

## National Study Abroad Day - Ms. Megan Van Hook

*[Opening Music, plays continually through the introduction]*

Hello and welcome to this episode of Global, Here and Now - a podcast where the Poole College of Management Global Programs team showcases a variety of unique ways to engage globally. I'm your host Ellen Frost and today, we are celebrating National Study Abroad Day! Now, Let's Go Global!

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February 22, 2021 marks the second annual National Study Abroad Day. The goal of this event is to celebrate the lasting impacts study abroad has on alumni. On the Global, Here and Now podcast, we have talked to several current undergraduate students about their international experiences, but today, we want to talk to Poole College of Management faculty and staff about their own study abroad experiences including some of their fondest memories and the impact studying abroad still has on their life and career today.

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It is my pleasure to introduce **Megan Van Hook**, academic advisor in the Poole College of Management. Originally from New Jersey and completing both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Boston College, Ms. Van Hook has been with Poole since 2013 advising both current and prospective transfer students. When not at work, Ms. Van Hook enjoys exploring North Carolina with her husband and two sons.

Ms. Van Hook is a huge supporter of our office and encourages any student she meets with to study abroad. This should come as no surprise given that Ms. Van Hook spent a semester abroad in Quito, Ecuador at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. During her time abroad, she lived with a host family, took classes in Spanish and traveled all over Ecuador and South America. Welcome, Megan, and thanks for joining us today!

Megan Van Hook: Great, thank you for having me.

Ellen Frost: All right, we're going to jump right into your study abroad experience, starting at the beginning, can you share with us how or why you decided to study abroad and then what drew you to Ecuador.

Megan Van Hook: Sure yeah well I knew I wanted to have some kind of global experience when I was in college I wasn't sure what that was like. I knew I wanted to study in a Spanish speaking country i'd studied Spanish in high school and studied in college. i really wanted to get some fluency in the language. I felt like I'd studied it but really felt like I needed to live in a Spanish speaking culture to really grow in my Spanish skills. So I knew I wanted to go to Spanish speaking country and I wanted to go abroad. I wasn't sure about the country. So I did some research in my university and talked to study abroad advisors at my university, there were a

couple options. Spain being one of them, Mexico and then they had a small program in Ecuador and it intrigued me with something that I had never considered I never thought about that as a country I would potentially study abroad but upon doing more research into different programs it really was everything I was looking for. The program that I went to had a service component which was really important to me, I wanted to. Really immerse myself in the culture and learn and grow and make connections with people in the country I was studying in. Had a homestay and a host family component which I thought was going to be really helpful in my language abilities and growing in that, and also in the cultural immersion piece. And it also had a lot of opportunity to study and travel and take classes in Spanish, so I thought that was a great way for me to grow, both in my language ability and also in my connection to the culture in connection to the people of the country.

Ellen Frost: yeah absolutely and you've touched on a few kinds of the pieces of the program that you really enjoyed but thinking about your experience can you share one or two highlights from your time abroad, I know there are many, but maybe one or two that you can share with us.

Megan Van Hook: Sure there are so many the big part where the connections and the relationships that I made when I was abroad, my host family was amazing. I'm still very close with them. I was invited to their weddings. They've seen pictures of their grandkids and their children and my children. It's a relationship that will last my whole life. So my connection with my host family, I had a host mother and father and then to his brothers and his sister so we're all still very close in touch base on social media and keep track of what each other's doing in their lives, so that, for me, was definitely the highlight. The ability to really engage in the country and the culture of Ecuador, is a really beautiful diverse country small country but there's so much there, I had the ability to travel throughout the country of Ecuador, I went to the rain forest, I went to the beach I went to the mountains, I went to the Galapagos Islands, which were incredible. All within a very short period of time, and it was very easy to do that very easy to travel, both within the country of Ecuador and also traveled outside of Ecuador. As well pretty much all around South America and at the same time taking classes of course and growing and learning and. Growing in my language skills and making friends with students that were in the university local Ecuadorian students, many of which I'm also still close with and also other students that were studying abroad in the country, I met students from my own university that I didn't know. But we're sitting on the same program as well as students from universities all over the country all over the United States that were sitting there as well, so so many highlights, but I think those are my top few.

Ellen Frost: yeah for sure I think a few things that stick out that I think for students listening would be something them to consider as a lot of students, want to go to Europe in Europe so phenomenal destination and our most. Popular one, but I think traveling to a country and to a region of the world that you might not naturally travel to for vacations or work opportunities gives you the experience like you had to. live in and travel around the country that you otherwise wouldn't have gotten to know which I think is pretty incredible and then I think. The Community and the connections that you meet you know you you've talked about your host family local students but also other students from your undergrad institution and around the United States, I

think a program that offers, that is, is really important, so in thinking about your study abroad experience it was a few years ago, maybe many years. What still sticks with you about your time abroad, like what has the experience, maybe shaped who you are now even though it was a while ago.

Megan Van Hook: It did I mean it was easily the most. I think take you out of your comfort zone experience that I had in college, I think it was I had the most growth through studying abroad. It taught me what it was like to live in a different culture and to experience a different culture and to really embrace not knowing and embrace learning which. I tend to be someone who likes to be in control of things, and there was a lot of situations where you just had to go with it and just learn and. Trust yourself and make decisions and problem solve and those were skills that you know I use in jobs every single day and even. After my study abroad experience the friendships and relationships, like, I said that I made with my host family and people from my own university. You know I'm still great friends with both of those my host family and and people from my university that you know we were in each other's weddings we see each other's children, so my best friends were the ones that I studied abroad with. So, really, it was the most I think influential experience I had in my college experience and. If someone has the opportunity to study abroad, I always say it's gonna change your life in so many different ways, you probably never anticipated. But it is always that are really, really good for your growth as a student, as a person, as a professional. Have nothing but, really, really wonderful memories from my time there and even after I think. From my first job after college, I was interviewing in a lot of different places. The first job that I actually got after college and in the interview I had studied abroad in Quito Ecuador and we talked about that experience. And I think that had something to do with me getting that first job out of college, because I was able to tell them how. What I learned there and the experiences that I had there showed how that would help me in my current role that I was applying for in so many different ways, it was a while ago, but I still look back on that time so fondly and wish I could study abroad again.

Ellen Frost: Yeah, don't we all right. yeah exactly that kind of leads us into our last question, which I think you've touched on, but. Based on your own experience abroad and then thinking about your role as an academic advisor in Poole, what advice do you have for students who are thinking about studying abroad?

Megan Van Hook: Do it there's ways to do it, you might not think you can do it, but you can. There's so many resources and so many people that can help you miss frost being one of them. To help make that happen, and even if it's you know hey I can't study abroad for a semester, or you know i'm thinking, maybe a summer program or maybe a spring break program or something like that. Just a way that you can get out of the familiar familiarity and live somewhere differently and learn and grow. there's no real other opportunity to do that, especially if you're thinking of a semester program I would love to go study or go somewhere for. Three months of my life or four months of my life, but with a job in life and everything else it's just probably not going to happen any other time. So if you have the opportunity, and you can do it, I would so highly recommend it and. Even if you're not sure, use those resources and

ask those questions. There're so many people that can support you in your research and figuring out, you know what's possible and what can you do and how can we make it happen for you.

Ellen Frost: awesome well thanks so much for sharing your experience abroad, it was interesting and enjoyable to hear about your time and how that's continued to influence so thanks for being with us today.

Megan Van Hook: Thank you so much, I appreciate it.

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### **Closing**

As you can see, study abroad experiences have a long impact on those who participate in them. While you may only study abroad for a summer or a semester, the experience will continue to benefit you as you apply for jobs, travel more, and connect with others. For the current students listening, I encourage you to ask your professors and supervisors if they studied abroad. You can also check out our website and Instagram page to see more highlights of faculty and staff who've studied abroad.

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Happy National Study Abroad Day, everyone! We are always grateful for a chance to talk to more people about their study abroad experiences. Thanks for listening to this episode of Global, Here and Now presented by the Poole College of Management at NC State. For more information and to listen to other episodes, please visit our website at [go.ncsu.edu/pooleglobal](http://go.ncsu.edu/pooleglobal). Stay safe, stay well and stay globally engaged.

*[Closing Music]*