

Ramapo Study Abroad Experience Led to Alumna's Work at Irish Consulate

Following a two-week family vacation to Europe during her sophomore year, Jackie Basile '18 knew that travel would play an important role in her education and eventually her career success. She reached out to Ramapo College's Roukema Center for International Studies and chose a Study Abroad program at the University College Dublin, Ireland, for the spring 2017 semester. "I fell in love with the country," said Basile, a Fair Lawn, N.J., native who majored in Political Science and International Studies with a concentration in European Studies. Enthralled with the experience, she returned to Dublin after graduating from Ramapo and earned a master's in International Relations in 2021 and was offered a position at the Irish Consulate in New York City.

"Jackie's original goal for studying abroad was to travel, experience the world and see new places. What she didn't expect was the significant impact that semester in Ireland would have on her personal and professional life," said Ben Levy, Director of International Education at the Roukema Center. "Returning to Ireland after graduation to complete her masters was a clear option for her, as a result of her semester abroad. Now, she is translating those experiences and her academic knowledge from her Ramapo degree, and applying this in her work at the Consulate. We could not be more proud of her."

Q: What are your duties at the Consulate?

A: I'm a Consular and Administrative Officer. I mainly assist with Irish passport and visa questions, and issue some visas within our office. Our office also helps Irish citizens who are abroad in New York to help them with issues, such as losing a passport, and issuing emergency travel documents. I will also be assisting with events at the Consulate when the COVID restrictions are eased. My enthusiasm for Ireland and my experiences studying in Ireland definitely help me gain this position and I love being surrounded by Irish people and the Irish community every day.

Q: How did your Study Abroad experience contribute to your current success?

A: Studying abroad definitely changed my life. When I returned to the Ramapo campus, I was a proud Global Roadrunner. After graduating, I ended up working in international admissions and enjoyed helping international students. Before studying abroad, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but this experience gave me a new global perspective and I wanted to inspire others to study and travel internationally. I wouldn't be who I am if it weren't for studying abroad. I would have never expected to work for the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs if it was not for my experience in Ireland.

Q: Why did you choose to earn your master's in Ireland?

A: I knew that I wanted to return to Ireland after having such a great study abroad experience there and wanted to learn more about international relations, and about Irish and Northern Irish politics. I applied to the one-year program at University College Dublin, which is where I studied abroad and loved their program. I was accepted and received one of their top scholarships, the Global Excellence Scholarship (which only 12 international students received that year), making my grad degree even more affordable. I was able to take a variety of courses, from human rights to gender and politics classes. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to travel much and part of my program was virtual due to the COVID pandemic but it still was a great experience. Now I can say I survived the pandemic while being in another country!

Q: What advice can you offer for current Ramapo students who are considering a Study Abroad program?

A: My advice to students would be: do it! I was the only person that semester to go to Ireland and I was scared and nervous, selecting a country to spend a semester in that I've never been to. But it was such an amazing experience. Studying abroad can literally change your life and your career. Getting out of my comfort zone and experiencing a new culture made me grow so much as a student navigating a different academic system and as a person. If you are able, study abroad at least once during your undergraduate time at Ramapo. Explore the scholarship opportunities through the Roukema Center and seek their advice. They helped me every step of the way.