

# GAP YEAR ASSOCIATION

## PRESS KIT



### What is a gap year?

A gap year is a semester or year of experiential learning, typically taken after high school and prior to career or post-secondary education, in order to deepen one's practical, professional, and personal awareness.

A gap year facilitates perspective, purpose, and maturation in emerging adults.

Components of a gap year can include community-based learning, volunteering, career exploration, paid work, and self-designed components that allow a young adult to explore their interests.

### What is the Gap Year Association?

The Gap Year Association (GYA), is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, and the official Standards Development Organization for gap year education in the US, as recognized by the US Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission. GYA encourages the responsible growth of the gap year option and focuses on four core areas: Research, Equity & Access, Resources, and Standards & Accreditation.

### GYA's Mission

To maximize the potential of young adults through accessible and meaningful gap year opportunities.

# 700+

MEMBERS, INCLUDING  
PROGRAMS, COLLEGES,  
CONSULTANTS,  
AND INDIVIDUALS

# \$5M

IN NEED-BASED AID  
AWARDED TO GAP YEAR  
PARTICIPANTS IN 2019/20

# 2012

YEAR FOUNDED

# DATA & STATISTICS

GYA regularly conducts its own surveys to analyze trends and outcomes of the gap year experience. These include the annual State of the Field survey, which polls gap year programs and consultants, as well as the [Gap Year Alumni Survey](#), conducted every five years.

In addition, we collaborate with the Gap Year Research Consortium at Colorado College and others to aggregate and share data on gap year benefits and trends.

# 1 IN 6

GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS CONSIDERS A GAP YEAR BEFORE COLLEGE.

- *Art & Science Group, 2020*

# 95%

OF GAP YEAR ALUMS SAID THEIR GAP YEAR PREPARED THEM SOMEWHAT OR VERY WELL FOR THEIR NEXT STEP.

- *2020 Gap Year Association Alumni Survey*

## 2020 survey respondents on their gap year experience:

# 82%

**FELT A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WHEN APPLYING TO COLLEGE/JOBS**



### TOP 3 SKILLS

- Cultural Awareness
- Communication
- Self-Direction

# 97%

**INCREASED THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE**



### MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS

- USA
- Central America
- Europe
- Southeast Asia

# 81%

**SAY THEIR YEAR INFLUENCED THEIR CHOICE OF CAREER**

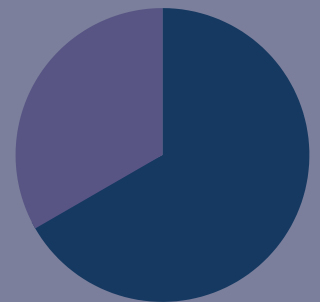


### CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Nearly all alums report their gap year developed their ability to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures.



**THE MAJORITY OF GYA SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE MOTIVATED TO TAKE A GAP YEAR TO GAIN LIFE EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOP PERSONALLY, AND ADDITIONALLY TO TRAVEL AND EXPERIENCE NEW CULTURES.**



**1/3 OF STUDENTS SPENT \$5,000 OR LESS ON THEIR GAP YEAR**

# PRESS FAQs

Below you'll find answers to our most frequently asked press queries.

## WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE GAP YEAR IN THE US?

Students have taken gap years as a common rite of passage in other countries for generations, most notably the UK and Australia. Since the 1980s, the gap year option has steadily grown in prominence in the United States as well. When President Obama's eldest daughter decided to take a gap year in 2016, the gap year was thrust into the spotlight. The global pandemic of 2020 also contributed to what we estimate was the largest number of gap year students from the United States to date.

## HOW MANY STUDENTS TAKE A GAP YEAR EACH YEAR?

Unfortunately, there is no central tracking mechanism to get a firm number. On average, we estimate about 40-60,000 students take a gap year. In 2020, due to the pandemic, news outlets and gap year education professionals estimated that upwards of 130,000 students took a gap year.

## WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO ON THEIR GAP YEAR?

Students customize their plans to match their interests, goals, and budget. Gap years usually contain a combination of activities such as community-based learning (service-learning with an emphasis on community needs and student learning) or interning, enrichment or academic courses and educational travel. Students can self-design their own program to suit their needs, or they can travel with a gap year provider for a structured, cohort-based program. For a gap year to be most effective, it should encourage a student's independence, spark curiosity, and incorporate mentorship.

## WHAT DO COLLEGES THINK ABOUT THE GAP YEAR?

For the most part, colleges understand that students who take intentional gap time arrive to campus better prepared to thrive. That said, each institution has their own policies for gap year students. Increasingly, colleges are allowing students to formally hold their place for an approved gap year experience (a deferral) and some also offer in-housing programming (Tufts, Princeton) and/or financial support and grants for their gap year students (Duke, Florida State University, UNC Chapel Hill).

## WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR THOSE CONSIDERING A GAP YEAR?

GYA encourages families to be thoughtful in planning a gap year and seek resources to make it as impactful as possible. Students can download [GYA's free planning guide](#) or visit [GoOverseas](#) or [TeenLife](#) for articles and program reviews. Families can also attend the annual [USA Gap Year Fairs](#) to gather more information.

## WHAT ARE THE LATEST TRENDS IN THE GAP YEAR?

- **US-based opportunities:** Both established and new programs have run more domestic programming due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. Hawaii was especially popular in late 2020 and early 2021. Domestic programming continues to be popular as we emerge from the pandemic.
- **Art and STEM programs:** A wide array of enrichment programs are available to students with STEM and art interests.
- **Work experiences and internships:** Students are looking to gain workplace-ready skills and explore career options before they invest in a college major.

## CONTACT



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