Mastodon Travels

My Global Perspective

As I was interviewed for a segment on INSight, the reporter asked “What is study abroad?” As I pondered the question for all of two seconds, my response was “study abroad is temporary schooling in a foreign country, to earn academic credit towards a domestic degree.”

Being that I over-analyze everything, I began thinking about that one particular question of whether I left something out or maybe I could have spoken slower. Then, it hit me. I realized there are many different types of study abroad programs to where it is hard to generalize. There are short-term, long-term, faculty led, independent, direct enroll, and the list goes on and on and on. Some students reside in hotels and spend no more than three days in each city they visit while others live with families and stay in the same location for a semester or longer.

I would assume that everyone has their own definition of what is study abroad, but I now realize it is what you make it. It is a generic term that can encompass many different experiences. You can eat fast food at McDonald’s or you can choose traditional foods. However, it seems that most college students share the long term goal of a good career that fits their needs and lifestyle. Some students choose to study abroad in order to enhance their future career prospects, while others choose not to study abroad, because they believe it will take away from their coursework and career progress on campus. I want to encourage this latter group to take another look at study abroad. Surveys prove that students who studied abroad get more job interviews, better job offers, and start at above average salaries in their fields.

This newsletter seeks to familiarize students, faculty, and staff with the activities of the Office of International Education and highlight our students who have studied overseas.

WorldFest

The Office of International Education in collaboration with the Office of Diversity & Multicultural Affairs, the African Student Association, and the Department of International Language and Culture Studies hosted WorldFest April 5 & 6. The festivities began with an African dance class led by Abigail Owusuo. The second event was an international food demonstration led by Elaine Mourad followed by a luncheon. Finally, the event culminated with the French Poetry contest. WorldFest sought to make the campus community aware of the history and cultural traditions of other countries and recognize the cultural diversity and rich experiences our international scholars and students bring to IPFW.
At 2:30 p.m. the school bell rang to mark the start of Spring Break, and I doubt that even my students were looking forward to the upcoming week as much as I was. Wasting little time, I was on a bus that evening with some friends headed to the Pacific Ocean. By sunrise we had descended over 9,000 feet through the mountains to the coastal paradise of Montanita.

Over the next few days we based in a lazy haze of sun, sand, hammocks, and cold drinks. Only shortly before the pristine beach and easy going demeanor of the people were able to capture us forever, we began the trip back home to Quito through the snow capped peaks of the Andes Mountains.

I awoke early the next morning in time to watch the sun rise over the glistening snow of Mount Illiniza, whose summit was to be my next challenge. During the climb, the terrain changed dramatically from lush vegetation to a steep, rough and frigid desolation; but 8 hours and 10 frozen toes later, I reached the peak where I basked in the rays of my accomplishment while looking down on Ecuador from over 16,000 feet.

That night, I was back on a bus headed further east towards Ecuadorian jungle. Following the nighttime bus ride, 2 hours by jeep, and another 4 by canoe I was surrounded by virgin rainforest and the chocolate colored water of the River Napo, which flows into the Amazon.

The next few days were packed with hikes, caving, climbing up waterfalls, and visiting an indigenous village, where time has seemingly stood still for hundreds of years. On the way back to Quito, my exhaustion from the past week was matched only by my amazement at how mind altering and diverse our world can truly be.

*Kevin Micks is now a graduate student at the University of Chicago. The pictures are courtesy of Emma Myers and Emmanuel Davis of Syracuse University.

Help Wanted!!! Orientation Leaders for International Student Orientation

Do you want to be a leader? Do you enjoy learning about other cultures and meeting people from other countries? Do you want a great resume building experience?

The Office of International Education is looking for orientation leaders to help welcome new international students to campus next fall and spring. You must be available to start mid-August.

If you are interested in interacting with international students, broadening your cultural perspectives and understanding all while further developing your leadership skills, please contact Aviana Symon, assistant director for international student services at (260)481-0328 or symona@ipfw.edu.
International Opportunities beyond IPFW

If you have studied abroad and now have the travel bug, or never took advantage of an international experience during your undergraduate career, there are many great international scholarship programs available to you. In this article, I will highlight two programs that will offer you the opportunity to explore the world after leaving IPFW.

Participating in the Fulbright Program is one opportunity for post-baccalaureate students to gain international experience. Established in 1946, the goal of the Fulbright Program is to help develop understanding between the United States and other countries around the world. Since 1946, 105,400 people from America and 174,000 people from other countries have taken part in this program and worked towards Fulbright’s goal of developing global understanding. Participants are able to go to countries all across the globe. Taking part in the Fulbright Program is a wonderful opportunity for soon to be college graduates to go out into the world on an adventure that will lead them to a greater understanding of the world around them.

Another excellent option for recent grads looking to study overseas is the Rotary International Program. Rotary International offers students the opportunity to develop themselves and their commitment to helping those less fortunate around the world. Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian services, encourages the development of ethics in all work, and helps build goodwill and peace in the world. There are roughly 1.2 million Rotarians globally in more than 200 countries and other geographical areas. Rotary International also provides scholarships to fund educational endeavors. Undergraduate students interested in language study can apply for the Cultural Ambassadorial Scholarship, which focuses on intense language development as well as cultural immersion. Students must commit to either a three or six month immersion program for any language. Graduate students can apply for the Ambassadorial scholarship which can range from a one to two year commitment geared towards developing the mission of Rotary. The money is available for those willing to develop themselves in accordance with Rotary’s mission. To learn more about Rotary, visit their website (www.rotary.org).

Burma VJ

Fort Wayne, IN is home to the largest Burmese refugee population outside of Burma. Six thousand strong, this dynamic group of people bring a diverse culture, wealth of experience, call for international outcry against human rights abuses, and a plea for the Burmese government to embrace democracy and a sustainable human rights agenda. But, with this new group of people to the Fort Wayne community comes increased misunderstanding and unnecessary fears about the refugees—their culture, traditions, religion, and food. Four students, Tim Wilson, Neil White, Rebecca Anzini, and Ladden Abassi, in collaboration with the IP Student Government Association and the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs will host a Burmese information fair and movie showing. The goals are to bridge the communication gap between the Burmese and their neighbors and foster a dialogue about the misperceptions. The event will be held Wednesday, April 27, at 6 p.m. in Cole Commons at Student Housing.
Finding my Seoul in Korea by Tim Wilson

I participated in the Bahrom International Program in the summer of 2009 and subsequently spent a year overseas at Seoul Women’s University for the Spring and Fall semesters of 2010. My initial experience in Korea through the BIP program was amazing and provided a comprehensive study on Korean culture, business, and history.

After returning to the United States (August 2009), I looked into several exchange programs including ones for the United Kingdom, France, and South America. After I considered several options, Dr. Jenny Weatherford, former Director of International Programs, advised that it might be possible to return to Seoul Women’s University. I had been interested in attending, but my Korean proficiency was extremely low and thought there might be more obstacles because it was a new program. Nevertheless, I enrolled and had the greatest time of my life. I met awesome students and had great professors and feel other students should engage in this wonderful experience. In addition to taking classes about Korean history, culture, business, and language, I served as an English tutor.

Three years ago as I was beginning my first semester as a returning student, the possibility of participating in an overseas study program was a distant dream. But after taking the little steps of reading, researching, going to information sessions, and attending the various international events at IPFW this dream has grown into a reality. Everyday was a new and different adventure—the food, the culture, and the people. Hence, I discovered my calling and found my Seoul in Korea.