



International Informant

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Informing you about Oklahoma State's international trade and development efforts

Calendar of Events

- Fall 2011: Wes Watkins Distinguished Lectureship

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Oklahoma State University:
Center for International
Trade and Development

A Message from Dr. Mike Dicks

The school year starts in a few weeks and we are busy developing our list of overseas projects for next year, hiring new personnel for the international trade area and preparing new courses.

We have an array of overseas projects for student service abroad and internship opportunities in Eastern Europe, Mexico, Latin America and Africa. The projects involve working with rural communities in education, water development, agriculture and small business development. A list of the projects will be on our website. We will have service trips available over Christmas, spring break, summer and for a semester. In addition to the trips, we will be offering a course during the fall and spring to prepare students for each of the projects. For instance, we have water development projects in Togo and Sierra Leone that require drilling water wells, participants in these projects can receive training in drilling and developing water wells prior to leaving.

We have been working with universities in Moldova, Mexico, Costa Rica, Ghana and Sierra Leone to develop semester-long abroad opportunities for students and faculty. Each of these sites offers a unique set of opportunities for OSU students and faculty to take advantage of.

This newsletter contains an announcement for the new trade position and we will fill two support positions in the trade area later this semester. With this position will be

new courses designed to prepare students for the Global Business Professional certification. This is an opportunity for OSU to prepare professionals who can assist Oklahoma businesses in marketing their goods and services overseas.

We are developing a set of graduate courses in sustainability, development and trade. The sustainability course is an online course providing an overview of the current state of world resources, an introduction into life cycle analysis and insights into the political and economic dimensions of sustainability.

The development courses will cover the tools and practices of development such as project selection, management and evaluation, micro-finance, and the socio-economic implications of outside intervention and development activities.

The school year promises new international opportunities for students and faculty. We hope to assist OSU in developing international relationships that provide meaningful study and service opportunities, international opportunities for Oklahoma businesses and development assistance in international communities.



An Experience in Puebla, Mexico

Everyone knows Mexico has some economic problems, as well as political and security issues. But is there a country which does not? There is much more about this country that can touch your heart and soul, becoming a part of you forever. Mexico has awesome food, friendly people, a rich history, family-oriented values and traditions. There are churches and cathedrals with famous paintings, sculptures, fresh flowers, holy water, lighted candles and about 400 years of history. The frames around the paintings and sculptures are covered with gold and sunlit reflections that make you believe it is an illusory, fantastic, imaginary world which has nothing to do with reality.

Being part of the Immersion Spanish program allows you to study the language while being helped and supported by your host family, a great university and newly found friends. You can hang out on campus and a bunch of people will come talk to you and invite you to hang out with them or visit one of the many historical sites. Every day there is a new place to visit. There are lots of small towns around Puebla, each with something unique to offer. What fascinates me the most is how different they are; each has different local food, diverse markets and beautiful churches.

There is a completely different way of living in Mexico! People do not focus on money issues as many of us do in the U.S. People are generally happier and value their families, friends and having a good time. Priority is given to people. Maybe that is something we forgot along the way; we keep forgetting that life is here and now. We forget that we cannot catch the future, and should not constantly worry about it. I think Mexico a the place that can remind us of this lesson. Stop worrying; just live your life here and now.

What about the security issues?

Well there are a lot of bad things happening on the news and it would be a lie to say it is not true. However, what I have seen is if you are smart and do not go to places where you clearly should not be, and take basic precautions (do not go alone at night, do not get involved in provocative fights, or do not sit down in a random car) everyone should be fine. It is dangerous anywhere in the world if you do not take simple precautions.

Moreover, this Immersion Spanish Program takes you to UPAEP, the University of Puebla, one of the safest places in Mexico. Within this program there is very little time you are left on your own and if you are, someone checks in on you. For example, the basic layout of the program is as follows: from Monday through Thursday you are in the classroom learning Spanish (we read about history, traditions and arts of Mexico, watched videos, listened to Spanish music and created presentations about places which we visited with our own pictures); then you have lunch and some free time. Then, you have either a class of Latin dances, movies or cooking.

Afterwards, you may engage in activities with other students from the program, but it is up to you if you want to join them or

go back to your host family. These activities included volleyball, soccer, *luche libre* (free fights), mini golf, visit of museums, or main square of Puebla. On Fridays and Saturdays, we usually traveled to different cities: Veracruz (beach Chachalaca and awesome seafood), Mexico City (tremendously huge and diverse), and Teotihuacan (trapped in time pyramids). We also went to Cuatzalan, a tiny town in the top of mountains near stunning waterfalls and caves with hilly brick-polished streets. In the evening, when lights are on, kids play on the streets and people sell handmade art crafts and food on its main square near the old church, which chimes its bells every hour. The whole place seems to be a big welcoming house.

After the trip, I look back and reflect on the opportunity and the perspective it provided. It almost seems as if it was a nice five-week long dream.

Natalia Kovtun



UPAEP Program

The UPAEP program is designed so participating students are immersed in Spanish culture in a variety of different areas. These Spanish lessons take place both in the classroom and with hands-on experiences.

“The program of Spanish for foreigners has been designed to give a response to the needs of students and faculty members who require the knowledge of Spanish for the different areas that the phenomenon of globalization has brought within,” Fabregas said.

During the program students learn Spanish as well as the Mexican culture. Students live with a Mexican host family to get the best of the Mexican culture and to improve their Spanish.

Participants take part in different activities organized by UPAEP, they also participate in touristic and colonial field trips that belong to the Mexican culture and history, and these field trips support the academic content they receive.

Some of the activities included in the program are: a welcome celebration, where students meet the professors and the staff in charge of the program, -25 hours of Spanish

learning per week, field trips and workshops that provide a fun way to practice the Spanish language and understand the culture: Latin dances, Mexican cuisine and film-making experience. Finally, participants enjoy a farewell ceremony.

The advantages provided by the program are plentiful. At the end of this program students speak better Spanish (a skill needed in international business), get to experience beautiful beaches, towns, the biggest city in the world and interesting people. Host families also make the experience better and more fulfilling.

A variety of OSU program areas currently utilize the program. These include: the language center, the gastronomy school, the department of arts and cultural projection, as well as the international programs department. There is no limit on registration; however the faster you register, the better price you will get.

Dr. Fabregas said that many of the students decide to spend at least one additional semester at UPAEP.

This experience can be used for OSU class credit. It is offered in five levels of Spanish, from beginner to advanced conversation. It is a five

week course usually starting the last week of May through the last week in June.

Several OSU professors have visited Pueblo and would be happy to share their experience. For their names or more information on the program, students can contact the UPAEP program liaison office, located in the Wes Watkins Center.

Dr. Fabregas can provide you with information about Mexico, Puebla, program housing, meals and security. If interested, email Lupita Fabregas at lupita.fabregas@okstate.edu or visit www.upaep.mx.



International Trade Specialist Position Open

The Oklahoma State University Division of International Studies & Outreach plans to open a position for an International Trade Specialist in conjunction with the Wes and Lou Watkins Endowed Chair in International Trade and Development this fall. The International Trade Specialist will



will establish and oversee a NASBITE Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) training program, provide export assistance to small and medium size businesses located in Oklahoma, identify public and private sector international trade related internship opportunities, secure ongoing funding for the International Trade Center and other support duties as assigned. The position will be located in the Wes Watkins Center on the Stillwater campus. Watch for

the position to open soon on <http://jobs.okstate.edu> or contact Mrs. Nikkie Dunnigan, Office and Human Resources Manager, OSU Division of International Studies & Outreach for more information on the application process at nikkie.dunnigan@okstate.edu or 405-744-6601.

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Teaching and Giving Back Abroad

My name is Kate Arroyo and I am a recent graduate of the School of International Studies Graduate Program with a Trade and Development focus area. Last July through August I traveled to Sierra Leone to assist with the first Agricultural Youth Leadership Camp hosted at Njala University in Taiama, Sierra Leone. The camp was a partnership project between Njala University and the OSU Center for International Trade and Development. The children participating in the camp were from the Wellington Orphanage of Freetown, Sierra Leone. While the camp was held for just over a week at the Njala campus, we stayed at Wellington Orphanage for several days throughout the trip.

Though I have previously traveled to 12 countries around the world, my experience in Sierra Leone was enlightening in altogether unique ways. One cannot help but be struck by the abject poverty in which seemingly most levels of society function. There is no fresh running water. No nation-wide, let alone city-wide, electrical power grid. No refrigeration. No flushing toilets. Needless to say, these seem like insurmountable barriers to daily function for a person coming from one of the most developed countries in the world. Yet, Sierra Leoneans carry on every day despite these barriers.



Kate Arroyo, (center-brown dress) with Njala faculty, and the OSU participants

I was not sure how to approach the subject of the country's brutal civil war that ended in 2002. Every person we interacted with was so kind and generous, yet in the back of my mind I always wondered how they were involved with or affected by the civil war. I wondered how they could be so kind, trustful and full of joy after suffering over a decade of violence that left entire villages burned to the ground and people with one or many amputated limbs. I found the Sierra Leonean people we met were ready to move beyond the trauma of the civil war.

They were ready to rebuild and eager to learn. Njala University's campus was practically burned to the ground and deserted for several years during the civil war. We were informed that any freestanding buildings were built just within the past couple years. This was a stark contrast to the burned buildings that looked like ancient ruins.

The goal of our agricultural youth leadership camp was to teach Sierra Leonean youth agricultural skills and practices that could be applied in their own communities. The hope is that this will eventually lead to increased food security rather than dependency on expensive foreign imports. Njala University faculty taught courses such as animal science, agricultural economics, crop protection, agricultural leadership,

crop science and home science. Students learned both in the classroom as well as in the field. For crop science, students actually measured, dug and planted rows of sweet potato and okra. For home science, students prepared and cooked several food items and learned how to market and sell them in their

communities. The agricultural economics instructor took classes to the village produce market to take inventory and calculate how much produce would fit into a certain budget. For animal science, students were transported to the university cattle range and had a hands-on demonstration of the Sierra Leonean N'dama (pronounced da-ma) cattle anatomy. One of my most impressionable class memories was during the agricultural leadership session. The instructor had students do a group exercise in which the class essentially practiced the entire democratic political process. At the end the instructor made a simple yet profound point--you can change your leaders without enforcing violence against each other.

Beyond the class sessions, this experience gave me a firsthand view of how international development works. Working with the university, orphanage, and a local non-governmental organization revealed the true benefits and challenges of collaborative international development projects. This experience has not only brought my academic lessons to life, but has also transformed how I will manage and participate in future international development projects.

This opportunity would have been out of my reach without the support of the Wes and Lou Watkins Matthew 25:40 scholarship I received. Congressman Wes and Regent Lou Watkins truly believe in the virtues of helping under-served communities in other countries as a means to both improve their quality of life and to serve as positive representatives of our country. I cannot fully express how grateful I am for the Watkins' generosity in creating this scholarship. The rewards of the Wes and Lou Watkins Matthew 25:40 scholarship will have a lasting impact on both my life and the lives of those I came to know in Sierra Leone.