



2020 & 2021 Review: Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic





It is during times of uncertainty that I am most reminded of the value of our shared community. Over our more than 40 years of history, ISEP has successfully navigated natural disasters and crises of human creation. Our community has worked together to continue providing authentic cross-cultural opportunities for students worldwide. These challenges only underscore the need for young people to develop the relationships, technical expertise, and cross-cultural skills that an immersive study abroad experience can provide.

While 2020 and 2021 were undoubtedly some of the most challenging years in ISEP's history, we are moving forward from the COVID-19 pandemic confident in the strength and resiliency of this community. During this crisis, our community jumped into action—working creatively and resourcefully to meet the needs of ISEP students with compassion and generosity. The many positive experiences of ISEP students who safely and successfully studied abroad during each wave of the pandemic inspired and encouraged us.

Throughout the pandemic, ISEP has continued to lead by creating innovative mobility solutions in response to the crisis we face. As we enter 2022, ISEP as an organization and as a community remains strong. ISEP is more nimble, agile, and responsive than ever before. Our ability to weather this crisis, the worst that international higher education has faced in over fifty years, is a testament to the strength of our collaborative, community-based model and to our financially prudent approach to stewarding the organization's resources. For this success, ISEP must credit the founders of the organization and its previous leaders who built a solid foundation. I also credit the current team for taking ISEP fully into the digital age, helping the organization to respond quickly to changing demands and maintaining excellent customer service during this time of crisis.

In collaboration with our Board of Directors, the Council of Advisors, and our membership, the ISEP team is well positioned to reignite student mobility during the recovery period ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lucas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

John Lucas, Ph.D.
President & CEO

ISEP RESPONDS TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On February 25, 2020, ISEP suspended semester programs in South Korea due to the sudden increase in COVID-19 cases. Within weeks, universities worldwide began halting all in-person activities and international borders began to close. The ISEP community came together to support students through multiple challenges.

ASSISTING STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

During the first wave of COVID-19, ISEP institutions ensured students were able to continue their educations safely. Every ISEP member continued to provide housing and meal benefits for students who stayed on-site. ISEP institutions also reorganized their curricula and developed online learning opportunities, allowing most ISEP students to earn a full semester of credit, whether they remained on program or returned to their home country. ISEP members also collaborated on a strategy to provide recoverable costs to as many students as possible. As the pandemic continued, ISEP worked closely with students to offer flexible opportunities, and many students were able to eventually go abroad.

 [READ THE ARTICLE "EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ARE STILL WORTH DOING, EVEN IN A PANDEMIC"](#)

KEEPING THE ISEP COMMUNITY ENGAGED

Throughout 2020 and 2021, ISEP focused on remaining engaged with our community. We developed virtual events for ISEP coordinators and Senior International Officers, and we integrated an Association Management System to improve our relationship-building and communication.

ISEP IN-DEPTHS

Beginning in summer 2020, ISEP launched the ISEP In-Depth webinar series for coordinators to learn more about unique ISEP programs based on specific topics. To date, we have hosted more than 20 In-Depth webinars.

ISEP INSIGHTS

Designed for Senior International Officers, ISEP launched the ISEP Insights virtual events to promote strategic thinking in internationalization and education.

VIRTUAL COORDINATOR WORKSHOPS

ISEP moved our in-person Coordinator Workshop to a virtual format, which increased access for our community, and welcomed more than 100 coordinators in both 2020 and 2021.

COUNCIL OF ADVISORS COFFEE HOURS

Hosted by the ISEP Council of Advisors Events Committee, ISEP Coffee Hours provide an informal opportunity for coordinators to connect and learn from each other during monthly guided conversations.

In February 2020

800+

students
were studying on ISEP
programs in

48

countries

92%

overall member satisfaction in
2020 and 2021

99%

of members reported
being satisfied or very
satisfied with ISEP's
virtual events in 2020

2020 & 2021 NEW PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Although the COVID-19 pandemic created a global pause in international travel, ISEP continued to grow and expand our program offerings with new partnerships, virtual opportunities, and creative solutions for students and universities. In addition, the in-house ISEP Direct Programs Taskforce began a multi-year project to re-evaluate the ISEP Direct program portfolio to better meet the needs of students, starting with our summer program offerings.

NEW MEMBERS & AFFILIATES

The ISEP community gained new members and affiliates seeking solutions for their international portfolios, including the University of Sussex, University of York, Morehouse College, Goucher College, and Concordia University Irvine.

ISEP SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Working with our international partners and member community, ISEP created custom programs for international students unable to enter the U.S. due to COVID restrictions.

NEW PROGRAM: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

ISEP successfully launched a new ISEP Direct program in Cork, Ireland, a country long requested by the ISEP community. University College Cork offers extensive academic opportunities in a vibrant Irish community. ISEP announced the program in 2021 and began accepting students for 2022.

NEW PROGRAM: YONSEI UNIVERSITY

In 2021, ISEP added an ISEP Direct program at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. Yonsei is a long-time ISEP Exchange member, and the new Direct program offers students from ISEP members and affiliates guaranteed placement at this highly-ranked institution. Extensive course offerings are available in English, in addition to Korean language coursework.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

After a thorough review in 2021, ISEP relaunched all summer programs for 2022, lowering the overall price of summer programs by an average of \$600 and prioritizing location, academics, and affordability.



[READ MORE ABOUT OUR RELAUNCHED SUMMER PORTFOLIO](#)

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

ISEP quickly developed a portfolio of virtual opportunities for students, including virtual internships, virtual service-learning in Barcelona, a virtual program in Ghana, and virtual courses at Masaryk University in the Czech Republic.



[LEARN MORE ABOUT VIRTUAL SERVICE-LEARNING IN BARCELONA](#)

In 2020 and 2021, ISEP
grew to include

5

new members and

7

new affiliates



CORK, IRELAND



[LEARN MORE ABOUT](#)

[UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK](#)



SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA



[LEARN MORE ABOUT](#)

[YONSEI UNIVERSITY](#)

In 2021, ISEP launched a new
summer portfolio with

22

programs in

14

countries

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Despite limited travel to our member and affiliate campuses, ISEP staff engaged with students through virtual events and social media. Our Student Services team also reorganized to improve the student experience.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Marketing & Communications developed Instagram content to reach more students through takeovers, a digital ambassador program, and Live events.



[SEE ISEP'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT](#)

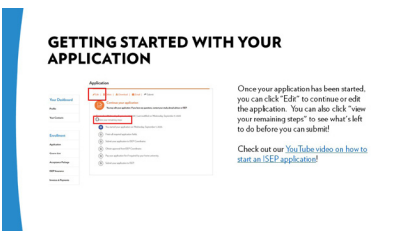


VIRTUAL EVENTS

Our Student Services team organized virtual panels and workshops for prospective and placed students, and our Member Relations team hosted information sessions and advising sessions during virtual fairs.



[VIEW THE ISEP ALUMNI PANELS](#)



IMPROVED ADVISING

ISEP created the new Student Services Officer position so students would have one primary point of contact throughout their ISEP experience. In addition, the team improved advising resources and procedures, which included updating pre-departure orientation sessions, adding visa workshops, and providing more information on building ISEP Exchange application lists.

LEADING EDUCATION ABROAD INDUSTRY CONVERSATIONS

In 2020 and 2021, ISEP received a grant from the U.S. Department of State's USA Study Abroad branch, U.S. Mission Australia, U.S. Mission New Zealand, and U.S. Embassy Suva to organize an ongoing webinar series to encourage academic exchange in the Pacific and between the Pacific Region and the United States. The series aimed to raise awareness of the changing landscape of U.S. study abroad and international education, specifically for the Pacific region, to strengthen foreign institutions' hosting capacity for U.S. students, and to increase participation in higher education strategic partnerships and engagement with U.S. university counterparts.

In partnership with the
**U.S. Department of
State, ISEP organized
and hosted**

5

**industry conversations
from 2020-2021**

Internationalization Post COVID-19 Webinar Series

ISEP collaborated closely with the U.S. Department of State representatives in the Pacific to offer a webinar series to the international education industry in Oceania, the U.S., and Asia. Topics have included "What Does the Future Hold for International Higher Education?," "Balancing the Learning Abroad Environmental Impact - A Pledge for A Greener Tomorrow," and "Education and Entrepreneurship: How Working Across the Pacific Can Inspire Us."



[VIEW THE WEBINARS](#)

BY THE NUMBERS

Despite a global pause in travel, ISEP supported students studying in:

14 countries in Fall 2020

27 countries in Spring 2021

5 countries in Summer 2021



As travel resumed, ISEP supported:

725 students studying in

32 countries in Fall 2021



23%

of ISEP students identified as first generation college students in 2021



100%

of all ISEP Scholarship Recipients in 2020 and 2021 belonged to an underserved student group



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Even if my exchange was postponed due to COVID, I am so grateful to finally be here and surrounded by the incredible nature, the sweetest people and professors! I got out of my comfort zone and I can already feel that this experience is changing me forever.

— Maéva Uldry, from Université de Fribourg, studied at Appalachian State University Fall 2021

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[READ MORE ABOUT 2021 ISEP STUDENT EXPERIENCES](#)

FINANCIAL STRENGTH

ISEP Awarded GuideStar's Gold Level Seal for Transparency

We are proud to announce ISEP received a Gold Level Seal for Transparency from GuideStar Exchange, recognizing our commitment to financial transparency. GuideStar connects donors and grant makers to a database of over 2.7 million nonprofit organizations.



[FOR AN OVERVIEW OF ISEP'S FINANCIAL INFORMATION, CLICK HERE.](#)



ISEP welcomed our first students to the new ISEP Direct program in Barcelona. Throughout 2020 and 2021, enrollments continued to grow.



STUDY ABROAD