The dual experience of studying abroad and participating in internships overseas has proven to be a powerful combination for Cameron School of Business (CSB) students. This two-pronged approach helps them understand cultural and academic differences while helping them build professional experience and international contacts.

CSB alumna Caitlin Nolan studied in London and participated in an internship there before her 2012 graduation with a B.S. in business administration and a concentration in international business. She worked in marketing and business development at Bechtel in London. Although she had previously worked for the company in the United States, her experience in the United Kingdom (UK) was very different.

In London, Nolan did market research, including competitor analysis. After this work, she said, “my studies make more sense because I have real life examples” related to classroom learning.

Skills That Count

Now, she better understands the impact of decisions and the need for creative problem solving. For example, in the UK she had trouble gathering data for a work project. She kept asking questions in different ways until she obtained the information she needed. That experience taught her the importance of communication in business interactions.

The U.S. student found sharp differences in classroom expectations, but she successfully adjusted. In London, professors were not as demanding about class attendance but required more outside reading and research. For homework and examinations, she had to shift from a focus on forming opinions to doing factual research and objective analysis.

Nolan also socialized and worked with people from several different countries, including Lebanon, Mexico, Turkey, the UK and the United States.

Before going abroad for her academic trip, Nolan already had a global, diverse lifestyle, she said. Her family had lived in different countries and traveled before she came to UNCW. While living in London, she found that her independence resurfaced.

During her time there, she traveled to nine countries and formed a diverse circle of friends. “It literally is a once in a lifetime thing,” she said. “You can meet these people and grow with them. You have to take advantage of it!”

Global Outlook

Nolan hopes to work in international environments in the future—possibly on the supply chain side of a consumer product or food and beverage company. She also anticipates earning a master of business administration degree. Her academic and professional experiences abroad have already earned her recommendations from international contacts.

While looking forward with enthusiasm to an international career, Nolan is grateful for the scholarship that subsidized her study and practical training. Grant-funded scholarships supporting international experiences are a phenominal tool for students, noted CSB Associate Dean Rebecca Porterfield, who is also director of CBS international business programs.

“Experience suggests that this study and work opportunity creates substantial difference in job marketability,” Porterfield said. “Students frequently are offered multiple job opportunities at substantially higher pay than those without international education and internship experience.”

Caitlin Nolan learned the importance of communication during her internship in London.
Inspired CSB Student Encourages Others

While participating in a scholarship-supported internship in Valencia, Spain, junior Marlene Zarate found an opportunity to give something back. She worked for Valtrave, a company that places adults in internships in the United Kingdom (UK). Her job was to evaluate the Spanish candidates’ English skills to determine their language readiness.

Zarate was touched by the plight of some of these candidates. If they could not go to the UK and learn English proficiently, they would be shut out of the better job opportunities with international companies back home in Spain. They felt that they would fail their families, she observed, and the pressure sometimes made them cry.

Neither Zarate nor the candidates accepted the status quo. Recognizing the barriers they faced, she took action to knock them down. In her free time she tutored these ambitious adults in English. This was an emotional experience; she understood that for them, learning English “was their only light, their only hope.”

The light inside Zarate shines when she is helping others. In addition to volunteering in Spain, she donates her time back home. She has been involved in Mi Casa, sponsored by UNCW’s Centro Hispano. As an ambassador, Zarate helped her high school mentee apply to a university and prepare for the ACT and SAT assessments. The student is now at East Carolina University and “is doing wonderfully,” she said.

The Mexican native also combines her passion for Latin dance with volunteer work. In addition to studying marketing in the Cameron School of Business, she is president of the UNCW dance club Ritmo Latino.

She and her partner teach salsa and bachata at a Wilmington middle school. While volunteering with the pre-teens, Zarate promotes positive behavior. When a student has a bad day, she encourages them to dance and let go.

Zarate enjoys transferring her passion for life and dance to others. “My personality makes me want to open their eyes to see the hope, the opportunities there are,” she said. “It gets me moving if I know that I’m motivating people, inspiring, making a change.”

Two former executives are helping Cameron School of Business (CSB) students prepare for internships abroad. Dick Verrone, an Executive in Residence who coordinates international internships, and Rudiger Daunke, a former Merck executive and mentor in the Cameron Executive Network, leverage their expertise to help students.

Together, they conduct mock interviews to prepare students to showcase their professionalism, skills, talents and ambition when talking with employers.

Before the duo agrees to help a student find an international internship, the student must prove his or her potential. They have found that students need initiative and an independent streak for optimal success.

When they meet with internship candidates, Verrone and Daunke explore each student’s motivation, behavior and cultural sense. They talk with students to determine “those who are best able and willing to go overseas and be successful,” Daunke said. Initially, the student brings in a U.S.-style resume, and they work to convert it to a European-style curriculum vitae, complete with photo.

Verrone then reviews business contacts he has cultivated and works to connect students with appropriate positions and hiring officials overseas.

The two also coach the internship candidates to project great first impressions. They want students who will succeed, both for the student’s sake and “because their success reflects on the business school,” Daunke noted.

Former Executives Provide Training
Alumni Use Internships as Springboard

The success of students is the ultimate goal of the Cameron School of Business (CSB). What does success look like? It looks very different to different people, depending on their perspectives, passions and dreams.

CSB students who are considering how to prepare for full-time professional employment after graduation should consider the advice of others who have been in the trenches and climbed to new heights. Participating in internships in their field of study has been a satisfying early taste of success for these students and alumni.

Taste of Success

The experience is unmatched, they have found. Coline Samat, an alumna who studied operations management at UNCW, said her internship at PPD in Wilmington helped her solidify her academic knowledge and apply it in the working world.

Samat is working as a proposal developer at Quintiles in Edinburgh, Scotland. At PPD, she learned about clinical research trials, the drug development process and pharmaceutical industry strategies. “This internship was very important in order to differentiate myself and increase the employment value of my business acumen,” she said.

Dual-Degree Option

Samat came to UNCW from France for the TransAtlantic Business School Alliance, or TABSA, dual-degree program. She also received a degree from the CSB’s partner school Euromed Management in Marseille.

Alice Cruz, a 2012 graduate, leveraged her academic endeavors to obtain a professional position in Charlotte. “The opportunity to do my internship abroad truly set me apart from other candidates in today's competitive job market,” she said.

Cruz graduated in May 2012 with a B.S. in business administration with a concentration in finance and is now working as an investment specialist at the Vanguard Group. “I am confident that this internship played a big role in paving the way for my current career with the Vanguard Group,” she said.

Cruz, who also majored in Spanish, studied in Valencia, Spain, during her junior year and then participated in a U.S. State Department internship.

Cultural Caché

Studying and working in different countries broadened her knowledge of culture and language. “It was an invaluable experience,” she said. The internship required Cruz to obtain a U.S. government security clearance and allowed her to work on unique projects.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the skills employers most want graduates to have are communication, teamwork, ability to make decisions and solve problems, time management, and ability to research and process information. Internships can help develop those skills.

Real-World Experience

Joanna Rickard Henderson, CSB director of work practice, noted, “Internships are critical to landing your first job after college.” Employers want skills that come from real world experience, she said.

An internship also helped prepare Daniel Aronson for the business world. He studied finance at UNCW and interned in Prague, Czech Republic, in summer 2012 with the help of a scholarship.

Aronson worked for Traficon partner Ira Saul Rubenstein and his nonprofit enterprise, the Czech Green Building Council. The council promotes sustainable building activities in the Czech Republic. He collected data on the costs of building green, and learned to network in the industry.

Because Aronson did not speak the language, he had to listen and find alternate ways to communicate. “You have to be adaptable to different circumstances and keep an open mind,” he advised. “It’s their country, not your country.”

After graduating in 2012, he went to work for BB&T as a collateral con-
IB Majors Put the Exotic to Practical Use

Studying international business (IB) sounds exotic—and there are exotic elements—but this degree requires a grounded academic focus that holds the promise of personal and professional growth. The combination of academics, demonstrated language competency and study abroad required for an IB concentration prepares graduates for careers in many industries.

Erick Cerquera, a 2012 graduate, parlayed his IB and finance studies into a full-time job as a finance ADP analyst with a French company, Schneider Electric in Raleigh. Cerquera noted that his adaptability, marked by studying in different countries and learning a new language, caught interviewers’ attention.

“We live in a global marketplace, and companies want to hire someone that will be capable of working in global teams and capable of establishing good work relationships,” he said.

Cerquera interspersed his studies at the Cameron School of Business with three study abroad experiences. He spent a semester studying in Spain and one in Brazil, and took a UNCW course that included a spring break consulting trip to the Czech Republic. At Schneider Electric, Cerquera deals with contacts in Brazil, Mexico and China. His IB major and experiences abroad were crucial to his job offer, he believes, because they helped him stand out beyond work experience.

Mentoring from former executives in the Cameron Executive Network helped him as did networking.

While abroad, Cerquera learned that “there is no standard ‘normal’ in this world. Each society has different characteristics,” he said. “When you move to a different society, you realize that the one being ‘different’ is you. This really helps you grow by learning and respecting their ideas, values, qualities and morals.”

Cerquera advises IB majors that a second language proficiency is extremely valuable and that the fastest way to learn is immersion in a country where the language is spoken. Finally, he said, having a global vision, education and skills will open doors that ultimately lead to career success.

Gaining Real-World Experience

Cruz cautioned students not to view an internship as just something to put on a resume. When applying for jobs, “it doesn’t matter what the line on your resume says—what matters is what you learned and what you can add to the job that you’re applying for,” she said. Cruz learned to employ diplomacy and demonstrate a strong work ethic. “It was rewarding and challenging and set me up very nicely for my current role at Vanguard,” she said.

Cruz advises current students to research which internships fit their goals and interests. She viewed her experience as a tool to improve her value on the job market. “Make it count—be the first one in and the last one out,” she said. “Stand out.”

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)

Gaining Real-World Experience

Prague, Czech Republic

(Continued from page 3)