ALUMNI REFLECT *on* RAVENSCROFT *and* WORKING ABROAD



~ BY KATHLEEN LOUIS ~

RAVENSCROFT'S global education programs and travel opportunities can have a profound influence on students' lives by broadening their comfort and curiosity about potentially studying, working and living abroad. In addition, the life-skills learned during their time at Ravenscroft — adaptability, self-confidence, open-mindedness, and resilience — have proven to be foundational for alumni excelling abroad.

Here are the stories of three alumni who have embraced the international experience, continuously learning and growing while overcoming a variety of challenges:

GROWTH *and* OPPORTUNITY *with* CHANGE

Will Hayman '11, Thailand

A Spanish culture and literature major at UNC, Will Hayman '11 had planned to gain international experience after graduation by working in Latin America and practicing his Spanish/Portuguese. Hayman had never studied Asia or Thailand, so working in Thailand was not on his radar. But when an opportunity arose to work as a Marketing Strategist at a school in "the Land of Smiles," he made the difficult decision to break away from his original plan. And he hasn't looked back.

"[I'd encourage others looking to work abroad] to keep your mind open and search for the best opportunity before you pick the destination. Focus on finding the right situation for growth, even if it's a country or a region you did not originally consider."

Describing every day as a "crash course" in Thai culture, Hayman has worked at the Ruamrudee School in Bangkok since July 2015 where he promotes the school through strategic planning and marketing. Hayman has redesigned the website, created marketing videos, and designed advertisements and collateral.

Being adaptable and staying positive has allowed Hayman to adjust to challenges that come with working and living abroad.

"Trying to learn a new culture and language along with the ins and outs of a new job can be very daunting. Especially when you are so far removed from your safety net of family and friends back home, you have to continue to keep your chin up and move forward."

Hayman's interest in global issues was sparked during Mary Beth Immediata's World History and AP European History courses. Hayman joined Ravenscroft's Academic WorldQuest Team and traveled to Washington D.C. his senior year with the team to compete. His passion carried through to college where he studied abroad in Oviedo, Spain for a semester.

"[Studying abroad] was one of the most formative experiences of my life. My time in Spain gave me the confidence and desire to try and work internationally."

Hayman plans to work for two more years in Thailand before returning to the US for graduate school, but adds that "of course, plans are subject to change!"



WILL HAYMAN '11 (far right) at the Ruamrudee School in Bangkok, Thailand





"These opportunities to experience NEW PLACES and learn about DIFFERENT CULTURES sparked my life-long love for travel."

RUSH DORSET '08 is Managing Editor at Publicize in Medellin, Columbia

TRUSTING *Yourself* *for* FULL IMMERSION

Rush Dorsett '08, Colombia

It's hard to find a perfect time to move abroad. It's easy to think of excuses not to. Rush Dorsett '08 encourages those interested in working abroad to just "do it — actively make it happen."

When first exploring options to work abroad, Dorsett admits feeling uncertainty, as if she was "diving into a great unknown." But having missed out on studying abroad in college to pursue studies in music, Dorsett promised herself she would seek work in South America after graduating.

"Once I started working after graduation, I realized that I had a window of opportunity before settling into a long-term career path. I trusted myself and stayed resolute in pursuing my dream of living abroad. I knew that if I didn't go now, it would only get more difficult to leave in the future."

After extensive research, Dorsett booked a one-way ticket to Medellín, Colombia in January 2015, committing to a three-month trial, which became a year and a half adventure filled with invaluable learning and growth experiences.

Landing a job as Managing Editor at Publicize, a start-up PR agency, after a month of networking, Dorsett fully immersed herself in the local culture, quickly finding opportunities to integrate her passion for music with her international work. Dorsett regularly dances salsa and also sings with a local music ensemble called MonteCarlo, performing at business events, dinner parties, political functions and weddings throughout the city and surrounding pueblos.

Dorsett's passion for music and Spanish go hand-in-hand. At Ravenscroft, Dorsett traveled to Paris, Seattle and Denmark with the choir over spring breaks. She also describes her junior year summer abroad with the Spoleto Program to study music and the humanities in Italy as "pretty magical."

"Those opportunities to experience new places and learn about different cultures sparked my life-long love for travel."

It was more than Dorsett's early experiences traveling that prepared her for working abroad. Being adaptable, curious and confident are all skills that helped her make the leap and take full advantage of her life abroad.

"Ravenscroft helped me develop skills to adapt to living abroad by providing an environment in which I could pursue multiple interests. I learned to adapt to many different settings and skills, which gave me a sense of confidence that I could be successful in a variety of fields as long as I had the right mindset."

Dorsett also believes that humility and the ability to ask questions and ask for help have helped her step out of her comfort zone, build a community and be open to new experiences abroad.

"In my opinion, learning how to gracefully ask for help and cultivate a support network is one of the most important skills one can have. Your community lifts you up, and having that support while living abroad is extremely helpful for navigating new situations."

The growth opportunities Dorsett experienced in Colombia have given her clarity on what she truly wants to pursue for her career — music. She'll be returning to the United States this fall to pursue a Master's Degree in vocal performance at New England Conservatory in Boston. She also plans to stay in touch with the friends she made abroad and connect with Latino communities in the U.S. to keep up her Spanish. Her experience abroad provided more than clarity for her career path.

"I hope to use the knowledge I've gained in Colombia to be a more understanding, informed, and compassionate person, and to help spread awareness and contribute to projects that seek to combat international social issues."





ADAPTABILITY *and* OPENNESS *to* NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Ashley Allen '86

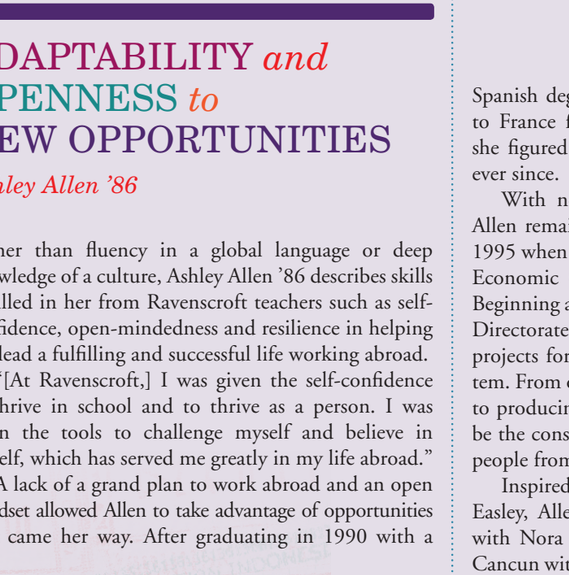
Rather than fluency in a global language or deep knowledge of a culture, Ashley Allen '86 describes skills instilled in her from Ravenscroft teachers such as self-confidence, open-mindedness and resilience in helping her lead a fulfilling and successful life working abroad.

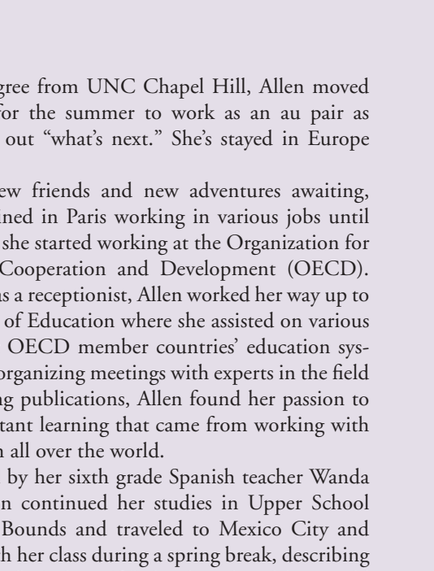
"[At Ravenscroft,] I was given the self-confidence to thrive in school and to thrive as a person. I was given the tools to challenge myself and believe in myself, which has served me greatly in my life abroad."

A lack of a grand plan to work abroad and an open mindset allowed Allen to take advantage of opportunities that came her way. After graduating in 1990 with a Spanish degree from UNC Chapel Hill, Allen moved to France for the summer to work as an au pair as she figured out "what's next." She's stayed in Europe ever since.

With new friends and new adventures awaiting, Allen remained in Paris working in various jobs until 1995 when she started working at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Beginning as a receptionist, Allen worked her way up to Directorate of Education where she assisted on various projects for OECD member countries' education system. From organizing meetings with experts in the field to producing publications, Allen found her passion to be the constant learning that came from working with people from all over the world.

Inspired by her sixth grade Spanish teacher Wanda Easley, Allen continued her studies in Upper School with Nora Bounds and traveled to Mexico City and Cancun with her class during a spring break, describing the trip as a "priceless gift" that broadened her world and opened her eyes. Allen believes the act of learning about a language, rather than the language itself, set herself up for success abroad — and in life.





ASHLEY ALLEN '86 spent many years in France working at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and now resides in Stockholm, Sweden

"Learning a second language opened my eyes up to new worlds, new cultures. So when the opportunity to leave for France came about after college, even though I didn't really speak French, I knew I couldn't pass it up. Having already learned one language made me believe that I could take on another. I am certain that all of my teachers at Ravenscroft molded me for my future abroad. Not only were they excellent teachers, but they were dedicated mentors, always there to listen, to support and to guide us."

At Ravenscroft, she was taught, from a young age, by her teachers to be "open-minded, to respect others as they are, to respect others' cultures and backgrounds." This mindset helped Allen thrive in new environments and difficult situations.

"I was taught never to give up. I remember having some difficult academic moments, and my teachers never gave up on me; they encouraged me to keep trying. I would succeed each time, with their encouragement. We were taught to work together and became like family by the time we graduated."

Currently living in Stockholm, Sweden with her two children, Annabella (12) and Gabriel (5), Allen is looking forward to beginning her next chapter, and is grateful to give the international experience to her children who speak French, Swedish and English. In addition to teaching her children new languages, she hopes to instill in them resilience, open-mindedness and self-confidence — skills that have helped her achieve success and happiness abroad. *R*

"[At Ravenscroft,] I was given the SELF-CONFIDENCE to thrive in school and to thrive as a person. I was given the tools to CHALLENGE MYSELF and believe in myself."





© Scott Tansey