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Huntsman Students Prepare Rigorously Before Going Global

Huntsman Post

Huntsman Students Prepare Rigorously Before Going Global

By Allie Jeppson



Jake Rhodes studied in St. Petersburg, Russia.

When students return from Global Learning Experiences in the summer, they report that the word "vacation" is not one they would ever use to describe their experiences. The students also report that they work especially hard during the grueling academic weeks that precede the summer trips.

"We tell students that if they want to go on a vacation, don't come with us," said Global Enrichment Director Liz Allred. "These programs are very much about learning and are absolute work."

This summer, the Huntsman Go Global Program is hosting a number of international trips, which are now underway. Students have the opportunity to visit the Asian countries of Vietnam, China, and South Korea; Chile and Peru in South America; or Russia and Turkey in Eastern Europe. Their time in each country includes visits with professionals and

executives of local and multi-national businesses, which help them gain a better understanding of the cultural business customs, Ms. Allred said.

"There are company cultures that reflect the local culture," she said, "and you have to be sensitive to what is occurring in a country in order to do business there."

This is where student preparation comes in.

The semester before their trip, all students in the Go Global Program are required to take an introductory course — Foundations for International Programs — that is specific to each trip. This course gives students a background on the culture, history, government, and economy of the countries they will visit so that when they meet with business professionals, they have a basis for discussion and a foundation on which to further their knowledge.

"We look at the country's business environment, how they do business in those countries," said Clifford Skousen, faculty advisor for the South America trip and a Huntsman accounting professor. "We also try to create a sense of creativity that just because we do something a certain way here in our culture, it doesn't necessarily mean it's the best way."

In the class, students complete a number of assignments, including group work, company briefings, and presentations, to help prepare for their visits with businesses.

"When we're visiting these organizations we expect the students to be knowledgeable, engaged and to have questions," Dr. Skousen said.

The program also allows students to earn up to 12 additional business credits during the month of May, prior to their travel experience and continuing through their travels. These classes take on an accelerated form of learning as each class is held Monday through Friday for one and a half hours. A regular semester's worth of content is taught during this short time, and the material covered in each class period is approximately equivalent to what is taught in a regular semester's week, Ms. Allred said. She added that this schedule would be no problem for a student taking only one class, but many students in the Go Global Program take three or four classes, and the load can become quite intense.

Political science major Luribel de la Rosa Gonzalez is earning a business minor through the Go Global Program. In preparation for her trip to South America she took three management classes during the month of May. Though she felt four courses would have been too much, she thinks the classes taken before the trip were very beneficial.

"The classes help because when we visit the companies, we're going to know what's going on," she said.

As a participant in the Asia trip, Kyle Draper — a junior majoring in international business and management information systems — agreed that the preparation would be helpful, even though as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he had already been exposed to the Korean culture.

"I didn't really get to see the business culture (on my mission) I just got to see the everyday culture. In talking to people, they said the business culture is a whole different realm," he said. "It's something that I wanted to experience and that I feel will definitely help me further my knowledge of the overall Korean culture."

While much of the students' preparation and traditional classroom learning takes place before they leave on their trips, the work continues even during their travels.

Ms. Allred said students are still responsible for homework in each of their classes, but the reports and assignments they complete, during and after their trips, are tied to the various visits they go on. These assignments help students apply principles they have learned in a global context, she added.

It's hard work, but overall, it's a beneficial experience, both academically and culturally, she said.

"Now that I've had that preparation, I see the value of those classes," said international business and economics major Susana Pantigoso. "I can't imagine going to South America having no clue about what's going on in politics right now or the main issues of the country."