

UWO students to travel abroad for learning experiences during interim

by Derek Paulus - Thursday, December 27, 2012

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/24184/uwo-students-to-travel-abroad-for-learning-experiences-during-interim/>

In continuing with its dedication to international education programs, a slew of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students will participate in study abroad trips during the 2012-2013 winter interim.

Through the UW Oshkosh Office of International Education, more than 80 study abroad programs are offered annually. Programs range from faculty-led trips lasting from two weeks to one semester, to direct-enroll and student exchange programs that enroll students into a host university abroad for either one semester or a full year. In addition, the University provides opportunities for students to intern in a foreign country, with destinations such as Australia, Scotland, Germany and Japan.

UW Oshkosh is also host to students from more than 40 countries who have made a temporary home at the University. Many study abroad trips and student exchanges represent long-established relationships between UW Oshkosh and academic institutions abroad.

One such relationship is the yearly nursing clinical trip to India. Professors from the UW Oshkosh College of Nursing will take 28 senior nursing students on a visit to India during this year's winter interim, which runs from Jan. 2 through Jan. 18, to study holistic medicine, teach proper hygienic practices and collaborate on research studies.

Patricia Vander Loop, a clinical professor leading the trip, said the nursing students will begin their clinical at Sri Ramachandra University, doing family home-visits, pregnancy clinic evaluations and immunization clinics. Vander Loop said UW Oshkosh has had a long-standing relationship with Sri Ramachandra University, with staff from both schools visiting the other for professional exchanges, including the yearly nursing clinical.

UW Oshkosh also has a relationship with Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi, another university destination on the trip. The university has a nursing school that specializes in Unani medicine, a medical specialty that uses plants as medicine. The hospital at Jamia Hamdard fuses Unani medicine with traditional Western medicine in their practice.

Vander Loop said the India nursing clinical allows students to experience different forms of medical practice in a foreign country. She said that early in the trip students tend to focus only on the differences between cultures, but by the end they are able to recognize the similarities.

“The goals and desired outcomes are very similar,” Vander Loop said. “The methods may vary.”

The nursing students will also visit the Himalayan Institute of Health Technology, founded by an Indian yogi named Swami Rama as a means to provide health care to those who could not afford it. The institute

will teach students about Ayurveda medicine, which addresses the cleansing of body and mind, in their healing practices.

Vander Loop said these lessons in alternative medicine show students what it truly means to be a nurse from a perspective outside of the technologically advanced practice of Western medicine.

“Students are able to recognize that the technology is not what defines a nurse,” she said. “Caring, intelligence and creativity are essential attributes that are shared by nurses around the world.”

Another trip determined to explore the well-being of communities abroad is the January 2013 trip to Malaysia hosted by the department of professional counseling. The 17-day experience will examine the effects that poverty, disability, education, and political and cultural climate have on families and individual mental health in Malaysia.

Vander Loop said study abroad trips provide a beneficial experience for students not only in gaining knowledge of a different culture, but in learning to use their study abroad experience to improve their work back home.

“Students that study abroad also get a sense of what it is like to be part of a minority,” she said. “They learn how to use translators and gain empathy for the patients in the U.S. that they have cared for previously and those they will encounter in the future.”

Nursing graduate Kaylin Bauer attended the College of Nursing’s yearly clinical trip to Peru in 2012, which takes place annually during spring break. Bauer said the experience immediately altered her perspective.

“As soon as I got off the plane and stepped foot in Peru, my perspective on life, family and my overall feelings changed,” she said.

Bauer shared the story of a bedridden mother the nursing students met on the trip. The students gave her foot and back massages to ease her tremors to the point where they were able to help her outside to enjoy the sunlight.

Bauer said the real impact of the experience came when shortly after stepping outside, an earthquake struck the area. She said the mother and her son could have been in danger had they been inside the house when the earthquake hit.

Professor Donald Hones, who will be leading a first-time trip to Costa Rica during this year’s winter interim, said students benefit from “the immersion in a culture and language other than their own.” Students traveling abroad to Costa Rica will visit an organic agriculture and ecotourism cooperative and various sites across the country, including the Irazu volcano and Playa Limon, which will help students to better understand Costa Rican geography and culture.

“Costa Rica offers a wealth of culture, history and nature that is seen in few other places,” Hones said.

Vander Loop said study abroad trips create mutually beneficial relationships with foreign institutions,

helping the surrounding communities visited by UW Oshkosh students. She said the study abroad experiences are “supportive of the learning needs of our students.”

UW Oshkosh has noticed this impact and since 2008 the number of international trips offered by the University has increased from 37 to 63. In addition, a small increase in student attendance on these trips has been noticed, with a total of about 425 students taking advantage of study abroad opportunities last year.

Bauer said these trips are an opportunity that no student should pass up.

“I highly recommend people take advantage of the study abroad program while they are in school and have the opportunity,” Bauer said. “This was an experience of a lifetime that I will never regret and hold close to my heart.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Office of International Education](#)