Alumni who have participated in any of FSU’s study-abroad programs are invited to a series of special events during Homecoming Week, Oct. 21-27, to celebrate a half-century of study abroad. Each continues the university’s commitment to turning the world into a classroom, providing high-quality, American-style education while immersing students in the vibrant culture and living patterns of its host city.

Beyond the study centers, students can choose from FSU programs around the world. With more than 20 study-abroad programs located from Europe to Asia and Central America, FSU’s International Programs (international.fsu.edu) is a presence in international education. The programs offer a range of opportunities, allowing students to satisfy graduation requirements while living within diverse cultures the world over.

FSU’s Florence campus, the brainchild of then-Dean of Students Ross Oglesby, was born in 1966. After accompanying the FSU Flying High Circus on a European tour that included this history-laden city of the Italian Renaissance, an enamored Oglesby decided to hang out an academic shingle there. Studying overseas is far more than what happens in the classroom. FSU’s first students arrived in Florence in the aftermath of a great flood and immediately pitched in. Italian officials later saluted them for their help in rescuing priceless historical treasures.

Bringing the modern into the art-permeated cultural treasure that is Florence, today’s FSU students attend classes in the program’s main building, the 15th-century palace of Alessandri, which also houses a library, computer lab and student lounge. Each continues the university’s commitment to international student life, with full-time technical staff ensuring that nurtured Western government, commerce and liberal arts loci. Using the tools of the contemporary scholar, students explore the work of Galileo, da Vinci, Dante and others.

Studying in Florence inspired Todd G. Kocourek to chart an entirely new course for his future. “After my time in the program in Florence—and they paid three to four times as much for the privilege,” recalls Kocourek. “After my time in the program was up, I elected to start studies at FSU.” Kocourek made the move to FSU’s Tallahassee campus without so much as a prior visit—and he stayed, earning an undergraduate degree in Asian studies in 1985 and graduating from the law school in 1988. Today, he is president and chief executive officer of Florida First Capital Finance Corp. and also serves as consul general for the Italian government in the greater Tallahassee area.

The London campus was established in 1971. Headquartered in a historic seven-building complex minutes from the West End theater district, the London Study Center is neighbor to the British Museum, the National Gallery and several landmarks of the British capital. With its small classes and liberal arts focus, the London Center is a standard-bearer for study-abroad programs. Its American and British teachers and scholars instruct students in a historic setting that permeates the modern. Continuing that legacy, in June, FSU President T.K. Wetherell inked an agreement with Università Politecnica di Valencia President Juan JI. Igual that provides for academic, scientific and cultural collaboration between the two institutions.

While in London, students reside in stylish flats in the center’s renovated 17th-century structures, which also feature classrooms, a lecture hall that does double duty as a theater, a library and computer lab. And the Study Center provides state-of-the-art technology, with wireless Internet throughout, along with full-time technical support.

Seminole football’s Myron Rolle spent the summer in London. Visiting historic sites, meeting new people and experiencing different parts of the city, the sophomore from New Jersey was impressed by what he encountered.

“I thought the diversity in the Big Apple was extraordinary, until I came to London,” Rolle observes. “There are people from all over the world [in London]. Sections of the city are populated by a particular demographic population. For instance, Edgware Road has a heavy Middle Eastern influence. Brixton is populated by Jamaicans. The west part of Soho has China Town. London is truly a multi-cultural city.”

Since 1997, FSU has maintained a study-abroad program in Spain, beginning first in the seaside town of Torremolinos. Three years later, the program moved its study center to Valencia, the country’s third-largest city. More than 1,350 students from Florida and 2,500 overall have enrolled in some 600 different courses taught by 60 faculty members in this 2,000-year-old city bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

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The Valencia campus, students reside in a painstakingly refurbished two-building structure that includes housing, classrooms and administrative space. Preserving the city’s unique history, the two-building site contains part of a two-story-high portion of a thousand-year-old Arabian wall and 14th-century tanning tanks used in making leather.