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Vi Kakares
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Asia Internship Program Earns \$400,000 Grant

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Over the past three years, Illinois Wesleyan University has sent 77 students to complete summer internships in Asia, and it is about to send a lot more – thanks to a \$400,000 grant renewal from the Freeman Foundation.

According to Professor of Sociology and Director of the [Freeman Asia Internship Program](#) Teddy Amoloza, the grant will provide full funding for students to intern in Asia during the summers of 2018 and 2019. This funding includes students' airfare, placement and visa costs, lodging, plus a living allowance. An informational session regarding the 2018 program will be held on Nov. 14 at 4 p.m. in the Minor Myers, jr. Welcome Center Auditorium, and applications are due Jan. 29.

Amoloza said that Illinois Wesleyan is one of 25 schools in the nation to receive this amount of funding from the Freeman Foundation.

"A number of schools that get this kind of funding are large institutions, and we have become part of that chosen group," Amoloza said. "The opportunity for our students is really great for this particular program in terms of the comparative advantage that we have."

Amoloza said that she originally started the program, open to sophomores and juniors, to strengthen Illinois Wesleyan students' knowledge and engagement with Asia. Her history with the Freeman Foundation and her personal connections throughout Asia make the program possible at Illinois Wesleyan.

"We're able to place students directly in Asia. That's how important these personal connections are," Amoloza said. "I got to know somebody, who knew somebody, and then I pursued it. It's about connecting the dots."

Director of the International Office Stacey Shimizu said Amoloza's connections in Asia have allowed students to intern at a range of sites, extending from the Philippines, to Hong Kong, to Japan, to Thailand. Shimizu said that because we live in a global society, experiences like the ones provided through the Freeman Asia Internship Program are necessary for students who will be working with a wide range of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

"Internships are really valuable because students are working with people who live in the culture," Shimizu said. "They're getting a hands-on experience in the work culture of that country."

Shimizu said that by interning abroad, students learn skills that extend far beyond the workplace.

"Students come back with stronger skills – certainly academic skills – but also 'soft' skills, like problem solving, communication, comfort with unfamiliarity and adaptability, skills that are so hard to teach," Shimizu said.



Savanna Steck '18, a 2017 Freeman Asia Intern, worked with Make a Difference Travel (MAD Travel) in the Philippines.



Illinois Wesleyan students interned in the Philippines – and several other countries – during last year's Freeman Asia Internship Program.

she was learning how to adjust accordingly to Filipino work culture.

“Coming from America, I’m very ‘by the books.’ I have a planner, I have a schedule, I have time. In the Philippines, I had to learn that not everybody is going to jump and do things as soon as I ask them to,” Steck said. “This was an invaluable experience in stretching my ability to work with different people and recognize how to adapt to make sure that I can be the best employee that I can be.”

Amoloza said that it is students’ abilities to adapt to different situations, “engage in different kinds of activities, and have the resilience to bounce back if something doesn’t work well” that typically constitute a Freeman Asia Intern. Amoloza said these are just a few of the qualities she typically looks for in students’ applications, due on Jan. 29. Along with preparing a resume, Amoloza said students will write two essays, expressing their interest in the program and discussing any previous experiences they’ve had that will help them adjust to being in a different place and culture.

Shimizu said that although the idea of interning abroad and adjusting to a different culture can be frightening, students can learn a lot from doing something that is outside of their comfort zone.

“Study abroad – when it’s done right – should be uncomfortable,” Shimizu said. “Even if you’re hesitant, do it because you will discover that you are stronger than you think. You just discover these hidden competencies through the power of observation – the way in which a simple task can be so daunting until you figure it out.”

Savanna Steck '18, a 2017 Freeman Asia Intern, agreed. An English major with a minor in Hispanic Studies, Steck said that from her internship with Make a Difference Travel (MAD Travel), a travel agency in the Philippines, she not only sharpened her writing skills, but also learned the importance of being independent.

“Being an intern, you don’t have the comfort of the things you know,” Steck said. “It really means that you have to be an adult and be self-sufficient, which is a great skill to learn.”

Steck said that when she wasn’t touring throughout the Philippines, writing blog posts, making brochures, and collecting pictures and videos to expand MAD Travel’s marketing efforts,