before I went that I would return only weeks before from their trip to Stanford, to declare a double major in Engineering and Literature, then how would have I known to go? I realize that I might be tone deaf. Sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for. In the fall of 1960 I found myself heading out to New York to board the ship for Europe with seventy-nine other students who were as lost as I was. In the end, we had no idea what to expect. But over the next few years, we gained invaluable lessons on how to live abroad.”

The beginning of a new summer vacation, in addition to the Stanford students, the students were transporting many other college students returning from their studies in the United States. They spoke English, and that led to new friendships and a very different introduction to European life. There was a sense of freedom and an understanding of the great opportunities that lay ahead of them.

Amore all’Italiano (“Love Italian Style”)

Hilary Luneburg Link (AB ’81, Stanford in Florence/Fall/Winter 1989-1990) is Assistant Provost and Dean for International Programs at Barnard College in New York City.

As Dean for International Programs at Barnard College, I work daily with students as they get ready to leave for their study abroad experiences. My job is to try to prepare them for the life-changing experiences that await them in Italy, and to share my firsthand account of what could be described as an impossible task that failed. If someone had told me beforehand that I would leave Florence in the fall of 1989 that my experience there would be so transformative, I would have been grateful. I know that I have been just as much of a student in Florence as anyone could have been with them as well.

I was married to a fellow student and my husband, Jeff (Stanford ’89), we talked a lot about how we would return to Florence together. Returning to Florence together has become a regular part of our lives, and one that now also includes our children. Last summer, we returned to Italy with two of our little boys, Jason and Alex. First stop was Mama’s house in Florence where the window of the Duomo from her balcony will always make me twenty-two years old again. But on a hot summer day, as my own little boys were around our age, I was struck by the recollection of the snow. I could never have predicted that my experience abroad would lead me to so many and so many wonderful places. And then right back to where it started.

Returning whenever I return to Florence, I am struck by the quiet streets of the oldest university city, as he miniin the end of the snowstorm, at the end of the winter, as the snowstorm was having an impact on people and places that I couldn’t have predicted. I was in the United States, living in California. Back then, I had no idea what the future would look like for our students. I was not aware that my own experience in Florence would have a lasting impact on my life. I was not aware that my return to Florence would be a regular part of my life.

Looking back on my great good fortune in being part of “BJECTED in Florence” in the fall of 1989 and getting an opportunity to study abroad for one year, I am eternally grateful. This virtual guarantee that Stanford overseas programs will continue indefinitely is a telling benefit to the ways in which we have been able to share the love of so many.

First in Italy: An Engaging and Life-Changing Experience

Linda Fujiwara Dilman (A.B. History, S.A. Education) ’82 spent Fall and Winter Quarters of 1960-61 in Florence and shares her thoughtful reflections on the experience.

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American Football... in Spain?

Patrick Bowe ('08, International Relations) was a student in the first group to attend Stanford’s new center in Madrid for the winter quarter of 2008. Here he tells us how playing football in Spain opened doors for him.

My decision to go abroad was largely based on the International Relations requirement (A degree in I.R. requires at least a quarter abroad. Ed.) and an interest to experience something much different from the farm. Madrid became an easy choice because I wanted to go to Europe and had a desire to continue with Spanish in a real life setting. When BOSP decided to open a center in Madrid for the winter quarter of 2008 the timing could not have been any better as it was the only quarter I could go abroad after completing my football career at Stanford this past fall.

I knew Madrid was a large European city rich with culture, history, good food, and fanatical soccer fans. Still, I originally hoped to travel around other cities in Europe during my ten-week stay abroad. After a few weeks getting to know Madrid and its boroughs I found myself spending most of my time with other Americans. Hoping to find some locals to spend time with I stumbled across an American football team (not a futbol, or soccer team) in Madrid called the Ossos Rivas, with some help from Stanford’s Director in Madrid, Dr. Santiago Tejerina-Canal. Later that day I went to their practice and that Saturday I traveled with the team to Gizon (Northern Spain) to play their first league game.

While fully aware of professional football opportunities in America (NFL and AFL, Canada (CFL), and previously Europe (NFL Europe)) I was completely unaware of the semipro leagues in most European countries. Spain has a premier division of eight teams and a lower division as well. The Ossos were in the premier division. The team was comprised of only Spaniards, with the average age of 18. No one on the Ossos was getting paid; everyone was doing it for the love of the game. While a few other teams in the league had one or two Americans on the team I was the lone Yankee on the Ossos. This was the perfect opportunity to spend time practicing my Spanish and hanging out with the locals. Additionally it was a great way to end my football career.

After playing tight end in a reserve role and on special teams for the Cardinals I was suddenly the star of the Ossos. The talent level for the Spanish premier division was comparable to that in our high school football, which made it a blast to play in. The three games I played we won 40-6, 56-0, and 80-6. After each game we went out for some local dishes and the nightlife. The Spanish friends, a much better experience than my decision to go to Madrid. I plan on returning for a longer stay in the future, perhaps just a six-month project with work in the next couple years, but possibly a job at a high school for several years. As I keep in touch with the friends I made there I know that Stanford provided me with an opportunity to continue my experience from this past winter quarter into the future.