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FSU students seize the summer with real-world experiences

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Charlie Gardner, along with other FSU students, traveled to Bali, Indonesia, this summer as part of the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Immersion program. (Charlie Gardner)

What did you do this summer? Attend class on the side of a volcano? Work with a German student affairs organization? Curate an exhibit of 19th-century French paintings?

Those are just some of the hands-on, real world experiences that Florida State University students took advantage of during their summer break.

Internships, service learning, undergraduate research and international study can enrich students' college experience, develop their skills and talents and broaden their professional network. In fact, research shows that participation in high-quality experiential learning improves students' academic performance and post-graduation outcomes.

That's why **Florida State recently became the largest university in the country to adopt an experiential learning graduation requirement for undergraduates.**

And, summer is the perfect time for FSU students to make the most of these types of opportunities. Here are a few of their stories:

Charlie Gardner



FSU and Balinese Undiksha students pose for a group photo in Bali, Indonesia. (Charlie Gardner)

When Gardner, a finance major, started doing research on studying abroad, he knew he wanted an experience completely out of his comfort zone. When he found the **Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Immersion program in Bali**, Gardner thought it would be the perfect fit because of how little he knew about entrepreneurship or Bali.

Gardner studied alongside other FSU students in Bali, Indonesia, for about a month, taking classes on social innovation and entrepreneurship. But what Gardner enjoyed most was that much of the learning took place outside of the classroom.

“While many classes were held at the homestay, there were other times where we got to have class in cool places, like on the beach or the side of a volcano,” Gardner said.

A large portion of the students’ experience in Bali included a “Social Innovation Sprint,” where they collaborated with the local Balinese Undiksha students to work on design challenges and possible solutions to major issues that the people of Bali face today.

“We visited a variety of social enterprises and socially responsible organizations around Bali and learned about their history, vision and social impact while participating in activities related to the topic at hand,” Gardner said.

Gardner said his experience in Bali influenced him to pursue a degree in the field of entrepreneurship at FSU.

“Coming into this trip, I was fairly confused on what I wanted to do with my life and honestly felt like I was getting very little out of my college experience,” he said. “Not only did this trip spark my curiosity in the field of social innovation and entrepreneurship, but it opened a new door in my life.”