

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE GAP WITH... ANOTHER LANGUAGE

Heritage culture helps French learners join the conversation.



Joining the conversation is the best way to become a better speaker of French or any language, but the starting point for that process nonetheless involves speaking up. When language learners are shy – and who isn't in the face of a lot of people talking, acting and reacting in an unfamiliar way? - it can be hard to get the upward spiral started. This is a common problem in IFE's Paris Gateway Program, in which students enroll to continue to learn French while also practicing it for the first time, via a part-time «conversational» internship.

For two students in last Fall's session of the «Gateway», the solution was to use a common cultural heritage to bridge the shyness gap. Alaphia was born in the US to a father from Sierra Leone and by her own choosing was assigned to URACA, an NGO springing from and devoted to the sub-Saharan African community in Paris. Spending part of four days every week at URACA, Alaphia helped out with various cultural and public health projects while joining a French conversation largely among speakers of African origin. In her own telling (on her final self-evaluation form), regular contact with immigrants from Francophone Africa provided Alaphia the confidence needed for participation which in turn helped her make, in the words of her supervisor's final evaluation, «tremendous progress» in her oral French skills.

Born and raised in Beijing, Lin is an international student in the US, where she first began studying the French language. Lin opted for a part-time placement with ARCAT, a not-for-profit devoted to a community-based approach to AIDS prevention and health education. Lin's supervisor assigned her to an information campaign among the Paris-area Chinese community, led by an ARCAT staff member herself Chinese. More timid perhaps than many students, Lin's final evaluation by her supervisor underlines the great progress she made in reaching out to others, in French. The key, in Lin's words, was the cultural familiarity she found among French-speakers of Chinese origin.

In an oft-related field, IFE has also been growing greener, as students seeking to continue their ecologically-themed undergraduate education while studying abroad. In the last year or so students have worked on: a cost-benefit analysis of fiscal incentives to improve housing stock energy performance; government programs to use new forms of agriculture to stop sprawl in peri-urban zones; developing viable economic models for sustainable energy production; how to eat «ecologically» when living in the center of Paris (a study of food sources and markets); comparing public policies in favor of bio-diversity; and studying the needed conditions for a renewable energy market in the EU. In the Fall students worked with the bio-diversity NGO Vigie Nature, the Ministry for Environment and Sustainable Development and Slow Food Paris.

THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM WHICH NEVER REALLY ENDS



Prolonging the IFE Field Study and Internship experience.

One of the recompenses of being an IFE staffer is not having to say good-bye, or at least not to everyone. Each session IFE posts an end-date for all three Field Study and Internship programs (in Paris, Strasbourg and Brussels), but each session more and more students prolong their IFE and/or European experience in a variety of ways.

First of all, increasing numbers of students enrolled in the Spring semester take up IFE's offer to extend their sojourn into the summer with either a longer internship or another, complementary placement:

- six months at Publicis advertising agency with one's own client load;
- six months with the Paris office of an African-based NGO to work on a multi-site program of recycling in developing areas;
- art historical archival work at the Louvre followed by working in an art restoration studio;
- internship with the documentation services of the Pompidou Center leading to assisting the communications director of Europe's largest holding of press archives in the social sciences in order to pursue a burgeoning interest in PR work for cultural organizations.

Another way to «prolong» IFE Field Study and Internship is to enroll in graduate school, in French, in Europe.

- Kathryn completed a first Master's degree in French literature at the Sorbonne, followed by a second degree in publishing business including a pre-professional internship at Gallimard Editions.
- After working on IR theory as an associate researcher with the IDDRI institute for international relations and sustainable development, Jamie sought and won admission to a double degree program between Sciences Po Paris and The London School of Economics, as the second IFE alum to be accepted into this elite track.
- Liz pursued a higher degree in translation and communication between Strasbourg and Paris.

Still other reluctant IFE leavers find ways to come to France for work.

- Many find that an English-teaching assistant-ship in France is an ideal follow-up to IFE Field Study and Internship.
- Rebecca worked on racial discrimination in the world of European soccer (having first herself to overcome some clear bias against a woman knowing anything about soccer) and proved so valuable she has been asked to come back after graduation and work full-time on a major conference on discrimination and hooliganism sponsored by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) to which Rebecca's organization is the official French delegate.
- After completing both IFE's Paris Gateway Program and Field Study and Internship Program, and her college degree, Kate went to work as a bilingual administrative assistant with UNESCO, in Paris.
- Paul found being a «grip» or production assistant with a French film company so gripping – and did such a good job – that he was able to prolong his job indefinitely, until he decided it was time to go to graduate school in film-making.

Even those who go on to work or further training in the US (or their home country) most often remain in contact with their host organizations and European network, another way that IFE remains a part of their future as well as their past.

IFE HEADS (SOUTH) WESTWARD



IFE's network of US partner institutions now extends to the Lone Star State.

IFE is pleased to announce agreements with two of America's premier institutions of higher education, The University of Texas at Austin, and Southern Methodist University, in Dallas. Resolutely international, UT boasts extensive experience and strong participation in undergraduate education abroad, while SMU's commitment to internationalization is more recent but no less fervent. Both institutions are intent on taking advantage of IFE's three-city Field Study and Internship offerings, including the possibility at some point of specific arrangements for various schools within each university. To complete the picture of IFE in Texas, mention needs to be made of Austin College, an impressive four-year liberal arts college in Sherman, in north Texas, which also has pre-approved IFE's programs.

Another cardinal point in IFE's compass is South, with students now allowed to enroll for academic credit in IFE's programs from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Back east, IFE expects its first students next year from Juniata College, in Huntingdon PA, while Villanova University and Williams College now count IFE's Field Study and Internship programs among their pre-approved programs.

These positive responses by universities to which IFE has reached out, or which have approached IFE, should not be taken as a sign of unbridled growth by IFE! IFE fully intends to maintain its signature approach combining individual attention paid to each student throughout the semester with close relations cultivated across the campus of each US partner. Simply, the addition of first the Strasbourg program and more recently a program in Brussels leaves IFE confident that it will be able to accommodate all qualified candidates from a (slightly) expanding network among US colleges and universities.

IFE GOES BACK TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Agreement in place to make the Field Study and Internship semester part of an M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution.



After extensive experience in the past cooperating with Middlebury College for the M.A. in French Studies with Internship, IFE is going back to graduate school. This time, IFE and Arcadia University have come to terms on the incorporation of the Field Study and Internship semester into the requirement for all students who participate in the IPCR program to complete successfully a significant internship in this field. From now on, French-speaking students in this Arcadia University M.A. will be able to benefit from intensive contextual preparation, IFE's broad range of possibilities for placement in peace-and-justice themed internships (see IFE newsletter August 2012), and the chance to base their M.A. research on an in-depth field experience. In time Arcadia expects to be able to attract more French-speakers into its skill-based hands-on Master's curriculum (with a very good employment record).

AND DON'T FORGET THAT IFE IS ALSO...

- On Facebook at Internships in Francophone Europe. «Like» IFE and keep up with the events and activities of students in IFE's programs.
- On the web, with a new site including a rich lode of student profiles (www.ife-edu.eu)
- In Brussels, its first year successfully passed, with students from the sciences, international relations, religious studies, women's studies, and other fields taking full advantage of all that this exciting city has to offer.