Summer in Pristina

Last summer a group from Ohio State traveled to Pristina, the capital and largest city in Kosovo, to test their newly acquired Albanian language skills, attend a two-week seminar on Albanian language, literature and culture at the University of Pristina and explore the nuances of everyday life in another country.

Before traveling to Kosovo, about half of the group who traveled abroad honed their skills by attending the Albanian Mini-Institute developed by Brian Joseph, Ohio State Distinguished University Professor of Linguistics and Kerstin E. Naylor Professor of South Slavic Linguistics. The Mini-Institute consisted of two compressed three-week courses, Introduction to Albanian Linguistics and Basic Conversational Albanian. Joseph taught the linguistics class and Matthew Curtis, a PhD candidate, taught the conversational class. Funding for the conversation class was provided by Ohio State’s Center for Slavic and East European Studies.

Ohio State ranked in top 20 nationally for international students and study abroad

Ohio State’s Office of International Affairs recently released its sixth annual report, “Ohio State 2010/2011.” The report tracks the number and composition of Ohio State students and faculty who study abroad. The report also highlights the university’s efforts to build relationships with faculty and institutions abroad.

The report showed that Ohio State ranked sixth in the nation with 1,449 students studying abroad. This represented 10% of Ohio State’s enrolled student body. Ohio State students traveled to 115 countries and institutions during the academic year.

The Office of International Affairs also sponsored and administered 55 programs abroad, including 17 faculty-led programs.

In addition, Ohio State was ranked sixth in the nation with 69 students who participated in language immersion programs.

Three Ohio State faculty awarded Fulbright Scholar honor

Yuvol Fricke, a Professor in the Department of Women’s Studies, and Richard Gordon, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, were selected as recipients of prestigious Fulbright Fellowships. The awards are given by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which administers the program for the U.S. Department of State.

Fulbright Scholar – Yuvol Fricke

In June 2010 Yuvol Fricke will travel to Buenos Aires, Argentina for three months to present a series of lectures to graduate students and faculty, and run a research seminar on current topics in archeology at the University of Buenos Aires. His lectures will be based on his current research work with Pierre Deligne, a Field Medallist (comparable to the Nobel Prize for mathematics) at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

“I will be describing arithmetic-geometric objects using analytic tools,” Fricke explained. “This research work will involve an undergraduate student from Chicago, also a Field Medallist, who has stayed dormant since 1981.”

Global Strategies A Q&A with William Brustein

What progress has been made in launching Ohio State’s Global Gateway centers? Currently, we are developing a business plan and a budget to phase in the opening of Ohio State’s Global Gateway centers in Greater China, India and Brazil. Working in concert with our China and India Gateway Faculty Advisory Committees – soon we will have a faculty committee for Brazil – we hope to open the first office in Shanghai in the early part of 2010 as an exploratory presence for Ohio State.

As a starting point, we have just signed a lease for office space in the central business district of Shanghai, and we have appointed desks, as well as an office space in Brazil and in India. In a subsequent phase we hope to expand this office to a full service center as envisioned with the Gateway initiatives.

We want our Gateway office to be independent of any one particular university in China. It is important that we are able to work with all distinguished universities in the country, rather than just one.

Our faculty, our alumni and leaders in the business community are working with us to help shape the type of offerings that might be possible in these locations.

For example, we are drawing on the expertise of our faculty to develop executive training programs in supply chain logistics and food safety, so that we can offer a certificate-curricular program for Ohio-based business professionals working in Shanghai.

What other opportunities arise as part of the Global Gateway project? Among the Offices of Research, Undergraduate Education and Stategic Planning, the Office of International Affairs is investing $100,000 in faculty grant opportunities to develop study abroad programs, research proposals and internship programs with partner institutions in Greater China, India and Brazil. We want to provide faculty with a direct connection to the Gateway countries and a way to enhance our existing partnerships.

The Gateway Study Abroad Seed Grant is a proposal for faculty to develop and implement three new study abroad programs in Greater China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), India and Brazil. Three seed grants of $5,000 each per country will be awarded.

In partnership with the Office of Research, we are offering the Gateway Research Grant, which promotes research collaborations between Ohio State faculty and partners in China, India and Brazil, and which are aligned with the themes related to the five Centers of Excellence. Five awards of $15,000 each will be distributed.

In partnership with the Office of Undergraduate Education, the Gateway Interactive Course Module Seed Grant will encourage faculty to adopt existing course content into collaborative activities for a shared experience between an Ohio State class and a class (or classes) in one or more international partner institutions. Five awards of $10,000 each will be distributed.

Melgar-Quinonez works worldwide to determine danger of hunger

Hunger is a reality for millions of families across the globe. And it seems that food insecurity is increasing. But no one really knows how many people are in danger of being undernourished and even starving.

Nutritionist Hugo Melgar-Quinonez is working to develop a reliable measurement tool that will give government agencies worldwide exact numbers about how households experience food insecurity and hunger. With the data, countries can pinpoint the causes and consequences, and then establish policies to stave off food insecurity.

Melgar-Quinonez will travel to Rome in March 2011 on an invitation from the United Nations to discuss his research with the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization. FAO has awarded the associate professor of human nutrition $50,000 to revise the use of the Spanish language and census scales used in food insecurity studies in Latin America and the Caribbean for use worldwide. In addition, he is interested in whether food insecurity scales could be used in China, India, Kenya, and the Philippines.

“We will talk about the psychometric characteristics of the food insecurity scales. Are they reliable? Do they measure hunger well, and define it in the same way?” Melgar-Quinonez said.

The consequences can be enormous. A measurement tool works in Brazil, where levels of food insecurity are 30 percent of the population, will it work in Mexico, where 52 percent of families are confronting the same problem? The FAO project will help Melgar-Quinonez develop a proposal to do a full study in Central America.

The project has implications for the United States, too. A U.S. Department of Agriculture survey using a similar Household Food Security Scale in 2008 found that 14.6 percent of families are food insecure. That was an increase of 5.5 percent over 2007 levels.

“Food insecurity is sensitive to the economic burdens people face,” Melgar-Quinonez said.

In addition, he noted, “There are different levels of food insecurity. Not all families are starving. Severe food insecurity leads to undernourishment, but mild and moderate food insecurity can actually lead to being overweight.”

He explains that carbohydrates are cheaper and poor families often cannot buy fruit and vegetables necessary for a balanced diet. In addition, as fast food becomes available even in countries far from the U.S., families move away from healthier traditional diets.

In his work with Latino families in Ohio, Melgar-Quinonez has found this pattern follows as immigrants enter the U.S. Unlike past generations, families already are familiar with fast food and have moved to non-traditional diets. Preliminary research at Ohio State is looking at the association between food insecurity and obesity among food stamp recipients.

At a time when food insecurity is a major public health and agricultural issue, Melgar-Quinonez’s scholarship is contributing to fight hunger worldwide.

GlobalPerspectives

Winter Quarter 2010

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Research project: American musicians in Cold War cultural diplomacy

During the Cold War, the U.S. State Department sent musicians to strategically important regions around the world to enhance the image of the United States. Hundreds of musicians performed a broad variety of styles including jazz, classical, folk, blues, country, musical theater, choral, and even avant-garde art music. Despite the importance of these tours, no scholar has yet done a thorough analysis of the effects of this program. Danielle Friel Otter, an assistant professor in the School of Music, is attempting to do just that, relying not only on material from the State Department and other key archives, but also on privately held materials and oral history research with musicians and diplomats.

One example is the tour of Latin America by the University of Michigan Jazz Band. The State Department saw the tour as a vehicle for spreading American ideas and inculcating respect for American culture. But the events played out on the ground was more complex. In Bolivia, the jazz band played on the university campus in La Paz because the local leaders used the performance to enhance their own reputations. The tour gave also American Embassy officials an opportunity to build relationships with student leaders. After the musicians left, embassy officials built on those connections by arranging for the Bolivian student leaders to visit the United States.

Other tours had other effects. A performance of avant-garde artists in Romania was facilitated by the State Department itself, and the jazz band that played in Bucharest, Romania, was the same group that played in Cuba. The Romanian avant-garde was not well received by the local audience, and they could not understand the music, which they considered too avant-garde to be good music. Nevertheless, the performance fostered a sense of inferiority. Musical projects thus built complex worldwide social relationships.

Ohio State ranked in top 20 nationally (continued from page 1)

International students at Ohio State are from 119 different countries including, China (1,161); India (1,052); South Korea (832); Taiwan (722) and Indonesia (122). Nationally, the leading home countries for international students are India, China, South Korea, Japan and Canada. The most popular destinations for Ohio State students to study abroad include: the United Kingdom, Italy, China, France, Germany and Spain. Nationally, the leading destinations for studying abroad are the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China.

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Students across the globe

Aimee Roy, a graduate student majoring in geography, spent 10 weeks in July 2008 studying the political making of migrants in West Bengal, India. Her project, The Political Economy of Migrant Labor in India, explores the material and ideological conditions that reproduce the system of labor exploitation in India. Merging with the research enabled Roy to complete pre-research dissertation work in West Bengal. She spent time at local archives researching implications on migrant conflicts. Roy also was able to build a network of contacts in urban Kolkata as well as in the rural districts of Malda and Darjeeling. She met with political representatives, labor union leaders, migrant workers, and labor contractors to discuss current and historical issues faced by migrant workers in the brick industry. During meetings with local researchers and NGO representatives, she received valuable feedback about her interviewing methodology and future fieldwork.

Mai Choi is an undergraduate student majoring in human resource management. Over winter break, I found myself trekking to the Vietnamese capital of the All-Scholars Mexican American Studies program. I expected to be awed by the things I would see, much humbled by the Mayan ruins, but I found myself more intrigued by the people and how they have been affected by the shrinkage of the world, in particular the global economy (as illustrated by the presence of American stores). And while many natives have thrived from it, many others are being destroyed by the economic downturn. Playing in a lacrosse tournament in the Berlin Olympic Stadium – a location of such historic significance.

Three Ohio State faculty awarded Fulbright (cont. from page 3)

“The work we are doing is revolutionary and opens a new area of research at the crossroads of algebraic geometry, arithmetic and representation theory – of very current interest. It was thought before that the technical difficulties were insurmountable, but we figured out how to open the door to advance the area, making it accessible to graduate students and other researchers. In retrospect, the initial observations were more straightforward but were never realized,” he said.

The Fulbright award provides a vehicle for scholars to share their research findings and disseminate information to educational institutions. A grantee typically travels to centers of mathematical research and study around the world, especially Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom and France, to lecture and engage in research and collaboration.

Teaching graduate level courses at Ohio State and having the ability to lecture during breaks, Flicker believes he has been fortunate so far. “I am honored to share what I have learned with others,” he said.

Working in Buenos Aires for three months will not only afford Flicker the possibility to enhance the mathematical environment there, but also give him the opportunity to deepen another of his passions: Argentine Tango. He currently serves as the lead educator for TangoOSU (tango.osu.edu), a student organization he founded while preparing materials for experiments and writing a report that was the foundation for the research of the doctoral student who mentored him. Through his interactions with his students, he realized that he was not only able to see the different American work environment. The Germans are more formal in their day-to-day activities. (It was a new dynamic I wasn’t used to),” he said.

Flicker earned his PhD from Cambridge University, UK, and conducted post doctoral work at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. Institute des Hautes Études Scientifiques located in Bures-Sur-Yvette, France, and at Princeton, Claremont, California and Harward University. He has been at Ohio State for 20 years.

International Student Profile: Sleiman Bou Sleiman

What has most surprised you about your experience in Columbus and the United States? How genuinely helpful and kind people are, especially in the Midwest. Oh, and how seriously they take their sports. My first day in Columbus was a game day so you would imagine my surprise seeing all that scarlet, white and gray.

What has been the hardest thing to adapt to since you’ve come to Columbus? Having experienced extremely efficient public transportation in Europe and being totally car-free for almost two years, I can say that Columbus slowly brought back the urge to drive a car everywhere I need to go, even to the down-the-street grocer.

What is the most fun/exciting thing you’ve done since you’ve arrived at Ohio State? I became part of the Lebanese Student Organization, serving as VP during the first year, and then President since December 2008. With all the wonderful people at the organization, we have made a lot of strides in raising awareness and creating a strong and reputable presence on campus, despite the size of the group. I’m especially proud of the many achievements including a magnificent Taste of OSU participation in 2009, the first ever Syria festival at the dining commons, a successful photography exhibition about Lebanon, and more recently planting a Lebanese Cedar tree at the OSU Chadwark Arboretum and Learning Gardens here on the Columbus campus!

How has the Office of International Affairs helped you adapt to campus life? I had the privilege of working with an OSU professor and founder/director of a highly respected lab in the ECE department while doing my masters at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden. He liked my work and offered me to pursue my project while assuming a position in his lab in Columbus. This gave me a chance to get a head-start with my research, instead of starting over due to a location (program)/lab move.

City and home country: Mehm, Lebanon

Year in school: Third year of PhD program

Major: Electrical Engineering

What are your career plans after college? Possibly working for some tech company’s R&D

Why did you choose Ohio State? I had the privilege of working with an OSU professor and founder/director of a highly respected lab in the ECE department while doing my masters at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden. He liked my work and offered me to pursue my project while assuming a position in his lab in Columbus. This gave me a chance to get a head-start with my research, instead of starting over due to a location (program)/lab move.

An internship in Cologne has historic backdrop

Playing in a lacrosse tournament in the Berlin Olympic Stadium and internating at the German Aerospace Center, opened up a whole new world to Tom Eckardt, a senior double-majoring in German and welding engineering. On his third academic inspired trip to Germany, Eckardt experienced a piece of history and engaged in a different type of work environment.

He took advantage of playing in a lacrosse tournament with a local club in Cologne whose members had he befriended on his second visit to Germany and the University of Bonn. He was able to be playing lacrosse in the Berlin Olympic Stadium – a location of such historic significance.

While his academic abroad programs to Dresden and Bonn were focused on learning the German language and modern German history respectively, the internship in Cologne found him having to make a series of adjustments. “It was a little different than any typical American work environment. The Germans are more formal in their day-to-day activities. (It was a new dynamic I wasn’t used to),” he said. His research at the aerospace center focused on examining the diffusion binding in nickel-based superalloys, conducting literary research, preparing materials for experiments and writing a report that was the foundation for the research of the doctoral student who mentored him. While Eckardt was proficient in the German language, he found the most steeped part of his job was translating his report into technical German.

While it was an adjustment to life in Germany, he ultimately found the experience something he will never forget. “On my two study experiences and one work experience in Germany, I have met people from all over Europe, Asia and North America. Through my interactions with them, I was not only able to see the differing philosophies on work, engineering practices and university studies, but I also discussed politics and social issues,” he said. “Having had these opportunities truly makes me believe that I can work anywhere in the world and in any industry.”

Tom Eckardt