

Working, Interning, and Volunteering Abroad

An increasing number of college students are exploring short-term volunteer, intern, and work assignments overseas. A growing number of individuals are looking for a meaningful activity that they can undertake before beginning graduate school; or as a way to step into a possible career. The Department of Religious Studies at CSU, Chico has, over the past few years, seen an increase in the number of our majors and minors who want to take on such a challenge. If you are a student or college graduate and want to explore overseas opportunities of this sort, the resources gathered here should provide you with enough information to get you started in your search. New organizations, websites, and other materials are constantly appearing, and we will attempt to keep you updated on resources. We have tried to provide some basic information on each organization, but it's up to you to do the research and make the connections. We are in no way affiliated with any of these organizations.

Where to start

The best place to begin searching for an appropriate partnership internationally is with personal contacts on and off campus. These should include former instructors, volunteer coordinating offices on your campus, the study abroad office on your campus, international students that are in your classes, friends that have taken on such adventures in the past, and the brochures and organizational information that appear on bulletin boards across campus. Begin to develop a filing system of contacts, addresses, organizations that do the sort of work you admire, and news clippings of individuals and organizations that are working in regions of the world that you might consider as a place to live and work.

The single most valuable on-campus lead regarding internships is the internship Center on our campus at <http://ids.csuchico.edu/>. Bill Lerch has for years provided the campus with thousands of internship opportunities for all sorts of majors. While most of these leads are for domestic internships, exploration of these options will give you a good idea of what an internship or volunteer opportunity might involve; the steps needed to initiate the process of finding an internship; and potential leads that match your interests. An hour or two spent in this center will save you dozens of hours later on.

Some helpful general publications and leads

The Website of the **Union of International Associations**

(<http://www.uia.org/extlinks/pub.php>) is very helpful in identifying organizations that you might wish to work with. It's search engine (with Boolean functions) is one of the most powerful available. UIA, in conjunction with Thompson's, also publishes the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (<http://www.uia.org/organizations/volall.php> in hard copy, 5 volumes, CD ROM and online). This is an exceptional resource guide for the full range of international organizations.

The **Non-governmental Organizations Research Guide** from Duke University (<http://docs.lib.duke.edu/igo/guides/ngo/>) is a great place to start a serious exploration of organizations and opportunities overseas. It can be a bit daunting, but the resources available here are nothing short of amazing. It is particularly helpful if you have a narrow skill of very specialized requirements in a placement.

The **International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA)**

(<http://www.volunteerinternational.org/>) is an alliance of non-profit, non-governmental organizations based in North America that are involved in international volunteer and internship exchanges. Their web site has a strong search engine that might link you up with the internship, volunteer opportunity, or job of your choice. It is also a good place to start exploring the legitimacy and track record of the organizations that you are thinking of committing to. While not exactly a "better business bureau" or "consumer reports" of the NGO world, there is valuable information available at this site.

Transitions Abroad (<http://www.transitionsabroad.com>) is a great first stop for anyone considering a move overseas. It is packed with leads to language study, TOEFL programs, and leads to volunteering and working. Don't stop with the web site, however. TA also publishes a bimonthly magazine with links to organizations, background stories geared to people who are looking for adventures off the beaten tourist paths, and meaningful cultural immersion experiences. Their Alternative Travel Directory and Work Abroad: The Complete Guide are gold mines of information and leads. This organization has been around for 27 years.

Volunteer Abroad (<http://www.volunteerabroad.ca/home.cfm>) is owned by the Canadian Federation of Students (a not-for-profit student organization founded

in 1981 that currently unites more than 450, 000 colleges and students across Canada). As part of this student movement, Volunteer Abroad connects motivated people with not-for-profit organizations, communities and government agencies in need of assistance around the world. Volunteers have taught in schools, provided disaster relief support for the International Red Cross, conducted essential research to improve the management strategies of threatened environments, built homes for impoverished people, provided vocational training and programs for street kids and have worked in cooperation with hundreds of local organizations to distribute aid and improve the quality of life for people throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Participants come from all types of backgrounds. Students have integrated their volunteering efforts into their curriculum earning credits at their university, college or high school, while others have been professionals, gap year students or recent retirees looking to take some time off and offer their skills and knowledge to those who need it.

Intern Abroad (<http://www.internabroad.com/search.cfm>) and **GoAbroad** (<http://www.goabroad.com/about.cfm>) are rich resources for all sorts of international experiences, including volunteering, interning, travel, language study, and working. Started by educators and student in the US, the organization is rich in experience and resources, and is able to provide opportunities that you won't find anywhere else. Whatever your major (journalism, chemistry) or interests there are fascinating opportunities (both short-term and long-term) listed here.

For those who want to plunge into reasonably well paying and demanding jobs, your best source of job announcements will be the bi-weekly publication of the **International Career Employment Weekly** (<http://www.internationaljobs.org/contents.html>). Access to this valuable resource is by subscription only (\$5-6 per month), with new listings sent out to you twice a month. But for the serious job searcher (and to get an idea of the sorts of positions that you can aspire to in the future), this is a great resource.

Non-Sectarian Organizations

Many non-government, religious, non-sectarian, government, and hybrid organizations exist that will give you chance to work, volunteer or live overseas. They number in the thousands, and we can't hope to list all of them here. Check

the sites above for more details on these and other organizations. This representative list is a good place to start your search.

CSU, Chico's Internship Center has a link to internship sites on the web, and these included many domestic and international web gateways. Check out the Center's favorite 20 links here, at <http://ids.csuchico.edu/info.asp?sel=otherlinks>

ACDI/VOCA (Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteer Development Corporation, <http://www.acdivoca.org>) is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes broad-based economic growth and the development of civil society in emerging democracies and developing countries. Offering a comprehensive range of technical assistance services, ACDI/VOCA addresses the most pressing and intractable development problems. This organization works in the areas of Community Development, Enterprise Development, Financial Services, Agribusiness Systems. Preparation in a range of disciplines is welcome. The organization receives funding from USAID, USDA, the World Bank, UNDP, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank and other development funding sources, and is partnering with a growing number of private sector corporations such as Chevron. With such support, this is an organization that has broad reach in many parts of the world, and great support for its employees and volunteers.

CARE (<http://www.care-international.org/>) is a leading humanitarian organization (Based in Geneva) fighting global poverty. Non-political and non-sectarian, it operates [65 countries](#) in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, reaching more than 50 million people in poor communities. The Organization helps tackle underlying causes of poverty so that people can become self-sufficient. It has more than 14,500 employees worldwide.

AfricaTrust Networks (<http://www.africatrust.org.uk/>) based in the UK is a relative newcomer to the field of development work. Since 1994 it has been committed to working with disadvantaged young people in North and West Africa and with enthusiastic international volunteers who want to gain valuable work-experience in Africa and at the same time make a difference in the lives of local people. Volunteers live with host families in their projects. The organization has an obligatory post arrival in-country induction course covering language, culture, music, history/politics and general knowledge. The concept of having "A Bridge" linking cultures is still fundamental to the program.

InterAction (the American Council for Voluntary International Action, <http://www.interaction.org/>) is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. With more than 160 members operating in every developing country, the organization works to overcome poverty, exclusion and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

Cross-Cultural Solutions (<http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>) Cross-Cultural Solutions is a recognized leader in the field of international volunteering, with over 3,000 volunteers each year. Founded in 1995, we are an international not-for-profit organization with no political or religious affiliations. CCS has a [worldwide staff](#) of over 200 people, and operates in 12 countries, with administrative offices also located in the United States and United Kingdom. We are in [Special Consultative Status with the United Nations](#).

CSU, Chico has, over several years, developed a fairly close relationship with **International Cooperative Education** (ICE, <http://www.icemenlo.com>). With ICE, a college students enjoy work placements in agriculture, community development, education (teaching ESL, teaching assistant, day care), small business or social work at a foreign location. Opportunities this summer are available in Mongolia, China, Australia, Europe, and South America. Internships are usually available in a wide variety of employment fields including retail sales, hospitality, banking, education, engineering, and teaching English as a second language. Students usually work 30-40 hours per week, and live in a home stay or employer sponsored housing program. Depending on the particular employment situation, students earn a modest salary or stipend.

Amigos de las Americas (<http://www.amigoslink.org/>) accepts volunteers who want to work in one of 250 communities in nine Latin America in areas such as health, education, and environmental service projects. Amigos collaborates with **local partners**. Immerse yourself in the lives of your **host family** and community while improving your **Spanish or Portuguese**. As you build your own leadership and language skills, you're also helping to build bridges for multicultural understanding throughout the Americas. You'll **make a genuine difference**, along with friendships that will last a lifetime. Accept the challenge this summer!

Sustainable Development and Environmentalism

Many of the organizations that accept volunteers and offer employment or internships work in the area of community development. But several have a distinctive commitment to sustainable practices and a focus on environmental issues.

For 12 years, the **Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD)** (<http://www.fsdinternational.org/>) has offered internships/volunteer programs to students and professionals looking to gain international development experience and training while making a significant impact on underserved communities abroad. Participants choose from over 350 different internship and volunteer experiences in Micro-enterprise, Youth and Education, Women's Empowerment, Health, Human Rights, and Community Development. FSD's comprehensive training program allows interns and volunteers to design, fund, and implement sustainable project work in collaboration with their host organization and our in-country support staff. In the end, participants gain language skills, development experience, and hands-on training while making relationships that change their lives.

Sectarian and Religious Organizations

Many religious organizations that are involved today in community development, aid, and education either began as or may continue in some capacity as the "missionary" arms of specific churches or religious organizations. The organizations differ in the ways they link their community work to larger evangelizing or church building missions. The organizations that we list here have been selected because they are student and young-people friendly; they seek a broad spectrum of experiences and academic preparation from participants; they have a global reach, and they welcome individuals who may not be members of their religious organizations. Recent volunteers report as well that they have been welcomed to engage in their chosen work without the pressure or need to take part in larger religious activities.

Church World Service (<http://www.churchworldservice.org/>) has been involved in aid and development work for over 50 years. It is the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of 35 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. Working in partnership with indigenous organizations in more than 80 countries, CWS works worldwide to meet human needs and foster self-reliance for all whose way is hard. Within the United

States, Church World Service assists communities in responding to disasters, resettles refugees, promotes fair national and international policies, provides educational resources, and offers opportunities to join a people-to-people network of local and global caring through participation in many programs, including the [CROP Hunger Walks](#).

American Jewish World Service (<http://www.ajws.org/>) is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community. The program has some volunteer opportunities for students and new graduates; more for seasoned professionals. But it accepts volunteers for as little as one month's service.

Islamic Relief (<http://www.irw.org/>) strives to alleviate the suffering, hunger, illiteracy and diseases worldwide. It aims to provide rapid relief in the event of man-made or natural disasters. In addition, it establishes development projects

Islamic Circle of North America's (ICNA) relief arm (<http://www.reliefonline.org/>) is a humanitarian relief and development organization responding to human sufferings in emergency and disaster situations at home and abroad, though much of their work focuses on domestic needs in communities across North America.

More sectarian and oriented toward religious work are the following organizations, which welcome thousands of volunteers and paid workers each year in education, medical care, development work, as well as the more religiously-oriented work (establishing churches and evangelization) of such organizations.

Africa Inland Mission (<http://www.aimint.org/usa>)

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (<http://www.jdc.org>) has, for nearly a century, has served as the overseas arm of the American Jewish community. Its mission is to serve the needs of Jews throughout the world, particularly where their lives as Jews are threatened or made more difficult. The Organization sponsors programs of relief, rescue and renewal and help Israel

address its most urgent social challenges. The organization has a number of well-developed volunteer programs for young people and well established professionals.

Presbyterian Church USA (<http://www.pcusa.org/navigation/mission.htm>)

The Mennonite Central Committee (<http://www.mcc.org/>) has a particularly interesting HIV/AIDS education project.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (<http://www.elca.org/globalmission/>) offers special one-year volunteer opportunities for college-age students.

Lutheran World Relief (<http://www.lwr.org/>), based in Geneva, is the umbrella organization for worldwide Lutheran Churches. It supports agricultural, educational, and community development projects in 35 nations.