



4-19-2010

Travel Courses Teach Business Abroad

Monica Piotrowski '10
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Piotrowski '10, Monica, "Travel Courses Teach Business Abroad" (2010). *News and Events*. 1400.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/1400>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Travel Courses Teach Business Abroad

April 19, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – It is one thing to learn about Asian Economics in a classroom, however learning about it while visiting the Caterpillar factory in Singapore provides an entirely different business experience. Such opportunities have been made possible by Illinois Wesleyan University, as well as professors such as Associate Professor of Business Administration Fred Hoyt, who has traveled to approximately 30 countries with students during various business study-abroad courses.

Hoyt began taking students on month-long study-abroad trips in 1993 with destinations such as Europe, Asia and Australia. The trips provide both the chance to travel and a business course abroad. Before their departure, students must first study and read about business practices in the countries they will visit, as well as write a comparative essay about their readings. Then while abroad, the students visit international businesses, receive tours of foreign companies and even meet with expatriates living overseas.

The business visits on Hoyt's trips are made possible by IWU alumni who are working abroad as well as connections made by Hoyt on his previous travels. On the May Term 2009 Asian Economics course, students visited businesses such as John Deere and Caterpillar Inc. in Singapore and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP in Hong Kong, where they were met by alumni Matt Dredge, class of 2000.

These business visits give students the ability to apply the materials they had read prior to the trip to the information presented by the hosting companies. "Reading before the trip about a country's business and economics provides material you would like to pick up and learn more of, if only you had the time. May Term trips give you that time, as well as the execution of business. You can read about a financial situation and practical application but the best thing is that you get to ask the practitioners 'Is the literature accurate or falling short?' You can't ask a book about that," said alumni J.R. Glenn.

Glenn, a business and economics major from the class of 2005, says the trips he took while at Illinois Wesleyan greatly impacted his life. Glenn enjoyed traveling abroad so much that he continued to do so after graduation. During his time at Illinois Wesleyan, he traveled to 15 countries including Europe, Russia, China and Southeast Asia with various business professors. He then joined Hoyt in China this past May. Glenn so enjoyed his trip that when the students on the May Term trip returned home, he and Hoyt continued on to Mongolia.

"Traveling to a different country pushes you outside of your comfort level and outside your average academic zone. These opportunities abroad are the essence of a liberal arts education. There is continuous learning while taking what you've learned, applying it around the world and seeing it used classically in both the social and business sense," said Glenn. "If you have free time and you are hungry in China, it doesn't matter if you can't speak the language. You will learn how to get that food. The trips teach you how to make it work. These ventures develop character. It is a personal experience that cannot be duplicated in a classroom."

The business values learned abroad can also be applied in future settings. “I remember discussing property rights while we were traveling in Asia. Now, a few years later, I’m talking about property rights again in law school at the University of Illinois. It all relates back,” said Glenn.

Christina Kerbel, a business major from the class of 2009, traveled to China and Korea with Hoyt in May of 2008. “While we were at the Caterpillar Inc. in Singapore, one of the students on the trip was wearing an IWU shirt. A worker stopped us in amazement because he was from the Caterpillar Inc. in Peoria. It showed how small the world can be,” said Kerbel.

“I recommend that everyone who has the opportunity to study abroad should do so. I’ll never forget biking on the Xi’an City Wall or looking at the buildings of Hong Kong at night. The trip broadened my horizons and while I would have been afraid to travel for business before, I would love to be sent to Hong Kong for business now,” said Kerbel.

Seniors Rose Richardson, a business administration and marketing major from Naperville, Ill. and Andy Bauer, an accounting major from Mequon, Wis., both attended the 2009 Asian Economics trip that traveled to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Beijing. The excursion was Richardson’s first travel course as well as her first time out of the country. “It was interesting to see the way business is done abroad. It was also great to talk to expatriates because they have a whole different perspective and also have adjusted to the culture of the country,” said Richardson. Richardson says the trip made her much more open to adventure and provided many memorable experiences. “Only on a trip like this would you eat fish stomachs, climb 272 steps to a Hindu temple in a cave and dance on stage at a Turkish restaurant in Beijing.”

This was Bauer’s second travel course. He traveled to China the previous year and decided to return to Asia after his first visit to Hong Kong. “I’ll never forget the first time I saw Victoria Harbor at night. It was stunning! I knew I had to come back to Hong Kong and when I got the chance a year later, I signed up immediately.”

“I really enjoyed when we met with expatriates at the companies. At PricewaterhouseCoopers in Hong Kong, we met some ex-pats that were only a few years out of school and it was interesting to see how they enjoyed living abroad. The expatriates learn a lot about their business and how to deal with people in other cultures. As our world becomes more globalized, I see this as an essential skill for people to have. I’m really glad I got these opportunities to see the world while studying here at IWU,” said Bauer.

Contact: Monica Piotrowski '10, (309) 556-3181