

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE

WISCONSIN EXPERIENCE

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The Wisconsin (<https://wisconsinexperience.wisc.edu>) Experience is UW–Madison’s vision for the total student experience, which combines learning in and out of the classroom. Tied to the Wisconsin Idea and steeped in our long-standing institutional values—the commitment to the truth, shared participation in decision-making, and service to local and global communities—the Wisconsin Experience describes how students develop and integrate these core values across their educational experience.

Through the Wisconsin Experience, our students will engage in the following areas of intellectual and personal growth.

Empathy and Humility

- Develop and demonstrate cultural understanding of self and others
- Engage locally, nationally, and globally in a respectful and civil manner
- Appreciate and celebrate one another’s abilities, views, and accomplishments

Relentless Curiosity

- Actively learn with expert instructors, scholars, and peers
- Engage in creative inquiry, scholarship, and research
- Develop resilience, and foster courage in life and learning

Intellectual Confidence

- Develop competence, depth, and expertise in a field of study
- Integrate ideas and synthesize knowledge across multiple contexts
- Exercise critical thinking and effective communication

Purposeful Action

- Apply knowledge and skills to solve problems
- Engage in public service, partner with others, and contribute to community
- Lead for positive change

STUDENT LEARNING AT UW–MADISON

Student engagement and activism are deeply rooted in UW–Madison’s rich history of academic and research excellence. Occasionally, students are expected to help the university better understand and improve student learning by participating in evaluative activities, which include surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires, and by providing examples of their work through presentations, posters, demonstrations, and writing samples. We rely on the student perspective when assessing the effectiveness of academic and co-curricular programs. By participating, students help improve their own educational and related experiences and contribute to better educational experiences for future students.

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT AND HONORS PROGRAMS

UW–Madison offers students many ways to enrich their academic program, regardless of the major field of study they choose to pursue. Engaging in research, studying abroad, being part of learning communities, participating in university honors, becoming a student leader, engaging in service learning—these are all vital components that enhance and strengthen classroom learning. This partnership between in- and out-of-classroom learning form the foundation of the *Wisconsin Experience*. The university encourages students to take advantage of opportunities to integrate their learning experiences.

Honors Programs

Honors programs, which vary slightly among the schools and colleges, are designed for students who wish to undertake work that is more intensive than regular coursework. High grade point averages are required to maintain honors student standing. Students should refer to Honors Programs (<https://teachlearn.provost.wisc.edu/honors-programs/>) for more information including specific school or college programs or to contact an honors advisor.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities

One of the most exciting things in life is to discover something new. UW–Madison provides unique opportunities to learn from and work with some of the world’s leading researchers and scholars. Options range from assisting with professors’ ongoing research to designing and directing one’s own projects. For many examples, see Undergraduate Research Opportunities (<https://teachlearn.provost.wisc.edu/undergraduate-research/>). The Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (<http://urs.ls.wisc.edu/>) is one opportunity available in the first or second year of study. Students may cap off their undergraduate degree with a senior thesis or senior honors thesis and are encouraged to present their work at the Undergraduate Symposium. For program descriptions, see Undergraduate Symposium (<https://ugradsymposium.wisc.edu/>). For a sampling of the many grants and awards available to support and honor this work, visit the Undergraduate Academic Awards Office (<https://awards.advising.wisc.edu/>).

Community-Based Learning

Undergraduates have access to more than 100 community-based learning courses each year. These courses emphasize hands-on experiences that address real-world issues as a venue for educational growth. More information on community-based learning is available at the Morgridge Center for Public Service (<http://morgridge.wisc.edu/>).

Learning Communities

UW–Madison’s rich tradition of supporting learning communities (<https://www.housing.wisc.edu/residence-halls/learning-communities/>) means that the traditional classroom is not the only place where students learn. Students may choose to participate in any of the many residential and nonresidential learning communities, where students, faculty, and staff work together as both learners and teachers to pursue their academic interests. For more information about residential options, refer to University Housing’s learning communities (<https://www.housing.wisc.edu/residence-halls/learning-communities/>).

WISCIENCE

At WISCIENCE (<https://wisience.wisc.edu/>) (the Wisconsin Institute for Science Education and Community Engagement), we advance inclusive education in STEM for all. Our high-impact courses, programs, events, and initiatives provide professional development opportunities in STEM in supportive learning environments on and beyond campus. We serve

UW community members at all career stages—with many offerings for undergraduate students.

In WISCIENCE courses and programs, you can:

- Explore STEM research (<https://wisience.wisc.edu/research/#undergrad-courses>), community engagement (<https://wisience.wisc.edu/service/#undergraduate>), and leadership (<https://wisience.wisc.edu/leadership/>)
- Build community, boost confidence, and develop your STEM identity
- Fulfill degree requirements while building skills for STEM careers
- Engage with instructors committed to inclusive STEM education for all

Learn More (<https://wisience.wisc.edu/>)

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Studying abroad extends the boundaries of the classroom to the world. It is an exciting way for students to complement and enhance their on-campus learning while earning meaningful credit toward the major and degree. Each year UW–Madison sends more than 2,500 students on study abroad programs around the globe, including international internships and domestic study away options within the United States.

International Academic Programs (IAP) (<https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/>) serves as the central study abroad office on campus, offering more than 300 programs in over 80 countries around the world. IAP program offerings, available to all majors for students at all levels, range from short-term faculty-led opportunities to intensive language study, internships, a semester or a year at a university abroad, service-learning, and programs with special themes. Students can visit the Study Abroad Resource Center, 301 Red Gym, to meet with advisors who can help students prepare and research study abroad options.

Additionally, in partnership with IAP, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the College of Engineering, and the School of Business offer programs geared specifically for their academic disciplines. All approved UW–Madison programs share policies, procedures, and best practices, and are featured on the Program Search (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/>) page.

The Value of Study Abroad

Employers are increasingly looking for workers who not only have technical knowledge, but also “soft skills” such as critical thinking, problem solving, time management, and communication skills deemed necessary for success in a global workforce. Study abroad is one of the best ways students can acquire global skills and stand out to potential employers. Study abroad alumni have better job prospects. Based on a survey conducted by IES Abroad (<http://thepienews.com/news/us-study-abroad-alumni-have-better-job-prospects/>), 90 percent of study abroad alumni found their first job within six months of graduation. In addition to being able to experience new customs, cultures, interests, and food, alumni have reported that study abroad increased their confidence and had a lasting impact on their worldview (<https://www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/benefits/alumni-survey-results/>).

Regardless of major, students will find that study abroad has much to offer. The variety of program sites and durations (semester, spring break, summer, winter, year) allow students to select programs based on individual academic interests and personal goals and objectives.

Access and Meaningful Credit for All Majors

In general, credits earned abroad can count toward fulfilling (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/academics/>) college and major requirements in any UW–Madison school or college. Seniors in most schools and colleges who complete their major and degree requirements while abroad on a UW–Madison program can graduate at the end of their study abroad program. Seniors who wish to graduate abroad should work closely with their academic advisors to ensure all degree requirements will be met.

Each study program has its own eligibility requirements. Students are encouraged to talk with their academic advisors early in their academic careers about how study abroad can fit into their academic plans and future career goals. We are also working with departments to create Major Advising Pages (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/academics/major-advising-pages-maps/>) to highlight programs that work best for students' degree plans.

Costs and Funding

Students who are thinking about studying abroad or have already decided to do so may be concerned about how they will fund the experience. We frequently hear from students that the program cost is a primary factor in deciding whether they are able to pursue studying abroad. Instead of tuition, students pay a program fee to cover the actual costs of the experience, which is unique to each program. Programs vary widely in cost, so it is likely that we have a program for every budget. Sometimes studying abroad is no more expensive than studying on campus, and other times the cost can be higher. We work with students to create funding (<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/funding/>) plans for their time abroad.

Students who study abroad in UW–Madison-sponsored programs may be eligible to use federal financial aid toward the costs of the program. Students should meet with the UW–Madison Office of Student Financial Aid to discuss eligibility requirements. In addition, students can apply for scholarships (<https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/scholarships.html>) specifically designated for use with study abroad programs. These include UW–Madison, national, and international scholarship opportunities. Students can also use most campus and academic department scholarships for UW–Madison-sponsored study abroad programs and should talk with their scholarship sponsor about that.

Diversity and Inclusion

Study Abroad staff are committed to providing quality study abroad and domestic study away programs for every UW–Madison student. We work strategically to identify, address, and remove barriers that may prevent participation and to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for students. Our team actively engages with students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds and prioritizes the continuous development of our knowledge and cultural competence. We also recognize the importance of increasing access to study abroad for historically underrepresented student populations. We are committed to diversity and inclusion so that every student can engage with and understand their identity through a new lens and continue to develop and make progress on their personal, professional, and academic goals.