

Nontraditional Student Organization's monthly meeting to focus on study abroad opportunities

by Contributor - Thursday, February 09, 2012

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For nontraditional student Chris Swartout, balancing school, family and his leadership roles in student organizations keeps him busy, too busy to study abroad — or so he thought.

Swartout had never traveled overseas before he took the Community Clinical class during the Fall 2011 interim, when he studied abroad in India through the UW Oshkosh nursing program.

“It’s very much a life-changing experience, especially in India because you see so much poverty,” Swartout said. “It’s not uncommon to see a beautiful stone house next to a mud hut — it makes you appreciate what you do have and it makes you realize that maybe what you do have isn’t so bad.”

Along with other adult nontraditional students who have studied abroad, Swartout will share his experiences at the Nontraditional Student Organization (NTSO) monthly “Meet & Greet” on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2012, at 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in Dempsey 301. This month’s meeting will focus on study abroad opportunities for nontraditional students.

“This semester we wanted our monthly meetings to be business-free and just for fun, so we’re planning activities and presentations to augment a social gathering with food and chat,” Lydia Sanders, co-secretary of NTSO, said.

“Several of our members have done study abroad trips, so the idea of encouraging other nontraditional students to try it just seemed like a natural one,” Sanders said.

The Feb. 16 NTSO meeting will feature testimonials from nontraditional students who have studied abroad and a presentation by Tanya Kollross, Office of International Education (OIE) study abroad adviser.

In 2011, the OIE served more than 400 students with its study abroad programs, with many students using financial aid to cover their expenses. The OIE also has advisers available to help students with any concerns they might have.

“Students with specific needs should contact the OIE just to see if they can be addressed,” Jenna Graff, director of OIE said. “We often hear of perceived challenges that stop students from inquiring about program options. Sometimes these challenges are a myth, and other times they can be overcome.”

Sanders, an English graduate student, studied abroad in Ireland for a three-week program during the May 2011 interim in the Reading and Writing in Place course through the English department.

Sanders said she chose to study abroad for two reasons — because of her interest in the British Isles, as well as the credit she received in the English department for taking the course.

“I like to travel. The opportunity to travel using a student loan doesn’t happen very often, so I think people should take advantage of the opportunity,” Sanders said.

Initially Sanders said she didn’t think she would be able to go to because she wasn’t sure how she would fund studying abroad. After talking to a financial aid adviser, Sanders received a loan, which also gave her some spending money while abroad.

“A lot of nontraditional students don’t even think studying abroad is a possibility with work, kids and money concerns,” Sanders said. “The idea is that it’s only for kids—that nontraditional students aren’t even invited.”

Sanders worked with her parents to make sure her three teenagers were cared for in her absence and talked to her employers about leaving for three weeks—making studying abroad a reality many nontraditional students don’t think is possible.

Many nontraditional students don’t think studying abroad is an option for them, but for Swartout, it was an investment in his future.

“Yes it’s a trip, yes it’s a school class, yes it’s expensive, but you will never have the same opportunity in a college class to incorporate learning with cultural aspects,” Swartout said.

NTSO will hold its study abroad-focused “Meet & Greet” on **Thursday, Feb. 16 at 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in Dempsey 301**. For more information, please contact NTSO president Chris Swartout at swartc47@uwosh.edu.

[Kayde Kempen](#) submitted this announcement. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to contribute calendar items, campus announcements and other good news to *UW Oshkosh Today*.

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