

## **Internships abroad becoming the norm at UWO**

by Allison Reineck - Friday, March 11, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/10047/internships-abroad-becoming-the-norm-at-uwo/>

Australia, Germany and New Zealand; these are just a few countries where University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students apply their acquired classroom knowledge to internships.

Not only are there numerous UW Oshkosh students earning course credits abroad every semester, but there are a growing number of students taking international internships as well. Both graduate and undergraduate students can intern overseas, earn course credit and even earn a pay check.

UWO business student Ryan Nelson became interested with internships abroad because it could provide a new environment and culture to work in. This senior marketing major ended up turning a volunteer experience with Special Olympics into an internship opportunity “down under.”

“To earn business credits for an internship, I had to intern a certain number of hours,” Nelson said. “So I started my internship here in Appleton—conducting marketing and event planning for Special Olympics—and earned the rest of my hours and credits doing marketing research and data analysis for the same organization in Sydney, Australia.”

The difference between studying abroad and interning abroad is that students typically go alone and immerse themselves in a different culture and work environment. Students may or may not need to know a second language, but they will need to adapt to a new culture, develop new communication and interpersonal skills, and apply their acquired knowledge to a job.

“It was a different experience because the people I was around had varying work ethics. In the U.S. we live to work, and they work to live. It’s very different,” Nelson said. “Because of this, our supervisor was really impressed of how hard and quick we worked on projects.”

The demand for internships has opened doors into many international organizations, and UW Oshkosh students are continuing to benefit from new opportunities abroad. Although students can set up their own international internship, Jenna Graff, Office of International Education (OIE), recommends students work with a placement organization to get the full experience.

“A placement agency will do all of the research for you,” Graff said. “They will maximize your time in a host country by setting up room and board, itineraries and appropriate insurance packages. These agencies are right by the student’s side when they have questions.”

Graff said internships abroad allow students to experience different cultures and gain knowledge to accomplish their academic and career goals. She explained that internships abroad get students “out of their bubble.”

“In a lot of the study abroad programs, students easily find the other American to associate with,” Graff

said. "If you're doing an internship, you sort of leave that enclave, go into a work setting, have to do things the way people do them in your host country and learn a lot more about the culture."

OIE recommends UWO students choose a field they would like to gain internship experience in, look where opportunities are available and select a country of interest. Graff said that it is important students spend time researching and understanding an internship abroad, because they need to make sure they get what they want out of it.

Amanda Fenske, a senior marketing major originally from Slinger, contacted OIE when she started looking into studying abroad but became more interested in international internship opportunities.

"I had been to Fulda to study last summer and was interested in going again, but there were not many internships," Fenske said. "Jenna told me about the Osnabruek program. It was a scholarship I could earn to study for six months and then intern the following six months."

Fenske received the scholarship and is currently interning as a research assistant for BMS Marketing Research + Strategy in Munich, Germany. She writes questionnaires for American clients, helps project managers with their own projects and codes open-ended questions to analyze responses.

"I think the biggest take-away will be having the ability to recognize the different languages, time zones and culture," Fenske said. "The internship builds on this knowledge by having me translate responses in different languages, listen in on conference calls from clients around the world, and understand the tendencies of how people in different countries respond to questionnaires."

It does not matter what major a student has or when he or she decides to intern abroad. Ashley Hellenbrand, a senior chemistry and environmental studies major, found a good fit on the other side of the globe during her senior year.

"I'm interning at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, where I will be taking away a much greater confidence in my ability to do anything," Hellenbrand said. "I was always unsure about my chemistry abilities, but they trust me in New Zealand—with whatever I do."

Hellenbrand performs lab duties at the University and gets to see how other people from Germany, Chile, France, India and New Zealand perform their tasks. She says it has made her like chemistry more.

"Before coming here, I didn't know if I was truly in love with my major," Hellenbrand said. "After performing research with people who love the topic, I am actually doing research I have always wanted to. It's amazing."

Students interested in taking part of an internship outside the U.S. can contact faculty and staff in OIE, Career Services and within their majors department to start the process.

"Studying abroad completely expands your horizons," Nelson said. "It's changed my perspective on a lot of things—work, culture, language and communication. I'm hoping the experience opens up to several career opportunities after graduation."

[Read more about international internship opportunities for UW Oshkosh students.](#)