Christopher Hemmig left Ohio State in mid-September for Mauritania, a little known country by Western standards with a population of 3.2 million that borders the Atlantic Ocean in West Africa. He will stay for nine months exploring the dynamics of cross-cultural relationships in the realm of development work courtesy of a grant awarded by the Institute for International Education through the Andrew Mellon Foundation. In Mauritania, he will be affiliated with the Centre d’Études et de Recherches sur l’Ouest Sahraien (Center for Research on the Western Sahara).

His interest in this research topic was sparked when he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in a small village in Mauritania from 2002 until 2004. It was a life-changing experience for him and thus began his interest in cross-cultural relationships. “The culture in Mauritania is so different from anywhere in the U.S., yet I and other volunteers were able to form meaningful relationships and understandings with people there,” Hemmig explained. “Since that time, I have been confronted with the desire and challenge of maintaining such relationships. I realized that among the people I encountered, there was a hope that two years of service would lead to lifelong connections.”

As a Ph.D. candidate in Ohio State’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, his research in Mauritania will focus on the relationships that form between Westerners and Mauritians as they work together to create better conditions for living in impoverished communities. He notes that development work brings people together who would otherwise have no opportunity to get to know each other.” The relationships that can develop through development work can differ significantly from those that would form through tourism or business partnerships – though this does not necessarily make them stronger. With different culturally shaped worldviews and expectations for social engagement, there is a lot of room for misunderstandings to arise, which can lead to exploitation of a community by outsiders or vice versa.”

With this primary theme, Hemmig will interview individuals directly involved in development work and have them share their experiences, insights, and attitudes about the work they are doing and what it means to them. He believes the stories and insights they share can provide strong clues as to what is happening in cross-cultural encounters and how people negotiate such encounters. What will be particularly important to Hemmig are the voices of Mauritians who have little access through which to share their experiences and provide commentary.

Hemmig also has studied abroad in Mali as an undergraduate and earned a bachelor’s in biology from Wittenburg University. His experience with the Peace Corps in Mauritania is what led him to earn a master’s in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from Ohio State. “I often find that many people have never even heard of the country. But it is so different from anywhere in the U.S., yet I and other volunteers were able to form meaningful relationships and understandings with people there,” Hemmig explained. “Since that time, I have been confronted with the desire and challenge of maintaining such relationships. I realized that among the people I encountered, there was a hope that two years of service would lead to lifelong connections.”

The grant gives Hemmig the financial support to conduct his dissertation fieldwork over an extended time frame. “It can be very difficult to find such support despite the recognition that such fieldwork is crucial to building bridges of international understanding,” he explained.

Hemmig hopes to continue working in academia, teaching Arabic language as well as the culture of North and West Africa, in particular, and the culture of the Islamic world.

**Gateway program gives student first international experience**

When Leslie Minney stepped on campus this fall, she began her sophomore year of college with a renewed sense of direction, motivation, and, 10,000 miles of international travel under her belt. This summer, she and 17 Ohio State classmates spent four weeks participating in the Brazil Global Gateway Study Abroad Program, which took them halfway around the world to a country and culture far different from their own.

While working for the Office of International Affairs as a student assistant last fall, Minney learned about Ohio State’s new Global Gateway Study Abroad Programs, which are designed for first- and second-year students, are taught in English, and cater to a variety of interests and areas of study. And though her major is international studies with a focus on development studies, Minney had never been abroad.

Karen Minney, Leslie’s mother, said she hadn’t been on an airplane since she was a baby. The Minneys are from Waverly, a town south of Columbus, with a population of 5,000.

“It was a little scary because we are from a small town,” Karen said. “This was an adventure for her.”

To fund her study abroad, Minney was able to use the full tuition assistance she receives as a Land Grant Scholar. She also was awarded a Saltzman Study Abroad Scholarship, which provided her with $1,000.

Katherine Borland, an Associate Professor in the College of Humanities led the group of 17 students as they traveled from the town of Araraquara in São Paulo state, to Bahia, a town in Brazil’s Salvador state. The students took survival Portuguese classes, learned about the history of Brazil and its rising economy, and spent time living with host families.

“I was interested in seeing two aspects of Brazil – a more industrialized city and the more developing part of the country,” Minney said. “I learned a lot about the Brazilian culture firsthand, versus learning it in a classroom.”

“In Brazil, we learned a lot about social movements. I have discovered a passion for people and the power they have when they desire to make a change. I now feel certain that I want to help people make a positive change in their environment.”

Her major already focuses on development studies, and Minney hopes to add another course of study in anthropology or political science in order to better understand social change and governmental policy.

“I’m glad she’s pursuing her goals and realizing that she can do anything that she wants to do,” said Karen Minney.

Ohio State’s Global Gateway Study Abroad Programs went abroad for the first time this summer – one program traveled to China, and one to Brazil. The programs are the first of many early-access programs aimed at younger students of any major. The four-week programs give students a taste of study abroad in hope that they will go abroad on a more focused program as an upperclassman.

**STUDY ABROAD EXPO**

Students speak to Dan O’Brien, a representative from GlobalLinks abroad, during the 2011 Study Abroad Expo. The event was held in the Buckeye Reading Room at the Thompson Library, and drew and estimated 1,000 students.

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New search engine makes finding a study abroad program easier

Students interested in widening their international horizons now have a quick and easy way to narrow their search for a study abroad program. The Office of International Affairs launched a new, online search engine that enables students to search through more than 200 programs to find a study abroad program that best meets their academic goals. The search tool can be found at oia.osu.edu/programs/search-programs.

“With the number of programs available, and all of the variables that come with studying abroad, we wanted to make it easier for students to sift through the information,” said Grace Johnson, Director of Study Abroad. “The search engine helps students quickly identify programs that match their specific criteria.”

Students can search by multiple fields to find programs related to a subject they are interested in studying, a particular country they want to explore, the length of time they want to study abroad and the time of year that works best for their schedule. Once the results of potential programs are displayed on the web page, students can click on the program name to find additional details about the program including dates, costs, eligibility, application deadlines and study abroad coordinator contact information.

When beginning a search, students should consider the following:

- A general search will yield more results
- A search can be narrowed by selecting one or more options
- The Key Word tab provides flexibility in searching for programs using specific terms

After students have spent some time searching through the variety of programs, they can attend a Getting Started session to learn more about narrowing their choices, as well as other practical information about finances, the application process and additional resources. Getting Started schedules are available at oia.osu.edu.

Ohio State, Wuhan University awarded federal grant to open Center for American Culture

The Ohio State University and Wuhan University in the People's Republic of China have been awarded a $100,000 federal grant from the Department of State to fund the WHU-OSU Center for American Culture, located within the School of Foreign Languages on the Wuhan campus in the Hubei Province of China. The grant will support interactive programming to provide information about American culture and the English language to the people of China.

A delegation from Ohio State traveled to China to meet with officials from Wuhan University to commemorate the approval of funds to open the center. Attending the informal ceremony was Gary Locke, the U.S. Ambassador to China, President Li Xiaohong of Wuhan University and officials from Ohio State, including Vice Provost for Global Strategies and International Affairs William I. Brustein, Bob Eckhart, a Lecturer in both the Department of English and the Combined ESL Programs in the College of Education and Human Ecology, Minru Li, Assistant Director of the National East Asian Language Resource Center, and Phoebe You, Director of Ohio State's China Gateway.

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Representatives from Ohio State, Wuhan University, the National East Asian Language Resource Center and the U.S. Department of State attended the opening of the Center for American Culture at Wuhan University in Hubei Province, China.

Global Strategies

A Q&A with William Brustein

Why is the OSU-WHU Center for American Culture important for Ohio State?

The Center for American Culture is the culmination of a 30 year partnership with Wuhan University that enables Ohio State to increase its collaborative academic efforts in China. With more than 20 active international agreements with universities in China, our China Gateway in Shanghai and now this new venture, Ohio State has created additional opportunities for its faculty to enrich the lives of students in China and create a new and interactive way of learning American culture and the English language.

What is the purpose of the Center?

Core objectives for the center are to create an advanced English language and authentic American cultural environment; promote administrative, faculty and student training; provide cultural background information to Chinese and American businesses; utilize a videoconferencing facility to increase programming, including opportunities for English conversation; and increase the number of collaborative projects between faculty at Wuhan University and Ohio State.

(continued on page 3)
Social security: At the Mershon Center, studying international security issues means traversing the ‘human terrain’

The modest building at the corner of Neil and West Eighth avenues that houses the Mershon Center for International Security Studies is kind of a high-powered lens—one designed to bring global issues into focus.

The phrase “international security studies” might evoke the perusal of arms control agreements or the analysis of Soviet military capacity. But some of the activities at the Mershon Center have more to do with culture than with military matters. The center supports research by faculty in the English, anthropology, and even music and theatre departments.

The Mershon Center’s mission is “to advance the understanding of national security in a global context.” It does that by supporting research in three areas: the use of force and diplomacy; the ideas, identities, and decisional processes that affect security; and the institutions that manage violent conflict.

Being located at Ohio State—with the ability to draw upon the university’s expertise in the social studies and humanities—is a competitive advantage, former director Rick Herrmann said. Herrmann is currently the Chair of the Department of Political Science. “The Pentagon doesn’t need us to help them fire a weapon. What we have to offer is on the human side, what they sometimes call ‘human terrain’: insight into the real fault lines in political life.”

The Mershon Center works with at least 23 academic departments to host or support frequent events: conferences, town hall meetings, lectures, and panels. Peter Mansoor, the General Raymond E. Mason Jr Chair in Military History at Ohio State, praised the center’s collective strength. “It enables scholars from a number of fields to have the means to collaborate on projects of national importance,” he said.

When it comes to questions of national security, Mansoor said, “The Mershon Center puts Ohio State on the map.”

Herrmann’s primary role as director is to spark cutting-edge research—or, as he put it, “to stimulate our thinking, not only among faculty and our Ph.D. students, but in the undergraduate honors program” and throughout the campus.

Herrmann compared the Mershon Center to another large, interdisciplinary Ohio State institution with a national reputation. At the James Cancer Center and Solove Research Institute, experts work together using different approaches to understanding the disease.

“We’re similar in that regard,” Herrmann said. Mershon faculty collaborate to produce ideas and strategies that influence public policy. While it’s not the kind of thing that can be trumpeted on billboards to the general public, as Ohio State’s advances in medical research often are, leaders in government and at the Pentagon look to the Mershon Center for insight and historical context.

And thanks to founder Ralph D. Mershon’s $5 million bequest in 1952, the Mershon Center for International Security Studies costs Ohio taxpayers pretty much nothing. With roughly $2 million taken from its endowment each year, the center operates “without one penny from the general revenue fund,” Herrmann said.

In the media

“Hard policy” security studies research is probably 80 percent of the scholarship the Mershon Center produces, Herrmann said. Prominent among the scholars is John Mueller, the Woody Hayes Chair of National Security Studies.

Mueller is the kind of outspoken, fearless guy Woody would have loved. When Comedy Central’s Jon Stewart brought The Daily Show to Columbus in 2006, Mueller appeared on the program to promote his book “Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them.”

The chance of an American dying in an act of terrorism is very small, Mueller told Stewart. The two concurred that, nevertheless, politicians look to sell fear instead of rational estimates of risk.

Last spring, high-profile venues including the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, CNN.com, and Foreign Affairs quoted both Mueller and Mansoor on their views of Libya’s struggling rebellion against Moammar Gadhafi. Mueller said that an “Iraq syndrome”—he coined the phrase back in 2005—had made the U.S. government reluctant to get deeply involved in the on-the-ground armed struggles in Libya.

A writer for the Economist, describing the accuracy of Mueller’s Iraq syndrome predictions, ruled: “A bull’s-eye for the professor.”

This story was republished with permission from the Ohio State Alumni Association.

Study Abroad: Students learning across the globe

Elizabeth Harter

This summer, I traveled to England for the six-week Oxford University Pre-Law study abroad program. Each day I attended classes that were engaging and enlightening, had tea time, and went on excursions around England to palaces, Parliament, and even to the Supreme Court. I learned so much about English and American law from professors who were unbelievably talented, and I developed a much deeper understanding of the world around me. I loved being a part of a legacy of students that reaches back to the 800’s. Studying abroad was an incredibly empowering experience. I wanted to study abroad to make the most out of my college experience and it ended up changing my view of the world and of myself.

Andrew Tirpak

I spent my summer participating in the Sustaining Human Societies and the Natural Environment study abroad program in North Queensland, Australia. I learned about the Australian landscape and the sensitive ecosystems that characterize the environment, and how these ecosystems have been affected by outside cultures and land development over time. Like the knowledge I gained about the environment, the lessons I learned about Aboriginal culture and history were so much more meaningful because I was being taught by an Aboriginal Australian—someone who was raised in the culture and had firsthand knowledge of the customs and traditions of the people who have inhabited the diverse continent for 40,000 years. In Australia, I was able to see and do an incredible number of things that I never imagined I would experience— I snorkelled on the Great Barrier Reef with sea turtles, dolphins, and humpback whales, hiked through rain forests with Aboriginal Australians and learned many of the methods employed by early Australians that allowed them to survive in the challenging environment.

This fall, the Mershon Center for International Security Studies welcomed a new director, J. Craig Jenkins, former Chair of the Department of Sociology.

Jenkins holds a PhD in Sociology from the State University of New York-Stony Brook, an M.A. in sociology from SUNY-Stony Brook, and a B.A. from the University of Texas-Austin. He has been a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at Ohio State since 1986. As a faculty associate in the Mershon Center, he is well acquainted with the mission and operation of this unit. He is also a research fellow with the Center for African Studies.

Jenkins specializes in political sociology and social movements. Current research projects include comparative analyses of social movements and violence, the world refugee crisis, ethnic and nationality conflicts, international terrorism, and global environmental degradation. He is the author of numerous articles and books, among them the “Handbook of Politics” (New York: Springer, 2010, co-edited with K.T. Leicht) and also a volume titled, “Identity Conflict: Can Violence Be Regulated?”, which he edited with Esther Gottlieb, Ph.D., the Office of International Affairs’ International Education Outreach Liaison.

After spending the past year as a visiting scholar at the Peace Research International Institute in Oslo, Norway, Jenkins began his new appointment on September 1. His first major project was to initiate a search for a chair in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, which he hopes to have completed by December.

J. Craig Jenkins

Elizabeth Harter

Andrew Tirpak
International Student Profile: Javier Alvarez-Araya

Home city and country: San Jose, Costa Rica
Year in school: Second year, full-time MBA at the Fisher College of Business, and MS. AEDE at the Department of Agricultural Environmental and Development Economics (AEDE).
Major: MBA - Marketing & Strategy, MS. AEDE - Development

What are your career plans after graduation?
I plan to pursue an international career in the U.S. or Europe. Prior to coming to OSU I worked as a management consultant, which gave me exposure to leading companies in several markets. I would like to pursue a career that involves cross-border engagements with a focus on development and continuous process improvement.

How long have you been in the United States/Columbus?
I arrived to Columbus at the beginning of the summer in 2010. During this time I took a three week module of classes prior to departing for Hong Kong on a 10 week consulting assignment for Fisher Professional Services. I returned to Columbus on September 15th and completed my first year of studies. Then I lived in New York City during the summer of 2011 for the MBA Summer Internship. Total time in the U.S. 12 months.

Why did you choose Ohio State?
Choosing Ohio State University was easy for me. I was looking for a flexible program with a renowned faculty in the areas I want to specialize in. I personally know several professionals from Costa Rica who studied at Ohio State, each of these individuals highly recommended OSU. Also during the application process, both faculties were extremely welcoming and candid about the opportunities that an institution the size of OSU could offer.

What most surprised you about your experience in Columbus and the United States?
I was very surprised by how welcoming people are in Columbus and the U.S. I have made friendships that I will always cherish. Also, the infrastructure of the country and the agility with which all official procedures are resolved is very impressive.

What has been the hardest thing to adapt to since you’ve come to Columbus?
Winter temperatures have been the hardest aspect to adapt to. In Costa Rica we don’t have all the seasons as the U.S. does. I have come to appreciate fall and spring’s nice weather and scenery.

What are your career plans after graduation?
I make an effort to get involved with student organizations and stay active as a school leader. I had the opportunity to work at the International Programs Office. In this program I had the opportunity to showcase Costa Rica’s business culture to fellow MBA classmates. I also have a close relationship with the Graduate Programs at Fisher, where I encourage other fellow Latin Americans to pursue their studies at Ohio State. I also like to have cookouts and friendly gatherings at my house or the Short North.

What is the most fun/exciting thing you’ve done since you’ve arrived at Ohio State?
Football games and tailgating with friends have been the biggest highlights of my stay in the U.S.

How has the Office of International Affairs helped you adapt to campus life?
Moving to a new country is not always an easy process. The Office of International Affairs has been very helpful in providing assistance with visa, tax and academic issues. The procedures are very well structured and the information/staff availability has always made it easy to work with them. I am also very impressed with the responsiveness of calls and emails whenever I have reached out.

How did the opportunity for this grant arise?
The $100,000 grant is one of 10 that has been awarded by the American Embassy in Beijing to pairs of Chinese and American universities throughout the United States and China. The State Department hopes that the network of American Centers and program partnerships funded through the 10 grants will promote greater understanding of the United States among the Chinese public and student community by providing access to a broad variety of American scholars, artists, writers and performers. Public programs will introduce Chinese to the American experience and enhance the cultural and academic outreach of the U.S. Mission in China.