

Efectos de la pandemia de coronavirus COVID-19 en estudiantes extranjeros y su posible  
impacto en los programas de estudio en el extranjero en el futuro

by

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## **Introducción y Propósito**

Estudiar en el extranjero ha sido una gran parte de educación universitaria en los Estados Unidos por mucho tiempo. En 2017-2018, un total de 341,751 estudiantes estudiaron en el extranjero, un aumento del 3% con respecto al año anterior.<sup>1</sup> Este tipo de estudio se ha vuelto importante con el aumento de la globalización, por lo tanto, según la investigadora Laura Siaya, existe una demanda de personas que son interculturalmente competentes y están preparadas para interactuar en un mundo cada vez más conectado.<sup>2</sup> Estudiar en el extranjero ayuda a formar personas que satisfagan esta demanda. Los estudiantes universitarios que estudian en el extranjero, por lo general, se vuelven más aventureros, según un estudio de 2017, entonces, “En reconocimiento del poder de los viajes para mejorar la visión del mundo, es razonable esperar que un viajero estudiantil más aventurero pueda convertirse en un líder más inteligente culturalmente, que es uno de los objetivos finales de la internacionalización del sistema de educación superior de los Estados Unidos.”<sup>3</sup> Es la expectativa, entonces, que los programas de estudio en el extranjero estén bien organizados con el fin de fomentar este tipo de crecimiento en los estudiantes.

Con la esperanza de convertirme en un individuo más consciente interculturalmente, como estudiante en California Polytechnic State University, aproveché la oportunidad de estudiar en el extranjero en Lyon, Francia en el otoño de 2019 durante mi último año de estudio. Participé en un programa de semestre dirigido por uno de los mayores proveedores de programas en el

<sup>1</sup> Institute of International Education, “Host Regions and Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 1999/00 – 2017/18,” *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange*, (2019), <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/all-destinations/>.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Siaya, “International Experience, Attitudes, and Knowledge in the United States,” *International Higher Education*, no. 26 (March 2015): 14, <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2002.26.6969>.

<sup>3</sup> Makarand Mody, Susan Gordon, Xinran Lehto, and Howard Adler, “Study Abroad and the Development of College Students' Travel Venturesomeness,” *Tourism Management Perspectives*, no. 24 (October 2017): 133, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.08.005>.

extranjero en los Estados Unidos (organización mundial sin fines de lucro), en colaboración con una universidad local en Lyon. La experiencia fue irremplazable, aprendí mucho y todo fue como se esperaba durante los cuatro meses en Lyon.

Mientras estaba en Francia, tuve el placer de conocer a algunos estudiantes que estaban participando en el mismo programa, pero durante todo el año académico 2019-2020.

Desafortunadamente, durante sus estudios en el semestre de la primavera, la pandemia de coronavirus 2019 interrumpió el programa y los estudiantes tuvieron que abandonar el país. Evidentemente, esto resultó en una experiencia muy diferente para los estudiantes de un año de lo que yo tenía. Tenía curiosidad por ver cuáles eran esas experiencias y cómo los organizadores del programa (tanto locales como estadounidenses) abordaron las circunstancias, a través de los ojos de los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este proyecto fue descubrir los efectos que la pandemia COVID-19 tuvo en los estudiantes estadounidenses que estudian en el extranjero durante el programa de 2019 de un año en Lyon, Francia, y evaluar lo que estos efectos podrían significar para el futuro de estudiar en el extranjero para los estudiantes estadounidenses.

En las siguientes secciones, abordaré la metodología utilizada para recopilar información en el cumplimiento del propósito de este proyecto, discutiré la información recopilada y concluiré con una exploración de posibles respuestas a la pregunta del futuro del estudio en el extranjero.

### **Metodología**

Para recopilar información en el cumplimiento del propósito de este proyecto, realicé entrevistas con seis de los siete estudiantes de un año del programa en cuestión. Las entrevistas fueron oral, anónimas y realizadas en inglés porque es el idioma nativo de los participantes. El propósito del estudio y los derechos de los participantes se les dieron a conocer antes de que

comenzara cada entrevista (ver Anexo 1). Las entrevistas fueron realizadas por teléfono o videollamada y fueron grabadas oralmente para ser transcritas, con la permisión de cada participante. Todos los participantes, y cualquier otro nombre mencionado, recibieron un seudónimo para preservar el anonimato. Los nombres que aparecen en esta publicación no son los nombres reales de los participantes o los que mencionaron durante las entrevistas. Las entrevistas consistieron en veinticuatro preguntas sobre la experiencia de cada participante y sus pensamientos sobre su situación única, con algunas preguntas añadidas o modificadas durante las entrevistas. Después de las entrevistas, las respuestas de los participantes fueron transcritas (ver Anexo 2). El análisis de las respuestas sigue.

### **Discusión**

Se puede ver temas y experiencias comunes en las situaciones de los participantes.

#### ***Una salida de dos meses temprano***

Todos menos Eli salieron de Francia se fueron alrededor de dos meses antes del final programado del programa de estudio en el extranjero. Muchos de los estudiantes no esperaban esta salida temprana y repentina. Cuando se les preguntó si esperaban la salida temprana, considerando las circunstancias, estas fueron algunas de las respuestas:

*“No, si estoy siendo honesta. Pensé que quizás me recomendarían que me viniera a casa y me diera la opción de quedarme, lo que me había imaginado quedándome sin importar qué, así que en realidad me sorprendió bastante...” – Amelia*

*“No, no sabía. No como si no pensara que era un problema, pero no pensé que me afectaría.” – Celeste*

*“No me vi personalmente regresando. Pensé que tal vez sólo iban a haber dos semanas en las que tendríamos clases [en línea] y luego, eventualmente, todos volvimos a la universidad.” – Derrick*

Mientras que algunos estudiantes no podían haber predicho que el programa terminaría al comienzo del año académico, comenzaron a ver el final que se avecinaba cuando la situación con el virus empeoró en otros países. Cuando se les preguntó si esperaban la salida temprana, considerando las circunstancias, estas fueron las respuestas:

*“Sí, como una semana o dos antes de irme, tenía la sensación de que probablemente iba a suceder porque había algunos estudiantes que ya se habían ido...” – Felicity*

*“Sí, simplemente no sabía cuándo sería—pensé que tendríamos más tiempo.” – Brook*

Pero aquellos que esperaban ser enviados a casa todavía experimentaron una lucha para salir al recibir la repentina noticia de que tuvieron que irse en un corto período de tiempo.

### ***Una salida apurada***

La mayoría de los estudiantes tenían menos que una semana para irse. Cuando describieron sus pensamientos en este sujeto, se ve que la experiencia podría describirse como traumática. “No estaba mentalmente lista para volver a casa todavía,” dijo Amelia. debido al hecho de que los estudiantes tuvieron que irse dos meses antes de lo que esperaban, esta declaración tiene sentido. Celeste tenía pensamientos similares sobre el cambio repentino en las circunstancias:

*“Siento que me arrancaron de un lugar que yo no había estado mentalmente lista para salir todavía...Y de repente, todo cambió. Por lo tanto, creo que definitivamente fue mucho peor que si hubiera estado lista para volver y regresar en mis propios términos en lugar de los del mundo. Fue mucho más frustrante. Sería frustrante de todos modos,*

*volver de vivir fuera del país...es áspero para asimilar, pero se puede hacer, y este sólo tomó un poco más de tiempo.” – Celeste*

Algunos estudiantes, como Brook, no creían, o no podían, que tal partida y regreso a los Estados Unidos les afectaría tan repentinamente. Brook dijo, “Seguí diciendo: ‘No, está bien, no me afectará...’ Y luego Francia cerró mientras yo todavía estaba allí, así que se volvió real y tú estabas como, ‘Oh, en realidad tenemos que irnos ahora.’” Fue un evento impactante al que tener que adaptarse.

### ***El estrés***

Quizá Amelia lo dijo mejor: “Fue estresante volver a casa durante una pandemia mundial.” Tres otros participantes también mencionaron específicamente el estrés que caracterizó su experiencia del programa terminando y teniendo que salir de Francia con poca advertencia y poco tiempo. Brook, Celeste, Derrick describieron en sus propias palabras como vean la situación. Brook dijo, “Fue una de las cosas más locas que siento que he hecho... Definitivamente fue un momento estresante, un montón de lágrimas y preocupación.” Tal vez para muchos de los estudiantes, esta experiencia seguirá siendo una de las "cosas más locas" que han vivido.

Había muchas cosas que los estudiantes tenían que lidiar con todas a la vez que hacían que la situación fuera estresante. Celeste explica algo de eso a continuación.

*“Sólo la prisa de tratar de encontrar un boleto era muy estresante y tratando de prepararse para ir a casa y empacar una habitación entera en unos días...es súper estresante...Así que, yo estaba definitivamente todas esas cosas, definitivamente muy enojada, definitivamente decepcionada y triste y...estresada, sin duda.”*

Una gran parte del problema para los estudiantes fue evidentemente el intento de comprar entradas para salir. Las palabras de Derrick se expanden en el tema:

*Fue un desastre saliendo de Francia. Todos mis vuelos se cancelaban y no sabía que hacer...por tanto era realmente estresante...Estaba un poco enloquecida y quería salir lo más rápido posible...No sabíamos si iban a cancelar el programa o no hasta que...nos dieron dos días para irse...así que fue tanto más estresante.”*

Teniendo en cuenta lo que estos participantes tenían que pasar, cualquiera probablemente experimentaría los mismos tipos de estrés, y es lamentable que las circunstancias hicieran la salida más difícil de lo que habría sido de otra manera.

### ***La decepción***

Las expectativas de los participantes como estudiantes del programa en Lyon fueron interrumpidos, no solo con sus estudios, pero también con sus amistades y planes turísticos. Las esperanzas que tenían para el resto de su tiempo en Francia no se realizaron.

Comprensiblemente, estas esperanzas perdidas crean un sentido de decepción, algo que Brook, Celeste, Eli y Felicity todos mencionaron. Celeste de nuevo compartió gran parte de lo que estaba sintiendo en ese momento:

*“Estaba súper decepcionada y triste, también, que tenía que salir de este lugar en el que pensé que tenía más tiempo, decir adiós a toda esta gente con la que pensé que tendría más tiempo...Fue súper triste, realmente decepcionante, súper frustrante, también, porque es algo que está tan fuera de tu control que no puedes evitar estar tan molesta por ello y realmente enojada.”*

Con dos meses de tiempo en Francia arrancados de ellos, un número de estudiantes no llegó a experimentar plenamente todo lo que pretendían o que se les había prometido. Felicity

declaró mucho de lo mismo sobre sus oportunidades perdidas, diciendo, “Definitivamente me decepcionó, si acaso. Definitivamente estaba muy triste porque me sentí como todos mis planes que tenía durante los últimos dos meses que iba a estar allí completamente cambiaron...”

### ***La información intempestiva y confusa***

Varios estudiantes mencionaron en sus entrevistas lo difícil que era averiguar lo que realmente estaba pasando y lo que la situación requería de ellos. Eli explicó que, “La información que se dio en múltiples oleadas, a menudo con información que contradijo la información que se dio antes—y parte de ella resultando no ser verdad.” Según él y los otros estudiantes, se les dijo que sus visas de estudiante serían canceladas por el proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos cuando el programa en persona terminó. Esto es parte de la razón por la que tantos estudiantes se fueron tan rápido, porque no querían residir ilegalmente en el país. Sin embargo, Eli descubrió que la información dada por el proveedor con base en Estados Unidos era falsa, y todavía reside en Francia con una visa de estudiante.

La historia de Derrick permite echar un vistazo a lo confusa y poco confiable que la información cambió las cosas para él.

*“En primer lugar, dijeron que teníamos dos semanas para salir. Ellos decían: 'Intenta sacar tus vuelos al menos dentro de dos semanas'. Y luego, después de eso, estaba la prohibición de viajar, y en realidad había algunos estudiantes del programa que no pudieron salir a tiempo. Cancelaron todos los vuelos en una fecha posterior, así que fue muy duro salir porque nos dieron esas dos semanas y después de eso nos enviaron otro correo electrónico diciendo: 'Tienes dos días para tratar de salir.' Todo seguía cambiando.”*

Esta debacle con vuelos e información hizo que Brook comprara dos billetes para asegurarse de que podría salir del país antes de la fecha límite de dos días. Había una posibilidad de que su vuelo original el lunes fuera cancelado, por lo que compró otro billete de última hora para el día anterior. “Me fui con ese segundo boleto el domingo sólo porque parecía tan incierto y seguimos escuchando toda esta información diferente.” Una gran parte de esta confusión se debió a fuerzas fuera del programa de Lyon, a saber, los gobiernos de los Estados Unidos y Francia y las aerolíneas entre ambos países, por lo que era difícil para cualquiera mantenerse al día. Sin embargo, como comunicador de información principal para los estudiantes, el proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos jugó un papel en la forma en que los estudiantes se preparaban para salir y sus suposiciones sobre sus visas. Incluso cuando algunas de las entrevistas se estaban llevando a cabo, quedó claro que muchos estudiantes todavía creían que sus visados habrían sido nulos si hubieran permanecido en Francia, lo que no era el caso.

### ***Los efectos académicos***

Sin duda, la interrupción del programa tenía un efecto en la educación de los estudiantes. Según ellos, su educación sufrió debido a los cambios que inevitable ocurrieron. Para Amelia, eso significaba detener sus estudios justo cuando estaba haciendo el mayor progreso porque no hablaba con su madre anfitriona todos los días o usaba francés en público, como en la tienda de comestibles, cuando regresó. Ella dijo, “Cuando salí de Francia estaba en un punto de mis estudios franceses cuando estaba empezando a mejorar drásticamente, finalmente me sentí cómoda allí, así que diría que me vi afectado negativamente por tener que salir temprano.” Otra estudiante, Brook, había sido capaz de mantener una conversación de una hora con un extraño hasta que regresó a los Estados Unidos. Cuando se le preguntó cómo se vieron afectados sus estudios, Celeste también respondió que el resultado fue negativo, afirmando que, “Tu francés

desaparece poco a poco y no te das cuenta. Por lo tanto, creo que ese proceso de no estar rodeado de él comenzó mucho antes que se suponía que debía. Así que, mi fluidez, definitivamente disminuyó.” Por supuesto, los efectos de no estar rodeados por el idioma que estaban aprendiendo día tras día probablemente se sentirían sin importar cuándo regresaran. Sin embargo, su nivel de dominio antes de que se produjera esa disminución de la fluidez probablemente habría sido mayor.

### ***La eficacia de la instrucción en línea***

De las entrevistas, se ve que se adoptaron medidas para prever la continuación de las clases en forma de instrucción en línea, implementadas unas dos semanas después de que terminaran las clases en persona. Considerando la situación, esto es lo mejor que se podría hacer. Sin embargo, según los estudiantes que decidieron continuar sus estudios de esta manera en lugar de recibir un reembolso mayor, la instrucción en línea no es lo mismo que un programa de aprendizaje de idiomas inmersivo en un país extranjero. Para muchos estudiantes, el aprendizaje en línea no es tan efectivo como las clases en persona, lo que impidió que estos estudiantes alcanzaran dicho nivel de dominio. Eli confirmó que estos eran sus pensamientos cuando se le preguntó cómo se vieron afectados sus estudios, diciendo, “Siento que fue un impacto negativo basado en el hecho de que el aprendizaje en línea no es tan, no me parece, tan útil como el aprendizaje en persona.” Felicity tiene la misma opinión, argumentando que, “porque es el aprendizaje de idiomas, tienes que tener una interacción en el aula, esa es la mejor manera de aprender.” Ella experimentó un estancamiento académico desde el momento en que se implementó el aprendizaje en línea: “No puedo decir que haya progresado desde ese instante.”

Parte de la disminución de educación podría ser, también, que el proveedor del programa y la universidad local requirieron dos semanas para implementar clases en línea, dejando a los

estudiantes una duración significativa de tiempo en el que no estaban practicando francés en clase, ni continuando sus estudios electivos. Pero si las clases hubieran comenzado tarde o no, el hecho es que los estudiantes perdieron la interacción en persona con sus compañeros de clase, profesores e incluso el público francés que les estaba ayudando en sus estudios del idioma y estudios electivos. Por lo tanto, en la experiencia de estos estudiantes, la instrucción en línea no fue muy eficaz.

### ***La comprensión y concesión***

Aunque la experiencia de los participantes fue, en general, negativa, todos expresaron su consideración por la difícil situación en la que se encontraba el personal del programa. Se les preguntó cómo el personal manejaba la situación y si las acciones eran satisfactorias, y las respuestas fueron amables. La pregunta específica fue, *¿Crees que la situación fue bien manejada por el personal del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos?* El testimonio del buen carácter y comprensión de cada participante es evidente en cada una de las citas a continuación.

*“Creo que en el momento en que todo estaba sucediendo estaba bastante frustrada, pero mirando hacia atrás creo que lo manejaron muy bien en el lado del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos. Fueron muy comunicativos y dispuestos a ayudarme a obtener compensación financiera y trató de ayudarme tanto como pudieron.” – Amelia*

*“Creo que fue manejado tan bien como podría haber sido por el personal del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos. Creo que todo el mundo estaba tratando muy duro y luchando para encontrar una manera de hacer felices a todos y una manera que funcionaría para todos, especialmente con las clases...” – Brook*

*“No me parece que haya ningún lugar donde colocar culpa, todo el mundo tenía que lidiar con algo tan fuera de lo común...así que, creo que con lo que tenían, lo hicieron muy bien.” – Celeste*

*“Creo que podrían haberlo manejado un poco mejor, pero creo que había mucha gente que simplemente no sabía nada que estuviera pasando. Todo estaba cambiando día a día, así que, de nuevo, realmente no los culpo.” – Derrick*

*“Creo que fue manejado tan bien como podría ser...Creo que, por el personal local, fue manejado bastante bien. Creo que podría haber sido manejado mejor a escala de todo el programa...Pero entiendo que, ya que era de todo el programa, estoy seguro de que tenían muchas otras cosas con las que lidiar al mismo tiempo. Pero sentí que estaba manejado tan bien como podría haber sido, considerando la situación.” – Eli*

*“Sí, seguro. Les doy un gran aplauso a cómo lo manejaron. Fueron muy, muy de apoyo. Cualquier pregunta que tenía, o cualquier tipo de necesidades fueron atendidos, así que no tengo nada malo que decir sobre ellos.” – Felicity*

Cuando se hizo una pregunta similar sobre cómo se llevaron a cabo el resto de sus estudios, cada participante también mostró el reconocimiento del desafío que enfrentaba el programa. Los siguientes son extractos de las respuestas a la pregunta, *¿Te pareció que esos arreglos eran satisfactorios, dada la situación?*

*“Sí. Creo que hicieron todo lo posible para transferir todas sus clases en línea.” – Amelia*

*“Sí, quiero decir, definitivamente sabes cómo son los franceses. Creo que a veces fue un poco difícil coordinarse con ellos dadas las diferencias de tiempo. Pero, dadas las*

*circunstancias, una vez más, es simplemente sin precedentes así que...satisfactorio para mí.” – Brook*

*“El programa de Lyon específicamente estaba haciendo todo lo posible para que todo funcionara para todos y los profesores eran muy amables y serviciales. Creo que salió bien, no culpo a nadie por lo que sea, pero creo que el mío salió bien.” – Celeste*

*“Sí, creo que fue satisfactorio para el tiempo restante.” – Derrick*

*“Sí. Sí. Me pareció que eso era más o menos lo que podían hacer con la situación, porque la universidad en la que estábamos también estaba cerrada, y también se habían mudado al aprendizaje en línea.” – Eli*

*“Creo que es lo mejor que pudieron haber hecho...” – Felicity*

Estas declaraciones maduras deben ser admiradas y piden que se respete la respuesta general a la pandemia por parte del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos.

### ***Cómo las experiencias negativas podrían haberse evitado o minimizado***

Aunque el proveedor con base en Estados Unidos hizo lo mejor para manejar la pandemia para el bienestar de sus estudiantes, todavía hay áreas que podrían haber sido mejoradas. Se preguntó a los participantes, “¿Qué podría haber cambiado el personal del programa con base en Estados Unidos para que el cambio de situación sea más fácil/mejor?” Cuatro de las seis ofrecieron lo que creen que podría haber mejorado. Las sugerencias de dos estudiantes eran sobre la comunicación, y los otros abordaron la puntualidad de la decisión de cancelar el programa.

En el caso de Amelia, quien recibió la orden de regresar de su universidad de origen antes que los otros recibieron la orden del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos, explicó que no fue comunicación suficiente entre las dos entidades. Ella dijo, “Creo que podrían

haberse comunicado mucho mejor. Sentí que era el intermediario mucho, cuando yo mismo no sabía realmente lo que estaba pasando. Así que siento que pudo haber habido una comunicación más directa entre los dos.” Eli también vio margen para mejorar la comunicación, sin embargo, esta vez fue entre el personal local del proveedor del programa y el personal en los Estados Unidos del mismo proveedor, sobre lo que dijo, “Diría que probablemente podrían haber comunicado más con el personal local, así que había más de una armonía de información que se dio en todos los niveles, en lugar de la desconexión que sentí. Y entonces probablemente también podrían haber esperado o tomado una decisión consciente de hacer un plan y luego presentar ese plan, en lugar de dar información y luego dar más información en una fecha posterior.” Evidentemente, la forma en que se transmitió la información también deja margen de mejora, desde la perspectiva de este participante.

Brook y Derrick piensan que el proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos no canceló el programa lo suficientemente temprano. “Creo que, para mi universidad, tardaron demasiado en extender la mano a los estudiantes que estaban en el extranjero sobre lo que estaba pasando... Supongo que, con el personal del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos, no sé, mi única queja es que desearía que hubieran cancelado el programa antes porque estaba en un limbo durante tanto tiempo,” dijo Brook. En las palabras de Derrick, “Deberían haber tomado una decisión un poco antes con respecto a cancelar las clases y asegurarse de que todos los estudiantes regresaran a casa de forma segura y más rápida. En cambio, era más caótico.” viendo como Italia ya había enviado sus estudiantes de estudio al extranjero a casa y el virus se estaba extendiendo más y más rápido, piensan que el final del programa era inevitable, pero la prisa por salir no tenía que ser.

## **Conclusiones**

Sobre la base de los resultados de las entrevistas y lo que los participantes tuvieron que decir sobre los temas mencionados, parece apropiado sacar algunas conclusiones sobre lo que podría ocurrir en el futuro de los programas de estudio en el extranjero, en general. Si bien este estudio sólo tiene el ejemplo de un programa de estudios en el extranjero en Lyon, Francia, parece seguro suponer que muchos programas de estudio en el extranjero experimentaron éxitos, dificultades y luchas similares. Respondiendo a la pregunta, *¿Cómo crees que tu experiencia podría afectar la forma en que esto y otros programas similares podrían ejecutarse ahora en función de lo que pasó con la pandemia?*, los estudiantes contribuyeron sus especulaciones, que también informan las siguientes posibilidades.

### ***La preparación***

Según los participantes del programa de estudios en el extranjero en Lyon, Francia no estaba tan bien preparado como podría haber estado cuando se enfrenta a una crisis importante, como lo demuestra la pandemia COVID-19. Por lo tanto, es seguro suponer que tales programas cambiarán algunas medidas para garantizar que estén mejor equipados para hacer frente a cualquier desastre futuro, en la medida de lo posible, incluyendo planes de emergencia y de contingencia. Las organizaciones y el personal del programa también deben ser educados en los asuntos legales que podrían afectar a los estudiantes en caso de crisis—incluyendo los acuerdos de vivienda y el estatus de visa. Esto es especialmente importante para la parte educativa de un programa, que es sin duda una de las principales razones por las que los estudiantes pagan por tales viajes. Es necesario que se apliquen planes para lo que sucederá con las clases si la educación en persona ya no es una opción, y dichos planes deben poder implementarse de manera oportuna. Si bien la noción de "oportuno" puede variar, basado en lo que revelaron las

entrevistas en este estudio, menos de dos semanas sería ideal. Estas medidas son necesarias para garantizar la seguridad y el bienestar físico y emocional del estudiante, y para asegurar que sigan recibiendo la mejor educación posible.

Se puede ver en las entrevistas de los participantes que los estudiantes tenían diferentes perspectivas sobre si el programa terminaría o no. Esto es probablemente representativo de las diferencias de opinión que personas de todo el mundo tenían sobre la gravedad de la situación, incluidas las perspectivas del personal del proveedor del programa con base en Estados Unidos. Estas diferencias de opinión probablemente afectaron las acciones y el tiempo de respuesta del programa, por lo que muestra la necesidad de planes claros para eliminar demoras innecesarias en la toma de decisiones. Como lo demuestra el shock que enfrentaron algunos estudiantes cuando el programa fue cancelado, las personas pueden estar equivocadas acerca de temas importantes. Los planes preventivos pueden ayudar a que el proceso de lidiar con una crisis sea más fácil y objetivo para evitar problemas innecesarios. Ya sea una pandemia, un desastre natural, una guerra, o cualquier otra cosa, los programas de estudio en el extranjero tienen la responsabilidad de estar preparados.

### ***La comunicación***

La información pertinente y correcta es esencial cuando se trata de una situación inesperada que afecta la vida de los estudiantes en un programa. Con el fin de garantizar que la información importante se comunique de manera adecuada y oportuna, los programas deben haber establecido métodos que regulen las normas de dicha comunicación, pero que también permitan flexibilidad ante circunstancias cambiantes. Estos métodos deben ser utilizados en todos los niveles, incluyendo vías para facilitar la respuesta unificada entre las universidades de origen y las organizaciones de estudiar en el extranjero, e incluso con los estudiantes. De nuevo,

esta es la responsabilidad de las organizaciones que operan estos programas con el fin de evitar errores y problemas innecesarios, especialmente para los estudiantes, como los vistos en este estudio.

### ***Los cambios estructurales***

Se especuló en las entrevistas que algunos programas tal vez no hubieran respondido bien a la pandemia en absoluto. En este caso, podría conjeturarse que hay algunos programas que simplemente dejarán de funcionar después de que esta pandemia haya terminado. Si hay suficiente respuesta negativa a la forma en que una organización manejó las crisis, puede ser en el mejor interés de la organización terminar el programa. En algunos casos, puede ser inevitable. Queda por ver si organizaciones enteras cerrarán sus puertas.

Para los programas que continúan, hay muchas posibilidades de cómo podrían cambiar. Algunos programas pueden disminuir el número de estudiantes que se permiten en cada viaje con el fin de limitar la cantidad de personas de las que son responsables. Esto también podría permitir que los programas sean más capaces de manejar las crisis y atender mejor las necesidades individuales de sus estudiantes. Tal vez, en un intento de limitar la cantidad de riesgo al que los estudiantes están expuestos en general, el número de viajes de campo que los programas de estudio en el extranjero a menudo organizan cada término podría reducirse, también. Otro paso que parece necesario para que los programas tomen es asegurarse de que no son responsables de los daños y perjuicios incurridos durante una crisis mediante la modificación de sus contratos estudiantiles. Además, estos contratos también podrían establecer las obligaciones de la organización con los estudiantes en caso de que necesiten ayuda durante una crisis.

Algo que los programas de estudio en el extranjero a menudo facilitan son oportunidades de pasantías para estudiantes mientras están en el extranjero. Estas oportunidades también podrían verse afectadas o disminuir su número a raíz del COVID-19 si las instituciones y empresas de acogida no quieren hacer frente a los estudiantes dejando repentinamente, o cualquier otra repercusión negativa. Por último, los programas pueden utilizar menos alojamientos de familia por un tiempo, o indefinidamente, con el fin de evitar problemas con las familias de acogida en el caso de que surja una crisis. Esto probablemente sería para evitar aprovechar la amabilidad de una familia anfitriona si tuvieran que continuar ayudando a un estudiante más allá de la fecha acordada, o sin ser compensado financieramente. Por el contrario, algunas familias podrían no apreciar la difícil situación en la que se pondría si se volviera a producir una crisis similar a esta pandemia, y las organizaciones no querrían arriesgarse a que sus estudiantes estaban expulsados en la calle. En el caso de una pandemia, también hay un riesgo para la salud de las familias involucradas si un estudiante estuviera en una casa de familia, por lo que la opción más segura sería una vivienda diferente.

### ***La instrucción en línea***

Aunque unos de los participantes en este estudio no pensaron que la instrucción en línea era efectiva, eso no significa que este tipo de enseñanza nunca puede ser eficaz para los programas de estudio en el extranjero. Ciertamente, las adaptaciones en línea de los cursos pueden convertirse en una parte integral de los programas de estudio en el extranjero de ahora en adelante, si son permanentes o medidas de seguridad necesarias. Sin embargo, esta instrucción en línea tendrá que ser capaz de ofrecer la mejor educación posible y adaptarse para compensar los aspectos perdidos de la instrucción en persona, incluyendo un énfasis en la interacción entre estudiantes y profesores, incluso si no es cara a cara.

Hay un gran potencial y oportunidad en las clases en línea para muchos estudiantes y por muchas razones, pero si están reemplazando la experiencia inmersiva que muchos estudiantes buscan cuando estudian en el extranjero, las organizaciones tendrán que asegurarse de que están ofreciendo la mejor alternativa posible cuando utilizan este tipo de enseñanza. Como se ve de los participantes de este estudio, clases sincrónicas no son necesariamente suficiente en sí mismas para los estudiantes si pierden más que lo que ofrece la habilidad de ver las personas en pantalla. Por supuesto, esta falta de una experiencia positiva puede deberse en parte a la manera apresurada por la que las clases fueron implementadas en respuesta a la pandemia. Por lo tanto, si las organizaciones de estudio en el extranjero están bien preparadas, como se explicó anteriormente, esto puede no ser un problema muy difícil de resolver. Se trata simplemente de contar con los recursos necesarios para poder ofrecer una educación eficaz en línea, especialmente para las clases de idioma que dependen de la facilitación de la interacción personal.

### ***Las respuestas estudiantiles***

A diferencia de las organizaciones que probablemente harán cambios, las acciones de los estudiantes también tendrán un impacto en cómo se ejecutan los programas de estudio en el extranjero en el futuro. Teniendo en cuenta los impactos negativos que tantos estudiantes experimentaron este año como resultado de la pandemia COVID-19, otros estudiantes pueden decidir evitar la posibilidad de que tales eventos les sucedan, por improbable que sea. A medida que los estudiantes cuyos programas fueron interrumpidos comparten acerca de lo que les sucedió, sus testimonios podrían tener un efecto muy real en las decisiones educativas que otros estudiantes toman. Esto podría resultar en menos estudiantes que estudian en el extranjero

durante muchos años, lo que también podría afectar el número de programas que son capaces de operar de manera factible.

### ***Las limitaciones***

Es importante declarar las limitaciones de este proyecto al considerar las conclusiones antes mencionadas. Primero, las experiencias de los estudiantes de las que se extraen las conclusiones se basan en un pequeño número de participantes de un programa muy específico. Por lo tanto, el grupo de participantes y las conclusiones posteriores pueden no ser una representación exacta de todos los estudiantes de estudio en el extranjero y las posibilidades futuras para estudiar en el extranjero a la luz de la pandemia COVID-19.

Segundo, las preguntas que se hacen en las entrevistas pueden conllevar sesgos personales en la forma en que fueron preparadas y estructuradas o modificadas durante las entrevistas. Por lo tanto, las preguntas pueden haber predisposto a los participantes a responder de maneras que de otra manera no tendrían. Además, la información recogida durante las entrevistas no es exhaustiva teniendo en cuenta la cantidad y el tipo de preguntas que podrían haberse hecho.

Tercero, el mundo todavía está en medio de la pandemia COVID-19. Todavía pueden ocurrir muchas cosas que afectan los cambios realizados para estudiar programas en el extranjero, o que retrasan la implementación de tales cambios. sólo el tiempo dirá cuáles de las conclusiones antes mencionadas se implementan, si las hubiera. Sin embargo, con el fin de evitar algunas de las dificultades evitables a las que se enfrentaron los participantes en este estudio, se esperaría que al menos algunas de las especulaciones se conviertan en realidad.

Cuarto, el estudio no examina los cambios que las organizaciones de estudiar en el extranjero pueden haber hecho ya en los últimos meses en respuesta a la pandemia. Muchos

programas pueden haber implementado ya estos u otros cambios, o pueden estar en proceso de hacerlo. Por lo tanto, las conclusiones aquí extraídas no reflejan consideraciones de tales cambios, en el caso de que existan.

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## **Anexos**

### ***Anexo 1 – Propósito del estudio y los derechos de los participantes que se les dio a conocer***

#### ***antes de que comenzara cada entrevista***

The purpose of this project is to discover the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on American students studying abroad during a yearlong 2019 Lyon, France program, and to evaluate what these effects might mean for the future of studying abroad. Do you understand the purpose of this project?

Your participation in this project is voluntary at all times. You have the right to cease participating in the project at any time and none of the data you have provided will be used in the project. Additionally, I reserve the right to cancel participation from anyone during the course of the project. Participant data will be confidential, as participants will remain anonymous and be given a pseudonym when necessary for the study. Notes will be taken and/or voices will be recorded during interviews, with participant permission, in order to reference questions and responses later in the study. Recordings of interviews may be transcribed, however any names mentioned will be given a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality. Do I have your permission to take notes during this interview? Do I have your permission to record our voices during this interview?

### ***Anexo 2 – Transcripciones de entrevistas***

Las modificaciones a las preguntas o preguntas añadidas están en cursiva y en negrita.

#### ***Entrevista 1 – Amelia***

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes, I was.

**When did you arrive in Lyon?**

I got there sometime around August.

**When were you projected to leave Lyon?**

I was supposed to be in the program into May, and my mom was supposed to come visit me at the end, so sometime mid to late May.

**When did you actually leave?**

I ended up leaving in March, right after winter break ended.

**What were the circumstances that caused you to leave?**

It was all because of the COVID-19, or coronavirus, pandemic. I got back from winter break and

actually a few hours later got an email from my home university with basically the order to evacuate the country of France.

**Were you given the option of remaining in France? Why or why not?**

Yeah, I talked it over with my home university and they told me I could stay but, if I did, they would they would be taking away my insurance and they couldn't really guarantee that my credits would transfer back—which was the whole reason that I was there in the first place—so I just decided it would be better to come back to the U.S.

**Were you given forewarning that you would be leaving France earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

No, they [the home university] basically sent me that email and then I had like a five day period, or something like that, to get out of the country. Again, even though they didn't really give me an option, I thought about trying to stay but after a certain point I just figured [it was] better to come home.

***So it was your home university that initiated everything without talking to the [provider's] staff in Lyon?***

Yes, they [the home university] emailed me and said that I needed to come home because at that point [the U.S. provider] and my French university were still going full steam ahead with in-person classes and everything like that.

**What were the reasons given when you were told you would be leaving France?**

While I was on winter break I received kind of like, I would now call it maybe a “fishing” email [from the home university], seeing how I was doing in France, seeing if I felt safe, asking me questions about how France was doing with COVID-19—[to] which I said, you know, “All good, I feel safe, it's fine.” And then a few days later I received that email which said the [U.S.] State Department recommended that all universities call back their study abroad students and that it just wasn't safe, and that they were worried for my safety and health and wanted me to come back.

**Did you expect the early departure to come based on the circumstances?**

Not really if I'm being honest. I kind of thought deep down maybe they [the home university] would recommend that I come home and then give me the option to stay—which I had pictured myself staying no matter what—so I was actually pretty shocked when they kind of, in my opinion, abruptly decided that we all [students from the same home university] needed to come back. At first, I had expected that it would just be our study abroad students in Italy, because we had kids there, too, but then they just extended it every country.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing your travel and departure, either from your home university or from [the U.S. provider]?**

My home university tried to provide help. They were definitely giving off the vibe that they were pretty panicked about the whole thing. They just told me to get home, basically by any means

necessary. We had originally booked my flight[s] to and from France through, like a travel agency that worked with my home university, and so they really wanted me to try and book my flight home through them, but it was astronomically expensive and really hard to do. So, I got lucky because my mom is a travel agent, so she just sent it and then my home university reimbursed me. So, they weren't super helpful, although they did compensate us financially. [The U.S. provider], on the other hand, didn't even know that my home university had called me back by the time I told them I was leaving. It all happened pretty quickly so I basically just emailed them and said, "I have to leave. I can't even come to the office, my flight's today." And they offered any help that they could possibly give but I wasn't really sure what they could do to help me at that point.

**Did the [U.S. provider] or home university staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed you would be leaving France?**

Yeah, I emailed [the U.S. provider] because I kind of had this whole panic about, "What's going to happen with my classes? What's going to happen with my credits?" And at that point both [the U.S. provider] and my home university made it pretty clear that I would receive W's for that whole quarter—because my home university's on a quarter system and not the semester system—so, they answered my questions but it wasn't super helpful, in the end.

***Why wasn't it super helpful, do you think?***

I think just pretty much the uncertainty of the whole situation, since it was all pretty, honestly rather unexpected, and I think that there was only so much that they could've done in the first place. We were like a week or two into our classes at that semester so I understand why I couldn't have any classes transfer back, because I didn't really do anything. But it was pretty frustrating to learn that I wasted a whole quarter of my junior year. [The U.S. provider] and my home university did everything they could to help me, it just wasn't something they could actually fix.

**What was your personal experience in actually leaving France? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

I had just gotten back from spring break, literally a few hours ago [*sic*], back to my apartment, and I was sitting down to dinner with my host mom when I got an email from my [home] university and I checked it and they basically told me, "Pack your bags and get home." At that point I panicked, naturally. I called my mom, since she's a travel agent, and we basically decided I'll try to [*sic*] communicate with my home university and see if I can [*sic*] stay, but if not, she would go book my a flight as soon as possible, which ended up being the next morning. So, I packed all of my stuff, you know, six months of my life into two suitcases, kind of in a pretty panicked state. At that point it was still technically spring break so none of the other kids [in the program organized by the U.S. provider] were there except for [student]. He and I tried to meet up because I wanted to say goodbye, but he was busy, so it didn't work out. And basically, I tried to spend some more time with my host mom for the rest of the night. She was pretty upset that I

was leaving, and I was too. She drove me to the train station, [we] took the train to the airport, said goodbye. Let's see, I think I had to make a transfer connection through Paris, which was really hectic because I was wearing a mask but no one else was wearing a mask at that point. But I finally made it home and, you know the whole time I was travelling I was nervous because I understood that I had to go home but the whole time I was at an airport surrounded by thousands of people who had touched thousands of surfaces so, if I you're going to get COVID, "Now is the time," basically. [I] made it home, my mom had decided that we weren't going to hug at the airport in case I was contaminated. And then I spent the next fourteen days in my house. Yeah, it was pretty frustrating but, in the end, I do understand why it had to be that way. But I definitely felt pretty upset since I was expecting to be there [in France] for a few more months and I had just kind of started to make connections and friends outside of [the program organized by the U.S. provider] with a lot of the new international students, so, pretty bummed not to be able to say goodbye, but, you know.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

So I got back, it was still...my home university had basically just been like, "Get back to the country and we'll go from there," because they were—like I said, my home university's on the quarter system—so they were in the middle of winter quarter and spring quarter was going to start in three weeks, so first I tried to communicate with [the U.S. provider] and they were like, "The Lyon program is still going to continue, the French university is now online, so basically you're on your own." So, I spent three weeks in a flurry of emails with my home university trying to get housing, figure out classes for the upcoming quarter, and it took about three weeks to do that. And then, by the time that was all settled, then [the U.S. provider] emailed me and said, "Oh, the French university's online now. We recommend that you come back and finish your classes." But at that point I already missed like a month of my French classes, so I just decided to stay with my home university. It was pretty much all up to me to figure it out.

***So, you basically had that first semester in France, and then the second semester ended up being back at your home university?***

Yeah.

**Do you feel that such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

I do. I think they did their best to transfer all their classes online. I was still, at that point, in pretty close communications with my friends who were trying to follow the online classes and, from what I understood, it was a lot of extra work because it was all online and a lot of it was just teaching yourself, so at that point it didn't feel too bad that I was missing out on them.

***How about the arrangements that your home university made?***

Yeah, I feel pretty good about those because early on, at the point when I was still hoping that I could stay in France, I basically sent a really rude email to my study abroad advisor, because I

was pretty angry, basically threatening not to come back to [home university] and I was basically worried that I was going to lose out on my French learning experience that I was so hoping for. And I got an email from the provost, actually, who offered me free tuition. They really wanted me to come back and they did make a lot of concessions to help me financially because, at that point, we had already paid for housing and everything for the [U.S. provider] program.

***Did you receive reimbursements for the money you had already spent in Lyon?***

Yeah, it's been a slow process. We got part of my housing thing back and we're still...it was a whole weird process. [The U.S. provider] sent part of the check directly to us and part of it back to my home university, which they were supposed to then send it to us via mail. But we're supposed to be getting the majority of it back.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

When I left France I was at a point in my French studies when I was drastically starting to improve, I was finally comfortable there, so I'd say that I was negatively impacted by having to leave early.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

Yeah, definitely. Although my home university went to some great lengths—they got me into an independent study with my favorite French professor to try to recover some of the credits that I lost—I still definitely feel like my fluency decreased, again, just because I wasn't speaking with my host mom every day, using it at the grocery store, things like that. And when I got back to my home university, French unfortunately is [*sic*] not my priority because my other major takes up a lot of my time, so it definitely suffered from that, yeah.

**Do you feel as if your return to the United States was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

I would say a little bit of both. One reason is because...I wasn't mentally ready to come home yet. I still believed I had a good few months left and having to abruptly say goodbye, or not even say goodbye all the people [I knew], that was really hard. And it was stressful to come home during a global pandemic. But it was also, in part, easier because...I don't really know how to describe it but, I had originally been worried about cultural readjustment but after the whole thing about how crazy it was and the fact that I was quarantined for fourteen days, everything else kind of just made it seem less stressful than I originally thought it would be. So, on the other hand, it was maybe easier just because everyone else was also dealing with some pretty crazy circumstances. It's not just me [*sic*].

**Has the change in situation and early return from France affected your outlook for your future?**

I would say yes, because I've been trying to find other ways, outside of school, to be involved

with French. I'm trying to find a good volunteer opportunity where I can speak French and not just use it in the classroom when I go back to [home university] and I'm a whole lot more determined to get back to France one of these days.

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the staff, *either at of [the U.S. provider] or your home university?***

I think at the moment when it was all happening I was pretty frustrated, but looking back I think they handled it very well on the [U.S. provider] side. They were very communicative and willing to help me get financial compensation and tried to help me as much as they could. And, also with the home university side, I think they made the right decision because a lot of the other yearlong kids who waited even a few days longer than me had a really hard time getting out of the country. So...they handled it pretty well.

**What could the *[U.S. provider] staff and your home university* have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

I think they could have communicated with each other a lot better. I felt like I was the go-between a lot, when I myself didn't really know what was going on. So, I feel like there could have been some more direct communication between the two.

**Did you continue receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after you had returned to the United States?**

I never [heard anything] from [staff member] or anybody, but I got a lot of support from [staff member] and the people who were assigned to my case, I guess, like the financial advisor and things like that.

***So, you got support from the people who were the [provider's] representatives in the U.S.?***  
Yes, yeah.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

I feel like I got a lot out of the [name of the U.S. provider] program in Lyon by being a yearlong student. I felt like I really started to get more comfortable and stronger in my French skills by being there for a second term and I wish that I had been able to finish it out. I mean, think it's a great opportunity. It wasn't always super organized, but it definitely helped me figure a lot of things out for myself in ways that I never that that I really could or that I'd ever have to.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

I hope that programs like [the U.S. provider] will become—not that you can really be prepared for every crazy thing that might happen, because it is all pretty unprecedented—but I think just kind of planning for kind of crazy scenarios like this, trying to communicate better, plan better, and maybe have some backups in place for when things go wrong.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

I think you pretty much covered everything.

Entrevista 2 – Brook

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes, I was.

**When did you arrive in Lyon?**

I actually arrived I think a week or two early, before the program started, so I guess that would be...end of August somewhere...just so I'd get everything settled in and moved in and get my bearings in the place.

**When were you projected to leave Lyon?**

May 15th.

**When did you actually leave?**

March 15th.

**What were the circumstances that caused you to leave?**

Well, my parents made it [known] to me—and also the French government—that we [the students] would no longer be able to legally stay in France due to health concerns and safety concerns for Americans abroad, so that was the primary reason that I left.

**Were you given the option of remaining in France? Why or why not?**

[The U.S. provider] did give the option, I think, of people staying in France, but they let it be well-known that if you wanted to stay in France you were kind of on your own, like you would have to be seeking your own medical attention or help, which would be, obviously, difficult to be covered if you didn't have insurance...for yourself.

**Were you given forewarning that you would be leaving France earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

Yes and no. I think it was really difficult because they couldn't really foresee what would be happening, obviously, the situation is ever-evolving. And so, I think that they didn't give us as much time as most of us would have liked. I think they kind of called it [at] the last minute but I think that was kind of unavoidable just because they wanted to make sure it was the last resort, of having to leave and having to be sent back home.

***What about by anyone else—were you forewarned that you would be leaving earlier than expected?***

I think just keeping up with the news, like generally, we kind of knew that we would have to leave earlier than expected. Especially because I had friends in Italy and they were sent home at the beginning—very, very beginning—of March, I believe, or maybe it was even earlier. So, I

mean, I think we all had an idea and we were forewarned that it would probably be cut short, we just didn't know when.

**What were the reasons given when you were told you would be leaving France?**

President Trump made a statement Thursday of that week—of March 15th—he made this statement about Americans not being allowed in [the U.S.] basically if they didn't get sent home that night due to concerns about contracting the virus and bringing it back to the States, so there was that, and then he took it [the statement/order] back. And then on Saturday, Macron issued that huge statement about what was going to happen, especially to foreign nationals in the country, so we were kind of, I guess, told to get out on Saturday night. We were told that we had until Tuesday or Wednesday after the 15th, that we had that much time to get out, and I think the main reason was just, they can't [*sic*] take responsibility for us or what happens [with] foreign people in their country.

**Did you expect the early departure to come based on the circumstances?**

I did, I just didn't know when it would be—I kind of thought that we would have more time. But also, at the same time, no, because everything was changing so fast.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing your travel and departure?**

I think yes and no, again. Obviously [the U.S. provider] is a pretty big program relative to others, and I think trying to organize sixty [or] seventy kids based on different circumstances was really difficult. They did offer their assistance but I feel like most people...it was more relying on either help from parents or relatives with funds to get home because it was this unexpected expense, buying that plane ticket and trying to figure out super quickly how to get home. So, I think they did offer it, but it was more coordination I had to have with my parents to make sure that I had a way to get home and it was my parents providing the funds, not [the U.S. provider], for getting home. So, I feel like I did more of the coordination with them [the parents]. But they [the U.S. provider] did offer help, it just wasn't necessary at the time, I guess.

***And what about from your home university?***

I actually did not hear from my home university, until I was actually home, about what was going on. So that was super bizarre. I think, also, the situation in [home state]—we were one of the last states to have our first COVID cases, so I think that probably played a role.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed you would be leaving France?**

Yes, I think to the best of their [abilities].

**What was your personal experience in actually leaving France? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

On Thursday of that week of the 15th I vividly remember my parents were calling me after

President Trump made that announcement and I had woken up in the middle of the night and it was just a bunch of frantic phone calls and text messages about whether I'd be able to get out of the country. And I was told I needed to pack my bags that night—of course, it ended up kind of being a different situation. And then, on Saturday, I purchased my plane ticket for Monday—and we were supposed to leave, I think, that week by Wednesday. And the more we started talking with other people the more concerned people in our program got about not being able to leave on Monday after Macron's speech because it was a forty-eight-hour window. So, I ended up super frantically buying a ticket on Sunday, so I had two plane tickets and the borders ended up closing, I think, on Monday night—I don't know for sure. But it was definitely a very close call and just a really hard experience because everybody was leaving at different times and, of course, when you're abroad, you form, I feel like, kind of different friendships and relationships with people. So, it was hard to know that a lot of the people I had met and gotten close to I wouldn't be seeing for probably a long time in the foreseeable future just due to the lack of being able to travel and whatever. I definitely kind of forget about it sometimes. It was one of the craziest things I feel like I've ever done. And I know that some people in our program—one guy is, I think, still stuck there. I think his situation's a lot different, but, yeah. It was definitely a stressful time, lots of tears and concern.

***So did you actually leave on that Monday or did you leave with that second ticket that you bought on Sunday?***

I left with that second ticket on Sunday just because it just seemed so uncertain and we kept hearing all this different information so it was kind of hard to know whether we actually would be let in [to the U.S.] if we left on Monday, especially because it takes like a whole day to travel from France to the U.S. I think ultimately if I could, I might've left on Monday, but I think it was more my parents being concerned about that.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

The [U.S. provider] office worked with [the local Lyon university] to create a way—and I think this goes for everybody [in the program]—to provide the classes online. So, people had the option of either finishing the classes out online, taking final exams, and getting credit for them, and then getting a 25% refund. And then the people who decided to not continue with the classes and just get credit for that first block of classes—like three credits—I think got [a] 40% refund. So you either had the option to take what credits you had completed thus far or finish through with the credits that you were enrolled in and then get not as much money back, but I opted to finish the credits because I needed them.

**Did you feel such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

Yeah, I mean, you definitely know how the French are. I think it was a little bit difficult at times to coordinate with them given our time differences. I had to take a midterm at, like, 3 a.m. so that was really rough. But, given the circumstances, once again, it's just unprecedented

so...satisfactory to me. I got my credits, I got some money back, but it was just a difficult situation.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

I found that I enjoyed the second semester more—I think that’s probably because I was more comfortable there and knew more French—but I will say that there was kind of this looming fear of COVID the whole time we were there and being sent home. Because all my friends from Italy had been sent home two, three weeks into their program and just knowing that that could happen to us, sometimes it would be hard to enjoy and really be in the moment. We had our winter break right before we got sent home so during winter break we’d have these moments where we’d just be super had and we’d be thinking, “Yeah, okay, it’s inevitable that we’ll be sent home.” So that was a little bit of a looming dark cloud.

***So, in general it wasn’t necessarily negative?***

I guess it was negative in the way we knew we’d probably get sent home once it got really bad, so that was disappointing to know, but it didn’t really change how I felt about the program itself or the experience.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

Oh, yes, for sure. When I left, like, I was able to talk to my Uber driver for an hour in French and, I mean, obviously I wasn’t fluent and I feel I like probably was, at times, not knowing what I was saying at all. But I definitely feel like if I had been in there until May, I would’ve been close to being at C1 [level 5 of 6 for foreign speakers]. For me, I saw a lot of progression when I was there so I was really hoping to at least get to a point of being able to kind of speak without feeling like I needed to think about it so much, and I felt like I was there and then we got home and...obviously online French classes are different than in person.

**Do you feel as if your return to the United States was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

I think that it was kind of a relief to be home because I know that a lot of people were dealing with a fear of being trapped in a foreign country so I was definitely glad to be home and be with family and loved ones, so it made coming home a little bit easier. But after the initial shock of being home and getting home safely wore off I was like, “Oh shoot, I kind of wish I was still abroad.”

**Has the change in situation and early return from France affected your outlook for your future?**

Totally. Maybe it’s not even a return from France but just the state of the world right now, but I hope that I can spend more time there or live there, so I think that really early departure made me want to go back even more. So that has changed the plan.

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

I think that it was handled as well as it could've been by the [U.S. provider] staff. I think that everybody [was] trying really hard and struggling to figure out a way to make everyone happy and a way that [would] work for everyone, especially with classes and—everybody learns different so I think that was hard—but I think ultimately the [U.S. provider] staff did...not a bad job, not necessarily an amazing job, but I think they did a really good job at letting people know that they were there as a resource if need be. It's just super stressful, probably a lot of emails, I would assume.

***And what about your home university?***

I honestly didn't hear as much from them as I thought I would, just being a study abroad student. I think that, once I got home, they were more like, "Fill out this questionnaire of how your classes went," or whatever. So, I don't think they handled it super well with study abroad kids. But also, again, I think they may have relied on the [U.S. provider] people to be doing more of that work than themselves, perhaps.

**What could the [U.S. provider] or home university staff have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

I think for my university, they took much too long to reach out to students who were abroad about what was going on, what they expected from their students, and just checking in on them, I think. I guess with the [U.S. provider] staff, I don't know, my only complaint is that I wish that they had called off the program earlier because it was in such a limbo for so long. It was, like, every day, we didn't know. And so, some people went home earlier than expected because their parents were so concerned and I think, obviously, they didn't want to send us home if they didn't absolutely have to but I think they kind of knew that it was inevitable. But I don't know, it was a little bit of a difficult situation.

**Did you receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after you had returned to the United States?**

They did kind of a check-in Zoom call, so if you wanted you could reconvene with everyone in the program and them and if you had any questions you could ask them. It was a little bit difficult communicating with the financial aspect of everything, like what was going to happen, what our finances would look like refund-wise, but that wasn't really [the U.S. provider staff in Lyon], it was the American side, I guess, of the program.

***Was that check-in Zoom call optional?***

Yeah, but the attendance was pretty high, so I think a lot of people were motivated to go.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

I thoroughly enjoyed the program, met a lot of really great people and had, I feel, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And I think that it's a really interesting way to look at different education

systems because, at my home university we're always checking in on our grades every day or every week and that was kind of impossible to do in France so I feel like you had to really trust yourself and work hard and hope for the best. And I think that them being more relaxed just with their way of life and the component of working hard but not working too hard was really enjoyable for me. I hope that doesn't sound lazy, but I just felt like they really valued being interested in what you're doing and doing it with a passion, with whatever you're doing. So, I loved that.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

I think that they'll probably limit programs to less people, maybe less field trips, perhaps. I don't know, I think that they'll probably be more prepared, like have an emergency plan, if something like this were to ever happen again, just because it very well might. Maybe they'll be more prepared for something crazy like this in the future, but it's so hard to tell, that's kind of just pulling at straws, I guess.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

I think the one thing that I would kind of want to circle back to really quick is that I feel like I kind of wish that they had been more realistic about us getting sent home. I feel like they just were just waiting and waiting, like really hoping that they didn't have to send us home, which I get—and obviously I didn't want to go home either—but at a certain point it's like, what would you expect and what could you expect? So, I think that was my biggest complaint of the whole thing, was just I wish that it had been not like this. Because I know so many people were just in a constant state of anxiety and fear about what would be happening and if they were get their money back, or classes, so, that was the one thing. But overall, the program, I think, did a really good job of making everyone happy with the situation, as happy as they could be, and giving people options and flexibility.

Entrevista 3 – Celeste

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes.

**When did you arrive in Lyon?**

September 1st of 2019.

**When were you projected to leave Lyon?**

The program was supposed to end May 15th and I probably would have left sometime after that.

**When did you actually leave?**

I believe I left March 23rd or 24th.

**What were the circumstances that caused you to leave?**

The COVID-19 pandemic and then, subsequently, the cancellation of the [U.S. provider] yearlong program.

**Were you given the option of remaining in France? Why or why not?**

In a way, yes. I guess the opportunity was there but things like housing, like our tuition that we paid would not have gone to our housing anymore, our visas were cancelled—they would have been void two weeks after the program was cancelled, so I would've had to just kind of live off a tourist visa at that point. So, the option was there but it was really difficult to actually stay.

Unless you already had a house or something outside of the [U.S. provider] program, it probably wasn't feasible for someone to stay.

**Were you given forewarning that you would be leaving France earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

I guess it was like a week's notice, but it was prior to the visa cancelling. But I don't think they really knew any more than we did so they just had to kind of do what they were told to do just like we had to.

**What were the reasons given when you were told you would be leaving France?**

The reasons were mostly the pandemic. I think that they just wanted everybody to be as safe as possible, was probably the outward reason. They probably didn't want to be liable for anybody at any point if they did get sick, so I guess that's what it was. And my school also asked all their students to come back. It wasn't mandatory, but they asked us to. So, there's [*sic*] a few different things going on that all led to having to leave.

**Did you expect the early departure to come based on the circumstances?**

No, I didn't. Not like I didn't think it was an issue, but I just didn't think it would affect me. So, I mean, I was travelling...the week I got back from our winter break it was time to leave, so there was barely any warning beforehand, maybe a few days and then you had to buy a ticket to get out of the country. And I kept just saying, "No, it's fine, it won't affect me. It's crazy that those numbers are growing so bad." Italy got really bad, but France was still okay, France was still allowed out and whatnot. And then France shut down while I was still there so, then it got real and you were like, "Oh, we actually have to leave now."

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing your travel and departure?**

Yeah, the staff was, you could just tell, super in over their head just like we all were. So, I really appreciate them for being super solid and how they managed to help us. They said, "If you want to stay we will try to help you stay, we can try to find you housing, whatever you want we'll try to help, as long as it's legal for you to do so." But it got to a point where there wasn't much they could do; it was up to us to decide if we wanted to go forward with either renting our own place or just leaving. But I do think that they were helpful, and they were helpful in more than just the

bureaucratic stuff, it was also emotional and there was a lot going on. And there was only three of them in that program, so it was probably a lot for them to handle.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed you would be leaving France?**

Yeah, yeah totally, they totally did. We mostly were trying to see, “Is it possible for us to stay in France?” They gave us a few different options and they also let us know that if it became impossible for us to leave for whatever reason that we would be find, that they could handle housing and letting us stay in France, but other than that, yeah. And I didn’t go to them for a ton of questions after I kind of had to just make my own decision and leave, but [for] the questions I did have, they were very helpful.

**What was your personal experience in actually leaving France? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

It was super hard, it was so, just, weird and didn’t feel real. Everybody that I was around, we were all...it was really emotional, everybody was crying. There [were] people that weren’t even from the States and they also had to leave, and so it was just a big mess for everybody an everybody was really sad. Yeah, I was super disappointed and sad, as well, that I had to leave this place that I thought I had more time in, say goodbye to all these people that I thought I would have more time with. Just the rush of trying to find a ticket was super stressful and trying to prepare to go home and pack up an entire room in a few days...it’s super stressful. It was super sad, really disappointing, super frustrating, as well, because it’s something that’s just so out of your control that you can’t help but be so annoyed by it and really mad. So, I was definitely all those things, definitely very mad, definitely disappointed, and sad and...stressed, for sure.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

They moved all the classes online—they already did that anyways because France shut down their schools, so everything had to go online no matter what, whether we would’ve stayed there or not—but the arrangements, they took a minute, maybe like a week or two, before they were able to support all the kids that had left the country, I believe. And the teachers, at least the two teachers that I had, were very good. They realized that the time zone difference was super crazy and they kind of let me do my own thing so I could finish the course. I don’t know what it was for everyone else, but at least for me it was sloppy at the beginning trying to communicate with them about all the time zone differences and then, how could I take my tests? And things like that. But, eventually, we had kind of figured it out and we figure out a plan. They were super nice about it. I guess I’d say the only thing that [the U.S. provider] did, in general, was they explained the online courses and how we could do the class like that. Or we didn’t have to do it, they said we didn’t have to continue the class and we would just get partial credit or money back. But I kept doing it, so I don’t know what the other option really was.

**Did you feel such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

Yeah, I feel like there wasn't much anybody could do so I didn't blame anybody in particular. I don't think it's [the U.S. provider's] fault. The Lyon program specifically was trying their hardest to make everything work for everybody and the teachers were super gracious and helpful. I think it went just fine, I don't blame anybody for however it went, but I think mine went just fine.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

Definitely negative, I'm going to have to go negative, just because you lose so much of what you gain being in person and having a teacher in front of you to explain things and whatnot. So, I definitely wasn't as diligent, I wasn't as invested, just because I was so far away, I had, like, no support. It was rough, but that's why I appreciated the teachers because they were very kind and helpful, no matter what. But I definitely feel like, if I had actually been there, I would've gotten a way better...education finishing out the semester. So, definitely, it negatively impacted that, yeah.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

I do, just because, I mean, also same reasons, where you're not having that same face-to-face conversation like you would be in the classes. And then coming back, I'm sure you know too, just being not around French all the time, your French kind of just disappears little by little and you don't realize it. So, I think that that process of not being surrounded by it started a lot sooner than it was supposed to. So, my fluency, it definitely went down, especially since I'm not even in an online class anymore.

**Do you feel as if your return to the United States was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

I think it was definitely more difficult, just because it was so rushed, I didn't have any time to plan, there [were] lots of things I had wanted to get or do before I left, and, like none of that happened. And it was just super hard trying to switch my flights, and I had pre-planned all of that stuff so, it was definitely more difficult getting out of there.

***And how about in terms of re-assimilating into the U.S.?***

I think it was definitely a lot different because I feel I was ripped out of a place that I hadn't mentally been ready to leave yet, and expected more time and expected to be able to do more things. And all of the sudden, everything switched. So, I think it was definitely a lot worse than if I had been ready to come back and came back on my own terms rather than the world's. It was a lot more frustrating. It would be frustrating anyway, to come back from living out of the country in a foreign [one] is rough to assimilate, but you can do it, and this one just took a little more time.

**Has the change in situation and early return from France affected your outlook for your future?**

I would say no...well, okay, maybe yeah. Because it made me want to go return to France even more than I did before, because I feel like my time got cut so short. And I had already kind of had a tentative plan of, "This is what I want to do," but now that I wasn't able to even do what I wanted to with the time that I had left. I have more of a drive to go back and go to grad school like I had kind of been planning, but now I really, really would like to go. So, it did, and it didn't affect it negatively, I think it affected it pretty positively and made me a little bit more driven.

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

Yeah, I do. Like I said, I don't feel like there's anywhere to place blame, everybody was having to deal with something so out of the ordinary, crazy, that no one could have ever predicted. So, I think that, with what they had, they did really well.

**What could the [U.S. provider] staff have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

I honestly...I don't know. I'm sure that there was but I kind of checked out after a certain point, so to me, there wasn't anything they could do [or] could've done differently. Everything they did I thought they were trying to do if for mine and my peers' wellbeing.

**Did you receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after you had returned to the United States?**

No, I didn't. But I didn't really reach out either, which I would've like to. The only thing that they've done is they sent out a little PowerPoint like they did the first semester, but other than that, not much, no.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

I loved the program and I think the program is less [the U.S. provider] than it is the people and I love the people, and I loved the advisors that were there and everything that they did trying to help us. So, I don't have any ill feelings towards [the U.S. provider]. I would love to hear somebody that did because I don't understand how you could be mad at something like that. It just is so out of anybody's control that it would be weird to be mad.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

I think that...that's a good question. I don't even know if anybody could ever predict anything like this, you know, it's literally never happened. So, the only thing that I would think they could do is put some more precautions in place in their contracts, or whatever, to help students out and save themselves if something like this ever were to happen again. But I think probably in the future it's just going to be something that people think about before they go on a trip, before they leave for a semester abroad, or whatever.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

I honestly haven't really thought super critically about it, but I guess it is such a weird thing to have experienced.

Entrevista 4 – Derrick

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes, I was a study abroad student in the [U.S. provider] program, yearlong, in Lyon, France.

**When did you arrive in Lyon?**

I arrived in Lyon at the beginning of September.

**When were you projected to leave Lyon?**

I was projected to leave in June, about June 10th.

**When did you actually leave?**

I actually left March 15th.

**What were the circumstances that caused you to leave?**

Well, there was a Trump travel ban and we didn't know about the Trump travel ban because he announced it in the middle of the night when we were sleeping, and he did not let the French government know, nor the European Union, for that matter, so it was kind of a surprise when we woke up.

***And the ban was to be implemented a couple days in the future, is that correct?***

He didn't say, he kind of just said, "In two days, it's going to be in effect," I think. And there was a lot of confusion about it. Nobody knew exactly what the ban entailed, we didn't know if Americans were in this ban or if it was just everybody. But they went back later and said that, "American citizens will be allowed back on the flights," because it wasn't known at first.

**Were you given the option of remaining in France? Why or why not?**

I was actually trying to remain in France because I had some French friends there and I was planning on maybe staying with them, and also they made it seem like we were going to have two weeks of classes remotely and then we would have the possibility of actually going back to classes after that. So, I thought that I was going to have the possibility to go back to in-person classes. The other Americans, they were all leaving, but the other people that weren't with [the U.S. provider] were planning on staying and then coming back to classes at a later date, so I was going to try to do that, as well.

**Were you given forewarning that you would be leaving France earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

No, not really. It was kind of like a waiting game, they kept saying, "Just wait, we're going to let you know at this time, after the French President has his speech, whether or not we're going to

cancel the program and send the students [in the program organized by the U.S. provider] home.” So, we really didn’t have much notice, and everything happened so fast.

**What were the reasons given when you were told you would be leaving France?**

First of all, they said that we had two weeks to leave. They were like, “Try to get your flights out at least two weeks from now.” And then, after that, there was the travel ban, and there [were] actually some students [in the program organized by the U.S. provider] that weren’t able to get out in time. They cancelled all the flights at a later date, so it was really rough getting out because they kind of gave us those two weeks and then after that they sent us another email saying, “You have two days to try to get out.” Everything kept changing.

**Did you expect the early departure to come based on the circumstances?**

I thought for some universities they’d for sure want to send the students back, but I did not see myself personally going back. I thought maybe [there] were just going to be two weeks where we’d have classes and then eventually, we all came back to the university.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing your travel and departure?**

I wouldn’t say so. They kind of just gave us a certain timeframe that we should leave the country, and that was about it. I’m sure if we had more questions or trouble, we could’ve contacted them, though.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed you would be leaving France?**

They did. I did have some questions and they helped me.

**What was your personal experience in actually leaving France? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

It was a disaster leaving France. All my flights kept getting cancelled and I didn’t know what to do because originally the Trump travel ban did not include the UK and Ireland, so I was going to fly from Paris to London and London back to the U.S. But then, just after that, he included them in the travel ban so all of those flights got cancelled. And I just had several flights cancelled on me, so it was really stressful. I was planning on quarantining in France, actually, so I had just bought, like, three-hundred dollars’ worth of groceries, and then I found out basically that night that I had to leave the country. Yeah, I had to leave that night and I was going to go stay with one of my friends that lives near Switzerland before I went to Paris to fly out, so I ended up just grabbing all my new food—because I didn’t want it to go to waste, didn’t have time even to give it to anybody—so I just threw all my food out into the hallway, hoping that somebody was going to grab it, because it was a student hall so I hope somebody got my granola bars and my pasta and all that good stuff. After that, I packed up all my stuff and I headed towards my friend’s house and they had a lot of train cancellations, as well. So, I arrived in Dijon and I had a stop

there, and I was taking the next train to my friend's village and they cancelled all the trains except for one. When I got onto that one last train to go through, it was just so many people all on the same train and it was the last one of the day. There [were] people, like, kicking peoples' backs and stuff, trying to get on the train. We were just jam packed in the train and everybody was talking about, like, "We're probably going to get the virus." But I got to my friend's village later in the night. It was around dinner time, so I ate with his family and then I received notification that my flight...I already had a few flights cancelled, but this flight would be cancelled, as well. I was going to stay with my friend for two days and then I was going to go to Paris, so that got cancelled. I just really wanted to talk to the airline company to make sure I got a flight out, because we heard from the [U.S. provider] program that our insurance would be cancelled, as well as our student visas would be cancelled, because we'd no longer be a student in France. I was kind of freaking out and wanted to get out as fast as possible. I waited on the phone for maybe two and a half hours with Delta Air Lines and then I finally talked to somebody and he said, "I can get you a flight tomorrow morning, at 9 a.m., leaving Paris to Detroit." And I said, "Well, I'm actually six hours away from Paris right now and its dinner time. They cancelled—for the rest of the evening—they cancelled all the trains; they cancelled all the buses." I didn't know how I was going to get to Paris, but he said, "It's one of the last flights that we're seeing leaving the country, so it's basically you get on this one or we can't guarantee that you're going to have a flight out." So, I was freaking out, my mom was having a panic attack on the phone with me. I took all my stuff out of my suitcase and I had an extra bag of stuff because I didn't pack it up well and I didn't even have time to grab my shoes or my clothes—because I was going to rearrange and refold all my clothes and put them into my suitcase [well] because I didn't have time to do that yet. And I found out I had to get to Paris six hours away because I had a 9 a.m. flight out. I still didn't know what to do but I was just frantically packing my suitcases with as much stuff as I could fit, just throwing my clothes in, and I didn't get all my stuff, but it's okay, it's still at my friend's house. My friend's dad, he was going to drive me to the airport in Paris, but he had worked all day and he had to start working early in the morning, starting at 5 a.m. So, he thought, if he drives me all the way there, just by the time he gets [sic] back he'd have to go right to work, and he thought he'd fall asleep on the road. So, obviously he couldn't take me, and there was no transit, no buses, so I went on to the app BlaBlaCar, which is a ridesharing app, and there was actually a ride going from...it was an hour and a half from my friend's house, the guy was stopping and he was arriving in downtown Paris at two in the morning, that was my only option to make it to Paris. So, my friend's dad drove me an hour and half to this place and the guy picked me up. And actually, as we were in the car, there was an alert on the radio, and it was kind of like a government emergency, it was almost like The Purge, like that sound, and they were saying that, starting at midnight there was going to be a strict lockdown in France, that you no longer had the right to leave your house without something from the government and you had to have it to leave your house or apartment. So, this was on the radio, saying you had to have this, and only essential things would be open, you could only do essential shopping, basically. I didn't know what this entailed, I was kind of nervous because we

were in the car, we were going to be in the car past midnight. So, I was like, “Do we not have the right to be in the car without a government certificate?” I was really scared that we were going to get pulled over. But it ended up being okay. And I honestly had no plan, I didn’t have a hotel or anything in Paris. The metro was closed, so I couldn’t take the metro to the airport. I was just going to get dropped off in downtown Paris and I was just going to sleep on the street, honestly. I was going to sleep on the street and then I was going to wait until the metro opened up and then I was going to take that to the airport. So, yeah, I was honestly planning to just sit on the street of Paris and wait with all my luggage, my suitcase, everything.

***But you didn’t have to end up doing that?***

No, he asked me where I was going and I informed him, “I’m American, I’m trying to flee the country because of the situation, I don’t have a hotel or anything. Is there any way you could possibly take me to the airport? I have 40 euros; I can give you 40 euros to take me to the airport.” Even though it was 2 a.m. and it was an extra almost two-hour drive away from his house, he agreed to take me to the airport. So, I had a really nice driver, I was so thankful. And he didn’t want to take my money either, he didn’t want to take my euros, but I was like, “Take all my euros, I can’t use them in America anyway.” But yeah, I was really grateful. So, I ended up just being in the airport and I was exhausted. I didn’t have a mask or anything. No hand sanitizer, no mask—there was still a mask and hand sanitizer shortage in France, you couldn’t find them anywhere. So, I had bought a scarf that I was using in the airport, and I actually have a picture—I was just so exhausted I didn’t sleep—of me just sitting at the airport with a scarf wrapped around my head.

***But your flight ended up going out the next day?***

Yeah, they kind of guaranteed that this flight would be going out. That’s why I kind of frantically had to get six hours away to Paris because I talked to them on the phone, they guaranteed that this was the last flight they could guarantee to leave the country. So, yeah, pretty scary, but I was just so exhausted and, yeah, that was my experience. It was honestly like from a movie, it really was.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

We honestly didn’t know what our classes would look like. It took a while to set it up, which is understandable because we had to go home so abruptly and everything. We didn’t know how it was going to be. We got home and we waited a while to see when classes would be back up and I think within almost two weeks after we arrived back we got more updates on our classes and then we found out that we’d have Zoom and everything. I thought I was going to be able to do my classes. You could’ve taken more money, like more of a refund to just drop your classes but if you wanted to keep going it would be less of a refund. And I wanted to keep going with my classes because we were going to finish in May, and it was not too much longer left of our classes, so I really wanted to finish, and I tried. I had quarantined for two weeks and then we had the stay-at-home order, so all [non-]essential businesses were closed here, and we weren’t

supposed to leave our house. I ended up not being able to do my classes because my Wi-Fi was too unreliable, so I ended up having to drop my classes anyway.

**Did you feel such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

Yeah, I think it was satisfactory for the remaining time. I think it was understandable and probably would've worked if I had better Wi-Fi.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

I think my general studies [were] negatively impacted, for sure, personally. Just because my connection is just not good, so I had a hard time, I was always late to my Zoom classes. I would try to get on 20 minutes early, waiting for my Zoom classes, and still I would always be the last student to get on, just because of my connection. So, I had to wait for a teacher's permission to log on, and even then, it was really lagging, so I feel like I didn't get the same experience that other people got. And, I think it was just negatively impacted in general because we were in France to speak French and be immersed in the culture, and we're back home.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

I don't think that my level has been impacted personally, just because I like to read in French, so I do a lot of my own work that I don't do in class or anything. So, I like to read to myself, I have French music that I listen to and I still talk to my French friends in French. So, I don't think that it necessarily impacted my fluency too much.

**Do you feel as if your return to the United States was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

Oh, yes. Without a doubt. I think it was more difficult. Again, we didn't know how it would be when we landed, there was—I don't know if you heard about it—but there was chaos in a lot of the airports, especially Chicago. Only a certain number of airports were taking international travelers at the time and it was kind of chaos because they had to screen everybody and it was a lot of international flights, everybody coming back at the same time everybody was together in rooms waiting to be screened. We had to do a whole lot of extra stuff we normally wouldn't have to do if we were returning normally.

***And what about in terms of re-assimilation?***

Well, me personally, I don't know if everybody had to do this, but I had to report to my county to doctors and I had to tell them my temperature, my symptoms, and how I felt and any questions, every single day for two weeks, so that was kind of hard. I just looked really rough when I got off of that plane and during one of the screens, after the temperature check, I might've been a little high, but I was wearing my winter coat when I arrived and all that stuff. So, I had a lot. I had a winter coat, a sweatshirt and everything just so I could get all my stuff back, as much stuff as possible, back with me. So, I guess I ran a little high temperature and she

said, “Sir you’re going to have to come with me.” And then somebody else was like, “No, he’s good to go.” I was nervous, I was like, “You’re taking me in the quarantine. Am I going to see my family?”

***And how about readjusting to U.S. culture, do you feel like that was impacted at all?***

Yeah, I think maybe a little bit. More so because I wasn’t expecting to come back as fast and there was still a lot of stuff I had planned in Europe. So, yeah, I guess there was a little bit, but not too much.

**Has the change in situation and early return from France affected your outlook for your future?**

Yeah. I think you knew this, but I was thinking about coming [*sic*] back to France, that’s where I wanted to finish my degree. I was planning on coming [*sic*] back to the American Business School of Paris and after the whole pandemic I didn’t know how it would be, I thought it would be difficult to come [*sic*] back. So, I decided that I should go to Canada to study. I did get accepted to university in Montreal, Quebec in Canada. I’m currently banned from studying there because I’m American and out cases [of COVID-19] are out of control, so my classes will be online for the winter semester, and I should be able to go in January to Canada. So, my future projections kind of changed a bit because of the pandemic. I wanted to be more closer [*sic*] to home but I still wanted to be in a place where there was French and stuff like that.

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

I think that they could have handled it a bit better, but I think that there [were] a lot of people that just didn’t know anything that was going on. Everything was changing day by day, so again, I don’t really blame them.

**What could the [U.S. provider] staff have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

I think they could have [taken] a bigger look about what was going on in regards to the pandemic and how it was spreading across the world, basically. And they should’ve made a decision a bit sooner regarding cancelling classes and making sure all the students [got] back home safely and in a faster manner. Instead it was more chaotic, and we were kind of left on a thread. They were saying that they were only going to give refunds if they decided to cancel the class [*sic*] and they said they absolutely were not wanting to cancel the classes. Some people, their universities forced them to go back, so they had to go back, basically, and they were under the impression that they were not going to receive a refund. And I think that a lot of students were really trying to stay, just because its expensive to study abroad and they didn’t want to have to go back home for it to be nothing—they’re not going to get [*sic*] their refund or anything. Because that’s what the [U.S. provider] people were making it sound like—that we had to stay and keep going. We didn’t know if they were going to cancel it or not until...they gave us two days to leave, is basically when we found out they were cancelling it. So, it was all the more stressful and I think that they could’ve maybe [seen] what was going on and decided to make a better decision for all

the students and said, “Probably best to cancel the program and send everybody home safely, before things escalate.” Because we saw what was happening in Italy and everything, they were under strict lockdowns in Italy—and in northern Italy, which is not that far from Lyon. So, it was basically just a matter of time before it happened in France, as well. And I think that they kind of should have seen that and made a better decision. I heard that there was a student that had their flight book kind of far out and they thought it was good, and it got cancelled, and they tried and tired and couldn’t get out. They actually had to stay with their host family when their host family wasn’t getting paid, they just let him stay there out of generosity. And he was trying really hard to come back to the U.S., but he just couldn’t get flights or anything, so he had to get his visa extended, I think. And I think that could have been avoided, as well.

**Did you receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after you had returned to the United States?**

Yes, they were really slow at responding after we returned to the United States, but I think they were trying to get the online classes rolling, so again, them being slow at responding, that was understandable.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

I think that I would’ve been fine without the program. I think it was good, I kind of did it because it was my first time studying abroad, so I thought it would just make it a lot easier, but I think that I probably could’ve done it myself.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

I think some programs, maybe they just did not respond well to the pandemic and getting the students out safely and in a quick manner, so I think that could affect some programs—just their response, or maybe their lack of response to what had to happen.

***How do you think that might change things for the future, speculatively?***

I think, in the future, they might have plans preset in place. There’s even been scares about World War III this year, so maybe they should look into having a pandemic plan, a war plan in case there’s another world war, or something like that. Just ideas, having plans in place to make sure that the students are safe.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn’t ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

Maybe not.

Entrevista 5 – Eli

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes, I was.

***You are in a unique situation in that you are living in France, is that correct?***

Yes.

***Okay, I will modify some of the questions because you didn't come back to the U.S.***

***Were you in France before the program started?***

Yes, I was in France I think a month before the program started.

***When did the program start?***

Early September, on the official start date of the program.

***When was the program projected to end?***

The program was projected to end in May, I believe.

***When did the program actually end?***

I believe they stated that the program was officially cancelled or closed in March, early March, I think. But I continued to take online classes that they provided.

***What were the circumstances that caused the program to end?***

The pandemic becoming worse in France, leading to—I don't know which one caused the other one—but multiple schools [in the U.S.] to recall their students and also the [U.S. provider] offices shutting down their local offices here.

***Were you given forewarning that the program would be ending earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?***

Yes, I received an email...I cannot remember, it was pretty abrupt, but I was given an amount of forewarning that it would be closing, I believe by email.

***What were the reasons given when you were told the program would be ending?***

The reasons given were the worsening pandemic and the fact that the [U.S. provider] offices were closing. So, since the program was shuttering, they could no longer provide housing for people that were living there, as well as the local staff onsite.

***Did you expect the early ending to come based on the circumstances?***

I did not expect the program to shutter.

***Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing everything after the program ended?***

They provided resources in that the staff was available, they were in their office and they were contactable by email up until the offices closed. And then [the U.S. provider] in the offices in America were also contactable by email and they provided, I believe, a few resources as far as questions, or things like that, as well as refunds.

***Did the [U.S. provider] staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed that the program would be ending?***

Yes, I was in contact with both the staff in the U.S. as well as the staff over here, and they responded relatively quickly.

**What was your personal experience *with the program actually ending*? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

It was pretty chaotic, as to be expected. Everything closed down quite quickly and the information that was given was given in multiple waves, often with information contradicting the information that was given before—and some of it turning out to not be true, which, specifically only affected me, but a big one that I can think of is that the [U.S. provider] offices in the U.S. told us that the visas were being cancelled, so we needed to leave by a certain date. But since I was staying, I got in contact with the local prefecture and they told me that [the U.S. provider] doesn't have the ability to do that, so I don't know why they said that, and that also went against what I was told by the local staff, who said that the program couldn't cancel the visas.

***Were you on a different visa or were you on the same student visa as everyone else?***

I was on the same long-term student visa as everyone else that was in the yearlong program.

***Did you have to procure a different visa after the program ended?***

No, what happened was the government of France, when France went into lockdown, they extended the visas of everyone [whose] visas were expiring within a certain timeframe. So, my visa...it's still kind of a weird gray area and I have to go check with the prefecture to double check—which, the prefecture here has also been really weird with their information—but all visas that ended within, I believe, from when France went into lockdown on March 16th-ish to June 15th were extended by six months.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

Yes. We were given the option, if we would like to continue the classes that we were enrolled [in], both the language classes as well as the elective classes, we were given the option to continue those via online instruction, or we could stop the program right there and we would receive—I'm not 100% sure—but I believe we would receive “withdrawals” on them, and also if we stopped early we would get a larger refund than if we continued.

**Did you feel such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

Yes. Yeah, I did. I felt that was pretty much what they could do with the situation, because the university that we were at was also closed, and they had moved on to online learning, as well.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

I feel that it was a negative impact just based off of the fact that online learning is not as, I don't feel, as useful as in-person learning.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

No, but I think mine was also specific because I stayed here, so I still was exposed to more French. But, no, personally, no. I felt that the online continuation was done well, at least in the language classes.

***Did you choose the option where you continued the classes?***

Yes, I continued the classes online.

**Do you think your transition out of the program was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

I would say it was more difficult, just based off of the fact that it was kind of a scramble for information. But I'm not 100% sure what the official transition out of the program was, because, after a certain point, since I was staying, I signed an agreement with [the U.S. provider] that kind of severed ties. It was a liability thing where, essentially, they were no longer responsible for me during the time of the program.

**Has the change in situation and early ending of the program affected your outlook for your future?**

Not from the [U.S. provider] perspective, like, of the program in and of itself. I would say, obviously, the changing social climate has affected my outlook for the future, but not in any way that that was brought about by [the U.S. provider].

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

I think it was handled as well as it could be, to a fault. I think, by the local staff, it was handled quite well. I think it could've been handled better on a program-wide scale, because, like I said, some of the information from the [U.S. provider] offices in the U.S. contradicted what I was being told locally here. But I understand that, since it was program wide, I'm sure they had lots of other things to deal with at the same time. But I felt like it was handled as well as it could've been, given the situation.

**What could the [U.S. provider] staff have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

I would say they probably could've communicated more with the local staff, just so there was more of a harmony of information that was given on all levels, rather than the disconnect I felt. And then also they probably could've...either waited or made a conscious decision to make a plan and then present that plan, rather than giving information and then giving more information at a later date.

**Did you receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after the program had ended?**

No, after the program had ended, once the offices in Lyon were closed, I had no more contact with the staff aside from transcript requirements, I believe. That was just via email and I think that was more of a formality of where to send it.

***Do you think that was satisfactory or would you have preferred them to be a little more engaging with students afterwards?***

From my end it was satisfactory. I never had any questions about the actual online learning portion of it, so I'm not sure how they worked with that. Maybe someone else has a different experience than me, but I didn't really need to be in contact with them, so I found it satisfactory after everything had kind of settled.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

Obviously it was kind of disappointing, but again, that wasn't so much the program as it was just the general events that happened. But it's always disappointing to end early and get forced into that kind of weird situation. Like I said, I think they could've handled the closing of the program better as far as information that was given. As well as, again, talking about the visa being cancelled when they don't have authority to do that, was weird to me and did affect my status, since I was under the impression that my visa had been cancelled until a couple months ago, which changed the way I interacted with the French government. But, other than that, it was overall disappointing that it had to happen. I wish their information had been a little less contradictory and that there was more communication on a whole level, but they did what they could with the situation.

***And what about in terms of studies throughout the whole program?***

I thought it was good. Throughout the whole program I thought the studies were pretty decent. I enjoyed the classes I was in and I felt that they were sufficient for an exchange program.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

I don't know what programs...what their protocol looks like for situations like this, but I think they'll probably be a lot more prepared for situations like this. I would assume that they would have some sort of plan of attack for a situation like this again. Other than that, I'm not too sure. I think there will probably be less exchange programs, to be honest, in the future. I think this will probably affect exchange programs, if not from the sense of programs themselves cancelling, but students not going on them.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

No, I can't think of anything.

Entrevista 6 – Felicity

**Were you a student of a yearlong 2019 study abroad program in Lyon, France?**

Yes, I was

**When did you arrive in Lyon?**

I arrived September 9th, I think.

**When were you projected to leave Lyon?**

I was projected to leave around May 15th.

**When did you actually leave?**

I think March 14th.

**What were the circumstances that caused you to leave?**

The program had ended there, and the pandemic had everyone come back to the United States.

**Were you given the option of remaining in France? Why or why not?**

I was given the option to stay in France, but it required me to figure out my housing independently and not in association with [the U.S. provider] because [the program] ended. However, classes still continued. In simple words, it required a lot of money upfront with the housing that I was staying with.

**Were you given forewarning that you would be leaving France earlier than expected by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

No, not really, because [the U.S. provider] was kind of trying to avoid having to do that. So, it was a very last-minute thing.

**What were the reasons given when you were told you would be leaving France?**

The only reason they had was the fact that we wouldn't be physically going to class anymore and [the U.S. provider] would not be able to be there for our support anymore, that would be the main reason—like insurance-wise, housing-wise.

**Did you expect the early departure to come based on the circumstances?**

Yeah, like a week or two before I actually left I had a feeling that it was going to probably happen because there were some students that had already left almost a month before we were all set to leave.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff provide resources to you to help with organizing your travel and departure?**

I feel like they did, but I didn't use any and I didn't really need to use their resources so I don't know.

**Did the [U.S. provider] staff answer any questions you might have had when you were informed you would be leaving France?**

Yeah, I asked them about where to stay, if I would still be able to contact them, and questions about refunding and how the program was going to handle that [were] pretty much answered pretty professionally and it all came through exactly as they said.

**What was your personal experience in actually leaving France? Please describe your thoughts and emotions during the time, as you feel comfortable, and include what actions you had to take.**

I was most definitely disappointed, if anything. I was definitely really sad because I felt like all my plans that I had for the last couple months that I was going to be there completely changed and also I definitely feel like I was not going to be able to progress in my level of French proficiency with the online program. Like, I knew straight away that that was going to pull me back in terms of my progress. But, it's okay because with the same due respect I knew that if I came back I would be able to work and so I would be able to...I don't know I tend to move on from things quickly, I don't like to dwell on it, I just try to make the best of every situation. That's how I work on it, so I'm alright. I had to find tickets. I bought two different airline tickets, cancelled one and had the other one cancelled on me. It was a lot of a money but when I got back to the States there was an emergency fund program, the CARES [Act]—I applied to that through my school and I was able to get all the money I spent on tickets back to me, so I guess that's what I did.

**Were any arrangements made for the continuation of your studies when the program ended? If so, how were these arrangements carried out?**

We transferred into online learning through Edmodo and there were weekly Zoom classes with the teacher but I was never able to attend any of them because of the time difference—not going to wake up [at] 3 a.m. to do that, and it was okay, they understood that and it was not a requirement, it was just recommended. So, I would just do these weekly assignments and the usual *production écrites*—the PEs [*production écrite*, written composition] the COs [*compréhension orale*, oral comprehension], the tests that they give out every couple weeks.

**Did you feel such arrangements were satisfactory, given the situation?**

I think it's the best that they could've done, but it, by no means, was effective. I can't say I really progressed ever since that instant.

**Do you feel as if your general studies in the program were negatively or positively impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

Negatively, for sure, because it's language learning, you have to have an interaction in the classroom, that's the best way to learn. And we were doing a lot less activities with the book because, in the beginning, I guess a lot of people just were not turning in certain assignments and it just wasn't being realistic, I guess, with that given situation. So, what ended up happening was we would have a few major assignments given to us that would count for points and we would do those, but it wasn't like back in France where we [would] study the language, doing something every single day.

**Do you feel as if your level of fluency in French has been impacted by the situation? In what way(s)?**

Yeah, I didn't progress.

**Do you feel as if your return to the United States was more or less difficult given the situation, compared to what you expected before the pandemic?**

With my experience I didn't really notice it until after. I'd also never lived outside of the country for more than two months, and so when I came back I was just kind of in my own world, it took me a month, I'd say, to for me to feel back to normal. And I would have some mood swings, but I think that would've happened whether I left in March or whether I left in May.

***So, it wasn't necessarily more difficult?***

Not really, not for me.

**Has the change in situation and early return from France affected your outlook for your future?**

I don't think it's really changed much. I'm still doing the same things I would've done if I come back the expected date. I had only changed one thing; it gave me time for work and to save up some money.

**Do you believe the situation was handled well by the [U.S. provider] staff?**

Yeah, for sure. I give them a big applause to how they handled it. They were very, very supportive. Any question I had, or any kind of needs were taken care of, so I have nothing bad to say about them.

**What could the [U.S. provider] staff have changed in order to make the change in situation easier/better?**

[Nothing] that I know of, I was definitely satisfied.

**Did you receive support from the [U.S. provider] staff after you had returned to the United States?**

No, because I didn't ask for any.

**How would you describe your thoughts on the program as a whole given the unique nature of your experience?**

I still view the program as a very good one, also with a very professional staff—only speaking for the staff that's in Lyon. I think they handled it very well, kudos to them.

**How do you think your experience might affect the way this, and other similar programs, might now be run based on what happened with the pandemic?**

Well, my experience is my experience and I guess the most I can do is just communicate that experience, whether I become an ambassador for the program or if I talk about study abroad. I can only share that experience and point out the goods and bads for people to learn from so that they can apply it in a given similar situation that may come in the future.

***What do you think those changes might look like?***

I think if there's any changes, the most needed ones would be applied to a more efficient,

productive online learning program. Something more organized and not something that gets put together in, like, two weeks.

**Is there anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask about or are there any answers you would like to expand upon?**

I'd say the most difficult situation was the supplies. We weren't able to get any masks or any kind of supplies that we would need to protect from the pandemic, and I guess it would have been nice if those supplies would have been found for us. But I think at that time the whole nation [France] ran out of masks, so I can't really criticize them for something that was also out of their control, so, I don't really have much to add.