

EXPLORING A GAP YEAR

TIPS FOR HARVARD COLLEGE STUDENTS

Harvard College supports students taking a “gap year” between high school and college. The gap year can be an opportunity to explore other cultures, conduct research, learn about the world of work, or delve into a creative passion. Students who have experienced a gap year report feeling refreshed and energized for academic work when they come to campus and they often report feeling more mature and ready for the independent living and decision-making required at college.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Students spend the year in many different ways. Some work in their home town and others travel, volunteer, pursue an activity, or engage in a job or some other meaningful experience. What a student decides to pursue often depends on family resources, since Harvard is not able to offer any financial assistance. The Office of Career Services is available to meet with a student or family to help brainstorm gap year options. Students, however, do not have full use of the office until they matriculate.

GOAL SETTING

One way to think about the gap year is to break the year into a few different segments and to use the segments to accomplish goals. Students may want to explore an interest in a certain academic area to test if this is a subject they might want to focus on in college. They may want to spend one segment earning money and if funds permit they may want to spend a segment travelling or exploring a new country or region. Many students also use this time to try an internship in an area where they would like to build skills or knowledge.

NEXT STEPS

There are a number of publications and websites that offer advice about taking a gap year as well as many organizations that charge a fee and provide a broad range of gap year services. If you plan to use an organization or service be sure to check eligibility requirements and carefully evaluate each opportunity, taking into consideration your goals and financial resources. Students should contact each program to discuss their interests and obtain names of students who attended the program in prior years to hear what they liked and did not like about the program. The Office of Career Services does not recommend any specific programs.

GENERAL RESOURCES

The Harvard College Office of Admissions information on taking time off: college.harvard.edu/admissions/preparing-college/should-i-take-time

Useful resources as suggested by Harvard students who took time off: www.gapyear.com/us, www.idealists.org, www.transitionsabroad.com

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

City Year: www.cityyear.org

An opportunity to get experience in education and public service. Serve full-time in schools for 10 months as tutors in one of City Year's 28 urban locations across the U.S.

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms

(WWOOF): www.woof.net

Links volunteers with organic farms around the world that provide food and accomodation in exchange for work.

Rustic Pathways: gap.rusticpathways.com

Uses travel and service to achieve sustainable development.

Australia Work and Holiday Visa Program:

www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa-1/462-

A temporary visa that encourages cultural exchange and closer ties with Australia for up to one year.

Many organizations will place you in a cross-cultural opportunity abroad. Here are a few:

WorldTeach: www.worldteach.org

Founded in 1996 by Harvard graduates; various summer opportunities to serve in a teaching capacity abroad.

Partners of the Americas: www.partners.net

Established in 1964 and inspired by John F. Kennedy, they offer youth exchange opportunities.

FSD: www.fsd.org/programs/internships

Sustainable international development service options working alongside community members.

United Planet: www.unitedplanet.org

Experiential opportunities for 1-52 weeks.

i-to-i: www.i-to-i.com

Volunteer travel company; various opportunities.

Volunteers for Peace: vfp.org

Opportunities to experience diverse cultures and create peace through volunteering.

Where There Be Dragons: wheretherebedragons.com

Offers a variety of program options abroad that include travel, trekking, home-stays, language study, and more.

Good luck with your decision-making and we look forward to helping you make the most of your gap year experience!

—The Office of Career Services Team