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Students Lured by Atypical Opportunities Abroad

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – When junior Jacob Weis decided that he must study in Uganda, he looked to Illinois Wesleyan for his opportunity. “I transferred from another university to Illinois Wesleyan so that I could spend a semester in Africa,” said Weis, who will study this fall in Kampala, Uganda’s capital city, and will also visit Rwanda as part of an Illinois Wesleyan-affiliated study abroad program, School for International Training (SIT).

SIT offers field-based, experiential programs for undergraduate students in nearly 50 countries on six continents. Weis chose Uganda after viewing the film *Invisible Children*, a documentary about the effects of the on-going civil war on the people of Northern Uganda.

Weis has spent his time at Illinois Wesleyan preparing for the trip, during which he will focus his studies on the Ugandan educational system. “I hope that through my studies I will be able to see what needs to change to help Uganda progress as a country,” said Weis. He plans to research Ugandan culture, educational opportunities, teaching style, opportunities for higher education, and how middle schools are run.

Illinois Wesleyan junior Angela Rumsey was also inspired to travel to Uganda after seeing the film *Invisible Children*. A Lombard, Ill. native, Rumsey traveled to Kampala, where she attended classes and completed a six-week internship through SIT during the Fall 2007 semester.

“I lived with a Ugandan family in Kampala, which is a very modern city, went to school on weekdays, hung out with friends—both Ugandan and American—and went out to eat,” said Rumsey. “In theory, all these things seemed like home, but they were still very different.”

The anthropology and international studies double major with a concentration in development studies chose the SIT program because “I was more interested in being active than just sitting in a different university,” said Rumsey. “I interned with Child Restoration Outreach, an organization that works with disadvantaged children, where I worked with them in classrooms, counseling sessions and just playing outside. It gave me experience that I could have never received just by going to class, even if it was in a different country and culture.”

Rumsey notes that her work with the SIT program in Uganda not only expanded her knowledge base, but also enhanced her sense of independence. "I am certain, now, that I will live and work abroad for a while in my life. I'd love to go back to Uganda but I have a long list of places to visit," said Rumsey.

According to its Mission Statement, Illinois Wesleyan prides itself on an education that prepares students to be part of a "global society." Alumna Myla Green takes this to heart. Since graduating in 2007, Green has been living and working for a non-governmental women's rights organization in Andhra Pradesh, India through an American Jewish World Services fellowship.

During her work in India, the women's studies major from Ashland, Mass. has found that a May Term trip to South Africa helped prepare her for life in a developing country while her studies at Illinois Wesleyan have been instrumental to her work. Coursework she completed for her degree has aided her in "making linkages between women's issues and greater patriarchal society, having a grasp of women's roles in international development, and developing a gender perspective," said Green, whose work focuses on research and education relevant to women's issues.

Among her projects, Green has created a 30-day gender and human rights course, which she says was largely informed by content from her own women's studies courses at Illinois Wesleyan and Oxford University, where she spent her junior year through an Illinois Wesleyan exchange program. "A coworker and I gave a shortened version of the course to the staff in our office, and now we are advertising it at local women's colleges and plan to offer it as a certificate course," said Green.

Upon returning from India, Green hopes to work at a non-government organization in either New York City or Boston. "I am currently applying and interviewing for more fellowships and I hope to work internationally again in the not-too-distant future," said Green.

For additional information about study abroad opportunities at Illinois Wesleyan, visit the International Office Web site at <http://www2.iwu.edu/studyabroad/>. For more information about SIT, visit <http://www.worldlearning.org/323.htm>.