**Why Chinese students choose to study abroad?**

In the last five years, about [3.7 million students](http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20120926-the-statistics-of-studying-abroad) worldwide go to a foreign country to pursue their education each year. Nearly 600,000 of them are from China, [the largest source of international students](http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180404_332354.html). I am one of the Chinese international students. One question I get asked frequently by domestic students, my professors and other international students is why I chose to go to a foreign country for college. I can go on and on for a day just to tell you my reasons. However, I’ll pick the top three reasons that led tens of thousands of Chinese students made the same decision on leaving their home country to study.

**Mastering a foreign language such as English**

Majority of Chinese international students go to English speaking countries because English proficiency helps them become more competitive in the Chinese job market. English is the lingua franca of the world, and it takes an irreplaceable role in the business world in China. An increasing number of employers in China require candidates with working proficiency English. Most of the Fortune 500 companies in China prefer candidates with overseas experience. Even though it is not impossible for students to master a foreign language in their homeland, it is more difficult for them due to the lack of a language environment. For Chinese students in English speaking countries, they are taking the advantage of acquiring and practicing English in all capacities through their studies and day-to-day lives.

**Learn from the best**

It is said that “to be the best, you have to learn from the best.” Many Chinese students made up their mind to study overseas for institutions in their destination countries that have top rankings in the subjects they are interested in, especially STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine) subjects. Zhiyan Feng, a first-year master's student studying Agriculture at UC Davis, told me that he chose to come to the states because UC Davis is ranked No. 1 in Agriculture in the world and he wants to learn from the best. Qiuzhen Wang moved to Paris the past summer to study political science at Sciences Po, which is ranked [No. 3 in the world to study Politics and International studies](https://www.sciencespo.fr/admissions/en/news/sciences-po-ranks-4th-world-politics-international-studies.html).

**Personal growth**

Chinese international students deal with cultural differences and academic challenges on a daily basis, so they grow both academically and personally. They value personal growth more. Some growth can only be seen from within. Take myself as an example, adjusting the cultural differences has enabled me to take on a global perspective. The entire study abroad experience helped me to be more independent and not just in life but as a person. I also acquired many tangible skills that I probably would not have learned if I stayed in China. I learned to cook as a result of missing certain Chinese dishes that are not easily found in the states, and I learned to drive since California relies heavily on personal-vehicles rather than public transportation.

**Stay or leave: It is a personal choice**

Study abroad is not a necessity for every student because of the expensive costs and challenges that come with it. Even though studying overseas has many benefits, it does not overshadow the benefits of staying for college in one's home country. Those who study in China have more time to build a network and get themselves familiar with the working environment compared to their study abroad counterparts. After all, it is a personal choice to stay or leave. Some made the decision overnight, and some took a long time to evaluate the cost and benefit before making a decision.