Director’s Letter

As I compose this letter for Abroad at the end of my first year as director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program, I begin with the same observation with which I began the year in the Winter issue. BOSP is thriving, its future is bright, and support for the program is strong. Student enrollments are at a decade-long high, having surpassed during the Spring 2013 term the magic threshold of over fifty percent of students participating in one or another of overseas studies opportunities. Faculty interest in participating in the various overseas centers and overseas seminars is impressive. Those are the combined factors that make BOSP one of the premiere overseas studies programs in the nation.

Having just returned from a visit with BOSP alumni in New York, followed by a trip to Florence to inaugurate the new home of The Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence in the Palazzo Capponi, I am struck anew by the passionate commitment on the part of Stanford alumni, faculty, students, and staff for the work of educating our students in international settings. The Breyer Center for Overseas Studies is an excellent example of this global commitment. It is the longest continually standing of our centers abroad, having celebrated its 50th anniversary in Florence in 2010. With the inauguration of its new home in the magnificent Palazzo Capponi, we extend the illustrious history that links the names of Stanford and Florence into a future that shines brightly with the light of humanistic learning.

In these first months of my term as the Stanford Bing Overseas Studies Program director, I have learned a great deal about the history of overseas studies at Stanford. The most moving sources of this history have been numerous first-hand stories I have heard from alumni, spanning practically the entire fifty-plus-year history of BOSP and every locale in which BOSP operates. What stands out most forcefully for me about current student and alumni accounts of their learning adventures in our European, Latin American, Asian, and African centers is the deep love that ties alumni from those five decades to the ideals of high learning fostered by the BOSP centers around the globe. For generations, students who have studied abroad, from Beutelsbach and Hamburg and Bonn and Berlin, Harlaxton and Cliveden and Oxford, Nantes and Tours and Paris, Semmering and Vienna, Haifa, Kraków, Salamanca and Madrid, Mexico City and Buenos Aires and Puebla, to Moscow, Florence, Kyoto, Santiago, and most recently, Beijing, Australia, Cape Town, and our Overseas Seminars have found their time

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Mayor of Florence, Matteo Renzi, with Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program, Ramón Saldívar.
overseas simply life-transforming. These centers are like diamonds shining with the beauty of the love of learning, which is the hallmark of liberal humanistic thought.

In my comments at the inauguration of our new center in the Capponi Palazzo in Florence, I quoted the words of the magnificent Florentine poet Dante Alighieri, from Canto XVIII of the Purgatorio in La Divina Commedia as apt for a celebration of new beginnings. At that point in the poem the Pilgrim trekking the allegory of humanity’s journey from infernal despondency to celestial bliss says in a contemplative moment:

“The soul, which is created quick to love, responds to everything that pleases, just as soon as beauty wakens it to act. [O]ur apprehension draws an image from a real object and expands upon that object until soul has turned toward it. And if, so turned, the soul tends steadfastly, then that propensity is love—it is nature that joins the soul in [us], anew, through beauty.”

Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, Purgatorio, Canto XVIII (Mandelbaum tr.)

What I take Dante to say here is that the soul, awakened through the apprehension of the beauty of the world, finds love, and in that process, fueled by love, nature unites our souls in beauty. As we move forward to expanding the opportunities for students that our overseas centers offer so remarkably, I hope that like Dante’s Pilgrim, Stanford students in their journeys overseas find their souls awakened by the apprehension of beauty and love, united in their shared experience of learning. From my vantage point, I see this ideal being fulfilled everywhere around us in the Bing Overseas Studies Programs.

Many students who participated early in the history of the Program are now celebrating their time with Stanford overseas by returning to the site of their studies and gathering with their former classmates. This dedicated and intense engagement with the experiences they enjoyed fifty years ago is both an affirmation and a reminder that Stanford Overseas Campuses and then Stanford Overseas Studies and now the Bing Overseas Studies Program have been enormously influential in shaping their lives. This heritage informs us at BOSP each and every day.

Ramón Saldívar
Burke Family Director,
Bing Overseas Studies Program
Stanford in Florence Inaugurates *Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate*

*by Jake Harbour ‘14*

On Saturday, May 25, The Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence had the pleasure of hosting an intimate gathering that marked the official Inauguration of *Palazzo Capponi alle Rovinate*, its new location in Florence. Faculty, staff, and students welcomed more than a hundred guests into the Palazzo for an evening celebrating the restoration and transformation of this Renaissance palazzo into a space that truly serves as an intellectual and social home to the Stanford students studying at The Breyer Center.

The *Palazzo* itself sits facing the Arno River in the heart of Florence, between the bridges Ponte alle Grazie and the historic Ponte Vecchio. Remaining in the possession of the Capponi Family, *Palazzo Capponi* is, in fact, the only remaining Renaissance palazzo owned and inhabited by the same family since the Florentine Renaissance, in this case since 1435.

As the evening commenced, guests were welcomed up through the courtyard of the *Palazzo* and into the Stanford Center on floors above. Among the guests were Stanford community members such as Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program and Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Ramón Saldívar; Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Harry Elam; and Executive Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program, Irene Kennedy. Alumni in attendance included, among others, Bob Burke (‘64, JD ’67), Jim Breyer (‘83), Jo Bufalino Libaw M.D. (‘73), and Bob Smelick (‘64). Among the local guests were the team of architects and technicians who worked on the *Palazzo* during the renovation, close friends of the Program, and members of the Capponi family, including Count Neri and Countess Flavia Capponi.

Inside the *Palazzo*, Stanford students in residence guided guests on tours and offered them information on the history of the *Palazzo* and the numerous works of art, as well as information on how the Stanford program uses the historical space today following the renovation that brought it into the present moment. While students led tours, a slideshow documenting the entire refurbishing process was projected in the *Palazzo’s* grand Armor Hall.

The evening continued with an opening talk delivered by the Spogli Family Director of The Breyer Center for Overseas Studies in Florence, Dr. Ermelinda Campani. Campani spoke about how “*Palazzo Capponi* affords our students a privileged vantage point for

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Center Notes

With this issue, Abroad brings you a new feature, “Center Notes.” From time to time we will bring you reports directly from the centers about special events, field trips, courses, and other general news. We hope these short articles will interest you as alums and invite your comments.

Bob Hamrdla
Editor, Abroad

BEUTELSACH GROUPS 1969-70 Otto and Annie's Restaurant in southwest Portland, Oregon, was the scene of a Stanford in Germany 1969-70 mini-reunion in March. Around the table were Jim Cone and John Esbenshade of Group XXII, and from Group XXIV Chris Rasmussen, Les Bush and Tod and Margaret Tolan. We all shared updates and stories including reminiscences of the famous little VW bug named Rico. Jim, a native Oregonian, was in Portland on one of his periodic visits. He is now a medical director for environmental health with the New York City Department of Health and teaches at the New York University School of Medicine. John has been winding down his pediatric medical practice in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. He is looking forward to picking up Thomas Mann again and to making a return visit to the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar on his next trip to Europe. The splendid paintings viewed there on an outing with the Winter-Spring 1969 German Art seminar remain among John's best memories of Landgut Burg and Stanford. Les and Chris continue their legal work. Tod is a well known Portland anesthesiologist.

—John Esbenshade ’71

ON “THE FARM” Cape Town history lecturer Mohamed Adhikari spent the month of May at Stanford as an International Visitor sponsored by the Stanford Humanities Center and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. In addition to pursuing his research interest in North American genocides Prof. Adhikari offered lectures sponsored by the Center for African Studies.

UNDERSTANDING In April Cape Town students met and discussed South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with Zensile Khoisan, a noted researcher and cultural activist and one of the Commission's senior investigators.

IMMERSION Spring Quarter students had an impromptu introduction and brief meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu on the streets of Cape Town during their orientation tour of the city.

CULTURE For one of their Bing Cultural Events Winter-Quarter Cape Town students had the great pleasure of attending Kalahari Karoo Blues, the latest edition of a journal by David Kramer (South African songwriter, singer, and musicologist) about a journey into the traditional and indigenous guitar and string music of South and southern Africa. The concert featured Hannes Coetze, guitarist from the Karoo region in South Africa, known for his unique playing technique using a spoon in his mouth to play slide guitar.

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Jorge Chaminé (the famous European baritone, also the much beloved music instructor for several Stanford students in Paris) offered us a rare opportunity this year. We were personally invited by Teresa Berganza to attend her master classes within the magical setting of the Villa Viardot in the town of Bougival, just outside of Paris.

This venue is perhaps one of the best guarded secrets in the area, as it was a haven for both artists and musicians in the 19th century (the meanders of the Seine at Bougival were painted by Renoir, Monet and Pissarro, among others).

Deborah Rubenstein (’89, International Relations), one of the mentors affiliated with the Center in Paris, had a wonderful idea: To enhance our present schooling internship and have Stanford students offer conversation sessions for pupils at the nearby elementary school. The project was difficult to implement, given France’s stringent security laws regarding schools. But nothing was impossible for three determined young women: Deborah Rubenstein, Elizabeth Molkou (the Center’s Educational Internship Supervisor), and Mme. Catherine Parage, the school’s principal. This experiment turned out to be one of the most grounding and memorable experiences in Paris for our young internees, all of whom were committed and creative in their work and fondly remembered by the children. For many of the children it was their first contact with native English-speakers, and they loved every minute! In fact, even the school principal was so taken in by the internees that she volunteered to become a host mother for our students this last quarter. A wonderful exchange for all concerned!

The Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) holds a unique place in the scientific world: it is over 400 years old and represents a major university research center, a museum, and a botanic-zoologic garden all in one. Each year one advanced bio-engineering or biology student at the Center in Paris is accepted to participate actively in research at the Museum. This year Shaheen Jeeawoody (’14, Bio-engineering) so impressed her lab supervisor that she was asked to give a presentation of her findings before some 50 colleagues at the MNHN. Her presentation was met with enthusiastic applause—rare indeed in French academic circles!

Oscar-nominated film director Pablo Larraín visited the Santiago Center and talked to students about his career and the making of his award-winning film NO. He explained how family traditions led him in a different direction, but he finally decided to pursue his true avocation: film. He encouraged students to identify what most mattered to them.

Spring quarter in Santiago was the first “thematic” quarter in the history of the program, emphasizing ecology and urban development fields. The decision to establish themes came after a deliberate search for new ways to approach the curriculum, emphasizing both breadth and depth. It is also a response to student academic needs, especially in the sciences.

The Santiago Center will be moving to new facilities closer to Chilean universities by the end of the year. The new environment will contribute to the study abroad experience by bringing students to an attractive location where they will have more opportunities to interact with local students. The new Center will still be located in the culturally and historically exciting district of Providencia.

Do you have a story or photo to contribute to Abroad? Your submissions will be considered for publication. Contact Bob Hamrdla at hamrdla@stanford.edu.
Community Health in Oaxaca 2013

Ann Banchoff, Director of Educational Programs in Stanford’s Office of Community Health, tells Abroad and its readers about a recent summer program in Oaxaca, Mexico. BOSP administers the program. Two students add their respective observations.

In mid-July, 15 undergraduate students returned from BOSP’s four-week program, Community Health in Oaxaca, in southern Mexico with powerful images and experiences in their minds. The Program is designed to inspire students to improve the lives of underserved populations on both sides of the border. Beginning with a pre-trip seminar during spring quarter, the group studied the cultural, social, economic, systemic and political factors that impact the health of both Mexicans and Mexican im/migrants to the US. In Oaxaca City they lived with host families, improved their cultural literacy, studied Spanish and Zapotec, shadowed health-care providers in clinics and hospitals, visited alternative medicine centers and worked with a street-children’s center to document the individual and community lives of the area’s poorest populations.

Recognizing, Valuing, and Integrating Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices

by Magali Sanchez, ’14, Human Biology

In a conference room near our cabins in Capulalpam de Mendez, a town nestled in the mountains of the Sierra Juarez, we met with a local healer who talked about the history of traditional medicine in Oaxaca and its recent reemergence into everyday life. In 2006, the Mexican Constitution officially recognized traditional medicine, ranking it equal to allopathic medicine and acupuncture. He explained that whereas traditional medicine prevents illnesses caused by disequilibrium in emotions or social, environmental, or spiritual relations, scientific medicine is made to cure them. Following the talk, we biked across town to the Centro de Salud (Health Center), one of the few places where traditional and allopathic medical sites work side by side, literally. While one side of the center offered limpias de huevo, or cleansings using eggs, to cure ailments such as mal de ojo (bad eye) or susto (fright), Continued on facing page
the other side offered vaccines as well as consultations for diabetes and hypertension. During my own limpias, I kept thinking about the interactions between traditional medicine and allopathic medicine.

The following week, a peer and I shadowed Dr. Lucia Cordero, a physician who specialized in acupuncture. Her site was tucked away in San Felipe de Agua, a neighborhood not far from the city. She explained how acupuncture re-energizes an individual by opening the blocked canals of energy. One patient brought in x-rays he had done at Hospital Civil, and, after reviewing the x-rays, Dr. Lucia clarified how acupuncture would alleviate the pain he was feeling. I hadn’t expected acupuncture to be so sought after in Oaxaca. However, Dr. Lucia regularly treated six patients an hour during her shifts.

Over the four weeks, I had completely different experiences with the three branches of medicines in various locations around Oaxaca. Though each branch addresses disequilibrium in the human body, providers address the problems differently due to varying beliefs about the origin of disease. The interactions my peers and I have had with the various providers taught us that, instead of comparing each type of medicine, it is essential to consider them as what they are, unique entities that may be combined.

Looking Upstream

by Juan Reynoso, ’14, Human Biology

Sliding off the metal lid, we peek inside the dark, cement water tank. Immediately, a mosquito comes zooming out, escaping from its damp haven. “Mira, ¡allí están!” There, floating in the water, were what we had journeyed half an hour by foot over dirt-paths and rocky hillsides to find—mosquito larvae.

It’s the summer rain season, and mosquitoes are thriving in the stagnant water of the outlying colonias (neighborhoods) of Oaxaca City. Our friendly guide, Salvador, is a promotor (community-health worker) for a small community health center in one of these colonias. On this hot June morning, we shadow Salvador as he visits local primary schools to examine their water supplies for the presence of disease-carrying mosquitoes and their larvae. As children stare curiously at us Americans in white medical coats, Salvador carefully administers small bags of abasto (mosquito larvae treatment) into the contaminated water. By preventing the growth of the mosquito population, he and the rest of the Oaxacan public-health system hope to prevent the spread of the feared dengue fever and other tropical diseases.

It’s about prevention. Whether it was a doctor urging her patients to use contraceptives or an NGO providing educational resources for indigenous and very underserved children, during my experience in Oaxaca I constantly witnessed the prevention of unhealthy habits and promotion of health. Although Oaxaca is one of the poorest regions in Mexico, the level of public and non-profit resources dedicated to health prevention was incredibly inspiring. By learning about the Oaxacan public health system and the emphasis on prevention, my Stanford peers and I have gained academic and cultural competencies with the health circumstances that Oaxacan migrants experience before they have even immigrated to the United States. Now that is upstream public health!
Andrew Horvat, retiring Director of Stanford’s BOSP Program in Kyoto, Japan, tells Abroad and its readers about the addition of a Winter-Quarter session to the program’s calendar. Previously the program had operated only Spring Quarter since its inception in 1989.

What did 12 Stanford students do this past winter in Kyoto? One thing they did not do is complain about the cold. On the contrary, Nick Akiona (‘15, Computer Science), Jacob Cruz (‘14, Mechanical Engineering), and Matt Lum (‘15, Human Biology), all from Hawaii, were thoroughly enjoying mingling with Japanese worshippers at Kyoto’s Yasaka Shrine on January 4, the first day of BOSP’s new winter quarter in Japan. As one of them put it, “You can’t get cool weather like this where we come from.”

To put the 12 Stanford students into the spirit of a Japanese oshogatsu (New Year Holiday), BOSP Kyoto staff sent students the day after their arrival in Japan to a costume-rental agency from which Casey Deres (‘13, International Relations), Marti Hardbarger (‘15, Psychology), and Sabrina Li (‘15, Science, Technology, and Society) emerged wrapped in floral-patterned kimonos, complete with long billowing sleeves. In keeping with tradition, the male students chose dark colors such as navy blue and brown for their holiday garments.

Accompanied by Religious Studies instructor Catherine Ludvik and director Andrew Horvat, the twelve headed straight for Yasaka Shrine, where they followed local custom by throwing a coin into a large wooden box, ringing a bell and clapping hands—the last two gestures being a way to summon the attention of the gods. The ritual seemed to work because the winter quarter proceeded smoothly.

The highlight of the quarter was, without a doubt, the introduction of the course titled Japanese Popular Culture. Everyone except Vince Muoa (’13 Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity) signed up for the course but all students, including Vince, took part in virtually every one of the many pop-culture-related field trips. These included outings to a performance of a musical version of Ocean’s Eleven, by the all-female Takarazuka dance troupe at their main theater outside Kobe. Instructor Sally McLaren, journalist-turned-media scholar, used her extensive contacts to invite a retired Takarazuka star to give a guest lecture at the Kyoto Stanford Center on her former career. Other field trips took students to the permanent exhibition inside Kyoto Station honoring the cartoonist and animator Osamu Tezuka, creator of Astro Boy, and to the Kyoto International Manga Museum.

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In response to students’ interest in Japan’s contemporary pop culture, the winter-quarter Bing trip called for half-day forays each to animator Hayao Miyazaki’s Ghibli Studio (where *Spirited Away* was created), Tokyo’s “geek city” Akihabara district, and Harajuku, home of “cosplay,” a fusion of fashion design with pop culture.

Other courses offered during the winter quarter were: *Contemporary Japanese Religion* with Professor Catherine Ludvik; *Japanese Minorities*, with former Kyoto Center director Terry MacDougall; and *World War II—Experience and Memory*, with director Andrew Horvat. (This coming winter the *Japanese Popular Culture* course will be taught by Professor Akiko Sugawashimada, who recently published a book about girls’ manga.)

Although extracurricular activities at Doshisha University, the Stanford Center’s host institution, are less active during the long Japanese winter break (from early February to late March), the Kyoto Center’s student services coordinator, Hiromi Uehira, was able to rely on contacts built up over the years to place students with community organizations such as a police athletic facility where the general public can receive instruction in *kendo* (traditional Japanese sword fighting with bamboo staves) from Kyoto’s finest. Students also enjoyed volunteering at kindergartens and attending welcome parties organized by local Stanford alumni and Doshisha Women’s College students. On their trip to Hokkaido, Adam Perelman (’15, Computer Science) and Armando Castillo (’15, Mechanical Engineering) ended up overnighting at the home in Hakodate of one of the Doshisha students they met at the Women’s College party.

But perhaps the most significant outcome of the winter quarter was the decision of two students, David Calica (’15, Economics) and R-J Lim (’13, Mathematics and Computer Science), not only to stay in Kyoto for both winter and spring quarters but also to undertake summer internships in Japan. One reason for choosing to launch the new quarter in winter as opposed to the fall was to allow Stanford students to spend as long as eight months in Japan. It has been suggested that students staying for longer periods undergo a deeper and more thorough transformation as they learn to function effectively in a new and different culture. And that, after all, is the goal of studying abroad.
Ramón Saldívar is Academic Director of Bing Overseas Studies Program. His biography is full of references to the Humanities: Hoagland Family Professor in the School of Humanities and Science, and research focusing on 20th-21st century American literature, US Latino and Latina studies, literary theory, and post-colonial literature. He is a member of the Editorial Board of American Literary Studies and has served on the boards of American Literature and Modern Fiction Studies from 2003 to 2007, on the Board of Governors of the University of California Humanities Research Institute from 1994 to 1997, and on the National Council of the American Studies Association from 1993 to 1995. Professor Saldívar received the 2012 National Humanities Medal in recognition of his work and has sat on committees evaluating applications for NEH fellowships.

Bruce R. Sievers also has a connection with BOSP: a Stanford alum (1964 AB Int’l Relations, 1969 AM Political Science, 1973 PHD Political Science), he spent two quarters at Stanford in Germany in Beutelsbach (Group VI, Winter-Spring 1961). Now a visiting scholar and lecturer at Stanford’s Haas Center for Public Service and the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, which he helped found in 2006, he was the founding Chief Executive Officer of both California Council for the Humanities, now known as Cal Humanities, and Montana Committee for the Humanities, now known as Humanities Montana. He has written widely on topics of civil society and philanthropy.

What else do these two gentlemen have in common? Earlier this year President Obama appointed both of them to six-year terms on the National Council on the Humanities (26 members), an advisory body to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The Endowment is an independent federal agency created in 1965, one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States. Your editor invited Messrs. Saldívar and Sievers to talk about their forthcoming work together and the state of the humanities in this country.

Q: Your appointments to the National Council on the Humanities come at a time when chagrin over the state of the study of the humanities in the U.S. is widespread and seems to be growing. What has happened to reduce their importance, and why ought the humanities to be more important than they are?

Saldívar: This situation first became evident right after World War II: the impulse was to examine the concrete, not the less defined; after all, the sciences are denotative while the humanities are connotative, and science had helped win the war. The humanities simply could not compete at the same level. At Stanford, some 25% of incoming freshmen in the 1990s expressed interest in majoring in the humanities, but that percentage has now slipped to about 12%. The corresponding figures at Harvard are not much different. The lingering effect of economic downturn has also led students to reconfigure their path toward careers and seek much more concrete results from their education. In addition, science has also changed as people recognize its creative dimension more and more. The fact is that higher education has not been able to deal effectively with these changes in terms of their negative effect on the study of the humanities.

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Sievers: I agree completely. For one thing I came to Stanford because it offered study overseas. For another, there was a twin emphasis at Stanford on science and humanities (in contrast to MIT, which was known primarily for science)—that attracted me as well. But the technological worldview has become so pervasive and powerful since then that it tends to crowd out the humanities. The less felicitous economic situation also means many more students leave college with debt that must be paid, and that in turn leads them to seek work in more lucrative fields.

Q. In your view, what are some post-secondary institutions in the U.S. that have made progress in raising the status of the humanities in their curricula, and how did they do it?

Saldívar: I’m not so sure there are any. Some version of the erosion of the humanities we just talked about has been happening everywhere. One possibility to reset the balance between the humanities and technology involves taking up the relationship between work and study again, in the form of internships. Internships in the humanities would allow students to experience first-hand the ideas, issues, and questions they are studying in their majors. I think students would be eager for these kinds of internships in the humanities.

Sievers: I am struck by the concept of the “open university” such as the one George Soros has founded in eastern Europe; perhaps that openness can bring the two [humanities and practice] closer together. The Haas Center also offers internships that fit Ramón’s description. Actually, in my own classes subjects that used to be all theory tend now to encompass a mix of theory and practice.

Q. The web site of the National Endowment for the Humanities specifies that the Council to which you have been appointed “advis[es] the Chairman of the Endowment.” The law establishing the Council specifies “advisory functions: policies, programs, and procedures; review of applications for financial support; recommendations prerequisite to action of Chairperson...” Which of these functions do you see as being the most important and why?

Saldívar: As the funding available to the Endowment has dwindled over the past twenty years, both the policies governing grants and the review of applications for those grants have taken on increased importance and likely are the most essential functions of the Endowment. Therefore, the Council needs to be very sensitive to these two responsibilities in advising the Endowment, especially since the number of applicants for grants has not dwindled commensurately with the resources available.

Sievers: Since I have not yet been to a meeting, I’m not sure exactly what role the Council plays in advising on grants. It is likely to expend more time and effort advising on new emphases and projects as well as overarching issues. I suspect Ramón would agree with me in suggesting that the new Director [the position of Director of the Endowment is currently open. Ed.] should aim to balance the interests of all applicants for funding among the priorities of research, education, and public programs, especially since the resources for grass-roots organizations are so minimal.

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Sometimes I cannot help but speculate on how I might have developed differently had I not seized the opportunity to study abroad in Moscow during the fall of my sophomore year. Defying the pleadings of countless friends and relatives, which were undoubtedly justified considering my shameful ignorance of all things Russian, I was determined to follow through on my proposal.

Today, only a couple of weeks away from the two-year mark when I first landed at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow, there is hardly an endeavor that I can reflect on, academic or otherwise, not related to my time in Russia.

I was undoubtedly very fortunate to have such an incredibly well-rounded experience during my time studying abroad. Each facet of that experience profoundly affected my development, both academically and personally, in its own unique manner. The conversations I shared with my host parents allowed me to gain a sense of Russian history, culture, and current events that is much more powerful than that which a history textbook, or any novel, could provide.

My internship with The Moscow Times allowed me to gain a greater sense of state and media relations, and the events I had the opportunity to attend at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow highlighted the intricacies of the diplomatic world. Even my trip to Ukraine allowed me to place Russia in the greater stage of Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet world.

I will never forget the massive protests in Moscow in early December 2011, a mere two weeks before the end of the study-abroad program. Tens of thousands of Russians, more than anyone would have ever imagined, filled the streets to capacity, in response to the much disputed legislative elections that had taken place. As an even further shock to much of the outside world, these protests continued at similar sizes throughout the election season, leading up to the re-election of Putin in March 2012.

It was events like this which forced me into deeper reflection about a changing nation so many have rashly brushed off, insisting that it is hardly of contemporary importance. For me, these incidents have proved to be the spark of my academic passion for Russia and the greater region.

In the immediate aftermath of my time abroad, I returned to campus and quickly declared International Relations as my major, knowing that I could not allow this experience to stand alone. It was meant to be continued. Before long, that desire took me off campus once again. During the fall of 2012, I participated in an internship with the Office of Public Diplomacy within the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

This summer, I find myself returning to Moscow to embark on two adventures. Principally, as a means of combining my experiences in Moscow with my time at the U.S. Department of State, I am participating in an internship with the Management Section of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Dually, I am working on a research project through a grant from the CREEES department (Center for Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies) at Stanford. While this project is still unfolding and I am quite likely to emerge from the summer with a new slant, I will essentially be exploring the relationship between the post-fascist and post-Soviet film industries in Spain and Russia, respectively.

What lies after graduation cannot be said for sure. The blessing and the curse from Stanford in Moscow is the insatiable desire I maintain to explore new places, encounter new cultures, and continue to build on the education I have received. With one more year left at Stanford, it would only be immature for me to speculate on where I may be headed afterward. Nonetheless, is there a strong chance that I will find myself working for the Department of State, or venturing back to Russia in some alternative capacity? Without a doubt, I can say only that I am excited to see where I am led.

“Each facet of that experience profoundly affected my development, both academically and personally...”

Page 12, top left: Miguel Boluda at the Bolshoi Theater. Top right: A snow-day in the Moscow suburbs with fellow students Alli Rath and Anissa Chitour. Bottom left: Anastasia Harchenko, Miguel, Shelley Fennessey, and Amy Lancot outside Red Square with the State Museum of Russian History in the background. Bottom right: Miguel and Sharon Tan, and Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, John Beyrle, at Spaso House.

Life After Moscow

Miguel Boluda ’14, a rising senior now majoring in International Relations, writes engagingly of how a quarter at Stanford’s Program in Moscow has set in motion a journey to a new destination in his life.
Q. You must be pleased with your appointments, as *Abroad* is very pleased for you and for Bing Overseas Studies Program. Bruce, this question is for you: to what degree was your time at Stanford in Germany significant in the course of your life so far?

Sievers: It changed my life. It was, as I said, a factor in my wanting to come to Stanford as an undergraduate; it also redirected my previous interest in science to an emphasis on the humanities. Furthermore, the connections with the local community in Germany and the exposure to the world outside the U.S. helped point me toward studying in Berlin as Stanford’s exchange student (this formal exchange is now for a graduate student from Stanford and one from the Free University in Berlin to attend the other. Ed.) Even if I had been taking courses in Beutelsbach (the site then of Stanford in Germany) oriented toward technology, my life would have changed.

Q. Ramón, from your side, how might you envision your work with the Council as beneficial to your work as Academic Director of BOSP and vice versa?

Saldívar: There will surely be some benefit, but it’s too early for me to suggest concrete details. My experience at Stanford should help me to contribute more fully to the Council’s work and give me increasing insight into international education—how, for example, ideology played a role in the education of older students, but not so much for the younger.

Q. What attracts you the most to your forthcoming work on the Council?

Sievers: I look forward especially to gaining an overview of what the National Endowment for the Humanities is doing these days and discussing key issues in the humanities with others on the Council.

Saldívar: For me, meeting like-minded humanists from all over the country and hearing their views of the near future will be major benefits of the interaction.

Your editor is glad to be able to bring elements of this discussion to you readers. If technology is increasingly society’s “work medium,” the humanities run an equally increasing risk of losing their place as society’s “think medium.” Study overseas in general and BOSP in particular are important agents in keeping this dichotomy both visible and engaging.
Integrative learning; it is a locus which bears witness to the extraordinary power of the humanities, which tell us about humans; of the liberal arts, which teach us about being free, and of creativity, which has very much to do with the ability to promote change instead of living within the status quo.” The Mayor of Florence, Matteo Renzi, spoke immediately after Campani and was introduced by one of the students, Jake Harbour ’14. Just one week after the release of his new book, Oltre la Rottamazione, Renzi discussed the benefits of study-abroad programs and encouraged the Stanford students in particular to make the most out of the productive synergy between the astonishing beauty of the art they have found in Florence and the innovation of the Silicon Valley and to use that very legacy of the past to inform their vision for the future.

Count Sebastiano Capponi followed Renzi and was introduced to the audience by Alejandra Mesa (’14), another student in residence. Count Capponi was visibly moved as he spoke of how the Palazzo has been brought back to life thanks to Stanford and how pleased he and his family are about what he described as a “perfect fit” between Stanford and Palazzo Capponi citing education, culture, and creativity as his family’s most treasured values. Ramón Saldívar, presented by Elena McCallister (’14), quoted Dante Alighieri when he spoke of his hope that: “Stanford students will continue to find their souls awakened in this most magnificent of locales for years to come.” Finally, Reed Jobs (’14), a student enrolled in both of Professor Verdon’s classes, introduced Monsignor Timothy Verdon indicating that “It’s not fair to say that Timothy Verdon is an art historian, he is an art master.” Professor Verdon gave those in the audience a taste of his art-history lessons, taking them through the topics covered in the courses he teaches for the program and showing them photos of his students on site in Florence during his classes.

After the speeches, guests were treated to a reception of traditional Tuscan food and enjoyed views of the sunset along the Arno from Palazzo Capponi’s second-story terrace. Mingling with students as they ate, guests learned about the profound effect of studying abroad on students’ moving forward as they prepare to return to the United States, almost all of them to another year on campus.

The Inauguration ended on a high note, if you will, with a short concert by talented soprano Lauren Libaw, accompanied by pianist Claudio Capretti. Libaw delighted the audience with a moving selection of Rossini and Bellini arias, and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house when she sang, as an encore, Puccini’s O Mio Babbino Caro.
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Thank you!

Pictured above, Annalisa Boslough reflects that “some of my most memorable experiences in and around Cape Town were exploring the natural beauty just outside the city center. The intersection of nature, urban life, and culture make Cape Town so unique and diverse.” This photo was taken by David Crockett, a local medical student, during a multi-pitch climb up Africa Crag on Table Mountain.