

James Heaton

Whilst there are many examples that come to mind when presented with this question, one person sticks out, mainly as he carved the path for me to follow. Bill Laurence studied music at the University of Leeds in 2003 . He was a jazz pianist and took a year abroad to study intensively at the University of North Texas. It was there he met Michael League, and they would both go on to form the jazz-fusion band, Snarky Puppy. After years of development, Snarky Puppy is a world renowned band; featuring Bill Laurence as a founding member of the group, and many of his compositions. They have won three Grammy awards and numerous other accolades, plunging Bill Laurence into musical fame, and into the spotlight as one of the best jazz pianists of this generation.

It would be hard to argue that Bill Laurence would be in the same position as he is today without having studied at North Texas. He proved it is a time for meeting new people, and networking within different groups, "I was very lucky to meet someone so driven, talented and optimistic, but I guess it goes to show that you never know who you're going to meet on any gig." However, despite his professional accolades (all of which was not guaranteed), it was at Texas where he develop himself personally to a large extent. He mentions how he was looking to "immerse [himself] in as many opportunities as possible" . He was constantly looking for experience. This is an example of a mind-set which ultimately cultivates success. Bill Laurence is an example of a success story, however, in my opinion, the mind-set Bill cultivated whilst abroad, to "immerse" himself in experiences, is an ideal mind-set for a student to have. Once a student comes back, thirsty for experience, and the wisdom this brings, they have got a much better chance of succeeding in the professional world.

Overall, Bill's story represents a journey that every year abroad can provide. I know numerous people at the University of Leeds who return from their year abroad, and take advantage of everything the city has to offer; as if they have found a new sense of purpose. A year abroad demonstrates to students that there is much more experience to be gained, and it is a mind-set borne from exploration.

References:

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