Cultivating Cultural Exchange: Improving University Study Abroad Programs

Katherine Crawford

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses

Part of the Higher Education Commons, International and Comparative Education Commons, Marketing Commons, Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons, and the Other Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Crawford, Katherine, "Cultivating Cultural Exchange: Improving University Study Abroad Programs" (2017). Honors Theses. 2894.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/2894
Cultivating Cultural Exchange: Improving University Study Abroad Programs

A Thesis for the Lee Honors College

Katherine Wei Li Crawford

Lee Honors College | Western Michigan University
# Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Methodology 11

Theory 13
  - Step One: Plant the Seed 15
  - Step Two: Explore 16
  - Step Three: Respect 17
  - Step Four: Engage 18
  - Culture Shock 18

Findings 21
  - Student E 21
  - Student J 22
  - Student L 23
  - Student A 24
  - Student D 26
  - Student M 27
  - Pre-Departure Preparations 28

Conclusion 33

APPENDIX I 36
  - Interview Guide 36
    - Student Questions 36
    - Professor Questions 36

Appendix II 37
  - Interview Transcriptions 37
    - Key 37
    - Dr. D – Thailand 38
    - Student M – Thailand 73
    - Student A – Dominican Republic and Thailand 87
    - Dr. L – Dominican Republic 101
    - Student D – Dominican Republic 125
    - Student J – Dominican Republic 144
    - Dr. E – Germany 164

Bibliography 252
Introduction

Studying abroad in today’s day and age is important. As Thomas Friedman says in his book *The World is Flat*, thanks to technology we are experiencing a time of interconnectivity that has never been seen before. And he’s right. Outsourcing is becoming more and more of a viable solution and international teams work digitally to achieve a unified goal through video conferences and email. History has never had such a global mindset and as technology grows, we are seeing even more to come in the future. The Cambridge Journal of Education and Science went so far as to say that, “institutions of higher education arguably have a responsibility to develop curricula that foster ‘global citizens.’” This call to action highlights the importance of an international mindset for future leaders and the general public. This can be achieved through studying abroad.

One field of study in particular that is greatly influenced by globalization is business. One professor described study abroad as a way to, “prepare you to be a global businessperson, global citizen, you don’t get to just participate in the US anymore if you’re a businessperson and really you shouldn’t do that even if you’re just a citizen of Earth you know you should have some understanding.” As of today, the Haworth College of Business (HCoB) offers various study abroad and exchange programs in over fifteen countries. HCoB has one of the largest study abroad programs at Western Michigan University (WMU). International business is not a new subject to the business world. Businesses cannot afford to not be international these days and HCoB has taken note. As stated on the Global Business Center’s website, “Here at WMU and
the Haworth College of Business, we need to do all that we can to make sure that our students don't fall off the edge of the intensely competitive flat business world.” (About, n.d.). European students speak multiple languages and are internationally educated. In the European Union, the Schengen Agreement creates a border-free zone which allows EU members to travel freely from country to country for work and education opportunities (Koikkalainen, 2014). With EU youth having this advantage in the workforce, American students need to prepare themselves for a competitive market through their experiences abroad. In order for HCoB students to compete in the globalized business world, they need to not only experience another culture, but also understand it through cultural immersion.

Western Michigan University already has an active study abroad department which sends close to 600 students abroad yearly to over 40 different countries worldwide (Application Process, n.d.). There are five different types of programs and all majors are welcome. Western Michigan prides itself on its global engagement; it’s one of the three pillars established in 2011 by President Dunn. As described in the WMU News, these pillars were created to represent Western’s identity, goals and initiatives for the coming year as stated by the president in his annual State of the University speech. He went on to list two specific goals related to global engagement: doubling the number of Broncos abroad to 1,000 in five years and helping the campus be more culturally aware. Although the former has not yet been achieved, with only around 5% of all Broncos studying abroad in 2015 (Fast Facts, n.d.), HCoB alone represents over 22% of all WMU student exchanges with programs in thirteen different countries, ten long-term programs and six short-term programs.
However, I believe we can do better. WMU focuses on two offered programs: professor-led and WMU exchange programs. The professor led program, much like the name, involves a professor directing a group of American classmates travelling abroad. They stay together as a group and sightsee with a guiding professor. The WMU exchange is a partnership with various universities worldwide. Students come to Western and in exchange Broncos are sent abroad. Generally, the students take classes with Americans and other foreigners with little class time with the locals. However, these are not what I would consider “cultural” exchanges.

Seven out of the seven WMU students I interviewed thoroughly enjoyed their experiences, yet, what could they really tell me about the place they had visited? I want WMU students to experience a complete cultural immersion. For this paper, I will define cultural immersion as, “an awareness of how one is informed by one’s own culture and makes sense of cultural differences subjectively.” (Rodriguez, 2000). Students should learn firsthand about the traditions and social habits of another culture and be able to comprehend and respect another worldview, though it may differ from their own, in order to better to prepare them as competitive players in this globalized business market. How does an exchange go from being just fun to cultural immersion? There are many factors to consider. This thesis project sprang from my own study abroad experiences and from wanting to know how during some I became immersed in the culture, while during others I remained an outsider. These experiences led me to break down several study abroad factors and their importance, including time, language, and interactions with locals. Time seemed irrelevant considering two of my previous exchanges
were both a yearlong and they had been drastically different. Language seemed important; breaking down the language barrier by learning either a foreign language or local dialects. Being a primary way to express ourselves, language can tell people a lot about the culture based on what is and isn’t important. Was interaction with locals relevant? My university exchanges varied but no connections had been made. Was native cuisine important? What made a cultural exchange? Were there universal experiences that helped students feel more included in a foreign culture? Could they be replicated?

More specifically, I want to examine if HCoB students experience cultural immersion through WMU’s study abroad programs and how the university can improve their cultural immersions during the most popular, short-term exchanges. For this paper, I am only analyzing three of the HCoB short-term study abroad programs. These are faculty led two to three week long voyages with twenty to twenty-five students. Short-term programs are popular because of their limited time frames. Students feel pressured to follow strict course guidelines to complete their university experience in four years, however, that leaves little room for a semester or year abroad. Also, as one of the students explained, “I would say for anybody that’s considering going [on] study abroad, I feel like a 2-week trip is like the perfect amount of time for your first trip it’s not too long to where you’ll feel uncomfortable or homesick.” The limited time frame represents a digestible amount of time for students to travel, half of whom have never left the country before.
My findings discovered that the majority of students who participate in HCoB short-term study abroad exchanges do not experience cultural immersion. Through the use of a scale to measure cultural immersion created by a WMU professor, Dr. Duke, the majority of the six students analyzed did not surpass step two out of the four steps. As later described, this implies that their experience was entertaining, but lacked cultural sensitivity and awareness.

This thesis will cover the findings of interviews with professors and students who have participated in or led HCoB short-term study abroad programs. The first section will describe this interview process and my chosen methodology. The second section will describe my core theory used for analysis - Dr. Duke’s study abroad scale. In this section, I will also divulge into the understanding of culture shock. I will use Kalervo Oberg’s 1954 definition, the anthropologist who coined the term, “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.” This refers to the negative tension release that occurs after the stress buildup due to encounters with cultural differences or the general unfamiliarity of the foreign culture. I will examine how the negativity of the term can influence a student’s time abroad and the importance of defining the term in pre-departure preparation. For this paper, cultural differences are defined as, “the integrated and maintained system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct which impact the range of accepted behaviors distinguishable from one societal group to another” (Adler, 1997). Simply put, cultural differences are the contrasting ways of life from that of your own. This includes but is not limited to language, nonverbal cues, and social protocol. The third section will then use the described scale to examine each student’s experience and rate their level of cultural
immersion, looking closely at the language and terms used throughout my interviews. Finally, there will be a section dedicated to my individual recommendations to increasing HCoB’s cultural immersion on short-term study abroad programs.
Methodology

My Lee Honors College thesis revolves around WMU’s faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs. I interviewed seven students who participated in the Thailand, Dominica Republic, and/or Germany study abroad trips. During these interviews, I explored their actual experience while considering the program’s objectives to see if the theory matched the reality with the help of Dr. Duke’s scale. By asking them unbiased questions about their experiences and how it has influenced their life, I then decided if the study abroad program creates a cultural immersion.

I also interviewed six instructors who led study abroad trips at WMU. Professors are responsible for the creation of these study abroad trips for the most part and their work is important. They are the working backbone of the study abroad machine. Their contributions directly impact students’ experiences. I want to know about the process they go through to create an exchange, what’s in it for them, and if the study abroad office gives them any guidelines. Can anyone create a study abroad trip? What do they view as a successful study abroad? For the full list of interview questions please see appendix I.

These interviews were recorded and transcribed for reference. During the interviews, notes were taken regarding specific areas of interest along with further questions. I completed thirteen interviews altogether, professors and students, whom I recruited using a snowball sampling method, whereby I contacted Haworth College of Business peers and professors who
participated in or led a study abroad program to assist in the identification and recruitment of respondents. I then asked respondents to assist in the recruitment of others. That is, at the conclusion of the interview I inquired as to whether they knew of other potential participants. As the Haworth College of Business is rapidly expanding its short-term study abroad options, I avoided the new December 2016 programs to avoid misrepresentation of the actual experience abroad. Afterwards, I compared the professors’ and students’ responses based on the involved program.

Altogether, seven students who had participated in one or more HCoB short-term study abroad program and six professors who lead HCoB short-term study abroad programs were interviewed. I chose to leave out a student and professor involved with the India study abroad trip because it appears to be an independent anomaly in terms of program content. The India trip is coordinated by Christ University, whereas the three programs I focused on were organized and led by WMU faculty, and, although extremely promising, is considerably younger than the other programs.
Theory

The major theory on which my analysis relies on is WMU’s Associate Professor of Marketing Dr. Thaweephan Leingpibul, more commonly known as Dr. Duke’s, study abroad scale. It is similar to the Comfort Zone Theory which revolves around the idea that when placed in a stressful or challenging situation, people will rise to the occasion to overcome their fear, thus resulting in growth that would not have otherwise occurred. The exhibit to the right depicts this concept. Individuals are more likely to stay in their comfort zone where things are unchallenging, familiar, and “normal.” The learning zone surrounds the coziness and security of the comfort zone, however, is the zone of personal growth and development. This is the area in which individuals experience new situations that results in learning whether it be good or bad. If pushed too far by new experiences, individuals can end up in the panic zone which is characterized by panic attacks and severe anxiety.

Figure 1: (Your First English Lesson, 2016).
Dr. Duke’s version is very similar. It uses a similar diagram to emphasize the importance of getting students into, what he calls, the elastic zone, without them snapping back which results in culture shock. Like the Comfort Theory, students start here in Kalamazoo, Michigan in their comfort zones. Much like the expression, “big fish in the small pond,” students who participate are frequently soon-to-be graduates and are at ease with their chosen field of study.

Studying abroad represents the elastic zone. Here they are experiencing another culture which may be a first for them. Everything is different and unfamiliar. They have to choose whether to accept the foreign ways or not. This is usually aided by the honeymoon period in which they marvel at all of the nuances of their new surroundings. Therefore, the students must stretch themselves to the elastic zone without going too far and entering the snapping zone. The snapping zone is when the student rejects the foreign culture and experiences culture shock. It is also helpful to think of stretching a piece of gum. The comfort zone is the wad of gum you spit out. It has the capabilities to stretch but is rolled into a ball. If you stretch a wad of gum, it can only stretch so far without breaking. Once out of their comfort job, students can only take in so many cultural differences before reaching their breaking point, the snapping zone. The adaptability of the student directly relates to the flexibility/extent of their elastic zone.
Dr. Duke took this concept and then created a four-part study scale to measure a student’s study abroad experience in terms of cultural immersion. I will be using this scale to examine six of the interviewed students for this thesis.

**Step One: Plant the Seed**

Step one is called, Plant the Seed. For most students even signing up is a win. By applying to go on study abroad, students are differentiating themselves from 95% of their peers who do not participate in an exchange. Thus, simply applying is a crucial step. Clearly, all of the students interviewed for this study successfully applied via the study abroad website. The application process is rather complicated. It requires various digitally signed paperwork, a 500-word personal essay of purpose, a certain GPA level, and two faculty recommendations, not to mention any personal requirements by the leading professor and the fact that first time travelers are responsible for acquiring a passport. This can result in a high amount of incomplete applications. Step one is important and difficult for most students because it leads to step two, Explore.
Dr. Duke believes an important aspect of study abroad is to “get rid of the fear of travelling,” because as he puts it, “they [Americans] think it [study abroad] is far away from them, they think it’s something, you know, it’s not related to me, it’s too much risk.” Step two, Explore, is about replacing fear with fun and motivating them to learn more. Getting students out of their known zone and having fun was the number one objective professors had for students. From this research, I can say that they succeeded in this aspect. All of the students interviewed had wonderful experiences. One described his exchange as, “pretty awesome” while another said it was a, “really, really fun experience.” This is the most common stage for the interviewees, a predictable result considering this professor’s description: “We want to have recreational fun time that incorporates culturally things but also incorporates things maybe they’ve never done before.”
Step Three: Respect

Step three is all about attitude. At this point, students recognize the cultural differences and “see the wow,” which represents their understanding of the foreign culture’s ways. This stage is all about their acceptance and attitude. There were several students who recognized the cultural differences from their exchange, however, I examined the language they used to describe these differences to separate truth from demand artifact. While they students might not agree with the foreign culture, it is important that they respect it. During my analysis, I looked for positive adjectives in descriptions and also accepting language such as “different” in place of “weird.”

During the interviews another professor mentioned his desire for his students to understand the expansion of the world and yet feel empowered to take it on. He also challenges his students to understand different worldviews. He says he wishes his students get “a taste for the respect it takes to do that well that the differences are probably pretty overcomable,” which helps express the third stage in Dr. Duke’s study abroad description. Once a student has a positive attitude and the opportunity presents itself, they will quickly go on to step four.
Step Four: Engage

In this stage is, the student is actively pursuing engagement with other cultures. This can be through social media, befriending foreigners, or job hunting abroad. Students are keen on a second international experience such as another study abroad, travel, or looking to move to another country. They are open to new experiences and new cultures to shape their worldview.

Culture Shock

As previously stated, for the purposes of this paper, culture shock refers to the negative tension release that occurs after the stress buildup due to encounters with cultural differences or the general unfamiliarity of a foreign culture. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg coined the term in the 1950s, and defined the four stages of cultural adjustment that typically accompany the so called “occupational disease.” The four stages are: honeymoon period, culture shock, adjustment, and adaptation. These stages can vary in length depending on the person. At the start of the voyage, everything is new and exciting, the honeymoon stage. After a period of time abroad, the differences become your primary focus, resulting in stereotyping, homesickness, and the feeling that small differences are catastrophic. This is called culture shock. The cultural differences experienced during this time are often called “culture bumps.” (Archer & Nickson, 2012). Depending on the length of stay and the traveler, it is possible for
them to feel multiple stages of culture shock intermitted with the next stage, gradual adjustment or recovery, as depicted below.

![Cultural Adjustment Curve](image)

*Figure 2: (Shaules, 2015).*

Much like it sounds, the gradual adjustment or recovery stage involves the understanding of how the new culture works followed by stage four, adaption, where they feel at home in the once foreign culture. This model is commonly used by study abroad offices to help students prepare for their exchange and what they might expect. Western Michigan University does not mention “culture shock” on the Haenicke Institution for Global Education website. It is briefly defined and explained in the Pre-Departure Handbook, however, the only mention of it on the website other than that is through the insurance company’s website. Although the handbook properly describes these stages of cultural adjustment, there clearly is some confusion.
Five out of the six students I interviewed described culture bumps when asked to describe their biggest culture shock experience: “I would say that the first time I kind of had culture shock was when I was there and I had never had mineral water... I couldn’t believe it, and I was like this is disgusting,” “I’d honestly say the biggest culture shock was the food.” The use of “culture shock” to describe cultural differences can have a negative impact on a student’s exchange due the negative nature of the word “shock.” In *Words Can Change Your Brain*, Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Robert Waldman explain, “A single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress.” Therefore, by using a negative word such as culture shock to self-describe the cultural differences or culture bumps the students encounter, they are unconsciously creating a negative physical reaction which can induce stress. “A single negative word can increase the activity in our amygdala (the fear center of the brain). This releases dozens of stress-producing hormones and neurotransmitters, which in turn interrupts our brains’ functioning.” (Borchard, n.d.). Thus, by using negative terminology to describe cultural differences, I found that students are creating a negative connection with not only the foreign culture but also with their experience in general.
Findings

During my analysis stage, I used the four stages of Dr. Duke’s study abroad scale to scale each of my six student interviews. They all automatically accomplished step one, Plant the Seed, by applying to study abroad. The majority of them were at step two, Explore, where they replaced their fear of travelling and the unknown with fun. Step three, Respect, is when they saw and learned to accept the cultural differences. This does not mean they valued the new culture more than their own. It simply means they respected the difference between the two cultures. And finally, step four, Engage, is when they actively looked for immersion in other experiences and cultures. As previously stated, most students showed they did not go beyond step two.

Student E

Student E went to Germany. She is an example of a lower end step two experience. Although she had previously traveled with her family to Mexico and Canada, she had never flown nor traveled solo. Her exchange did not start with a pleasant experience, “I was lost for 3 hours...it was my first encounter and everybody I talked to at least didn’t really understand me or they didn’t know where the hotel was.” This rocky beginning colored the rest of her trip. Negative expressions depicted her eventful trek around Germany and show her lack of understanding for the foreign culture, “their lettuce in salads kind of tastes like dirt I didn’t know if they washed it or not, I didn’t eat it.” Indeed, she was not open to new experiences and
saw the trip through her own worldviews, “they’re just like chugging a beer on the street and we’re like you can’t do that.” By referring legal actions in the host country to a law in her motherland, she indicates that she constantly compared the two cultures, judging instead of learning and accepting. She even complained about the amount of time it took her to find a hamburger abroad. Searching out familiar foods can be a resource to aid culture shock, something she believes began immediately after her hectic arrival. Surprisingly enough, after the interview concluded she mentioned her love of the local students. On all other aspects, Student E fits into only step one of our scale due to the overall negative experience, however, at the end of the interview, she said this, “I actually was considering doing the semester at Paderborn in Germany.” This could be due to demand artifact, given that she has not and is not going on another study abroad exchange before graduation, but due to her interest in the local students I believe her intentions are true. She said, “I still keep in contact with some people from the trip. I’m friends with a lot of them of Facebook and they’re like always talking about if you come back like let us know or if we come there we’ll let you know just so we can like meet up or something.” Her desire to return abroad, whether true or not, leads me to believe her experience overall was fun. This considered, I place her in step two on the scale.

**Student J**

Student J had a wonderful experience in the Dominican Republic. Originally, he selected the trip based on the leading professor and “of course the 3 days we spent in Punta Cana...cuz [sic] it’s an all-inclusive resort and during that time we didn’t really have any like school
responsibilities.” Once down there, J had a lot to learn about, “I learned that their culture is obviously is different than like any other Latin [country].” The trip proved to be instrumental in his choice of major, “I actually got to meet somebody that was like in the role that I always like knew in my head I wanted I just didn’t know what the role was.” Student J did learn about the Dominican culture, “they’re real close and personal which is something that I don’t.” This friendly side of the culture really impressed him, “they’ll come up and hug you even if they don’t know you they’re very friendly people.” Although Student J is close to what I’d consider to step three, Respect, the manner he described aspects of the culture lacked cultural awareness: “there was a lot of that, just like, I’d say sketchy, but not really sketchy because that’s like that’s their culture.” He recognized their culture is different, however, he did not understand the differences: “we learned that in the DR really their staples like food-wise is chicken rice and plantain, so you can only have chicken, so much chicken and rice, you can only have that so much in my opinion.” Due to these observations, I would classify him at the higher end of step two because of his perceived interest in other cultures, without being completely open mentally.

Student L

Student L participated in two study abroad experiences, one to London through the Communications Department and one to Germany through HCoB. When asked why he pursued a second study abroad trip, he said, “I just kind of fell in love with it over there.” This interest in different cultures would normally rate the student as a step three on the scale, however, there
were some important details that surfaced during our interview. Although he worked well with the local students and saw firsthand his professor’s comments on the German work style, he still made sweeping generalizations which showed his lack of cultural awareness. “All these places [world cities] aren’t that different.” He explained that once you got to know city life, all large international cities were pretty much the same. Also during his second exchange, which lasted three weeks, he became stricken with culture shock when the German McDonald’s did not offer the McGriddle, “they didn’t have McGriddles and that was like a big deal for me because I was like really into McGriddles at the time. It’s kind of weird but that was a culture shock for me.” Finally, he continuously compared the new culture to his home culture, “Another culture shock that I noticed that the portions there are so small in comparison to the US”. This nonstop comparison demonstrates a mental barrier that prohibited the student from allowing himself to fully take in the new culture. Due to these factors, I ranked him only at step two of the study abroad scale.

Student A

Student A went on two study abroad trips. Normally, as in the case of Student L, this would normally qualify them for step three on the scale due to their motivation to explore more cultures, however, other observations kept the student in step two. Student A is a wonderful representation of over 50% of all HCoB short-term study abroaders, “I’d never travelled outside the country before going on my first study abroad.” While her first adventures into the world were “fun” and full of “cool stuff,” she lacked cultural awareness. This student participated in
the inaugural Dominican Republic voyage which definitely influenced her experience, she explained the leading professor’s difficulties, “you could tell she was really trying but you could tell she was kind of stressed sometimes if something didn’t go right.” She commented that the Dominican trip was much more business-oriented than her second exchange to Thailand, “I feel like we learned more about the Thai culture than the Dominican Republic and I feel like part of that reason is because our professor was a Thai native... he grew up there so he knew like all that stuff whereas our professor for the Dominican Republic that was her first time going well I think it was her second time visiting there but first time taking a trip there so she didn’t really know too much.” She depicted the locals with positive adjectives such as “nice,” “amazing,” and “welcoming” and she took as to not point your feet towards, even a picture of, the country’s leader out of respect. These are all very intuitive, thoughtful responses, however, there were holes in her description that showed her insensitivity. Although she talked of showing respect for the leader of Thailand and how important that was, she could not remember what type of leader they have, such as king, president, or prime minister. In addition to that, her memories, despite her recent return from Thailand, were focused on surface observations such as, “the people are amazing, they’re little but they’re so nice.” The most concerning was her lack of awareness regarding her setting, “I felt very safe which was a big concern, my mom doesn’t like this, but there was a night market right by our hotel in one of the places in Thailand and I actually went by myself and my mom was not a fan of that and I bet the professors wouldn’t be if they found out either but I was completely safe I was not scared at all. I didn’t not think anything was going to happen to me like walking around in Thailand.” She acknowledges that her native Thai professor, who she has admitted to being an expert on the culture, would not
be happy to hear this, in fact, she purposely did not tell him for this reason. At this point, she has replaced fear with too much fun and is ignoring the local culture with insensitivity which makes me place her only in step two on the scale.

Student D

Student D went to the Dominican Republic for a cultural experience, saying, “I wanted to go somewhere I thought the culture was going to be different than that of America,” and, “also you know just being in the Dominican Republic, I’m like it’s going to be hot, it’s kind of like a touristy, you know, vacation place.” He loved the interactions with the multilingual local students, “I was just kind of really impressed you know how smart they were.” He also had an interesting experience, “Me being I guess biracial and having a darker tone in my skin, a lot of people thought that I was Dominican or had Dominican family.” This was a reoccurring theme with African American students who visited the Dominican Republic. However, Student D was the only one interviewed who felt that the white students were uncomfortable because of their skin color and experienced more culture shock. “They didn’t say things out of their mouth as far as I feel uncomfortable, but when it came to cultural activities a lot of them were standoffish and kind of stick to each other and they would not really embrace the Dominican culture as much.” He learned a great deal about the culture, “Dominican people are like super passionate about their culture like they’re super nationalist, like they love being Dominican and it was cool… it was almost a compliment mistaken for being Dominican.” He was engaged in the island’s history and had an incredibly detailed memory of him exchange. Everything about his
experience was described in loving terms. Even while describing his biggest culture shock, he explained how it has changed the way he looks at a basic necessity in his own life, “the Dominican Republic, for the most part, a lot of people are poor, the poverty is really high so it made me really grateful…I can go to my sink right now.” Due to his skin color, Student D felt acceptance in the Dominican Republic and I would place this experience as a step three, however, I question if he had not been so vigorously welcomed into the culture due to his skin color how he would have reacted.

Student M

Student M is in step 4. Through reverent tones, he depicted both his first and second study abroad experiences. Even though his second exchange to Thailand took place the previous year, he remembered important minute details about the Thai culture such as, “you don’t step on a coin in Thailand because it has the king’s face on it and you don’t ever want to disrespect the king because of what he’s done for his country.” He credited study abroad for an “increase in my perception, my awareness, and I gained new respect...if I wasn’t there, if I hadn’t had those experiences, then I wouldn’t have had that same perception...it definitely opened my eyes to a totally different way to approach life.” His exchange descriptions were filled with positive terms followed by how these new life experiences translated into his daily life back home, “so the company I work for, I chose them because they’re a global company... it [study abroad] has exactly influenced the choice of where I chose to have my career and everyday there’s an opportunity to interact with people from around the world and having that awareness that I
gained through my study abroad experience is helping me network, communicate, and be productive with some of my counterparts that are from other countries.” This is what I would consider an example of a full circle exchange. However, some might argue that this student was bound to have an engaging exchange no matter where he went in the world, “my friends from Saudi, they were having their study abroad and what was home for me was like an adventure to them and I wanted to have that experience.” He was previously engaged with international students at Western before going on his first study abroad which was a semester long exchange. One professor had this to say regarding students’ cultural awareness perceptions and abilities, “I think some people even [when] you expose them to it [the foreign culture], they are almost incapable of separating or understanding their value judgements because of a lens they’re wearing not because there is an actual value judgement there.”

Pre-Departure Preparations

Pre-departure is the time the professor creates the study abroad agenda, researches the culture, and also the period they help prepare the student for their experiences. This will include the professor’s pre-departure travel history, cultural understanding, and preparation routine along with the importance, yet difficulties, of group personality and the breach of culture shock preparation. With around 67% of students who participate in HCoB short-term study abroad programs not experiencing cultural understanding or immersion, I will be examining the potential causes in the next section.
Interestingly enough, a couple teachers had never travelled internationally, barring Canada, before the site visit required of new study abroad programs in preparation for smooth logistics for the students. One professor had, “never actually been out of the country before I went on the site visit.” This was shocking considering the faculty are expected to guide the students in a foreign culture that they themselves do not know. During my analysis, there was a reoccurring pattern of insensitivities with these particular profiles. Although they might have been familiar with the procedures of creating a short-term study abroad or the lay-out of the trip and despite their high praise of the host country, there arose some concerning lack of cultural awareness.

For starters, there were several incidents of sweeping stereotypes. Stereotypes are a key aspect of cultural insensitivity and unawareness: “Labeling and generalizing those who are different, based on global and ignorant stereotypes are major contributors to the problem of being culturally uneducated.” (Seibert, Stridh-Igo, & Zimmerman, 2001). From basing their need for structure based on their distant German heritage to their struggles with the Latin American concept of time, one professor stood out. They had only recently become a traveler before leading their first study abroad exchange, however, since starting their trip have travelled to several other countries for pleasure independently. This has not changed the way they view culture. During the interview, they complained about the lack of English being spoken in their destination country and admitted, “it’s not that they’re holding out on you, they honestly don’t speak English.” This also led to broad statements such as: “everyone’s more casual and that’s probably why they’re happier” and “women there are dressed up 24/7, they look like perfect all the time.” These are comparison statements which are seen through American culture lenses. Although Americans feel the need to stereotype to comprehend our sensory overload, it is
important to remove the cultural lens and be open to the foreign country’s way of life. Much like with the students, if not more so, the professors leading the trips should be at step four, Engage, of Dr. Duke’s study abroad scale. It is their job to present the new culture to students therefore it is best that they are not equally suffering culture shock. This particular professor’s students noticed her lack of ease, “you could tell she was really trying but you could tell she was kind of stressed sometimes if something didn’t go right because it was her first time.” This same student participated in two study abroad programs and commented on how different they were and the professors’ influence on the experience, “I feel like that was mainly based on our professors, also we went with three male professors to Thailand who were all very very adventurous in spirit whereas we went with two female professors to the Dominican Republic who were more business and like just didn’t really want to press the limits and were also very cautious.” The professors directly affected the sentiment of the experience.

Preparing for a study abroad without prior travel experience or knowledge of the culture can be difficult and is crucial to the final result. Most professors simply researched the country online, however, they’re aware of the discrepancies, “that doesn’t really tell you a lot of stuff and it’s like saying all people in the US do this we know that’s not true so you just got to figure [it] out while you’re down there.” This can result in large cultural misunderstandings as in the case of another professor in Germany, “the whole process I went about to invite a meeting with him was cultural insensitive because I didn’t necessarily understand the more closed and formal culture of Germany.” Yes, you learn by doing, however, it is not the most culturally sensitive way to go about it.
Finding cultured, well-travelled professors with free time can be difficult. “The issue is that you have faculty members that are passionate about this because it’s so much easier to spend 6 weeks in a summer course teaching 3 to 6 hours a week and going home.” Study abroad is a large time commitment and it is always easier to stay in our comfort zone. This professor went on to explain that is wasn’t just about comparing the numbers, study abroad also represents a huge amount of responsibility for the professor both pre-departure and abroad. “Faculty member is not doing it for money, they are not doing it to get the extra class. They are doing it cause [sic] they care about the students and also have passion about traveling themselves.”

Creating and planning a study abroad exchange, as cited by a HCoB multi-study abroad creator, takes approximately a year and a half before the actual trip starts which is a long time commitment for faculty members with full course loads and, most likely, research of their own.

Group dynamic was also an important reoccurring topic in the professor interviews that can make or break an exchange. One professor did not agree with the traditional application process. In regards to the faculty recommendations he had this to say, “I don’t think that is help that much because, think about it, [the] professor knows him in the classroom setting, but I need to bring them outside to the bar and those kind of thing so those people can give you [a] recommendation.” He preferred interviewing friends if he was unfamiliar personally with the student or examining their Facebook profile. “You can go to their Facebook, if they’re drunk all the time you think this is a party animal so this can go too far for fun replace fear,” what he says here not only relates to the next step in the study abroad scale, but also directly to group
dynamic and student safety during the exchange which are all aspects professors consider during the application review period.

In addition to the lack of pre-departure culture knowledge, the professors interviewed did not appear prepared by the university to handle culture shock with their students. The experienced professors had developed their own personal timelines and guides for dealing with culture shock. “I put it on my calendar for the start of the second week to like check in with students because that tends to be the first time they start being like you know I’m having delayed culture shock.” However, overall there were large misconceptions about culture shock such as a strict timeline or methods for coping with related topics such as homesickness. Despite their deficiencies, HCoB professors do seem to prepare their students more than other programs outside of the college. Students cited attending two to three meetings separate from the Haenicke Institute for Global Education during which they were introduced to certain aspects of the foreign culture, perhaps language or history depending on the lead professor.
Conclusion

In conclusion, after analyzing the data, there are three recommendations I would like to make to improve the HCoB short-term study abroad programs.

Firstly, in order to develop and extend the pre-departure procedures and help HCoB achieve its third learning goal, students will acquire global business understanding, I recommend that after the completion of the required B.B.A. business core course, BUS 2200 Introduction to Global Business, all HCoB students participate in a short-term study abroad program. According to the course catalog, the class covers, “factors having an impact on global business including cultural differences, management theories, marketing activities and various legal and financial institutions are examined.” After a semester of studying international business, a trip abroad would reinforce the course objectives and give them a unique insight that would differentiate them on a mass scale from other business colleges. The semester course would also give professors more time to go into depth regarding cultural differences and culture shock. They would be able to explore not only the cultural implications of global business interactions, but also be able to understand first-hand the implications of salient environmental differences as described in the HCoB learning goals.

To accomplish this, the university will need to act on its words. Even though WMU claims “globally engaged” as one of its three pillars, it does not make it easy for professors or students to study abroad. As mentioned in the data, creating or leading study abroad programs
are not financially attractive to professors for the time commitment and responsibilities required. Not only should the university help prepare and make study abroad financially viable for professors, it should make it appealing to the students as well so as not to deter future HCoB students. Currently, the goal is to achieve 10% of the student body to study abroad. One professor mentioned what the university is currently doing to achieve this number, “the biggest barrier is financial. Now part of the university committee has really put forward a plan to try to not only gain scholarships but one of the proposals that we had was that every student if you come to Western we will actually facilitate and pay for a passport for you. And in addition, we would give everybody that wants to a $1,000 toward any study abroad education opportunity when they’re here at Western.” With my plan of including the short-term study abroad costs into the HCoB tuition and the university’s support, all business students will be able to experience business in another culture, making them more competitive thus making our program more competitive nationwide. However, financials aren’t the only concern for the university. The study abroad office should also require all professors to accompany a seasoned professor on a travel abroad before leading their own. Presently, this already happens frequently, but by making it mandatory, we will avoid completely novice traveler mistakes and make the experience easier on everyone, professor and student. This will also give the professor insight into another culture and another professor’s honed tool kit.

Finally, in order to improve our current study abroad programs, I recommend intercollegiate cooperation. Western Michigan University offers a wealth of resources; whether it be the professors from various parts of the world to the international students to the globally
focused student organizations hundreds of countries are represented without leaving campus!

In the business college alone, there are around ten different nationalities represented in the faculty. There are more than seventeen student organizations that deal with internationally minded people, from the Dominican Student Organization to the Intercultural Business Student Association to the Russian Club to even the Study Abroad Alumni Ambassadors. Professors can ask study abroad alumni or current international students to come speak with their outgoing students about what to expect. Some established professors already do this within their own programs. I suggest we use our campus wide resources to prepare our students and faculty for their study abroad experiences so they can go in with an open mind.
Appendix I

Interview Guide

Student Questions

1. Tell me about what interested you in study abroad
2. Tell me about your previous traveling experience
3. Tell me about how you chose that specific study abroad trip
4. Tell me about about the trip you chose
5. Tell me about the most memorable part of your trip
6. Tell me about what you learned
7. Tell me about the country you visited
8. Tell me about the biggest culture shock you experienced
9. Tell me about how you think your experience will help you in the workplace

Professor Questions

1. Tell me about how you got involved with study abroad
2. Tell me about the creation process
3. Tell me one thing that would help facilitate your experience
4. Tell me one thing you would change about your experience
5. Tell me about the greatest challenge you faced with this trip; either in the creation process or during the trip
6. Tell me about your trip
7. Tell me about the objectives for your trip
8. Tell me the one thing you hope your students take away from their experience
9. Tell me about your biggest success with the trip
10. Tell me about how you create a cultural experience for your students?
Appendix II

Interview Transcriptions

Key

- Culture shock related
- Observations of local culture
- Pre-departure preparations
- Travel history
- Related to importance of study abroad
Wei Li: alright so I just want you to start by saying how you got involved in study abroad

D: when I first started at Western I saw like a group of professors that do it I remember the first trip that they went is Australia and then they show that in advisory board of Supply Chain Management so and then you see like the connection between the industry side like that is a great idea that’s why I think this going to value a lot to the student because business people says good-bye session going to be the future of this generation and we don’t know how to teach them well in the classroom so that’s why study abroad turned to be you know one of the best options to do and you know what? It’s true when you show them through the story and the picture you can see like how engaged with like a student so that’s why that kind of like being a teacher and think that will be a good way to teach the kid that why I get involved. So that is a motivation it’s about like teaching and show like the next generation the better way to be the global citizen and not from only of us but from industry the relation that we have they also like back that up.

W: alright and I know we’ve already talked about it but can you kind of describe your creative like your creation process to creating your study abroad trip?

D: ok so we start with like you know we copy each other right? You copy whoever you think this is going to be the best benchmark and the easiest way to like start is to start from your
colleague in the same college because we have the same type of support those kind of thing and we just learned one thing back the we’re talking 2005 university doesn’t support this stuff well for example the professor who did this actually there’s only one professor that did this very few but at that time I just saw this one and he didn’t get paid and what he did is he would do this for his volunteer doing it so a lot of work involved so what we did is I don’t want to say creative but we copy over each other and how we did this we gonna visit different corporation every day that is kind of like my set that everyone think like study abroad mean you’re going to visit another university sit in a lecture with another group of student right or visit like a big corporation CEO give you a pitch we did that but I just learned that is not the best way to do ok and this the reason most people have objective when we look at short term. For example, if you set objective for each study abroad and you have to be able to measure it within those like you know 3 months or 2 weeks or whatever so that why that really meant like in term of like how affective study abroad can run like put it that way. And when we think like that procedure that we copy over from each other should be the best one but actually it’s not because they miss the most important part its engagement like how my students connect to those concept topics give you some example if you go to another corporation and see CEO talking about a local product you will have a lot of problem to like connect the topics so number 1 the experience between CEO and student is a huge difference so student only understand 30% of what they say now number 2 on top of that the language barrier right? So if you could kind of sum only these 2 so saying you might only get 15% out of it but think about it every single day on study abroad have a lot of value so you like waste one full day with only like 15% productivities so that’s why I think that like that is not what the student really want so we have to start with this
and the philosophy for me is we call like when the student is ready to teach you will appear that mean you going to teach students when they’re ready or when they feel like they’re engaged to see the value they listen to everything you say not just like randomly just put somebody in a thing at the end they’re going to get everything that they want ok so that why I just like go back and recreate a while thing based on student perspective that why we just cut off a lot of traditional stuff that we have done in the past and we create a whole new set of like of study abroad it’s almost like camping abroad so that why we have to say this is what we do. You say like your research talking about like the objective of what we set up and at the end how much student get? You want to see like this is what you want and at the end what the final product looks like this. Ok. I have 3 things to say and I think this the most important part the short term and long term study abroad you know what you when we talk about globalization we not talk about one single country but because of the timeframe you cannot pick that many destinations within like 2 weeks or 3 month correct? So you can start what study abroad really do is not really learn deep about one single country but you learn how to 3 thing this is my objective: #1: I want to get rid of the fear of travelling because most American students when you talk about study abroad they think it’s far away from them they think it’s something you know it’s not related to me it’s too much risk on that a lot of them think people out there hate Americans you know those kind of things based on the media and all Hollywood movie show you the kidnapping and those kind of stuff right so that why the fear is the most important we want to get rid of that make them comfortable and fun want to see that travel the world is like fun part is regardless of destination that is like what everyone like aim at now all of this I’m going to call this a grand theme that might not be able to put on the syllabus when you study abroad
because when you put on the syllabus everything objective have to be measurable within 2 weeks or 3 months of the study abroad so this you can’t but actually this is the main concept under the whole study abroad the main drive so my #1 get rid of the fear think everything is really fun so you have to replace the fear with fun so if you can get that you know what you’re pretty much like that’s a successful story of a study abroad the second is because we want to get them out there to learn about diversity that people are different right? And they want to appreciate diversities and they have a lot of people out here that reason they like not travel abroad is not about the risk or the fear that what we talk about the most but they don’t want to go out of comfort zone so that why we want to like you know I want to say get them out of comfort zone but at least they learn about diversity they want I want them to know that we are a part of like a big diversity nobody have like the best standard that standard should not apply to the rest of the world and this is quite important because sometimes we think we have the best standard and when you think you’re better than other you try to enforce you know like other people to accept like your wishes sometimes it’s not right. So #1 I said replace fear with fun #2 ne a part of diversity appreciate to be a part of diversity and the last one because diversity that last one is I want them to respect the difference respect the difference once you know hey you’re different you have 2 choice you either separate and say you come first so you’re different than me so that why we have nothing to relay to each other most Americans think that way but I want them to see like I’m not all those different and so you cannot fear them and separate from the group you just respect like what they have so that is the most important 3 things that you know I want them to learn that’s why I do study abroad.
D: you should ask like how did you make all of this objective yeah

W: well we haven’t even talked about your list your trip yet

D: yeah that why when it told us when I build I trip you can see like why I build a trip this way so that

W: yeah so tell me about your trip

D: so that’s why there’s 3 things let’s talk about the last trip because you know this trip kind of built based on the previous trip and we kind of fixed the unknown the kind of mistakes we made on the previous trip right so like what we said we copy over the other people format visit corporation go to partner universities and that’s it and we have some time we have like the free day so that’s what most study abroad like consist of if you look at span of we talk about short term study abroad and that’s what we did and at the end everyone come back and everyone say nice thing about it but you just learn one thing sometimes they be nice they try to be nice to say only nice thing but they have a lot of thing you can fix and we have no way to know about it because only one way you can access you like it or not you have to talk to student and nobody going to talk bad about it but you know like during the trip some of them is have a complaint or something like that so you should know this thing is not perfect but we have no
way to improve it because we don’t know the truth we never do the measurement and most measurement and objective is just like it’s too general for example you go to Thailand trip to learn about the culture and the business of like Thai people blah blah blah how to make it different from the US. You can live there for 15 years you never learn at all so don’t even talk about 15 years 2 weeks you not learn it you learn only like a part of it so the study abroad itself is not about like learning but it’s just like starting of the learning curve because if they really like Thailand let me tell you what when they come back all their life when they see someone talk about Thailand when they see Thailand on the news when they have time they just Google YouTube of Thailand and that is the first starting point so that mean the objective we put on the syllabus it doesn’t matter that much people do not learn that much until you hook them up and then they’re going to learn by themselves so starting point of lifelong learning so I think that is the point yeah study abroad should be the point of lifelong learning

W: start to tell me more about your specific trip I know we talked about all these objectives and goals you want them to get but tell me about your trip

D: my trip

W: yeah

D: how you want to start?
W: what did you do on your trip?

D: what do we do on the trip?

W: yeah

D: we visit corporation so we have the local business that kind of like that we visit to see or make presentation we visit facilities and sometimes they have the intern or student with them a big group so we kind of put them together and we do like the joint lecture that what we do but you know the Thai lecture itself if we have 2 day workshop that will be only 25% but we gonna spend like 3-2 75% of knowing each other like icebreaking those kind of thing because I think the most important business is people and people have the culture if you have to break then you have to put them together first before business can start that how I think is the right way to do so we visit corporation we visit facilities we have the internship we call the joint workshop or lecture with those local intern like student so the group is huge because we bring about 25 student from here and they have 50 student on their side and the really great thing that they did before we had the closing dinner together with like this 2 workshop the kid break down to small group like 5-6 student so half of the American and then like the 4-5 like Thai student and they just like bring like their American friend to the destination they like the most in Bangkok so everyone like have their own like plan

W: so they get to go off with these local students?
D: correct right for almost 4-5 hour in the city so whatever the thing they want to show them that is like so the Americans can have the opportunity to see the real country through the local eyes that pretty much comparable to their age the great thing I learned from them when they come back is they ask them like hey what did you really like and you can learn so next year why don’t we do this? For example, we never go to the Thai boxing like stadium never been in my mind and then a lot of them go to this place and say you know this is a really cool place like you know you can learn the traditional martial art where the place the local go so that’s why we learned from them and say next year we might be able to put this one on it and so this is really help out it’s about how to have the eye opening this go into the second part remember? Diversity we want people to see like something different and then lead to the 3rd one and respect that difference and then this is the next so that is what we call the standard like procedure, we visit corporation you know sit in the classroom so we fulfill that part but remember I said the most important to run this as like the engagement you have to find something students really like think they like or they have connection with so you can teach them easier. We change from like the big corporation like that we keep it down to right now only 20% and 80% what we did is why I have the word camping because a lot of American kid here love outdoor because it’s more engage it’s not really like indoor and being outdoor you can see a lot of thing surround you that different like people are different culture your friends like even environment rainforest it look different so that why they love outdoor so you have to find business that run outdoor so that why ecotourism is also the main theme for our program so we changed from traditional business to ecotourism because I think like that’s so important
to go there and see like sustainability and how the people in the third world that people might think like sustainability is for developing country only the third world never think about it but actually they do and they end the so they need the most sustainability like you know the rainforest, pollution that kind of thing. So that’s why we think we can teach them like hey #1 something they like to do #2 something related to this topic so that why ecotourism is like a main theme for my trip so 20% traditional study abroad I want to say like another 40% is ecotourism let me give you an example of ecotourism. We went to the zip lining project in the north part of Thailand it’s where like all the big river start so it’s a source of like the most water in Thailand. We used to have a problem with the slash and burn problem like you know like people live in a huge tribe you know they cut down the rainforest to grow the opium when the soil is kind of like no longer good they move to another place to what they did is they destroyed the whole rainforest right and then they have the drought after that for like the whole country because that is a place collect all the water but we lucky we have the king of Thailand that start the whole project so we want to see how that thing really work in term of operation so one place we went was a coffee village which is like people used to live in rainforest and cut down like all the tree but right now they have organic coffee that require all the big tree and they plant this plant among all those you know tree so that how the king really start the project. Now the ecotourism is like a second step after that so after the grow so they know rainforest important but someone still like cut down those big tree forest for some I don’t know the reason need wood to build a house so the second group called the zip lining they came and say you know what? if you have just a beautiful tall tree like this we can build like a zip line station that go over the rainforest to see monkey and that kind of thing. And what happened was the
zip lining corporation give a lot of job to the local and the local used to cut down the tree, right now he say this tree bring tourist than like a long term business for example the wife going to do cooking for tourist the children can do photographer and the dad going to be operator in the zip lining business so they built like the snese of a unique to rainforest product because actually this is make more money than just cutting it down so this is a part of ecotourism that American kid can like enjoy the time with it and can see what’s going on like how this business can generate more money to the local communities so this one example second example is a great on is elephant sanctuary I think I told you about it right? Like if you rescue elephant from the street ok but again elephant have to work to support themself but in the past their work is kind of abuse animal they put tourists on the back and that how they make money but animal need like down time break like every hour to like clean and water so if you look at like 8 hour a day animal can work like less than 2 hour in total if you subtract all the down time so 2 hours is not enough because elephants have to #1 feed themselves, that at least about $50/day, second is the family that attach to the elephant so 1 elephant have to feed about 4-5 people if you look at it a part of family member so that mean $50 to break-even for themself you need another $50 to feed another 4 like people so but per day they have to work at least $100 and you cannot like make $100 by putting people on their back for 2 hours that going to be numbers don’t even match that’s why the elephants sanctuaries did what they did. They say riding the elephant kind of abusive for the animal but we have the other way to do it so as a tourist we go to the like elephant sanctuary you’re going to start with the morning feeding animal learning how to take care of animal do a little training like you know like how to make them move left and right go down, you can jump to their back ok and then at the end you can take a back with
elephants so if you at this all of those used to be down that had no value correct? but right now every single minute you spend with elephant is the money making like minute so elephant instead of like one day of work some can work up to 2 hours so they can make enough money to support all of like the food they feed themself the family of the elephant like trainer you know? So even the elephant camp itself so you can see in a time of ecotourism that help out like this animal that need help the same with the first concept with the coffee village and zip lining you help those people live in the rainforest that used to think I have nothing to do around here but now you have it. So American student really connect with that they connect with animal they connect with those zip lining activity and that how they really learn diversity the life they live in the rainforest it doesn’t mean like hey they’re not happy they’re really happy and then they respect that lifestyle right now a lot of them go there like is this the house where they live right here you know where’s the toilet you know? Everyone kind of feel bad about it but now’s the day after they walk back they say wow they’re so lucky to live in the rainforest. You see this change the whole perspective they used to think like that standard of life’s bad right?

W: and how do you

D: and we have more this only 2 out of like 5-6 destination in ecotourism that we did that kind of highlighted the ecotourism part but we have more

W: do you do one per trip? Or how many do you do?
D: no we have like 5-6 per trip

W: each trip? Ok

D: right remember if you look at like among all 14 day 20% is like company visit so we take 2-3 days for it and then about 5-6 destinations ecotourism ok so that how we combine together

W: and how do you get the students can you tell me about how you present the ecotourism to the students because I hear you’re visiting it but how are you getting

D: remember the best way is you have to go back to the root you have to sell to student right?
You have to see through their eyes so what I did is one an assignment that student like really that I want to show you right here everyone going to create like you know their own PowerPoint we’re going to have like 2 assignments right here and in the end those two assignment going to be the recruiting tool for me. So one is individual work I have these PowerPoint slide of everyday you’re going to give me the eye opening photo 5 of them every day. So if you run for 14 day multiple 14 by 5 so you’re going to end up with almost like 60-70 slides. So each day they give those 5 they put together in like a kind of like this PowerPoint right here like they have a photo and they give them a little like description of this photo so think about it I have 24 student I have 24 set of slide so what I did did going to look for what really wow like student so we try to find a connect right and if among those connection if I can put
any business lesson I will do it and among all 24 you’re going to see some common theme that come out like oh these people really love elephant that’s why we should do elephant sanctuary next year these people love like you know like ATV so we going to do it these people really love fishing why don’t we do fisherman village you know somewhere in Thailand so that how I learn from them. So this is how American your age see through the world what make them wow it’s not you know what I’m just going to learn one thing I run this for like almost 10 year you going to have only 1 or 2 photo from the corporation visit even though they used to be a big part student doesn’t care that much that part but the thing that wow them is outside that why I think you know what we should stay we not stay a while we should minimize the time within a corporate visit because this is what they really engage with so this is how I recruit them. So I use this tool it’s not even like for me but I take from student and I run this one in class every day I have 24 from last year and then I have like a lot more from the past year so every day in class I can show like different like slide like this and that at some point you know what 24 is a good random number like someone going to like cuz they’re going to have the same lifestyle like this girl right here so what they see here they’re going to like the same like this girl like it so for the guy have their own set so that how I recruit I recruit through the story in the picture

W: but how do you get the ecotourism aspect of cuz zip lining is fun but how do you get across the benefits for the small business and the effects on the community

D: every morning, it’s only for my trip, 7 o’clock in the morning everyone have to meet me in my room before we go to breakfast everyone have to be ready cleaned up at 7 o’clock, so 7-8
that the lecture time I said this what you’re going to see today because we don’t want you to be like the normal tourist that go to like let’s say go to like rainforest and take a photo but when you go to the rainforest you should know this rainforest used to be an opium field before then the king came in turned everything into this they have a lot of fight between this and how they add development to this place so you can go to like one place when the normal tourist see like it’s a beautiful rainforest but you see the whole concept behind this rainforest like all the history which relate to business so that how we get across that the lecture in the morning is so important so every day we going to put like this going to be ecotourism about the rainforest write your project of the north and we’re going to tell the whole story and then in the evening because we have the dinner provided the dinner will be the wrap up like hey today did you see what I told you in the morning so beside that what else did you see and you can see everyone say yeah I saw that plus this because you have like 24 pair of eyes so they can tell me more and then I can just take a note and say hey next year when we go to this place again in the morning I’m going to go over this part too because the kids see this part so that how we improve yourself ok but again one thing that really like how did they know that ecotourism was a trend it’s from all of this because you know what they’re going to talk about it and that how I know this will be the good part to talk about so like that is another ecotourism see that the coffee village that I’m talking about it’s a zip lining operation there’s an elephant camp and you can see like a lot of student kind of share the same like photo you think ok that the eye opening one it’s very quantitative actually it’s not just I think they might like this no we have a data support
W: and do you see a difference between the morning meeting and the evening wrap up? Cuz I mean 7am is pretty early I imagine.

D: correct but you do 2 things #1 for education purpose and #2 for the discipline because you know Thailand is the country where entertaining 24 hours so the kid that went out to the bar if you don’t tell them like tomorrow this time we going to start everyone going to like start to stay up late but when you say 7 o’clock everyone has to be in my room cleaned up ready to go and that is going to set up like you know the whole schedule and say like you can go as much as you want but if you try like too late in the morning you cannot like function that well and I will call them out right so the first 2-3 days they adjust to it but after that we never have a problem everyone know the rule and then they manage themself during the night and say this what I have to do to so that’s why 7am have 2 objectives the main one is education and the second one is important is build the discipline. No everyone just pump up every day because you know the morning part you have to make sure it’s really pump up you going to start with the music and say today we’re going to do something like really fun you know what’d you do last night you’re going to start with what’d you do last night with what’d you do last night first with that question itself it can go over an hour because everyone that went out that night talk about what they did who they meet you know those food stand on the corner like it was very like incredible so beside we teach a new concept we say hey what you did last night so we have access almost every 8 hours for example dinner is access to what they did during the day in the morning what happened last night what you do on your own free time which is good because if you look at it dinner we talk about like hey this is the schedule that we have a plan for you so
how you feel about it but after the night everyone do their own so in the morning 7 o’clock I’m going to ask like hey what you did last night that’s also really important because they had their own like time to do it so you’re going to get another set of information like what students really like to do at night so important for safety reasons because you don’t want them to go to the place that you don’t know about and you bring them to the same place every single year so you should now like hey they did this they’re lucky they got out of the situation but next year I’m going to have warning on those so yeah the meeting itself which I give them a lecture is a great way to collect information and prove yourself yeah it’s different 7 o’clock sometime they have a hard time wake up but after they know like why they have to learn all about this you know for example when we go to coffee village those people are not even Thai they migrate from like Burma to live they have their own culture so with that we have to understand learn how to be a part of diversity that why we get there they do all the sanding they put like the they do the welcoming ceremony so all the kids kind of like yeah to day I have to meet these people I’ve never see them before I’ve never heard of them and now they’re going to talk about really old tribe so how am I going to make myself you know presentable to them so the kid like really very excited about it and everyone just asked the question like what should and should not do so we fixed one thing the people think that American ignorant totally not true when you put them in situation where they know I going to be a good guest I want to show them the respect of the old culture everyone want to engage like that go to the second objective like you want to have diversity and you want to respect diversity aware of it and then respect it which is totally different a lot of American aware of like diversities but when you talk about like what do you think about them most of them not respect it they say like you know what yeah I know they are
different but we are better so aware of is like 1 point but respect is like \textcolor{red}{\textbf{when you appreciate what the different and that is really hard to teach}} but this study abroad I think it’s the only one where to do in class you can talk about different culture different group of people different way to dress up different religion so we can recognize it but if you asked them hey what do you think about this? Right? A lot of people don’t even respect it a lot of people look down on other people who look different but when you put them in the place like that they know that this is not the US right now I’m the guest that’ll be a part of it so it’s totally different

W: and what builds that respect though? I mean they’re learning about this other culture but what about it builds the respect?

D: \textcolor{red}{\textbf{you have to what build the respect}} that’s a good question \textcolor{red}{\textbf{everything have positive and negative side and you have to show them the positive side first and say like hey this is like you know how beautiful this look listen to the shanning you can here}} all this like little high school girl like dance for you because you a guest so they feel like welcoming so you give the the positive like you know part of the culture right and that’s why they think ok they do this because they favor us being here so that is like how get them like respect you cannot talk about like how cool you are and make people respect but you have to do something give something to do them

Cut – for test
D: you asked me like how do I measure it this is the measuring part because if the kid really appreciated it you’re going to see the picture plus the description right here and say I really like this thing like the wow thing itself if they put right here that mean I hit like the second objective right they see difference diversities and when you read through the wording right here you know like yeah they respect their diversity too because sometime they some have some photo right there and they might have negative like you know like part of it for example they might see stray dog stray cat and they might say aw that is really sad so you know like that is diversity that negative part not the respect part so that happen [we have to understand like everything have like good and bad so we have diversities you cannot force people like them 100% but if they like them like 80% that’s good enough right?]

W: I know you talk a lot about the Thai culture focusing on welcoming and hosting and everything do you think this you also mention that you build the respect a lot with the positive aspects with the big welcoming which is Thai culture do you think it’s possible for this to build in such a maybe in like in a short term like in the business college we have a lot of the 2 week exchanges to build that positive aspect of other cultures on other trips maybe in countries that aren’t so focused on welcoming

D: ok you can welcoming is only one aspect of the culture but the culture might have something else for example people might think German is not you know like that much welcoming but look at Octoberfest, that the way to celebrate they might not welcoming like Thai people if you
get lost they gonna like grab your hand and walk you through it right but if you go to other
country they might not have that time but they might help you in another way ok so that is
diversity so you should say welcoming is a part of Thailand the cuisine is a part of it the party is
a part of you know Thailand so that why we sell this positive but the other country also have
something to offer too for example you can go to like you know China look at the history that
they have you know you can appreciate the diversity of history you can appreciate the diversity
of something else you can bring them to the old Buddhist temple in Japan and you feel like
those peacefulness that what they can connect to and they can appreciate it too it doesn’t need
to be like people or like welcoming or the retail the place you sell the food you know the people
that you see on the train sometimes they smile at you you know those kind of thing all those
kind of thing can create a positive because diversity comes in different shape and form and like
what we did the welcoming is one but it’s the one students talk about the most but other thing
else too like the laid back culture they really like it the party aspect of it but the party in
Thailand is kind of like they reason they like it is nothing fancy for example when you talk about
like going to the bar right here you think about the bar people dress nice go to have a nice drink
Thailand doesn’t have that so what they did they just like set up like the old coffee table on the
beach when people come to enjoy the sunset so they operate like a business within what they
have a lot of limitation but people make it happen that’s what student like the most they didn’t
have like a dance floor but they have the beach in the evening everyone going to go and kind of
like use the broom to set up a simple stage you don’t even know is that a stage? Because it’s
like the way it’s set up so it’s kind of cute like you don’t have much but you know how to throw
a party you know how to entertain people within like what you have I think that appreciation
that they have from the local you don’t have much but you give like whatever you have to us to make us like feel good I think that the message we get the most out of the trip you think you go to third world country they don’t have infrastructure but what they have they have some like how do you say they have hospitalities so that what student really like about it which is every country have that right? Yeah

W: so what would you say your greatest challenge would be with this trip over the years you’ve had a long time

D: this trip over the years it’s a risk I mean when you want to engage the kid you know they have like a fine line between you remove fear with fun correct and sometime too much fun is a risk that the most important part so you want to like make sure you be able to control it what you try to do everything have an extreme if you get rid of your fear with fun that’s good but too much fun is bad ok you can like respect other diversity but you never like forget your roots for example I don’t like students like oh my god this so great I want to be Thai hate to be American that is bad it’s just like I’m really great I really like being Thai I’m also glad you know like I’m American so that why we try to control you want to control the concept and not go too far. So I thought about the risk part of the unsafety part and this is one. You don’t want them to like you know hey go to an extreme. So the fun part is one like you know the fear and fun you don’t want them to have no fear you want them to keep some fear to make themselves safe so safety is one #2 is group dynamic that very challenging because you recruit like 24-25 student and we are only one college that have that have the big group. The average size study abroad is less
than 10 if you hit like 11 or 12 that we call the big group the college of business we double sized
that the three program that we run study abroad short-term is almost half of like the whole
university’s so that the problem so you have how do you know you picked the right one to go
into the group. **The group should have the same personality, if they have the split personality
it’s really hard to move the group in the same direction that the second concern.** #1 is about
safety and #2 is about group dynamics

W: and can you tell me about how you pick the group the personality is so important

D: it’s almost like a what we call MLM – like you know multiple level marketing through the
network for example the most important is when they apply for my program I disregard like the
reference from professor I don’t think that is help that much because think about it professor
knows him in the classroom setting but I need to bring them outside to the bar and those kind
of thing so those people can give you recommendation but **they’re not relate to the real
student but you can get it from either Facebook or their friend.** You can go to their Facebook if
they’re drunk all the time you think this is a party animal so this can go too far for fun replace
fear so most of the time I use recommendation from friend if I never have them in my class
they have to come to me to talk to me for about 30 minute so I can learn about their
personality so that help out a lot but the best is like friend recommended I don’t even have 500
like statement of objective that a part of default requirement that everyone like want, I don’t
want that because **everyone look great on paper** because you want to go but in reality it’s not
yeah the GPA is really interesting one, is really interesting. **If you have too low GPA, let’s say**
less than like 2.0, you cannot even organize manage your own life so if you bring them to study abroad different environment it’s going to make it worse but some of them that have really high GPA because they can control themselves so well that not good either because when you go to the study abroad a lot of thing beyond their control and they get frustrate so I know like they have a perfect range of like GPA if the kid have about 2.6 like up to 3.5 that the perfect range. Anything like beyond that sometime you can see very challenging the group dynamic of like the kid that have like the too high GPA sometime they’re nerdy to be honest you know that why when somebody say is GPA important? That’s why we say the lower GPA is a no-no go but a higher GPA that higher than average like 3.5 and up that can be a problem too so we have to meet with them and see what your personality the great one of like 3.3 and believe it or not this number is a magic number even like a fortune 500 say the best group of like graduate kid that you want to hire is about 3.3 if you’re too good you’re going to move up in the company right going to have high turnover but you have 3.2 3.3 they cannot like you know they have enough drive to do well at the same time they know how to they don’t like you know too ambitious to move to leave you because if you think about investment you can invest a lot on one person in training and then they left because they think I’m better than this place so it’s kind of like true in this recruiting process too you know what you can talk to Dr. Eckert he has exactly the same and we never talk to each other but we both of us run program for 7 or 8 year and we came up to this conclusion at the same point.

W: I never would have guessed
D: but no no a lot of great student also good but if you below 2 you have some problem you do so the recruitment that is how we do it from the network from the reference the most important you never just rank up like the GPA and then ok this one going to go go go you never do that because if you do it you’re going to end up with a bad bad group it’s happened to me once I went on sabbatical in 2012 so 2013 I run the trip without knowing student right so #1 they picked like all 22 you know what it end up with only 14 7 or 8 of them kind of drop off because you know what when you pick student like a lot of person drop off you don’t know them you don’t know the situation you don’t know how serious they are but you know on the paperwork everyone look fine they complete it so at the end I think that is like mean a lot so when you have pick them you already know the level of like commitment ok so you never have the drop out you know like problem but that is the only one year I have problem the drop out people and the group that I make was bad because you just like you really don’t know them you rank them by GPA and whatever they look on the paperwork so that why let me warn you the system that we have for recruiting student right now is not related to quality of group dynamic the one that they set up for us right now it’s nothing at all we would rather do what I want

W: and what’s the highlight I know you said you’ve been collecting all this data from students what are some of the most memorable things reoccurring events you’ve see

D: when the student cry right when we go to like some place we spent like 2 or 3 days let’s say elephant project the coffee village they have the one called the fisherman village that is the project I did back in 2008 we went to like one group of the Island middle of nowhere beautiful
98% Muslim so when you hear the word Muslim you know what a lot of negative thing flow into the mind right the same when we told like the parent the parent feel uncomfortable but this is the point this group of fisherman people have beautiful island but they don’t want to build the big resort those kind of thing because they want to preserve their own like community like life and religion but they need the money too too bad this turned to be in the middle between like two most popular tourist destinations in Thailand so the students see a lot of opportunity from the both side compared to this boring island so they have a lot of what you call like the drain of the next generation nobody want to stay on the island they want to work in like those more bustling like you know beach town so we help them all set up the home stay program like you know you have the house and you have the house have extra room you have some beautiful towels your wife cooks the great food your husband go and work in the beautiful ocean everyday why not let the tourist get the same experience like that or a part of it so they do the thing called the home stay so if you look at home stay it’s like very low investment business you have an asset that not utilize correct and now you can make like more money and you can like advertise yourself and you can show your kid and say hey around here they have people come to see all of this why you think this is boring actually this is beautiful and this is true when tourist came in they just like amazed with whatever you have and then the kid say we not middle of nowhere actually we were lucky that have this is a peaceful like you know island like to live in so they help a lot of perspective beside like economic itself so that why the fisherman village the kid really like when they leave they just like a lot of kid just like cry and say oh I’m going to miss this place the most important like statement I kind of like listen to the kid is I’m going to bring my friend I’m going to bring my family back to Thailand this
will be like my place and you know what every single place that we have from like the last trip everyone just fall in love with it or at least one place you’re going to have someone cry before we leave that how much they attach to it yeah the coffee village I was talking about we have to stay in the treehouse no air condition nothing at all because that is the only one thing you can afford so I warn them like hey we’re going to stay in a 5 star hotel but sometime we’re going to go down to like worse than camping yeah the room that they sleep is almost like this but nothing in here and you have the pillow and really thin mattress and the girl this size you’re going to have like 4-5 people staying in the same room I’ve heard a thing like damn this going to be like much lower standard the kid just love it because you know what even though the room look shitty but underneath is like you know a big rainforest with the water like run through it and in the evening they just like do the ritual thing they do the chanting they put the thread like on you like a welcoming people like dance for you they bring in like the local food that wrap in the banana leaf which I’ve already think ok if they get like a diarrhea from this it’s going to be totally my fault right but it turned to be one of the most lovely most memorable like you know destination and with that we can tell them this place in the past it’s totally like a rainforest with a ton of like ____ and tiger and the first tribe came in and cut down grow the opium and destroid all like you know the source of water the king came in introduced like royal proc and now the private like you know people came in to build the zip line and this is the place so the reason they cry because they’re thinking about like what really happened to this people you know they walk into like the first let me tell you about the first time when we like open the door to the place there’s this look on their face like oh my god we’re going to stay in this treehouse you can see the girl feel like uncomfortable with it but after that night you know
what they just like oh this is a must next year they have to come here next year they have to like be here they have a lot of rich story they have a lot of hospitality and they have a lot of interesting business to look at you can turn the villager who used to be like you know cut the tree from rainforest to be the protector of the rainforest and I think that the beauty of it and all the kid have like a touching part of like why the king have to leave the palace he like walk through the dirt road that what we walk when we do hiking and that and other story so they learn through all of those too so it’s like all in one package and they cry when they leave full moon party too

W: from where?

D: full moon party they have the biggest party in the world the beach party but interesting part of business is like it’s the middle of nowhere and they usually have 18 bars on the beach compete with each other let’s say you do Monday a promotion I do Tuesday promotion but how much can like one small bar can draw people it’s none so that why they think about it like how about this time this what we going to do we build like put together like in a big party all 18 we going to throw like one night per month and it turned into full moon party totally building the society and the island have nothing only coconut plantation beautiful beach so they have to import everything because they cannot create any product right because the island so small so they create the thing called fat bucket like they have like the sand pail the little one that the kid play with but they put all the drink in it you can mix and match like all the alcohol and drink and they call like the fat bucket turned to be the product of the islands and everyone just love it it’s
so easy to make it that turned to be the icon of the full moon party and the price is so cheap
totally interesting how those people have no business like background no education but they
say like all the 18 bars you cannot raise the price of the fat bucket if you raise the price people
are going to leave this place because this should be the cheap place to go have a good time so
they help each other control the market price so you can look at that assimilation of small
market that have their own government that control the market like a mechanism beautiful and
the whole island only have like 2 cop but we talk about like 50,000 people on the beach so they
have to have their own law enforcement which is interesting how they collect money how they
hire those people came in it’s almost like a little assimilation of business that we can learn from
beside it’s one of the most popular party in the world go to like the YouTube you’re going to see
it and you can see the investment like when they built up the stage or set up the bar it’s nothing
they just use the beach sometimes they have the stage they build from the plywood and people
like get drunk and go dance on those stage it’s interesting why people from all over the world
go up there Thai government don’t even know about it they have no direct route or support by
government there’s a group of private company like transportation company that bring the
people in very few bungalow those 18 bar and that’s it but turned to be the most popular one
and that what I want student to see and say there is a need to have like a business normal but
you have to have a gut feeling of how to run business and this is a good example so the
rainforest the elephant camp and full moon party they have a lot of thing in common we try to
show them at the end if you just like move the different out you’re going to see the DNA of this
this is the real business and you know what we can like bring this to any part of the world that
why we call global business because at the end strip every different out you have some common theme in it

W: interesting I have one last question I hadn’t thought of this originally but it came up in my student interview yesterday you’re taking a group of 25 students I’m guessing who are

D: 24 yeah

W: 24 who are predominately I’m guessing white youre taking them to Thailand where they’re going to become a minority

D: say it again the point is I’m color blind

W: yeah I know I know

D: put it that why that why the way I look at I never look at like the rest at all

W: I know I understand I don’t usually look at it either but it came up yesterday and I thought it was interesting and the student noticed they went on a different trip but they noticed that going from being a majority and going to another culture where they’re a minority he thought influenced the student and how they interacted with the locals and that it might become a culture shock have you noticed any
D: see this is the reason we do Thailand and Japan before this trip we went to Paris London right now even though you look like kind of the same but they know you’re American and the French treat you one way it’s totally unfriendly it reached a point where we kind of concerned like these kids don’t have a good time in Paris and they do in different level they go out like buy stuff from grocery store if they’re too loud the French kind of look at them like you’re not welcome here they went out to the bar with the French kid the French student doesn’t like care much about them either and sometimes talk bad in front of them so next week we move to London totally different the British totally welcome an American but the concern is in French we just think like is this a good place to bring like first time travelers because one thing we in our program we’re really strong with we try to pick like the first time traveler we try to give them opportunity so that why if you’re first time travelling and you just like run into people who don’t like you we going to kill the first objective like you know replace fun with fear they’re going to feel more fear so that why we change to Thailand and Japan being minority over there like being amreican is welcome so that why they feel like remember beside like replace fun with fear the second part is like you want to respect other people diversity so you know minority you know you’re different you can’t even hide because the way you look everything you stand out but now they just feel like a minority but people do not look down upon me they just like me or welcome me as a guest that why Thailand and Japan is a main destination let me tell you this we should not send a kid to a lot of place in the world they have some place that student don’t like American we have to recognize that don’t be like nah say oh everyone love everyone that is not true so that why you have to be strategic in term of planning like you know where to go
where not to go the most one where not to go the minority part Thailand Japan trip we never had a problem because we’re the pro American country and Thai people they welcome everyone anyway like you know you go to this Muslim 98% Muslim you’re going to feel like hospitality along the way they little kids just wave at you sometimes they’ve never seen like white people before we go eat they surround you and take a photo and this kid feel like celebrity being minority is depend if minority because you they look down upon you that different story now you minority but people look up to you we call celebrities so the Thailand and Japan trip that what they feel like they’re celebrities that is one among the local but the most important thing is when you go to Thailand is a melting pot is not only the local that you hang out with you’re hang out with the other tourist too and that why that how they learn we have like 2 days that we going to stay in the backpacker area when everyone like share the room with like a whole bunch of backpacker oh they learn about themself a lot you just go out you just go out to the bar with the group of like Canadian, British, Scandinavian, French and just talk about like what you did here and say oh yeah you know what in British after you graduate you have one year off like travel ok the French are like oh yeah I have like 60 days off for my vacations scandinavian we have 90 day and then being American just thinking right here why we don’t have that culture like british why we have only like 2 week of vacation you know and that when they think you know what global might be on my career path look at this the other people have better option right why I have to go back to my country and accept the 2 week program the 2 week vacation every year and those kind of thing and so I thnk being minority is part of learning but how you manage by not being minority to be celebrity that is a trick and Thailand can make that trick happen but I don’t know about the other destination
W: being in a native do you think you’re better able to show the students the culture?

D: that only half of it

W: ok because you talked about having trouble previously

D: correct being a native is part of it but at the same time you have to be a native that live I the US for a while so you have this like common perspective this is the reason a lot of program run by American professor so this strong term like they know what you like what you have what you don’t have so when you go to another country they see the other country through American eyes but for me I’m a native born right there live in the US for 20 years so I have a better perspective I already know what the native can offer broader range than like the outsider and then I live here for a while I already know like what American like what everyone have what you don’t have so that is my strength like being a native who live in the US that is my strength not the native itself a lot of professor bought the what we call the package from like local agency they are native but they already like put the package you know most of the time you don’t even care for example

W: like a package from a tourist ok
D: oh yeah that is most of study abroad do if you want to go to Thailand go to Laos Cambodia Burma you just call travel agency they specialize in study abroad that what they say and then they put the package together and they first day you’re going to do this this this this but at the end you’re going to say like you know what they have a few ‘em interesting but the rest of them is not interesting at all for example if you buy some package to Thailand the first day going to be this you’re going to Grand Palace and another 4-5 temple as an American the first temple look amazing the second one look ok the third the fourth the fifth one going to be like oh my god it just look like the same temple right but the local see different they’re thinking like oh the first one built by this and that little think make it different from the second one the third one built like 50 years like later on and that influenced they don’t know that detail because you guy are the newbie right we don’t know those deeper detail but if you let local do it that what they going to do to you yeah because you know what they way they see the world is different they going to bring you to 5 different temple but for me first 2 temple enough we do something else that more important after that because I already know like you know what the value of the temple is not that great yup so that why being a native is a great help but you let native doing it sometime it’s not the best way to do the real native so I’m not the real native that why I see like my role I bridge between like 2 world yeah I’m not live in one side but I can travel between like both side that why I always see thing different

W: but do you think that’s part of the reason you had trouble with the London Paris trip
D: that is one because we don’t know the local that well so when we pick like that French professor to do a presentation it start with not that good feeling I told you about it right the guy that say oh we went to Negocia Novancia and they have one professor that consulting with Euro Disney and the first slide and say oh by the way the biggest mistake we have is we have an American CEO they don’t understand like French and keep going on like that and all the kid just like sit and it’s like we be American and they talk bad American like right in front of you and they have like one company called Expio Logistic\(^1\) which is like you know Paycorn in the US only in France and they all themselves XPO actually it’s x + 1 but we don’t know what the real name so we call them XPO because based on what they say what the name say the guy say don’t call us XPO we’re Express 1 and really serious you know and say you want to call XPO one more time I gonna walk out and he’s really serious and all the kid like is that a joke or not a joke and I say you know what guys that is not a joke so next time it’s almost like when you call somebody name like wrong sometime they insult like them type people like that so those kind of thing is really really

W: did you work with just professors at the business college for it or did you collaborate with the study the French department

D: oh we didn’t connect with like the French department because they’re totally different we just like work with the college of business professor only that might be bad part right

\(^1\) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XPO_Logistics
W: I was just wondering

D: cuz it seem to me like what we did is we don’t know much about Negocia so you already go to that contact person like you don’t know how much that contact person have power in term of like pull the best person it seem to me that she didn’t have that much power because like it look like we almost beg the professor to like

W: meet with you

D: yeah to be to meet the class he feel like I don’t want to be here you go that feel that why I say bring the kid to another country call the CEO or call the professor to do it sometime you kind of like I don’t want to be here but when you go to those like less fortunate people like the elephant camp fisherman village they excited to see you you can see like yeah I’m here since like noon waiting for you guys we arrive at four so like you could have rest they’re like we so excited that all of your moped we have like the big party you can feel like the welcoming and you know this thing you cannot fake with it you can feel right away like is these people really the genuine? You know with it and sometime like the French one or sometime we meet a CEO they don’t want to speak English because all of them is not native speaker but now you put them on the spot so everyone going to see their weakness I used to be like my manager I looked like really cool and people think I can speak English well and then one day Cooperbrincken came in and they put me in the front and now my English is not that great so all my teammates be like eh he’s not that cool so you lose some face so it happen a lot in Asia that
why I remove the executive like you know company visit out because when they did they always say hey Dr. Duke can you just stand next to me if I have a problem can you like jump up and help? Or some of them say can you tell me like what topic you want but can I send you the slide and you clean it up? So i noted they have a lot of nervousness and those kind of thing like on the side so I think like if we do study abroad why we have to bother these people we make them feel uncomfortable so that why I think I’m born and raised in Thailand too this kind of concept the knowledge I already have that why not I can use that one hour in the morning give them enough information about the company banking system all of this I don’t have to put someone who have the bad English bad for him bad for us bad for student so that why I don’t see any win when people do like you have to have like 5 company visit one university visit that the wrong format let me tell you that is standard practice here not only here but almost everywhere because we think like that what we have to do no we don’t have to do because like my job is find something student connect to and then we can build lesson based on that and we expect like there to be love it and then you know what they’re going to start learning on their own about Thailand I don’t need to show them like 5 temple I show them 2 if they like it enough they’re going to explore the other 5 temple by themself but we don’t need to do that we a starting point of the learning curve we not learn busy to complete all in one because we can’t, are we good?

W: perfect, I’m going to stop this
Wei Li: alright so first of all tell me about what got you interested in study abroad

M: well what got me interested was I actually lived with or I roomed blind one year and I ended up living with a guy from Greece and a guy from Algeria and then I lived with a guy from near Flint so it wasn’t that bad yeah a diverse cast of characters and yeah at the same time I was riding motorcycles and one of the guys well a group of guys I rode a lot with were from Saudi Arabia so between all those experiences it was I could see that there’s a lot more to see and I wanted to have my own experience especially all my friends from Saudi they were having their study abroad and what was home for me was like an adventure to them and I wanted to have that experience so that was one of the things that motivated me. One of the people that I have to thank is Hannah Downs though and that’s why I went to the Netherland because she kind of gave me the low down on how cool it was and that’s probably one of the best things I’ve ever done.

W: now let me just clarify this, you went I know you went on two but what order did you go one a short one first and then commit to a long one or did you go right to the long one?

M: oh great question I went right to a long one so yup I did a semester in Utrecht and then I did just about 24-27 days in Thailand so the Netherlands was in 2014 that was from Feb to the end of May and then Thailand was pretty much the month May of 2015
W: yeah and who was your professor it’s not a mentor cuz we have a partnership with the Netherlands who was your contact at Western?

M: oh so professor-wise Western well Ann Ganz was my contact she wasn’t like a professor or anything but she was tremendous. She there’s a lot of paperwork that I had to do and I didn’t understand it all and she walked me through everything. So yeah it was Ann Ganz she’s in the study abroad college and then Barb Tomczak she helped me a lot as well with some of the paperwork so those were the two I guess contacts I had on this side for the Netherlands

W: ok great thank you did you have any previous travelling experience before going to the Netherlands

M: you know I did but it was all really recent because so what happened I think I might have my dates wrong but I think in 2012 all I know is the year after I lived with the guy from Greece that next year which I think was 2013 I went to see him and I stayed in Greece for 3 days so that was an expensive trip for 3 days but I decided to do it to have that experience but I decided to do it to have that experience and then the next thing I did was that study abroad so I did have one short trip for 3 days overseas I done a little bit of travelling with my family when I was younger to the east coast but I hadn’t really travelled that much before that

W: and you travelled alone to see him
M: and I travelled alone to see him right but we built a really good relationship while he was here so it was kind of I was just going to visit so it worked out

W: and I know you mentioned you had a friend who told you about the Netherlands trip but how did you pick to do the Thai trip?

M: the Thai trip you know I just heard it was a really good time I heard that it was going to be eye opening almost mind-blowing because of the culture shock and the culture difference and me having friends from the middle east Africa and from Europe I felt like I wanted to see what this Asian lifestyle what this Asian culture shock could be and Thailand is not all of Asia I want to make that very clear but it does give you a glimpse into how some people live on the other side of the world

W: yeah so you just went off of peer review basically

M: I did, yeah I went off of peer reviews I mean I looked online I love wildlife so when you get to see things that you otherwise wouldn’t see so I got to see some cool animals like lizards stuff that you probably don’t care about

W: and tell me about your trip. You can talk about both of them or one of them.
M: sure sure I’ll try and talk about both of them I think one of the biggest things that I learned from the Netherlands trip was that there’s different types of travel and I was just describing this actually to one of my family members yesterday that people go on vacations they stay at hotels travelers they typically don’t they stay in a hostel which is totally different because now they’re travelling to meet other travelers which is how you experience the culture or maybe they’ll even couch surf and stay with a local but living in the Netherlands was like a while ‘nother experience. Getting used to biking everywhere that was probably one of my favorite things knowing that you can take a public transportation anywhere you want to go the Netherlands in particular is a flat country obviously they don’t have a lot of tall building because the ground is too soft but what that did is it made the sky seem huge because everywhere you looked you could see much further than where I was living in the USA. So that was an eye-opening thing to me and then also being able to travel across easily boarders to all these other places that was an awesome awesome awesome experience I also lived and I think was probably the best part I lived with over 20 people from all around the world and we got to eat dinner with each other every night just hang out and have conversations and we were able to find that common element what you could call that human element we were all able to bond even though we come from different cultures and different backgrounds so yeah the Netherlands trip provided that and then Thailand of course that I have to say a great big thank you to Dr. Duke for taking care of us and really showing us the best possible time I think I will ever have I will go back but I don’t know if I’ll have as good a time as I did with Dr. Duke just because he already had some inroads some connections and he really wanted to well I feel like he showcased Thailand so it’s very well seeing the more fluent side as well as what real poverty looks like but also seeing the...
joy of the people and the way people make money how they survive what they eat what the terrain looks like what they have to manufacture what's there how do they make money basically so all of that wrapped up into one pretty gift basket was the Thailand trip so that was and I love animals like I said so I got to see some things I had only seen on National Geographic so that was a really eye opening trip to me as well it went by really fast but I did a lot of what we did in 27 days people probably would have to do that in over 3 or 4 trips because we did so much so that was an awesome trip for highlighting Thailand.

W: yeah how do I mean you spent real time while you were in the Netherlands guessing you said you also travelled while you were there do you think you got to know the Thai culture even though you were just there for a short period of time compared to your stay in the Netherlands, like you did do you think you got to know the Thai culture like you got to know the Dutch culture?

L: I won’t say I got to know it to that extent but what I will say though is that it certainly did increase my perception my awareness and I gained a new respect I learned about something new so I learned about the Thai people and as I learned about them I also gained their respect for them that if I wasn’t there if I hadn’t had those experiences then I wouldn’t have had that same perception it wasn’t that in-depth but it definitely opened my eyes to a totally different way to approach life and in just approaching how we communicate with people.

W: and what was the most memorable part of the trip, either one, both actually.
M: the most memorable part of the Thailand trip is or was we were on a beach so I was at a little outing on a beach and we got to watch a lighting storm happen I can’t that’s too difficult to explain I’ll be hard to find the words it was awe-it just an awesome experience to see a storm that’s like a 4-5 miles out over the ocean it’s pitch black but all you see is lightning but you’re also dancing to music under flames it was crazy so I don’t know if that that might not be the best one so I’ll come back to the Thailand.

W: it’s your memories whatever you choose.

M: yeah so for the Netherlands it’d be the people it wasn’t just the Dutch people but also it’s the people that I met that I lived with I will say so in the Netherlands I wound up couch surfing so I stayed with a local Dutch person because I arrived in the Netherlands two days earlier than my lease started and we’d become friends I just visited them we met up in Toronto last about 2 weekends ago and they were just here over the weekend staying with me so that that’s probably one of my favorite part the highlight was the friends that I made on that Netherlands trip that from around the world

W: and that was just a coincidence

M: yeah it was that happens though that happens people if you’re outgoing and you’re respectful and nice then you’re going to meet people and it just so happens they might just be
from a different country if you’re in a different country so that’s it so yeah that was that’s all I have for that one I think Thailand you know actually I take it back so my favorite from Thailand this is easier. So we were on a boat so I’m all about the view and just the we’re at the location the location of Thailand is absolutely amazing so we happen to be on a little boat along some limestone cliffs and we go to see dolphins happened to be swimming along these cliffs at the same time the sun was setting and like crazy it was crazy that’s hard to explain too so yeah I would say getting to see the wildlife that was my highlight wildlife and nature I just really appreciate that and the people in Thailand are all everybody everybody was so kind so that’s what I say

W: can you tell me about what you learned on your trips?

M: yup so first we can start with the Netherlands so yeah there’s the reasons so I’ll tell you why I took the trip first

W: ok, are you there? Oh no!

......

W: you were going to talk about it was just right before you started talking so perfect

M: ok so I the reason studied abroad wasn’t it was as much for the educational part but really it was because there’s experience to be gained that I don’t think I would gain any other way then actually going there and talking to the people. So we have a I understand that the world is
globalizing and in a sense it’s shrinking because it’s cheaper to fly places the internet connects people blah all that stuff so I wanted to have my own unique experience and I wanted to keep my mind open and that was an opportunity for me to make myself uncomfortable and to continue to expand my box and continue to open myself up to new ideas new thought processes cultures etc. etc. which I think is going to allow me to be better at everything I do personally and professionally so then secondly from the schooling stand point it was interesting like I learned Dutch I learned Dutch a little but I’m not great I learned also how their approach was to international business how what their approach is to school things like that so that that’s what I learned from the Netherlands. From Thailand it was mostly cultural immersion I don’t want to sound like a broken record from what you’ve heard before but I didn’t grow up in a household that had a whole lot of stuff so when you are kayaking down a river and I’m watching people bathe in the river and they’re got their clothes hung up and the kids are playing in there it gives me a bit of perspective so that was one of the things that I learned in the main the big point I’d like to the thing I’d really like to point out is that these people were happy really happy so it really helped me shape what I need to be happy in life and most everything so gave me a really strong prospective of things I think should be important to me so that was something I learned from Thailand and also that respect from travelling this is what I learned from travelling in general respect is universal so that I think that may be the biggest take away that you can somehow even if you don’t speak people’s language if you can find a way to show respect like maybe learn how to say their name as best you can or learn how to say hello thank you and goodbye or understand that you don’t step on a coin in Thailand because it has the king’s face on it and you don’t ever want to disrespect the king because of
what he’s done for his country so these kind of things if you can find a way to show respect I think that’s the biggest take away I’ve learned from my study abroad and from any travels

W: Just taking notes, I’m listening I promise

M: oh no worries I’m ok with pauses so much and I’m talking a lot just to give you a little bit of info

W: you’re fine I interviewed Dr. Duke this morning so I’ve heard we talked forever

M: dude Dr. Duke is the man. Seriously I’m so thankful to him.

W: so why don’t you tell me I mean I guess we kind of have but you’ve touched on both countries you visited more so about Thailand it’s kind of a broad question to tell me about the countries you visited

M: all the countries that i visited?

W: specifically, the Netherlands and Thailand

M: oh I see so maybe about their culture and things like that
W: yeah things it kind of goes hand in hand with what you learned about the culture and the
country

M: sure sure yeah I can talk about that so in the Netherlands I thought it was really interesting
that the people were pretty laid back from what this was just from my small perspective of
when I was there though but in general people pretty much have what they need so they have
a larger middle class which has a lot of social impact meaning you don’t have as much I don’t
want to go that

W: no tell me

M: sure if I leave my cell phone somewhere somebody’s probably not going to take it because
everyone has a cell phone things like that so I thought that that was really really unique the fact
that everyone bikes everyone the fact that that makes the air cleaner the interaction level
between people is higher in Europe I think and in particular when I was in the Netherlands
because in the US we all drive in our cars so a car for this illustrative purpose is a metal box that
separates you from the world so you don’t really ever interact with anyone inside your metal
box you get in your metal box and you get where you got to go and then you get out of your
metal box when you’re there. But in the Netherlands when you’re biking somewhere you’re all
out and exposed and even if you’re not talking to people there is more of a unity somehow
which that’s how I felt so I thought that that was really unique and I think I talked about their
attitudes and everybody’s pretty laid back they Netherlands know how to have a good time I
feel like they really know how to enjoy life I won’t say that they arty it up they definitely don’t party too much but they do party more than we do and what I mean by party though you’ve got families young people older people all out in the street celebrating King’s Day or Liberation Day or whatever it is and it’s the whole village the whole town whatever it is everybody does it so there’s that sense of community which I thought was outstanding and it’s something I didn’t experience as strongly when I was in the US. In Thailand I think can you ask if the question is what did I learn about the country right?

W: well it’s just tell me about the country and I said it kind of you briefly touched on it already on what you learned on the trip but

M: ok thanks for the redirect

W: yeah no problem

M: it’s been a long day ok so with Thailand at least half of it for me was the geographical part the water the limestone the animals etc. and then the other half because I didn’t speak Thai I don’t speak Thai I only know how to say thank you and that hurts things like that I didn’t get to interact with people as much but people were always excited to see us and I know that their economy is tourism and that’s probably part of it but in general people were excited to see us they’re really respectful they’re interested in learning English and so I really had a positive really felt a positive vibe from the Thai people even with the disparity between the rich and the poor
so to speak so Thailand has some extremes. You’ve got Bangkok which is a world city you can find whatever you want there and then there’s these rural areas, like we went to Chang Mai up in the mountains it’s a coffee village where all they do is grow coffee beans and so there’s a huge contrasts on this little island here there’s a huge contrast of city life etc. to you can be out overlooking the ocean or you know walking through a forest a jungle whatever you want to do in a matter of hours so if I were to describe its it is a tropical paradise to have a world city in it but yeah that’s what I would call it

W: so tell me about your biggest culture shock that you experienced on both trips

M: I’ll be honest, I didn’t have culture shock I really didn’t I didn’t know what to expect but I was expecting 3 things so I guess the Netherlands is very similar to the US if there’s anything to see it’s the bikes there’s more bikes in the Netherlands than people don’t quote me but I think there’s 16 million people in the Netherlands or something like that and to see these bike racks they’ve got four high and they’ve got 400 bikes on them or something and then there’s probably 20 of these racks in this one little area to see the flow people on these bikes I did see what I call a Dutch Buick it was a mom in the middle it was a baby on the front and it was 2 kids on the back that’s 4 people on a bike so that’s amazing but that wouldn’t turn a head, I guess that’s pretty normal. Closest thing to culture shock for me would be all the biking but I really embraced that had a real good time for Thailand you would think so Thailand doesn’t have a lot of infrastructure in a lot of areas so I’ve heard in the girls’ bathroom it’s not as set up as it is in other places like there’s just a hole in the ground that would probably be a little bit of culture
shock but I didn’t have to deal with that yeah so other than that I didn’t expect anything so I’m trying to think of something that maybe really surprised me but I was going with the flow. I like the people I guess the culture thing to that would be the Thai language sounds very it was there’s no way I could try to comprehend anything so that was it Dr. Duke was saving the day all the time so yeah that was probably the most difficult thing or closest to culture shock was if someone said something to you there’s no way you can really guess

W: did you know any Dutch before you went to the Netherlands

M: I didn’t I didn’t know any Dutch but they Dutch speak English they learn English in the 7th grade, the Dutch is one of the only countries that is like an English speaking country where people go to the Netherlands to learn English.

W: yeah did you take classes while you were there?

M: I did I took one I took a Dutch class the whole semester and it was awesome it was a lot of fun

W: alright and last one tell me about well now it’s been a little bit since both of these experiences so I was wondering if they’ve influenced your career path or your how it will help you in the workplace
M: Absolutely 100% this is a very accurate question so the company I work for I chose them because they’re a global company so what I was saying with both of these experiences being so positive it reinforced my want I guess you could say it reinforced my want to work for a global company and to have opportunities to work in these different cultures and to continue to have these global experiences and maybe on the professional side so that helped my drive to work for a global company so it influenced me directly as to who I even chose to apply to and secondly when I’m in now that I’m working I’m working in a global company so there’s people from all around the world and I can have some conversations about these people about their local cultures if I’ve been to Brazil I know about Feijoda which is the case or you know if I’ve been to Thailand I can say thank you you know these small things or you can talk about holidays so being able to relate to people that are working at my company but come from all around the world I am able to do that directly because of these experiences. So it’s been it has exactly influenced the choice of where I chose to have my career and everyday there’s an opportunity to interact with people from around the world and having that awareness that I gained through my study abroad experience is helping me network, communicate, and be productive with some of my counterparts that are from other countries.

W: Yeah perfect that is it I’m going to turn off my microphone
Wei Li: alright so tell me what got you interested in study abroad

A: I've never travelled outside the country before before going on my first study abroad I had ever only flown once and that to Florida for spring break my freshman year so my second time flying was to the DR which was pretty scary but yeah so I just wanted to see like more of the country and I have the Kalamazoo Promise so it paid for it so yeah

W: so you had never travelled by yourself either? Did you go to Florida by yourself?

A: no I went with my friend and her mom for spring break so yeah it was my first time travelling by myself which made it even more scary cuz it was international but there was like a lot people were on the same flight but none of us knew each other at that point so we were on the same flight but you were still pretty much doing it by yourself but when I went to Thailand for my second study abroad we all paid Dr. Duke and he like got all our plane tickets we like did we like paid like it was like online so we all sat next to each other we were all on the same flight and like the professors were with us so it was a lot more like easy going and less stressful because he pretty much like handled all of the baggage claim and we just gave him our bags and were just on our way so it was easier but yeah

W: can you tell me about your why you chose those specific trips?
A: well I chose the DR because it was focused for advertising which is my major and I knew Dr. Lancendorfer who’s the director of advertising and she was the one who created the trip and it was the first year that she had gone and so she really really wanted me to go and then once I looked into talked to my parents some more I was like yeah this sounds like a great trip, I’ve never travelled anywhere like I’m doing it so that was why I did the DR and Thailand I had heard about it so my mom works in the Food Marketing department upstairs so that’s a food marketing trip mainly food marketing and ISM, so I know a lot of food marketing students and a lot have gone on the trip but I didn’t think I would be accepted but I did get accepted I think it was because of my mom but so yeah I just chose that because of like all the stories I’d heard about it and it just sounded like a lifetime trip, like I’ll probably go back to the DR on a honeymoon or a vacation or something but Thailand, if I had never gone there in the first place I’d probably never think about it.

W: tell me about your trips

A: well they were both completely different the DR was like an every other day type event so one day we’d go to a business or like an ad agency or something and then the second day we would go to like a cultural event so we’d tour the downtown historical area we went to some like lagoons and cave we made chocolate one day so it was like an every other day type thing and then in the middle of the 2 weeks we got like a free I think it was 3 days and we went to Punta Cana which is an all-inclusive resort there so that was pretty awesome in itself so that
was like our free days and then we had I don’t know exactly but like probably 2 free other days throughout the time we were there I believe like one in each location that we went to so we could just go travel out by ourselves and like the educational part of it really is business and culture abroad so it was learning about those business learning about the culture and then we had to reflect on it so we had to write a journal everyday about our experiences that we did that day and then before we went on the trip we got assigned a group and we had to like she gave us she assigned the group a place that we were going and our group had to research it and then we had to present it to the rest of the group like the whole trip that there that morning that we went to where we were assign so we weren’t going in blind so we kind of knew some background information about the places and then for Thailand again it was more about culture than business so we went to a ton of temples, the professor is a Thai native so he knew a lot of cool places that like tourists didn’t even know about so we did some cool stuff and like I said it was more like food marketing and ISM so we went to a lot of like grocery stores retailers stuff like that and we just walked around the stores and we just observed stuff and like how it was marketed how it was placed on the shelves and why it was there and then our project for that was we had to do a personal PowerPoint so that he could use to recruit so it was just the stuff we did there and then we did like an educational type one which was a group one and we got we all got assigned a Thai product well like the very first couple days we were there and our group got assigned a Thai product and we had to record how our group utilized that product the whole time we were there and then when we came back we had to put a PowerPoint on how it could be marketed here should we bring it here how we used it stuff like that
W: the presentations you mentioned was that the reputation of the trip did that influence you wanting to go on the trip originally?

A: no I don’t think so

W: it was more like word of mouth

A: yeah

W: tell me about the more memorable part of your trips

A: oh goodness so for the DR the first thing that comes to mind would be making chocolate the day that we made chocolate I don’t really know why but it was one of probably my favorite moments the chocolate actually did not taste good at all but the experience was really fun. We actually like crushed up the coco beans we made it from scratch so it was just really cool to see how it’s made and actually do it ourselves. And it was just really funny and like the whole group was having a blast it was just really fun and relaxed. I also really liked Punta Cana but that was kind of like didn’t really count because it was just like a free here’s 2-3 days where you can just relax so I don’t really count that but definitely the chocolate making was probably the best part or probably the whole colonial zone which is where we made the chocolate it was a really cool experience
W: can you tell me a little more about that?

A: about the colonial zone?

W: yeah what did you like?

A: so it’s like a historical, it’s like their historical downtown I guess you could say. But so [it was just like super old like we don’t have anything like it here it’s like the buildings are just I don’t even know how to explain it it’s just like so old and historic I guess and we had a tour guide so we looked like complete tourist we had the headphones on and everything so we could hear him and it was hilarious but he was very informative it was a very long day though it was just so cool to see all the landmarks in the background because if we were just walking around by ourselves we’d just be like oh look at that building it’s so cool but he knew about the building and just very informative it was just really nice to get a more in-depth feel and then during the tour is when we stopped and I think we made chocolate for like 2 hours and then for Thailand my most memorable moment there was a lot of I think I really enjoyed riding the elephants so so that’s like elephants are really big in Thailand and so we went somewhere new this year he said than in years past and that’s because [this new place that we went like taught you about the elephants let’s say like so they rescued all the elephants so they’re all rescued elephants and there’s like certain stuff like you should ride them bareback you shouldn’t sit on one of those I don’t know what they’re called but like crate things I don’t know what you want to call them but you shouldn’t like sit on those on elephants you should ride bareback you should only
be on them 10 or 15 mins when most places if you go to ride an elephant you could be on there for upwards of an hour and that’s not comfortable for them so like they really taught us about the elephants it wasn’t just there to go ride them they taught us all about the elephants the proper ways that you should ride them then we rode them for like 10 mins just around their property and then we ended at like a pond type thing and then we actually got in the water with all the elephants and gave them baths and they were all spraying the water with their trunks at us it was really really fun experience so yeah

W: tell me a little bit about what you learned on these trips

A: well I would say overall like combining the two just travelling abroad in general I learned to I guess you could say be more independent because I’ve been very dependent on my parents I actually still live with them because they live here but and so I was away from them for a month both times well the first one was only 2 weeks but I travelled by myself and I learned that I actually love travelling like I’m thinking about after graduation just taking a couple years off and travelling more so it opened up those doors for me that I never knew knew of so yeah I don’t really know how to answer this. What was the questions again? I gotta think about this

W: tell me about what you learned

A: alright so I guess the education part of it would have been just learning about how different countries operate I guess so there for Thailand their stores are set up completely different
they’re I don’t even know how to explain them they’re most of them are in malls to start out
with so those are completely different they just shop differently I guess you could say so we
learned about like consumers you could say how they shop it’s just very it’s very interesting to
see they shop in malls like you’ll see people walking around with like a Rue 21 bag and then
they’re going to get groceries like it’s just really funny but that’s just how they do it, like almost
all the stores are in malls 711’s are everywhere there so they also like to shop at like
convenience stores I guess you could call them and then for Thailand what I learned is like I
don’t know like not to be scared like I was like very shy and even my bosses say when I came
back I was like a completely different person so like my first study abroad trip I guess they like
could say it really changed me I was very shy never really talked to anyone was by myself and
now I have a job where I talked to students all day and I give tours and I’m in front of everyone
all day long and talking with huge groups of people upwards of 100 people and before I would
have never ever ever done that so yeah that didn’t really answer your question but

W: tell me more about the change what do you think brought it on what do you think changed?

A: so I think it was just me going out by myself like being independent not having someone to
fall back on if I got scared if I didn’t know how to something I had to figure out myself and then
I didn’t ok maybe I knew like 2 people that went on the trip but other than that I didn’t know
the other like 20 kids that went so I had to get out of my shell I had to go talk to them like I was
going to be with them for a month excuse me and so yeah I had to like get out and talk to
people and I couldn’t be scared of them like I hate talking to people but now I I mean sometime
it still makes me a little nervous but I pretty much got over that so yeah my boss says that’s part of the reason I got my second job was because he noticed such a huge difference in me and so yeah it’s still a little nerve wracking but I pretty much got over it I guess just talking to the other students having to be friends with them I didn’t really have a choice I was with them for a month so just getting out of my shell I guess

W: tell me about the countries you visited

A: So I’m going to start with Thailand so Thailand was beautiful temples everywhere Bangkok was like a big city it was like polluted ton of traffic but once we got out of there we went to like up north I guess you could say trees everywhere beautiful like everywhere you looked there was hills and mountains we actually went up in the mountains some of the places we stayed were just like breath taking like you think of a hotel here it’s completely different than a hotel there and everything is like I mean not like so cheap but cheaper than here that we stayed in some really really nice places that we would never have been able to stay at if they were here in like the states just because of the price difference so I think we also got to experience a lot more luxurious stuff because the price was so low that’s about it the people are amazing they’re little but they’re so nice like they know that we’re Americans well maybe not Americans but they know that we like don’t speak Thai, we did know a little bit we learned like thai phrases which is like hello thank you, more thai I’m sorry. So we learned some stuff but for the most part we couldn’t communicate and so they would just like giggle about it and they would try very hard though to understand what we were saying and sometimes they would even go
run and grab a friend or something or a coworker that knew some English and then we could communicate that way, but like you just hear about all these people abroad like they’re mean and like all this stuff and they’re so nice I didn’t meet one bad person like everyone was so welcoming, and everyone tells you like don’t talk to strangers you know especially abroad like you never know we talked to everyone and everyone was so amazingly nice like I don’t yeah be cautious but I don’t think people should tell you not to go out and talk to people because some of them are very amazing same with Thailand like we were told like be very careful when you go out don’t talk to anyone stay in your groups we did stay in our groups but like everyone there was so just nice, and so helpful so yeah I guess like a lot of places just have those bad reps like don’t talk to anyone be careful I mean yeah be careful but talk to people so

W: tell me a little bit about the difference between the two trips

A: well they were completely different so but I mean it also is the fact that they were in different locations so just the culture in general was different but the DR was more like go go go, like have a strict schedule like you have to wear this this day and that that day stuff like that whereas Thailand was more I don’t want to say relaxed because we did still have a strict schedule but we were pretty much in like workout clothes like shorts and tank tops the whole trip because it did reach upwards of 110 degrees while we were there there were a couple of occasions where we did have to wear like dresses and be a little bit more approachable and nice but for the most part that was that whereas in the DR we had to dress in business clothes almost every day I mean I don’t really know how to say they were different they were both
completely different I think we did more adventurous stuff in Thailand but I feel like that was mainly based on our professors also we went with 3 male professors to Thailand who were all very very adventurous in spirit whereas we went with 2 female professors to the DR who were more business and like just didn’t really want to press the limits and were also very cautious because it was the first year going to the DR whereas Thailand they’ve been going years and years and years so they kind of had it down so Thailand was more put together I guess but the DR you could tell she was really trying but you could tell she was kind of stressed sometimes if something didn’t go right because it was her first time but then we just kind of went with the flow but they were both pretty relaxed

W: do you think you got to know the culture of both countries

A: oh yeah so definitely in Thailand because you have to learn the culture before you can go I mean you don’t have to but to be respectful you do you have to like bow to them when you say hello and thank you just need to learn that stuff so they’re I don’t know he just passed away but I don’t know if they have like a king I don’t know what they call him but he just passed away actually like a month ago and we were all like very sad about it but you so how I’m saying like you can’t point your toes at him even if there’s like a picture on the wall you have to like you have to be very careful of how your posture is how you’re sitting like so we definitely had to learn a lot about that culture because we just wanted to be respectful and we didn’t want to come off the wrong way and we were representing WMU so that culture was I feel like a little bit more strict you could say just because the stuff we had to learn like no pointing your toes
always say please and thank you bow stuff like that whereas we didn’t really learn anything like that we learned to say like hola and stuff like that but we didn’t really have any restrictions on you couldn’t wear shorts above your knees like females couldn’t so you did learn about the culture but I feel like we learned more about the Thai culture than the DR and I feel like part of that reason is because our professor was a Thai native so he really like he lived there he grew up there so he knew like all that stuff whereas our professor for the DR that was her first time going well I think it was her second time visiting there but first time taking a trip there so she didn’t really know too much

W: tell me about being a woman in a Latino culture

A: well in the DR there was some big guys with guns in the streets but that’s like their police but they’re not in uniform they’re just there with guns which is very intimidating very scary especially being like a woman in a foreign country in general but like I said you just can’t be scared you just have to go for it so like I didn’t I didn’t feel bothered at all like I just felt like you can’t let it get to you so I don’t know I felt fine it thought I would feel different I thought I’d be like very intimidated but it was fine same in Thailand like both the times you just have to you have to like act like you know what you’re doing when you’re abroad like you have to like act like you know what’s going on even if you don’t and then people will come you’ll come off more respectable and people won’t be like they won’t want to come and like talk to you or something if you like act like you know where you’re going like don’t act lost or like some random guy might wander up to you I never felt unsafe anywhere. I felt very safe which was a
big concern my mom doesn’t like this but there was a night market right by our hotel in one of the places in Thailand and I actually went by myself and my mom was not a fan of that and I bet the professors wouldn’t be if they found out either but I was completely safe I was not scared at all I didn’t not think anything was going to happen to me like walking around in Thailand and the DR with just like 2-3 people like I felt safer than I would here some nights so yeah

W: did you notice well tell me about going from being in the majority here to becoming a minority in a foreign culture, did that influence you at all?

A: well you do get stared at a lot you always feel like everyone is watching you but kind of like I said before you have to act like you know what you’re doing even if you don’t but like I don’t know I just didn’t think about it I guess

W: you still felt welcomed

A: yeah you say this stuff and I’m like I never thought about that when I was there so it’s kind of hard to answer but like yeah I just like yeah I know I didn’t fit in per say but like I felt like I did even if I didn’t because I wasn’t none of that stuff bothered me like yeah people would stare people stared a lot in Thailand but that’s because our professor took us places where tourists never go like places tourists have never ever heard of like he grew so he knew everything so especially the little kids in Thailand little kids stared all the time but it didn’t bother me I
thought it was cute, I was like oh they’ve never seen an American or a light skinned person I guess and so nothing bothered me like that

W: tell me about the biggest culture shock you experienced

A: food? I don’t know is that a culture shock? I don’t know. I mean the first time you step off the plane it’s going to be a culture shock. Like you’re in a different place everything’s different like the way the countries are different like they’re high paced moving I don’t know how to answer that

W: tell me a little bit about pre-departure, did you have any prep?

A: yup both times we had classes I can’t remember exactly how many but I think like 3-4 for each which is like the professors just sat down and talked to us for Thailand he brought in past students to talk to us so his past students told us stuff to bring, stuff not to bring, they gave us great advice like we’re going to be there like 3 weeks but only pack like you’re gonna be there for a week or a week and a half because you’ll do laundry so much and we were backpacking and we could only fit what was in our backpack so a week’s worth of clothes was fine but for the DR like I said we were the first group that went so all she could really talk about is when she visited there when she like set up all the trips and everything that’s all that she could really talk to us about and she taught us some of the language but she doesn’t she doesn’t really know the language so there were like pre-meetings we went to but I just feel like Thailand was more put
together I guess but that’s because it was like he had gone for years and years and this was the first one so I can’t really compare them like that cuz that’s not really fair but yeah

W: tell me about how you think your experiences will help you in the workplace

A: well I’m I don’t know if I should say like I’m more comfortable I guess around international students you could say I try to understand them a lot of them are like difficult to understand because of that language barrier but I mean when I was there everyone tried so hard to understand me cuz they didn’t have a clue for what I was saying so you just learn respect for that so then if you deal with an international student or coworker or something you don’t want to come off as ignorant I guess you could say so I really love actually working with international students like a lot of people don’t really communicate with them like even like student to student and I don’t really know why I don’t know if they’re scared of them of if they’re I don’t know but if an international student comes up to me I’m like so happy to work with them be in their group talk to them hang out even so I think that will go with me to the workplace I don’t know I guess you could say I’ll be more comforting welcoming of them than some other people would be so

W: thank you that’s it!
Wei Li: so why don’t we start by telling me how you got involved with study abroad

L: ok it’s kind of odd actually so UNIBE which is a university in Santo Domingo in the DR came about 4 years ago to Western because they wanted to set up 3+1 agreements to have where we would share students back and forth and I sat in on that meeting and at one point they said we’d also like to try to do some study abroads and I just said I’ll do it that’s how I’d never actually been out of the country before I went on the site visit never been out of the country but it went really well

W: was it just the people? Did you find that they were really welcoming?

L: they were amazing yeah everyone down there is super nice and I wanted to go somewhere I wanted to try something I had known Spanish when I was young and hadn’t done something with it forever and I was hoping to try to pick it back up that’s been slow but yes so I like that part of it

W: so can you tell me a little bit about the creation process

L: the creation process what do you mean
W: of creating your study abroad

L: oh mine’s probably a little bit different Eckert’s is similar to mine oh Duke’s is too just creation wise but Zach and Steve have one where they go to Chile and they work with an agent on the ground there and I don’t so 2000 3 years ago or so myself and Dr. Veeck went to Santo Domingo and Punta Cana and actually did 5 day site visit so we went to the hotels we were considering went to restaurants we were considering we went to the ad agencies and the multinational corporations that we wanted to visit when we brought the students to check out everyone to see would it work for us and then we decided cuz some of them we would visit and one of the ad agencies was really nice but their total number of employees was 25 so then if we bring 22 people it was just way too many and they didn’t have the space to accommodate us so we’re like that would have been a cool agency but it just not going to work we need bigger ones so I planned it all from top to bottom and UNIBE helped but just with kind of setting me up with people they weren’t able to make the arrangements but they’d say oh we know so-and-so in this company or whatever and so I could go from there

W: but you were saying how Dr. Newell uses a program there

L: yes they use an agent so they have like a tour guide almost and that tour guide comes up with a program for them and leads them so they all arrive there and then that tour guide takes them for the 2 weeks and does all the stuff with them
W: and you created your own

L: I did

W: and you got the leads from UNIBE

L: yeah I got some leads from UNIBE but then developed some other ones over the years I’ve started meeting some other people down there and it’s helped

W: how long has it been

L: this will be my third year like taking the students but then we went the year before that

W: great tell me one thing that would help facilitate your experience

L: a Spanish speaker cuz my I have to translate the contracts that I get from the hotels and all of the places and I can do that but it just probably takes me longer than a native Spanish speaker where I could just say ok here’s the hotel contract does it say what I think it does like what is it in there so and yeah my coordinator has been a different person each year so the first year study abroad it was one woman second year was a different woman this third year it’s a third person and then she just got promoted so next year it’ll be a different person again I think it’d
be better to have continuity because they’re the coordinator that you work with in the study
abroad office to do the budgeting and all that stuff with I feel like it’s always a different person

W: here

L: yeah I want it to be the same person. They’re probably just like oh she’s fine she’s just doing
the stuff I’m like yeah but shouldn’t I have somebody who knows

W: and they help you you said with the budget

L: yeah I have to come up with a draft budget and then we meet with the study abroad office
here and then they turn it into magic somehow to figure out how much each student should
pay which I don’t know what they do I just say these are the costs that we have from everybody
and then they do like pages and pages of stuff that’s just one more thing I don’t need to do

W: tell me one thing you would change about your experience

L: one thing I would change well if there was a drinking age in the DR? is that what you mean? I
mean I think some of the 18 year olds want to experience it a little bit much when we get down
there because they’re not used to having the country where the drinking age is 18 and so if it
was 21 down there we would just be it’d be the same as when we’re up here and so I think
would go a little smoother occasionally there are things where you have to say yeah no these are the rules this is what you need to do

W: and tell me about the greatest challenge you faced with this trip either in the creation or during the trip

L: Latin in Latin American countries time is very different than our time so if I might need contracts or to confirm stuff it even if you ask repeatedly and you’re supposed to ask repeatedly cuz I checked on that first like if I’m following up on that every week are they just going to get mad? They’re like no they expect it if you don’t follow up like 10x then you’re not going to get anything so 2 months later you get data on stuff so always my budget comes in last my budget always comes in in January which is you know later than everybody else’s. but we are also the cheapest trip I think so

W: the hardest challenge

L: the other challenge my not being fluent in Spanish that would be nice and that it changes each year so you’ve got 20 students and they like you know last year it was 10 ad students and 10 of other majors the first year it was 15 ad students and 5 of other majors but just the personalities you don’t know how they’re going to work together so but that’s going to be a challenge you take any group anywhere cuz they have to live together it’s 24/7 you don’t do anything you’re always with the group and if there’s someone who just decides they don’t like
the group they’ll be an issue but sometimes that happens yeah it’s not the biggest challenge
then we just deal with it

W: how do you select the people who go on the trip with you

L: it’s an advertising based program so we start with advertising majors and then if there’s an
addition room then we go from there also seniors I mean I start at the top if they don’t have
another year open to take it yeah I want to make sure to take them now. And if they have a lot
of allergies to food or are vegetarian it doesn’t work in that country because you can’t eat the
vegetables unless you can peel them because you know it’s like being in Mexico unless you can
wash your fruit or vegetable you shouldn’t eat it so if someone’s a vegetarian and thinks they’re
only going to be able to have salad the salad was washed in the water and so the locals aren’t
eating the salad you shouldn’t eat the salad but they’re like I’m a vegetarian and I’m like no but
we’ve got that on our on the form when you go online on broncos abroad but sometimes
people don’t say anything cuz they want to go and then we get down there and we had it this
past year we got down there and she’s like well I can’t eat any of this food said well there isn’t
other food available to you so this is the food and she didn’t speak Spanish so she couldn’t tell
on the menu like what options were so I was trying to help her and we were doing that for
every single meal so it’s not set up for that type of yeah or if you’ve got one year a student
decided not to go she had allergies it was like meat gluten soy like all these I was like we don’t
how are you going to eat down there if you need very specific things in your diet that you take
care of yourself we’re not going to be able to do that
W: you mentioned that you had never travelled before

L: I had never well I had been to Canada but that doesn’t count yeah never that was my very first country I’ve been to 4 more countries since then just because I love it but we were always I’ve been married 24 years my daughter is 23 and my son is 21 we were sending them abroad like we sent them my daughter has been to 15 different countries they’ve been all over the place so there was never any time or money for me to go but I don’t think like our study abroad office in HCoB I don’t know if they knew that I’d never been abroad before when I said I’d do the study abroad I don’t know if it would have made a difference

W: but can you tell me about your learning experience because this was a culture you were unfamiliar with

L: it was different yeah when we if we had not gone out on the site visit it would have been too hard those 5 days the culture is I’m Italian and so a lot of the Italian things are going on down there as well so everyone is very friendly and they’re kissing and they’re hugging I’m like oh ok I can do this I’m familiar with this but yeah you can’t show up on time you have to show up late and yeah I’m half Italian and I’m half German so the German insists you’re early for everything the Italian’s late for everything and down there so like the businesses might say like say you have a 9am appointment or 9:30 appointment or whatever and you’ve got all these students and we’ve got this little shuttle bus to get us around oh cuz they don’t have mass transit that’s
a big thing down there you go to a country without mass transit like how was I supposed to
yeah figuring out how we were going to get everyone where they needed to be but just that
site visit if we had not had that I would not have known anything when we got down there. It’s
still hard in the airport cuz the business people and higher ups speak English but taxis don’t
airport doesn’t restaurants don’t people on the street don’t and it’s not that they’re holding out
on you they honestly don’t speak English so but they’re very friendly so they’ll like try and then
you try and then you come up with something so except the one year they lost my luggage so I
had actually found a guy who was on my flight who I had heard speaking Spanish and English
and then he was going to get his luggage too I’m like will you please help me I have no idea
where to go now like I’m just I got nothing and so

W: but did you learn most of it through experience while you were down there

L: yes

W: did you just research it. How did you learn that

L: No I mean I don’t know I guess I just I mean I talked a lot with the UNIBE people and just
learned on the ground I mean I researched the DR but that doesn’t really tell you a lot of stuff
and it’s like saying all people in the US do this we know that’s not true so you just got to figure
out while you’re down there.
L: no I’ve we went to there was some Dominican event and we went to but that was all and it was dancing which was amazing. We took dancing lessons when we were down there too that’s one of our first days so I figured out that cuz a lot of the group may not know each other and things so one of the first days we get down there and well we get down myself and my coleader get down there on Saturday and get everything you know ready we get them we pick them up on Sunday they arrive we tell them to arrive in the afternoon so we bring out shuttle and we wait and get them off the plane in the afternoon that first day Monday we go to UNIBE and meet all the people at UNIBE and meet a bunch of students. And then we have the dance lesson and we have a dance teacher actually down there it’s 2 & 1/2 hours. We learn bachata and merengue and dembow which is a little like twerking it’s explicit but they don’t like do it on each other so it’s ok but then all of the students you know they’re doing all of these silly things and none of them know any of the steps so they’re all trying it together and they meet each other and it’s unbelievable icebreaker and so once you’ve tried to dance something and you’re in front of the big mirror and then the teacher’s doing it with the other teacher and they look amazing and then all of us try it and we’re like haha that was great and so then yeah then they get along really well the rest of the time. And I think you need that icebreaker early because unless your group somehow all knows each other you’ve got to somehow make them bond

W: do you do any pre-departure meetings
L: we do we have **3 meetings pre-departure, we talk about all the requirements we talk about**

**Spanish we do a little Spanish lessons** do any of them remember it by the time we get down

there sometimes they really take it to heart and they work really hard and others are like ah no

we’ll have you with us and stuff I’m like we’ll you won’t have me like every second of the day

with you but it’s ok

W: can you tell me if you’re willing to tell me about you’re Italian and German are you second
generation?

L: my background? No it was my great-grandparents yeah so it’s been quite a while I mean my

both great-grandparents spoke another language when I was little growing up and I always

wondered why I was like what’s going on?

W: but you knew them

L: yes yup

W: so basic tell me about your trip

L: like what we do? Or what we? Ok so we wanted a trip...(break 15:30-15:44) ok so I wanted a

trip that was focused on advertising because the Thailand one is focused on food, and the

Germany one is focused on sales I mean heavily on sales I guess and also Duke’s trip I like but it
doesn’t really do any of the business side just does the cultural and then Eckert’s trip is all business with a little bit of cultural and I thought there’s got to be something that’s in between the two of those and no one was going down there no one was going to Latin America or South America and then right afterwards like Steve set up the one in Chile so I thought that was interesting I wanted it advertising focused and since we were able to when we went on the site visit and discover more of the ad agencies down there these are the same advertising agencies that are up in the US just smaller and the same companies so Coca-Cola is Bepensa down there and Nestle is down there and Frito-Lay and all of them have places down there and Presidente which is the largest beer manufacturer in Latin America so I wanted the opportunity for the students to see what it was like to have manufacturing and branding and advertising and all that whole IMC picture in a foreign country and I specific chose a foreign country where they do not speak English because I wanted them out of their comfort zone I wanted them to not be on vacation I want them to go down there and have to work at figuring stuff out and try to relate it more to a class and you know learning and stuff that’s also the reason why cuz a lot of people will say well you know oh well I’ve been to the Dominican before I’m like oh you’ve probably been to Punta Cana oh yeah it was a great resort well the resorts in Punta Cana are like Disneyland or Disney World you go down there and they people will just work there and then it’s not Dominican now we go there to the resort for the weekend just the weekend between the two weeks and it’s amazing we don’t do any work we lie on the beach we snorkel we do banana boats we waterski we do all that stuff it’s just like that little vacation in between the two work weeks but then we go back to Santo Domingo where it’s a real city with real people the workers in Punta Cana actually live there. They have it where they live there and
they work for 3 weeks then they live right at the resort and then they go all the way back to Santo Domingo for one week to be with their families and then they come back out there and work for 3 weeks. They have the dorms for all the workers this is not a normal set up this is they’re like oh we love the resort I’m like that’s great but this is not how people live in the Dominican so some of them I mean cuz there’s a lot of poverty too and that’s one of the things we did service project this year this past year that we had not done before and then we’ll do another one next year I don’t know if we’ll do that same one I’ll see what one they’re UNIBE can set up yeah cuz we planted trees with school kids in the Ecological Zona it had a name before it but I don’t remember what the name was. Ok so where do we go we go to the ad agencies we go to the multinational corporations we go to oh Noticia Cine so we go to a television station the they’re broadcast level is like US broadcast levels maybe 60’s or 70’s it’s still set up the same way like we had way back there so we can go into the station and we make those arrangements and we come be like one the news and all the things and the students I mean for them they’re like I’m on the news this is yeah it’s just an amazing thing and we see how the broadcast works and everything there it was really fun this year because they were holding the elections they actually had the election while we were there now the DR is calls themself a democratic country that’s important to understand so previously the constitution in the DR said that the president could only be one term so their terms are 3 years while in power the president deiced to change that so he could be president again and he is that’s not exactly what we would call free and unbiased election so I say they call themselves democratic but yeah it didn’t impact us it was just cool to see all the advertising for their advertising down there is extremely minimalist so like they have a company that is like our AT&T it’s called
Orange and it just has an orange billboard that just says orange we’re like what is that for it took us a long time to figure out what they were advertising but everyone there knows what they’re advertising but everyone there knows what they’re advertising and so all of the candidates there was almost 20 candidates for president ok all over the billboards so we were watching television we didn’t see any television commercial all over the billboards there was just the picture of the guy and it would say their name for president and that was all every billboard was a different candidate we were like wow this is really different down here. So we go to chocolate factory and we learn how chocolate is made from the beans all the way to the chocolate and we do it so we have to pick the beans we cook the beans we shell the beans we grind them it takes hours and then we turn it into chocolate you put this in this great big center fuse and it just spins it and you add sugar and stuff yeah and it turns into chocolate yeah and it was good we went to oh the cultural things we went to the zona colonial so Santo Domingo is where Christopher Columbus had the first settlement in North America so they’ve got Christopher Columbus’ house and part of him is buried there and they’ve got a statue of him on every corner and things they’ve got the fort he built to protect the people in the city from the pirates we go to all those and then we also go to Los Tres Ojos is the three eyes it’s pools where the native Indians would conduct rituals. It’s underground pools and but you can still see up to the outside and it’s just gorgeous it’s unbelievable down there and then we get to go we can only stay outside they don’t let you go in where supposedly part of Christopher Columbus is buried but it’s just a gorgeous monument and everything and so we try to do all the cultural things along with the business things and then we do the beach on the weekend and yeah and then we spend 2 days with UNIBE students in class doing different classes so and we do them
together so the UNIBE students will be in class with my students and so we do different projects and that’s really fun.

W: can you tell me a little bit about the grocery store project

L: oh yeah how do you know there’s a grocery store project? Who have you been talking to? Ok last year it didn’t work as well as the first year because we went to a different grocery store and it was too Americanized it had too it didn’t have local products you need local products normally we go and we go to like a colmado which is like a mom and pop shop like a 711 and you’ll get a local product and you’ll have a team and then you bring that local product to the class for that day and then I match them up with Dominican students and you have to figure out how to market that product when it comes back to the US and you have to come up with the whole campaign you know they’ve got a few hours to do it and then they pitch it to the whole group and then we decide who wins we have judges with like it’s myself and Dr. Veeck and then the other professors who teach the classes that day and decide who wins the pitch of their like what they’re going to do when they bring it to the US to sell it

W: and they work with the

L: Dominican students, UNIBE students. Yup. But yeah we have to go to local shops we went to the really ritzy one by the Embassy Suites last year and it was not good. We had a lot of trouble finding Dominican products. We did I know
W: but you don’t have any rules about them creating their own pitch and then talking compromising with the Dominicans or anything like that?

L: oh no I no they all have to like come up with something. The Dominican students speak English so that works really well

W: What-tell me about your objectives for the trip

L: the objectives for the trip

W: what do you want the students to take away?

L: I want them to be out of their comfort zone and challenged and just experience a culture they’ve never seen before but still learn about advertising so they think I mean these are seniors they know they think they know how advertising works and they think it’s the same everywhere well advertising doesn’t work the same everywhere no field works the same everywhere so I want them to be challenged to see how it’s different

W: so between the comfort zone and challenge to see advertising in a different light that’s your overall takeaway for them. Perfect and what is your biggest success with the trip
L: biggest success? I don’t know I would say it’s a little one so Mikaela went on her very first trip she’s a sophomore very quiet her parents had told her not to go on the trip cuz she’d never been out of Michigan much less to a foreign country and she wasn’t going to like it it was going to be all different and she was going to be unhappy and scared and all of this stuff and they’re like oh it’s not going to be like you know vacation and all this stuff and she still said she wanted to go and one of the first days into the trip we did see a lot of the poverty and the kids on the side of the road and lots of things like that and we were sitting that night at dinner and she said yes it is totally different but I’ve never seen anything like this I need to you know find out more about the culture and the city and everything I’m like yes that’s exactly why you’re here so and now she’s president of ad club you know two years later she really just she was so so quiet she didn’t say a word for like 2 days like oh my gosh are you ok cuz they get homesick sometimes and she did it was such an amazing job yeah and she just really came out of her shell and I liked seeing that though she probably could have gone to Germany and don’t the same thing or Thailand and the same thing

W: tell me about students and homesickness

L: oh we had one the first year as well so we were like 3 or 4 days in and she came all the students were in the pool because Embassy Suites has an infinity pool like on the roof where you can oversee the city it’s gorgeous and then the lights go down in the city it’s just really nice it’s in a nice safe area which is great the students came to me and said ok I’ve booked a flight home I’m like ok wait a minute what you can’t book a flight home what just happened oh well
my dad’s sick or whatever I’m like what I’m sure you paid for all this I’m sure they would tell you to stay she just wanted to go home and she just decided she was going home whether or not I was tell her she was staying I’m like ok you paid for this class it’s only 4 days in this is 15 days 14 nights you can’t pass with with 4 days of it you really this is a real class it’s not just you can go home now and she’s like I’m going home so we talked to her throughout the evening she’s just like I’m going home I said ok let me let study abroad office know left them messages cuz it was in the middle of the night at this point she had to get up at 4am I ordered a taxi for her I met her and she says my parents convinced me to stay so at 4am I’m going ok so I call the study abroad office back and say ok she’s staying so then she stayed that weekend she had an awful weekend and then she says I’m leaving again so then she left so I called the study abroad office again so then we get back from Punta Cana get back to Santo Domingo and then she left on a flight on Wednesday but I called the study abroad office again and they’re like oh really good you convinced her to stay like the first time I said ok but she’s leaving again so she just which is the funniest thing because now since then she’s done a whole semester study abroad and another short term study abroad and she said would never have done those you know if she hadn’t done the first one with me but I’m like you hated every second of it we were doing one activity one time and she said oh I’m not going to do that and I said well this is our activity right now look everyone is doing it and she’s like no I don’t think so I’m like ok so if you hated it why would you want to do it again? But apparently we were the yeah like we had to get her through that or something to but yeah Eckert talks a lot about homesickness he can see you know when they reach that point Lauren one time we were in a restaurant and she was having trouble ordering and you could tell and they get tired too because they go out at night and they
come in and they’re late and stuff they’re like she said I wish they’d just stop speaking Spanish
I’m like well you know it is there language so you know I can help you with it hold on and it just comes out of them and they know she’s like that’s not what I meant but yeah so towards the end of the second week they’re starting to get ready

W: can you tell me about how you handle the homesickness with the students

L: I don’t know I just kind of listen actually they talk among themselves with it more so where they’ll just like and see the thing is they need some alone time we’re together so much that I’ve built in some af-the first year I had it where we were doing something every second of every day and then only if something like if someplace cancelled which they do a lot down there would we have some free time but now I’ve got like afternoon pool time just like on the schedule see you on the arubican in the morning afternoon pool time and then they can decompress and I think that worked better.

W: do you have them journal about their experience

L: they have to have a journal every day and we check it as we’re going through and then they turn it in at the end

W: tell me about how you create a cultural experience for students
L: I don’t know the answers to these questions, how do I create a cultural experience? I don’t even know what you’re asking exactly I don’t know what you’re asking so is it different than creating an experience for them?

W: cuz they can have an experience anywhere so how do you make it specific to the DR?

L: oh ok I guess by visiting places and engaging in activities that you can’t do anywhere else though I guess parts of Christopher Columbus are buried other places but I mean they don’t have the same historical background with Christopher Columbus I mean that’s the first settlement so they don’t have those things they don’t have the pools where the native Americans er-Native Americans oh my gosh Native Dominicans would be doing thing they don’t university is totally different down there culture is different down there cuz so like the students they don’t there’s no dorms university there’s only 4 there’s supposedly a 5 one but it’s really small universities in the DR. There’s the tradition that students do not live away from home until they marry so if you go to school until you’re 23 or 30 or whatever you still live at home. And so if you meet you know like up here you meet a guy and they say oh yeah I live with my mom you know then the girl’s like yeah great ok everyone lives with their mom their parents drop them off to school in the morning and so that’s that’s how it is. The school is open air like there’s only a couple rooms that are closed off with air conditioning these are just like verandas and stuff and that’s how you go to school and so if your class is at 9 the prof will show up at 9:15 and the class will get there at 9:30 and yeah that’s something you have to adjust to and
everything’s just everyone’s more casual and that’s probably why they’re happier but yeah
everyone’s just more casual if something changes you go ok yeah we’ll do something else then

W: so tell me how you introduce the students to this culture

L: by putting them in it? I mean the first day when we do the when we meet with UNIBE
students and I think the having the things were doing with UNIBE students is the easiest way
because my students are more comfortable talking to them and vice versa and they invite them
out they’ve been known to go out to dance clubs and stuff there’s a lot of dance clubs in the DR
because that’s strong in the culture is the dancing when they go out they don’t go out to the
bars they go out to the dance clubs so they’ve taken some of my students out to do that and
those type of things and then being able to see all the different cultural events and having to
write about them and then going to the ad agencies going to the corporations just all of that oh
here’s another way we go to the baseball stadium baseball’s not in season because all the
players there’s more Dominican players playing in US baseball than any other so they’re not
they only play winter ball down there but we have a lecture at the baseball stadium about the
importance of baseball in Dominican culture. And how different it is for them to they have
scouts who are going out and talking to 12 year olds and convincing htem to drop out of school
so they can start training even though you end up with 1% of the people being able to make it
to the US and then you’ve got there’s a word they would call I forgot what it was but if you
wash out like if you you start training and so they sign you at maybe 16 and then by 18 you
either have to be signed all together or go up to the US and if you don’t make it if you’re
released so is it I forgot what release is something real close but then that’s a stigma so if you

you go home then to your family at maybe 18 you’ve been out of school since maybe 12 14 15 16 so

you have no education and you have to go back to the home because you’ve been released

people say Mary’s son came home he’s and then they have that title for them and they can’t

get jobs because they have no education and so they take very menial jobs and that’s really

hard on the country to have these things going on when people think oh yeh I’m going to be a

baseball player and these people are not going to be a baseball player it’s so unusual and then

whenever relations with Haiti are strained and that’s a problem as well also they struggle with

Democracy they struggle with tolerance for other races and gender identity or sexual identity

so they’re behind us I would say in those well no I don’t know not behind us we’re our US

country struggles with that too they’re not behind us but they’re more open about their

feelings people who don’t conform to a set thing. And then like they don’t want to be

influenced by Americans so we’ll be like oh no so he’s gay so what does it matter you know

we’re accepting and they’re like oh well you would be enforcing your beliefs upon us we’re like

no we’re not we’re just here

W: so going off of that tell me about becoming like a racial minority going from a the US where

you’re part of the majority did you notice a difference?

L: I did notice a difference, so like we had some students who were like Hispanic Alex is Hispanic

and he got down there and he’s like he felt so happy he’s like I fit in I’m like I fit in with

everybody else some of our African Americans said I fit in with everybody else everybody else
looks like me no one looks like you know our white girls with the blonde hair and the green eyes no one looks like them everybody else looks like me and they loved that now the problem is is if if you look too Haitian if you’re very dark skinned African American then sometimes the Dominicans will feel that you’re from Haiti and they have biases against they have prejudices against Haitians

W: but did you notice any like the way you were treated or anything like that

L: for me? No cuz the whole professor thing doctora yeah so I have a tendency to get away with that yeah but yeah Joel went into not Joel who was it one of the guys went into a restaurant and he would be dark skinned African American who is gay and so he went into a colmado into a shop and I guess one of the guys there was making fun of him and he was not I’m like how did you even know? You don’t understand any Spanish he’s like I could just tell, I’m like ok

W: and I think this is my last question for you tell me about being a woman in a latino community

L: yeah cuz it’s patriarchal, women wear skirts women wear dresses women look like women they’re fitting in meant I wore full makeup and hair and heels and a dress everyday now here I can wear whatever when I teach but that is not appropriate there so women there are dressed up 24/7 they look like perfect all the time they were in the airport I’m like oh my gosh I’m never going to be able to get to this level ever but yeah we had to step it up we talked all the students

122
the guys felt the same thing too a bit because the guys look sharp everybody is much more conscience of how they look down there even the students much more so than us and no one wears shorts shorts is not an accepted clothing article but it’s 100 degrees so sometimes the students are like wow really why are these people not in shorts? It’s not respectful you just don’t wear shorts and so you’re a tourist if you wear shorts and a lot of places you can’t even get in they won’t let you in you can’t go in the restaurant or the shop or whatever

W: and you felt obligated to wear dresses and makeup and heels

L: all the time yeah

W: would you be treated differently if you weren’t?

L: well you can’t get into places well now businesses of course you know to show respect if you were going to any business in the US as well but unless you’re in a tourist area then yes you’re judged when we were in Punta Cana it’s tourists from all over the world everyone just wore bathing suits and cover ups but yeah in Santo Domingo you have to dress accordingly

W: do you guys only stay in Santo Domingo
L: aside from the 3 days in Punta Cana yeah we don’t we would need another week if we would
go up to there’s another city north of it about an hour or two but we’d need another week then
again

W: great, thank you

L: you’re welcome
Wei Li: So go ahead and tell me what interested you in study abroad

D: ok well one of first things is *I’ve never really travelled out of the country besides Canada*, and you know that doesn’t really count just being so close to Michigan. So that was one major thing. And then one of my best friends he went and he loved it and he talked about it so much I’m like ok I looked into it. And then the I mean the scholarships that Western offered to the business students was appealing so I’m like why not?

W: yeah, how’d you pick the DR trip?

D: well I wanted to go somewhere I thought the culture was going to be different than that of *America* and the two that I was kind of bouncing between was well three I guess, was the Thailand, DR, and the Germany trip. But the German culture it’s kind of I just compared it a lot to American culture just in the way you know there’s a lot of similarities between people more so than people in the DR or even Thailand compared to Americans I wanted something else

W: did you research, or were you just basing it off of what friend who went on the trip said?

D: kind of what my friends on the trip said
W: ok

D: and then also you know just being in the DR im like it’s going to be hot, it’s kind of like a touristy you know vacation place too so you know I get the best of both worlds

W: sorry just taking notes

D: oh you’re find

W: alright so tell me a little bit about your trip, the most memorable part

D: the most memorable part?

W: yeah

D: I would say the most memorable part would be just the comment or interactions with the Dominican students. I was just kind of really impressed you know how smart they were. Not like I didn’t expect they weren’t going to be smart already but how some of them were fluent in multiple languages and could articulate high level thoughts in multiple languages which kind of blew my mind because you know I can only speak one languages and they were speaking English just as well as I was and they could speak Spanish fluent so that was the most
memorable part to me, how welcoming they were. Me being I guess biracial and having a
darker tone in my skin, a lot of people thought that I was Dominican or had Dominican family

W: oh really?

D: yeah so that was kind of cool because they welcomed me. Like they’d argue with me and
thought that I was Dominican when I told them I wasn’t they were like no you have to be
Dominican. And the fact that I speak a little bit of Spanish helped and like the people were just
like they felt almost like family like the Dominican people, like I didn’t meet one person in the
DR that wasn’t friendly to me.

W: I guess I’m not really familiar with the trip in general, the DR trip, can you tell me a little bit
about it.

D: yeah, the trip is business and culture in the DR. so it’s an advertising based program I mean
advertising wasn’t my major but I still got a lot of business concepts from it as well. We went to
David Ogilvy which is an advertising firm in the DR. and it’s a, also they have some Americans
too, it’s founded by David Ogilvy, I don’t know if you know who that is.

W: No unfortunately

D: so David Ogilvy is one of the main people who was like one of the pioneers for marketing
D: have you ever seen Mad Men? He was like this whole series was kind of based on him

W: ok

D: so that was really cool because I got to meet some of their like their COO and some of the project managers and they were just trying to be like some techniques they do when it comes to business...some techniques they use when it comes to advertising, getting consumer’s attention things like that so

W: like, do you have any examples? Sorry to cut you off

D: no you’re fine but absolutely. They said a lot of ads and things they do are consumer based products, a lot of it would be like food so they gave us examples like technically traditionally what people did when advertising a food product, they would think of advertising where it is. So for example if you’re in a grocery store and there’s a sale, they’ll put a for sale sign right above where the item is so you know that’ll kind of catch your attention but they said what actually they found to be most useful was doing the complete opposite, which was advertising as far away from the product as possible, like not even in the store. So like almost a billboard or unconditional outside marketing so like buying street furniture and putting them on the side of
buses and they want to convey opinions of you know I’m new I’m exciting try me buy me love me now.

W: yeah

D: so that was really cool. Let’s see what else at that same firm they kind of taught me like they main point of advertising and I mean it seems kind of simple but it was something I didn’t really know and even some of the ad majors didn’t even really think about it like that. They said there are really two points of advertising and promotion. And it’s to increase revenue or you know bring in revenue or increase awareness. Which I thought was cool because you know I have some entrepreneur aspirations something I’m working on. So that’s something I think about you know when I’m trying to develop my own you know company or selection....

W: yeah

D: In a helicopter we went to the Young Rubicam, which is a Dominican made advertising firm and they’re most famous for their president campaigns and president is their beer on eof the biggest beer companies there. It’s made in the DR and it’s at like 98% market share, they love the beer

W: Wow
D: like Anhimer Bush is like almost pulling out of the DR because they can’t sell it. So excuse me
I got a little bit of a cold too

W: you’re ok

D: but Young Rubicam they were super cool because Juan Presidente is a fun brand like while
we were there we obviously tasted it so we were kind of excited about that but like not during
the show or the presentation or anything but like being the DR we tasted the beer so it was
cool and it was like something cool to talk about but so the Dominican people are like super
passionate about their culture like they’re super nationalist like they love being Dominican and
it was cool like it was you know to me it was almost a compliment mistaken for being
Dominican because that’s a super big compliment so with that being said, el presidente is a
Dominican beer. It’s made in the DR, they sell it there, so it’s super culture thing, they love it.
It’s super big. It’s almost __(8:15)__ something to do with the family

W: yeah

D: so one of their eminent – one of their biggest campaigns came from, I don’t know if you’re
familiar but Dominican baseball that’s also like a big, like baseball’s huge in the DR

W: Yup
D: so one of their campaigns came from after the DR nation team lost to I believe like Switzerland or somebody and they were all like down like you know they were all like sad and stuff so the following year they come out with this campaign and it was like super Dominicain, like it was like a commercial that showed like different things to do in like the DR and what it means to be Dominican and you know things like that and they used ___ Basketball player name ___ (9:05) the famous baseball player from the DR and they predicted that they were gonna win but that was before the game even happened so after they did actually win their sales just like spiked and it was a super successful campaign.

W: wow

D: so I guess that was really cool too

W: so you visited a couple companies, what else did you guys do?

D: yeah that was the business aspect of it but there was also a lot of culture....

W: a lot of what?

D: a lot of culture

W: oh ok
D: ....so one we went to, we were in Santo Domingo, and Santo Domingo is the capital of the DR and while we were there we went to a place called la zona? Which is like, it started out as like a strip mall kind of like an outlet mall,

W: ok

D: but then they slowly started taking away from it and started building into a like historical area some cool things there were the first cathedral which is said to be one of the resting places of Christopher Columbus but Spain says the same thing so...that was there and also there were a bunch of houses that were there for Napoleon Bonaparte

W: wow

D: yeah so there was like a house that he had bought and he used for like the war cuz they was like really close to the Caribbean sea and he had a really good view if someone was coming to attack them and things like that.

W: yeah

D: there was also a huge fort that was cool, made by African slaves and tano slaves, *tano slaves* are just, well *tanto* people are just like native Caribbean people
W: ok

D: so and it was made out of seashells and like parts of the ocean, stuff that they pulled in from the Caribbean Sea they made this out of it but if you look at it, if you google it. It’s really incredible.

W: what was it called?

D: I’d have to pull it up, it’s fortress of ....I don’t know

W: That’s ok, I can find it, it’s in SD?

D: yeah

W: ok yeah it sounds great

D: and then we went to this resort for the weekend that was really cool too just got to relax and kick back and stuff for two days it was like an all-inclusive and like the pool was really good we got to go snorkeling in the Caribbean Sea what else did we get to do my assistant professor went fishing at like 5 am he caught like a huge swordfish. What else? We to like some caves
there was like a there were some caves right by Christopher Columbus’ lighthouse and they shot like they shot like parts of Batman in there

W: oh wow

D: which was really cool, there was like underwater canals stuff and you could like ride in it. Like little fairies

W: yeah sounds cool, can you tell me about how you met, you were talking about the local students earlier

D: yeah so there was multiple ways, so one of our first couple days in the DR, our teacher had to go to UNIBE which is the University there in SD

W: ok

D: so she had some students that she had dealt with prior that she introduced us to so there was like two or three that were a little bit older so we got to talk to them but then on one of the last couple of days while we were there we actually did some assignments some advertising assignments and we did like we wrote like poems and stuff like collaborated and made like business business proposals with Dominican people so there were teams with half American half Dominican so we worked with them closely on those projects which was kind of fun too
W: yeah I know you talked about learning a lot of business aspects but you also talked about it being an advertising trip, can you tell me what kind of things you learned in that last assignment or maybe during the entire trip?

D: so as business goes?

W: yeah or advertising you talked a lot about the two factory or really the business visits being really influential but then you didn’t mention anything did you what was the assignment like I guess

D: ok so

W: or did you learn anything from it, was it

D: yeah I mean I learned a couple things so one just to give you a quick example of what the assignment was when you I had to go to a local grocery store in SD, and find a product that was local to them, so made in the DR and sold in the DR and we had to bring it back to class and we collaborated with our classmates, so each group was assigned to get a different product, and what we had to do was come up with a __(15:20)__ of how we would market it to the US so it was cool because we got to one come up with ideas from some of our American teammates you know really quickly and then we got to make up some with our Dominican teammates and
then they were familiar the product so their info was just completely different from ours and we had to find a way to come up to bring their ideas together with ours like they were like polar opposites which is really cool

W: do you have any examples of like some of the differences?

D: yeah so I mean we used our product was some candy, it was a like a bon bon do you know what a bon bon is?

W: explain it to me

D: it’s like this big ball of chocolate and on the inside it has wafer and cashews

W: oh yum

D: it wasn’t yum it wasn’t good. But so we bought it cuz it looked ___ 16.35 so we brought it to them and they all made this disgusting face like it’s so nasty. So they came up with the ideas like sell it to kids or some of the lower income people in their area because it was relatively cheap product whereas the Americans we and this my teammates came up with the ideas like change it a little bit and make it a kind of a romantic thing like you know a valentine’s higher end chocolate because the candy was called like it translated to English as serenaded
D: so we were gonna make the wrapper like red and kind of make it like a metallic wrapper and oh you know really build up on the experience that you have when eat the candy. And you know so we had to come up collaborate with those ideas together and it was it was fun, lots of fun argu-like not evil, like that’s not going to work no way so we found a way to you know a consensus

W: so you developed the product separately and then came together

D: right

W: and did the Americans pick the product? Did you just get released in a super market with the instructions to-

D: exactly exactly you got it

W: ok and when you’re describing valentine’s day did the Dominicans understand what you were talking about?

D: yeah some of them did cuz some of them had spent time in America or you know were more familiar with American culture so they knew what valentine’s day was
W: and were you marketing the product for the Dominican?

D: no it was for the American consumer

W: ok with a Dominican product

D: correct

W: ok cool, very cool and so this is one of the business college’s shorter experiences correct?

It’s only like two weeks?

D: correct, yeah it’s like two and a half weeks

W: yeah and did you have I mean it was your first experience out of north America, was did you have any culture shock experiences or moments you really noticed a big difference?

D: well I yes and no. one the water and how we’re used to living. The DR for the most part a lot of people are poor, the poverty is really high so it made me really grateful so we can like I can go to my sink right now and drink the water there it’s the only water you can drink is bottled water you can’t even brush your teeth with faucet water so that was kind of shocking and then the reason I said yes and no was because I was kind of going in expecting to be culture shocked
and then I really wasn’t because of my I guess physical appearance I look I guess I have some traits they favor some Dominican men so it was like they were almost on a mission to make me feel like I was one of them. So that part was really cool

W: yeah

D: and then also some of the white students like I went on a you know a trip there were 20 students, 13 of them were women and 7 were men and I would say of the 20, 17 were white so one thing I noticed was you know in America white people you know or Caucasian people are the majority whereas in the DR Dominican people, you know Spanish people are the majority,

W: Yeah

D: so I noticed I know so I noticed they felt uncomfortable

W: Really

D:Yeah so I would say they definitely experienced some culture shock because you know it was such a strange experience for them whereas me you know being someone who is a multi-two or more races, I guess biracial I’m used to being a minority here but there I was almost like the majority because of my appearance
W: and last question since well actually I guess I guess it’d be more for your classmate but did they did your white peers mention it to you or did you just notice them being uncomfortable?

D: they didn’t say things out of their mouth as far as I feel uncomfortable but when it came to cultural activities a lot of them were stand offish and kind of stick to each other and they would not really embrace the Dominican culture as much and there were just multiple times like a side from the resort where there are heavily and mostly Americans at the resort anytime we were at SD where like the Dominicans are you could just notice a difference as far as just being stand offish not really being there kind of

W: and why do you associate this to their skin color

D: it’s because there was certain I guess it’s hard to explain almost

W: they were what? Sorry.

D: there was certain I guess activities or environments that they were put in where you could just notice it like being in the university like UNIBE every student there is Dominican so they were you know the minority there so they would be we would be in situations where we would be sitting with them just waiting our teacher would be out doing things and so it would just be a natural place we’d be talking and you know kind of getting to know each other and they would kind of like most of the people who were with us would be kind of off to the side with the
Americans so maybe it wouldn’t be there skin color but maybe it would just be the way that they’re used to live but just from being favorite all of the people that were not white so I mean there were multiple races there were kind of more engaged in the foreign culture because it was so different whereas you know they kind of felt like you know it was really different for them where for us it was kind of more interesting that’s my own I guess that’s obviously an opinion and that’s more of a observation than a opinion than you know them actually saying it but it was pretty

W: but it’s interesting you noticed that. Do you mind if I ask you about you keep talking about being multi-racial would you mind telling me a little bit about your family?

D: yeah absolutely, my mom she is Italian and a Italian and Irish, my biological father is black.

W: but where we raised with your biological father?

D: no but my step dad’s black too

W: ok so you were raised in a biracial family/household.

D: correct
W: and do you think it seems as though you were more accepting even if it is a matter of your skin color or not you were more accepting and open to the other culture

D: absolutely

W: do you think that the do you think that it was your family background or the study abroad office or just the fact that you’re used to being a minority perhaps that made you more open?

D: I think it’s the gambit, being so diverse I guess to being raised in a diverse background it just makes you open to learn about multiple cultures because you’re more than one culture so I feel like me not being ___(25:56)___ makes me interested in being you know just learning about other cultures because I’m just involved enough to you kind of go the best of both worlds I guess. So

W: yeah so do you think the study abroad office prepared you for the other/new culture of maybe your professor if you met before, I’m not sure if you did.

D: yeah I mean, as far as before I left the precautions that they gave us at the information they gave us was defiantly more than enough they defiantly made sure that you were aware of some hazards or somethings that are different, things to say, things that you probably shouldn’t say and like even as far as health too they obviously made sure that you knew the safes and the not safes
W: oh good and last questions and I’ll let you go, I guess since now you are working has your experience abroad influenced you in the workplace? Or how you view the world?

D: I wouldn’t say it necessarily pertains to my everyday life now but I mean there are things I took away from it that I can use like just conceptually like actually I have some entrepreneurly endeavors that I’m kind of pursuing so like I said some of the advertising things that I learned there I apply you know I kind of think about when I am planning for my advertising and marketing promotions on my own

W: great well perfect I’m going to stop the recording

D: ok
Wei Li: don’t get freaked out by that so tell me what got you interested in study abroad

J: well I was already interested in studying abroad even like coming into school that was something one of the things like my mom and I’d talked about she’d always kind of like not pushed it but she was like I really want you to go abroad like get that experience so when I came in did my orientation and everything that was another thing that they pushed like they make it so easy to study abroad like go wherever you want so that was two of the main factors and then just wanting to get out of the country and actually having a class with Dr. Veeck the first year for before the trip actually started because I went to the DR so Dr. Lancendorfer she’d come into our marketing 2500 class a couple times and said hey we have a study abroad trip brand new advertising and business in the DR so that was just something where I was just like yeah I gotta go

W: did your mom ever study abroad?

J: she did not no

W: so it’s like a regret?
J: I wouldn’t say a regret because she like she still wants to travel now and plans on it. **we actually lived in St. Thomas the Virgin Islands for about 8 months.**

**Yeah so**

W: it’s in the family

J: yeah definitely a traveling family

W: Had you so you lived abroad did you do any other sort of travelling before going

J: no not before going just within the states

W: and you lived there with your family you said

J: yeah mom dad and my older sister

W: that’s awesome can you tell me why you chose that specific trip?

J: well I was always interested in marketing so coming into college I planned on majoring in sales and business marketing but that wasn’t it was just because I didn’t know like specifically what in marketing but going on that trip with advertising based with Dr. Veeck and Dr. Lancendorfer it really actually opened the door for me to choose advertising as my major and kind of introduced the advertising aspect and like everything it encompasses so I would say that
was probably the main reason because going into the trip I didn’t know anybody so it wasn’t
like I was hey me and so and so are going on the trip it was just going in there blind and looking
for learning and a good time

W: what year were you when you went

J: I was going into my sophomore year oh I’m sorry I was finishing my sophomore year

W: ok going into junior

J: yeah

W: and now you’re pursuing advertising

J: right yeah full time

W: that’s great

J: I’ll be I’ll have the advertising degree in the spring

W: and where are you looking?
J: I actually have a full time offer from Pepsi right now it’s not for advertising it’s a sales position but still Pepsi if I can get my foot in the door that’ll open the door for a lot of different things

W: that’s great

J: I’m also obviously looking at different advertising agencies so like I’m in ad club searching reading trying to network with people like that

W: that’s great and it’s always great having an offer on the table

J: oh yeah especially coming into the year so it’s just like alright if I can just get through the year see what else I can rack up but if not I’ve got them waiting

W: exactly so tell me about your trip

J: so it was 2 weeks which I would say for anybody that’s considering going study abroad I feel like a 2 week trip is like the perfect amount of time for your first trip it’s not too long to where you’ll feel uncomfortable or homesick unless you’re that type of person in general but but it’s also short enough to where if you have an internship or something else lined up in the summer that you’ll get back in time for that so like me I had I was part of the externship program so I had an externship with Pepsi after my study abroad trip so the 2 weeks was just like the perfect amount of time I saw one of the good things about it was that we learned but it wasn’t by doing
a whole bunch of bookwork because I know I’ve heard some other trips where like you’ll go you’ll do whatever throughout the day and then you have 4 or 5 hours of homework maybe when you get back where here we had like group projects so we would just have to get our part done for your day present it to the rest of the group so say we went to the historic district of the DR well I had to say ok we’re going to the historic district today this is what we’re going to learn we’re going to see this stuff and then we’d go out there and see it so that was one of the things where you’re actually doing the research and then you get to see it plan out like pan out like ok so this is what I was looking at on the computer

W: so you acted as tour guides kind of

J: pretty much yeah so when we got to the place we’d be like ok as I was telling you this is Los Tres Ojos which is the three lakes and like and obviously here is it is right in front of us so that was nice I said another cool part about it was that we Western has built a relationship with the university in the DR which is it’s called UNIBE so now they’re considered one of our sister universities and all we got to spend 3 or 4 days over on UNIBE’s students with advertising students more specifically and there were a couple days where we may have done like a case study there were days where we had to play like shark tank where Dr. Lancendorfer Dr. Veeck and 2 of the professors from UNIBE they played it as investors and each of us or each group had to go to a grocery store and get a foreign product so get something that you won’t find in America and then we had to work together with the Dominican students to find a way to pitch this and sell this new idea because we had to reinvent it so we had to pitch this new idea to the
sharks and the winning team got some prizes so like that was cool really getting incorporated and like building relationships with the UNIBE students over there cuz I’m actually friends with a lot of them on FB now just like making those connections just see what they’re up to they see what you’re up to I’m sure if I ever go back I’ll have somebody to hit up and say like hey what club should I go to tonight or something like that so I know that was one of the coolest things about it just building those relationships and then of course the 3 days we spent in Punta Cana that was that was great another reason why I’d say that’s another reason why I probably picked the trip just cuz it’s an all-inclusive resort and during that time we didn’t really have any like school responsibilities so while we were there on that island we just got to enjoy it got to take a 3 day break just kind of enjoy the water enjoy the pools enjoy the pirate ships that they had because there was one time when we went on like a dolphin viewing excursion and we went snorkeling and then like we pull up and then one of our tour guides is like hey brother brother cuz that’s over there they would call me brother like they said like I resemble the Dominican so like that was that was actually pretty cool cuz like I was in a group of I think it was like 20 of us students and they’d come up to me and be like brother brother and then like whisper something to me or like they’ll like start speaking in Spanish and I’ll just be like I’ll give them one or two lines and they’d be like and I’m like lo siento like ingles and they’d like oh ok but one time was like brother brother look big he’s like do you see this pirate ship beautiful Dominican women look so like that was just like crazy funny stuff like that would happen I got to take a picture with a monkey yeah that was definitely a highlight I bought that picture I feel like just seeing like the culture difference was another huge thing cuz like when you hear like the DR or like other countries like that where you’d go vacation you think of like the resorts and like the
hotels and just everybody’s like everything’s so nice and beautiful we saw that but we also we saw that saw like we stayed in Santo Domingo for two weeks that was like the main place that we stayed and there you saw like there were the people that were on the streets either homeless or like poor there were people in the middle of the highway trying to sell you stuff like lunch boxes just random stuff like car chargers everywhere on the streets everywhere you go we saw like the garbage in the streets in some places where it clearly wasn’t kept up but I think that was all a part of what made the process or made the experience whole it’s like you don’t just see the postcard you see what’s behind the cameraman so I’d definitely say that trip was I always that I left a part of my heart in the DR and I have to go back one day to get it

W: I like the postcard idea what’s the most memorable part of your trip

J: most memorable part I’d probably say when we did actually tour the colonial zone the one I was talking about earlier 1. Because that was a part of my assignment like that day the colonial zone but also just because we spent a lot of that day touring and a lot of that day walking and over in the DR it’s really hot but not like hot here it’s like more humid than here because I actually went to Texas like after that and the heat is just like super dry and I was like you know this could have been ok in the DR. but just walking the colonial zone like I said we spent hours but we also got to see how beautiful the city was I don’t know if you’ve ever been to New Orleans but it kind of reminds you of that like if you see a picture of just like downtown Bourbon Street like that’s how that’s how it looks I guess that’s how it was actually designed when our tour guide he said that bourbon street was actually kind of built off of how the DR
looked so that was cool we got to see where supposedly Christopher Columbus was buried and I say supposedly because they don’t know where he was actually is Spain says they have him the DR says they have him somebody else says so it’s all up in the air but we saw where the DR says they have him at and just seeing like in the middle of the colonial zone all of the activity that was going on cuz you have like your shopping districts but you also have like the people that’s in the courtyard like there’s a guy that was just sitting there painting just like painting like beautiful just like huge photos just in the middle you see like the beautiful statues that they have up so I’d say that was the most memorable

W: just the beauty and the

J: yeah that whole day that we also just because I remember we were really tired and hungry that day cuz we were walking so long so that was just kinda like that kind of stuck out to me because we had made like a thing of that later on within the trip

W: what do you mean

J: it was just it was something with Dr. Lancendorfer because she’s always so uppity and energy but like we were all just walking we’re all just like ok if we could stop right now we’d all be perfectly fine and then later on in the trip it was kind of reversed where we’re all just kind of energetic and Dr. L’s like ok guys like just relax slow down and we’re like no we’re ready to go
W: and what did you learn on your trip

J: I learned that their culture is obviously is different than like any other Latin so like if you go in thinking like cuz I know personally I thought like ok well with the food and everything it’ll be like Mexican food maybe the culture will kind of be like that but then when you actually get there you realize it’s like it’s just a whole different kind of like whole different people so learned that they’re real close and personal which is something that I don’t mind like obviously they do like the double cheek kiss but they’ll come up and hug you even if they don’t know you they’re very friendly people that was one thing I did notice, you can say hi to anybody on the street and even if they don’t know you they won’t give you a dirty look or like yell at you they’ll say hi hola or just keep on their way as opposed to here you’ll say hi to somebody and they’ll like look the other way or like turn their headphones up or something you just learn how friendly they are like I said how beautiful it is but also like I said it’s not a postcard so that was another thing learned about their education system they go to school year round so like in school they have 3 semesters throughout the year but they also are supposed to graduate in 3 years

W: you’re talking about college?

J: so like that’s kind like of the trade off with that yeah so that’s kind of the trade off with that I actually kind of opened up the door for like the partnering with WMU and UNIBE cuz since they do only go those 3 years they can actually spend their 4th year at WMU and get a degree from
WMU as well so that was a cool thing that we learned I wish I could say I learned some more Spanish but I feel like that all left me in my senior year of high school

W: you mentioned this was a big moment for you about advertising specifically and marketing was there anything in particular was it the teacher? Was it the assignments?

J: I’d say it was because out of the 20 students that were there there were probably about 3 or 4 of us that weren’t advertising majors or going to declare advertising majors I think that there was an entrepreneurship, me I was SBM, there was like a communication major but really being really since it was advertising based we visited about 5 or 6 different agencies so I got to see kind of how they work I actually got to meet somebody that was like in the role that I always like knew in my head I wanted I just didn’t know what the role was so I got to talk to somebody that was it’s a copywriter so I got to talk to a copywriter and kind of learn what he does learn kind of how he fits into the industry and then since we did go to like 5 or 6 different agencies I got to see like different ways that copywriters are and there’s a difference in the advertising majors that I didn’t know anything about before so when I learned that like what I wanted to do was advertising and not SMB because I always thought the business marketing of sales and business marketing was like the advertising I’d be doing but going on that trip really taught me that no this is if you want to what you want to do is in this major so like that’s that was a big moment where I was all ok and Dr. Lancendorf of course with her being the head of advertising she always she kept telling me Joel we’re going to get you to join the dark side we’re going to get you to join the dark side by the end of this trip and I always had Dr. Veeck
pulling on my arm like Joel you’re such a good salesman like you should just stay in sales you’re going to do great but I think in the end obviously that Dr. L shoulder won

W: do you think this could have been accomplished if you were visiting ad agencies here in the US or was it specific to

J: I think it could have been it wasn’t specific to just like the advertising culture in the DR it was just kind of like learning the advertising culture in general was that’s one thing about advertising it’s like it will get different but in the end you’re still kind of doing the same thing you’re trying to get the same point across so I think having a heavy dose of it when I was in the DR definitely helped because like like I said I got to meet somebody that was in the role I got to we got to sit on meetings we got to meet like presidents of ad agencies over there and just like talk to them network with them so I definitely think that was a good thing it wasn’t specific to the Latin American culture it was just the culture the advertising culture in general I like and I actually like since that trip I’ve gone to Chicago with like the ad club and like done tours like that so I get to see those it’s like it’s not the same but they’re kind of different I mean they’re still kind of similar so I think that it’s been nice to go either or to go to both

W: I know you mentioned the postcard image and then seeing behind the poverty can you tell me a little bit more about the DR
J: yeah so like I said we were in Santo Domingo for the majority of the time there which is the capitol city so if you can imagine the NYC of the DR where I don’t think well I don’t remember what the legal driving age is but I don’t think we have to go through like driver’s training or anything because like one thing there’s like traffic is crazy everybody just kind of drives you don’t have the right of way as a pedestrian so that’s another thing that we learned because here in college obviously we’re just like yeah I’m going to walk in front of this bus if it hits me like I’m going to school for free but over there it’s like well yeah I’m going to walk in front of this bus and if it hits me it’s just going to keep going so that was one things so like with that with it being like the capital city you do see like you see the people on the streets you see like the some stores may have like an armored guard outside of it with like a gun and a bulletproof vest we actually I think it was across the street from our hotel and then like down the block a little bit there was a club and then we went to the club and on the way back we just see like 2 guys just like wheelin guns just like standing outside some store we’re just like ok let’s go this way and I guess like like we didn’t experience anything like obviously anything like crime related while we were there everything was safe but I could see how there are people who like cuz they don’t have much especially with the currency exchange rate over there we went over there and we felt rich but like obviously if they don’t have that there they’re probably not living too hot so we did see a lot of that like we saw a lot of people who had like fruit stands and they like push the fruit stands and try to sell the fruit and that was a thing we learned not to buy any of that fruit just because the water over there is supposed to be not good for you so a lot of times they wouldn’t wash the fruit off properly or they would use their water and obviously like that contaminates it so there was a lot of that just like I’d say sketchy but not really sketchy
because that’s like that’s their culture but just like a lot of sketchy food on the streets another thing is that there are no drinking and driving laws there so they have I think they’re called calmodas stores where you can just like pull up like a drive through get some alcohol and just like leave obviously drink it on the way so that’s another thing that makes the traffic iffy you hear a lot of horns a lot of horns so with that traffic gets kind of like with us like you hear a horn when either somebody pisses you off or you see somebody you know like honk honk trying to get their attention like you would swear that everybody knows each other over there because all you hear is honk honk they’re like driving continues just honk honk so that was cool scary and insightful we also like our bus driver we had like a stable bus driver the whole time and he just showed us like how traffic was so obviously like I said we had 20 people 20 students and then 2 teachers so we had a big bus and he drives past us one day flips a U-turn in the middle of the intersection with this big 25 passenger van and you just hear people honking at him he’s just like checking his surroundings making sure he’s good he’s like yeah yeah pulls up and we’re like nice man that’s solid

W: he didn’t care

J: yeah no I knew this guy I was like don’t worry there were a couple times we got nervous and we were like ehh and he’s like nah don’t worry so

W: can you tell me about your biggest the biggest culture shock you experienced?
J: I’d honestly say the biggest culture shock was the food. Cuz like I said, I was going in expecting it to be Mexican food or like something I was like familiar with but we learned that in the DR really their staples like food wise is chicken rice and plantain so you can only have chicken so much chicken and rice you can only have that so much in my opinion so I’d say seeing that and then like having the menus where like if you obviously if you went to like an American style you can get food you’re familiar with but like sometimes like when we’re in the colonial zone there’s not like tourist stops there’s just like authentic places so like seeing the menus all of the menus were like based off of chicken and rice and plantain so like ok this is different than what I thought

W: can you tell me a little bit about how they prepared you to for the trip

J: yeah so Dr. L she had like a or we had a couple of touch base sessions where the group got together she kind of she gave us a packet that had some country information it had like 2 pages 2 or 3 pages of like Spanish translations I can’t remember if she she didn’t show us a video but I remember the study abroad the Haenicke they showed us a video so it’s just like what to do what not to do while abroad I think I got a couple of shots and besides that I just came in with an open mind so it was really just cleaning slate just like alright soon as I got there just kind of soaking everything in besides the size of the airport and everything just getting ready like that

W: did you meet with Dr. L multiple times or was it just once
J: I can’t remember I have

W: that’s ok

J: well no I’m just trying to remember if I had Dr. L that year I don’t think I had her that year but yeah I think we met at least 2 or 3 times prior to the trip just to like I know in the very beginning just to kind of like assure them like ok you’re set you want to go and then after that it was kind of like the touch base sessions it wasn’t one on one though it was like with the group so

W: were you guys responsible for your own travel air-like down to the DR

J: yeah so we had to pay for airfare obviously our passports while we were there I’d say a lot of our meals were covered obviously when we were in Punta Cana that weekend all-inclusive hotel that was covered there were I think sometimes dinners well dinners most of the time were what we had to pay for ourselves while we were down there cuz bus transportation was taken care of while we were down there breakfast was taken care of because we had like business meetings every morning at like 8 in the morning so those were taken care of

W: but you travelled independently not with a group down there
J: yeah so like you had to get your tickets like whenever I think some people were able to find tickets for like 400 something and some people paid 600 something depending on when you got it and I know mine was more expensive because I got it like a month before we left

W: and I know you haven’t graduated yet but just in visiting the ad agencies and your externship I don’t know if you’ve interned but in your experiences do you think that this exchange experience will help you in the workplace?

J: I definitely think so because like one of the main parts when we were doing the work with the UNIBE students there were some that spoke English there were some that exclusively spoke Spanish there were some that spoke like broken English so just learning how to really work directly with somebody like to get a project done it’s not like we’re in a group together then like ok I’ll do this part you do this part then we’ll combine it together it was like no like the 6 of us have to put our thoughts together work on communicating in order to get this done within the time frame and try to win so I’d say that that was definitely a huge help for my future and well has been in all the other experiences I’ve had post abroad

W: and when you worked with the other students did you work on the entire project together or did you kind of separate it and then

J: yeah no it was all together so the shopping that we done cuz like us American students when we went to the grocery store and then we each had to pick out like it was a product like I said it
couldn’t be an American product so we chose for my group personally we chose like a dipper where it was half like Nutella and half I think it was white chocolate yeah so it was something really good like that and so we picked it out and then we went to the university the next day and they assigned us into groups and then we had to tell them ok this is the product that we picked and then they’d be like oh yeah we’ve seen that before it’s really good or something like that and then we all just like kind of brain stormed because there was like a sheet that we had to think like ok how are we going to rebrand this how are we going to promote it who are we promoting it to so we all had to like kind of brain storm and kind of work on that together and it was only like maybe an hour timeframe that we had so we all had to like kind of pound it together

W: yeah that’s fast last question this is kind of a weird question it came up in my other interview with actually with a student who went to the DR he also he’s half black and he experienced people thought he was Dominican and he thought it was because of his race and he thought also that the he didn’t feel that the other people on his trip who didn’t look Dominican he thought they struggled more with culture shock and weren’t as accepted and I was wondering if you experienced anything like that on your trip or if you noticed it

J: yeah so I agree with him

W: you do
J: I don’t think they were I don’t think they were treated like differently or like negatively I just think it was more of a like when they saw me or like when they saw him they came and they were like they kind of thought that that we had like slid in with the group somehow maybe cuz there were numerous times like I said when we were in Punta Cana they were talking to me when we were touring the Colonial zone one time there was a group of guy Dominican guys that we walked by and I was in the back of the group and he’s like brother brother he’s like the group of American women that you’re with *kiss noise beautiful and I’m like thanks and he like taps me up so I don’t think it was more of like they didn’t treat them negatively I think they were just more comfortable with like trying to talk to us just cuz like in their eyes they were like maybe they’re Dominican maybe they’re not and like they try to especially when I would try to go like a sentence or two in Spanish they’d like be and I’m like ok I’m sorry I didn’t mean to get you all hype but I’d say if anything they loved I’d say they loved me but I’d say they loved like the people I was with more cuz it would always be about them they’d always be like like the girls specifically they’d be like you’re the women that you’re with yes yes I’m like thanks man but yeah cuz I feel like I know there were a couple times where the girls were like oh my god like they would like compare themselves to the Dominican girls and like I’d say that was probably like a shocking culture thing to them

J: just like I don’t know there was I feel like there was just like a uncomfort with some of the girls and they’d be like oh they’re so much prettier than I am look at their hair look at their bodies and all that so I think that may have been like something that like shocked some people
well just from being like what they heard but I’d say just off of the eye test I don’t think they were treated negatively or anything like that I’d say they were just more personable

W: do you think it was did you notice I should say was it more difficult for them cuz they are used to being a majority and like going to be like a minority did you notice any differences there

J: maybe not in like a big sense but just because we’re always like there was always a group of 20 of us so even if there’s like if you step outside the group of 20 like there’s a lot of people but if you like a lot of them may have stayed like close in comfort cuz I know like I think it was maybe the first night we got there there was a bar that was right down the street from our hotel so there were a couple of us that went and like there were a couple people that stayed in and was like wasn’t trying to explore but like we got like a great experience apparently like Sunday nights at this bar they have like a game where everybody gets in a circle and like there’s a guy they call him the shock doctor and he like come and like brings his box and like everybody holds hands and like he turns on some voltage and you start to feeling like some electric like tingles a little bit and like last person to let go is obviously the loser is obviously the winner so like seeing something like that is like wow you won’t see that anywhere in the states but like you guys missed out on that because you’re kind of and maybe it was because it was the first night and they were just being kind of more sheltered and like oh I don’t want to go out tonight but it’s like experiencing stuff like that I talk about that all the time and Dr. L is like ok but when you talk about the recruitment of the trip don’t bring up the shock doctor I just remember
vividly there was a guy that like he was like oh yeah he’s like I’m going to play and he like grabs his beer and like gets his hands all wet we’re like get out of here no yeah so

W: well thank you I think that covers everything I’m going to turn this off
Dr. E – Germany

Wei Li: alright so tell me what got you involved in study abroad

E: just a colleague invited me to go along

W: really?

E: yeah Bret Wagner walking down the hall one day looks at me stops says do you want to go to Australia and I’m like is this a trick question? Of course and so and I had never done study abroad as a study so I was trying to catch up in life so yeah there’s no it wasn’t like I had this epiphany one day I got invited one day and I said yes and I continued from there That’s why I always try and invite new faculty members as my assistant so that they that door opens up to them

W: how did you get into Germany then?

E: well the second year he organized a trip to Germany and I was the same I was the extra faculty member the second year I just in the end I liked and connected better in Germany than Australia so that’s why when it was time for me to do something I did it in Germany

W: can you tell me a little bit about the creative process to creating your study abroad
E: I don’t know how creative it was but I was I guess being a marketing professor I was trying to figure out how could I make mine unique in comparison to other programs so I focused a lot on interactions with universities because to me one of the cool things is when the students get to pretend they’re students over there obviously they’re not and it’s a short term situation but when they get to be able to connect with the students there and experience what it would be like to be a student there I think that’s pretty cool I minimized the amount of just business visits you know for instance once you’ve seen one manufacturing plant you’ve kind of seen them all and then I also looked at making the cultural experiences relevantly unique in the sense of not some of them are things you could do as a typical tourist but I was always trying to find and still always trying to find something that if you just came over to Germany on your own you wouldn’t be able to reproduce this experience so even our trip to Volkswagen which is a business visit but because I have an inside contact there our tour of the manufacturing plant is not one you could just walk up and get they do have one of those it’s not nearly as elaborate or interesting as the one we get even some of the things part of the reason I’ve built the relationship with the hotel owner in Bacharach which is this tiny little town on the Rhine it’s because he can help people experience Germany at a different level than if we were at the Holiday Inn Express in some German city so that’s always been my always trying to create experiences they couldn’t reproduce but I’ve also put a lot of emphasis on university based experience

W: can you tell me about your experience with German culture
E: I’m an idiot the phrase I use is I turned out to be a successful idiot because my very first interaction so make a long story short I was meeting Dr. Egert and yes everyone laughs Dr. Eckert meets Dr. Egert but the whole process I went about to invite a meeting with him was cultural insensitive because I didn’t necessarily understand the more closed and formal culture of Germany so I had asked my contact at the study abroad office if she could set up a meeting with me for someone in the marketing department because while the kids were working on the case study I had nothing to do for 6 hours so why not say hello to someone that is me in Germany well of course I did this at very American style and even at the last minute and of course she being I was the professor and professors are treated with much more respect she was like she did everything she could to find this meeting on last minute notice and poor Dr. Egert who was really low man on the totem pole at this time was the one that got stuck doing this and then there’s also that kind of that German hospitality which people don’t think of it that way but they feel very compelled to have that meeting etc. and then I so I was an idiot in the sense of if I had wanted that meeting it should have been arranged weeks in advanced much more formally not at the last minute putting on all this pressure on this person because but in the end Dr. Egert and I got hit it off very well our half hour meeting turned out to almost be a 2 hour meeting and at the end I invited myself to come teach and he said yes and it went well and I invited myself back and it went well and I keep inviting myself back and so when I go in December to teach in that case I’m just teaching Paderborn students I’ll have been doing this for over a decade now this will be like my 25th trip to Germany so but over that time I have slowly because I’m dense I’ve slowly learned more and more about the German cultures and I
try very hard to stay in function in a more German environment so I pick my hotel based on it’s not a it’s not a foreign tourist hotel I try to speak the language as often as I can although I’m pretty abysmal at it I love going over to any culture Germany I love going over and working versus visiting because you get a different experience when you’re working like I would much rather go spend a week in Germany teaching a class than spend a week sightseeing I really don’t want to see another church or castle they’re great but I’m done been there done that go the t-shirt but to go spend a day or a couple days interacting with students from a German university and then meet with one of the professors and then work on a research project that kind of stuff that is a blast to me and then I get to experience as more a day in the life of a true German than I would if I’m visiting you know other things now don’t get me know you might find me at the Beer Garden also but I’d rather be at the Beer Garden with a colleague than just be a tourist

W: so tell me a little bit about how you introduce students to the German culture

E: I I don’t do like a big formal here’s Germany presentation I just constantly am talking to them about it I like a little bit of preview and a little bit of self-discovery so when we first went just on the preview part I don’t just have them going cold turkey because one of the reactions to that is a negativity that doesn’t need to be there so the first time I went to Germany we tried that and we were at this great hotel in Stuttgart we were visiting Mercedes the next day and they had this huge breakfast spread but it was a German breakfast which is very different than an American breakfast and I sat there and listened to the students complain about this terrible
breakfast and how the beds weren’t what they thought they would be and I was thinking those are things I need to preview because instead of them embracing it so what I found for instance I show them a photo of a German breakfast looks like I talk about it and then they’re like excited about the first time they come down to the breakfast room and there’ll be no eggs there’ll be no pancakes there’ll be no typical American breakfast things but now they’re excited about experiencing that now in other things I let them you know I let them experience it like how they’re going to interact with their German classmates that I let them do that because there’s certainly a little bit more I’ll say kind of point to point connection there they’re both students at a university you know there’s enough it doesn’t matter what culture you’re in connection that then they can go from there but when it comes to the culture as a whole I like to do a little bit of preview and then let them experience it so

W: can you tell me about the greatest challenge you faced with this trip? Either in like the creating of it or during the trip?

E: well there I’ll say there’s two types of challenges there’s me focused challenges and there’s them focused challenges so like in the me it’s you know getting it done within a busy schedule is certainly a challenge but it’s also just I have to constantly remind myself I’m the only one who’s done all of this before so I have to remember to allow them to discover it on their own allow them to you know something as simple I’ve done the Berlin Bike Tour 9 times now? In fact Tom who’s one of the guides he’s an English guy who does cuz we always do the tour in English I can he’s always like oh great Dr. Eckert’s here he’ll finish my jokes because he’s been
my tour guide 5 times I think? So I so I have to keep stepping back and I have to remember that my job there is to do to handle the logistics and everything and I have to do that job without getting grumpy and turn into a you know drill sergeant and you know recognize and stay also focus on the fact that some of the kids are having uncomfortableness etc. for instance one of the things I actually do is **I put it on my calendar for the start of the second week to like check in with students because that tends to be the first time they start being like you know I’m having delayed culture shock you know** and such Now in terms of my challenge for the students is to get them to break them out of what they would do normally for instance this past trip we had we sat down and had a discussion about how you know your search for faster wifi should not be the sole part of your trip to Germany yes their wifi ironically is not as good there their cellphone connections are better but most of the kids aren’t on cellphones their wifi sucks it sucks at hotels it sucks at cafes it’s way less available etc but if that’s the only and it’s trying to get them not to just in some ways not to be themselves but be a better version of themselves during the during the experience and to get them to embrace and to ask questions and such I found the kids will during the trip there’ll be a certain amount of almost arm’s length and then when they come home I hear them talking and you know not even to me or I hear through someone or they’re talking when I’m in their presence but not to and they’ll be talking about how it was this life changing experience and I’ll be like it didn’t you didn’t seem that way while we were there you seemed more interested in you know can I take a nap and where’s the stronger wifi so **it’s trying to trying to push them in a way that doesn’t kill them I don’t want to push them off the cliff but I want to push them off the little ledge to the other ledge to the other ledge and eventually you’re down at the bottom of the cliff and you**
didn’t have to do a free fall so it’s finding that balance and you know and then me not being an a-hole is always a good thing on the trip so yeah it’s I can tell I mean this will be my 8th year but you know 10 I’m older than I used to be you know I’m tired more easily etc. I can’t keep keep the pace that I used to keep and so I have to be smart about that too there’s a whole logistics element to this that is not yes we’re it’s this wonderful event for everyone but it’s a it has to get organized it has to get executed it has to happen and so I have to remember not to let that part overwhelm the other part

W: can you tell me about how you help students deal with culture shock

E: we talk about it ahead of time I try to I mean I don’t have terrible amounts of culture shock because it’s a faculty-led short term program but also though because my program’s a little longer than most there is more and the final part of it is this stupidly intense class which would stress them out even if they were here it’s interesting I’ve had students say why don’t we do the class first I’m like cuz it would kill you I don’t say that to them well I always say logistically it works better at the end which is also true but my real reason is I would have people implode if they had to handle the stress of a hard academic experience while immersing in this so but I just keep an eye on it a lot but it’s also why I have a second faculty member with me you know my job is to reconfirm the reservations and make sure you know make sure the calendar in the schedule and all of that is taken care of I don’t use an outside vendor so I don’t have someone feeding me that I do all the organizing and so in this case recently it’s been Marcel it was Kelly before that it’s like part of your job is eyes on the group and let me know when you see
someone struggling like Marcel came up to me last year and he was like you know Houston we have a problem you know I’m noticing some real a little bit of a cat fight between two of the girls on the trip so I changed roommate situations to separate them so that doesn’t then compound into the culture and a lot of that sometimes is just the culture they wouldn’t have that cat fight back in the US but when you add the little levels of stress the bed doesn’t quite feel the same the room feels different I laugh there’s all sorts of I had one group that came down from the room they couldn’t figure out how to open the windows because they open very differently and so a lot of it and then I try with a lot of humor I mean I’ll use a lot of phrases like yeah because it would be so much better if we were just sitting in Kalamazoo instead and they’ll be like no that’s not what I meant you know it’s just really trying to get them to recognize that it’s ok to be frustrated or be a little grumpy about something but big picture wouldn’t you rather be part of this than not be part of this and most of them are like yeah so

W: can you tell me about the objectives of the trip

E: get them out of their comfort zone and have them excel out of their comfort zone and again that’s one of the things I like about the class part of it is we’re going to go do some of the same things you would in Kalamazoo but we’re going to do it over there kind of play by their rules a little bit more and I want to see you still excel and that leads the second objection which is prepare you to be a global businessperson global citizen you don’t get to just participate in the US anymore if you’re a businessperson and really you shouldn’t do that even if you’re just a citizen of Earth you know you should have some understanding so and you know we’re
Western Michigan University we’re not an ivy league school with people from families who you know vacationed in the south of France all the time and such so a lot of the time probably 50% of my kids this is their first real trip out of the US and so I’m helping force the issue so and you know really that it just expose them and let them go from there I would say it works based on the reactions of people post trips I invite people from previous trips to talk to the group that’s going this year and sometimes you know I can’t help smiling when I listen to the old people talk in terms of how much it meant to them and how how much it changed them so I’m just trying to make sure I set that opportunity up and stay out of the way as much as possible to let it happen

W: so you have two basic objectives

E: yeah I mean you know and then obviously there’s a Germany based we’re going to Germany so let’s get you to understand specifically Germany but it doesn’t really matter in many ways if we went to Brazil it would be Brazil focused so Germany I just happen to like Germany I have a lot of contacts you know I’ve built up momentum in Germany so I share that with them but I think the real objective in some ways goes considerable beyond Germany we also again you know half my program is a negotiations course so I have actual like traditional course objectives learn negotiations you know etc. which is different than most of the programs I mean o=most of them are simply about the experience and I have the experience plus a very ground level practical academic experience too so interestingly and I don’t know where it might fit but when I ask the kids later what their favorite part of it is 80% answers relate to the negotiations course
and I’m always like so they seem to like that better than the day we rode bikes around Berlin and saw all these cool things and it’s like now during they hate the you know they’re like oh my god I’m so tired and we have more class and during the bike thing they’re like whoo this is great and then they get home and those have reversed because they start to see the value of it differently

W: can you tell me about the students’ interactions with local students or locals?

E: it’s interesting and part of it’s been you know I work really hard to create those types of things when we’re in Berlin it’s a little difficult because Berlin’s just such a huge it’d be like you know even if we went from Kalamazoo to New York City for a week you know your interactions with locals is going to be arm’s length at best because that’s the way big cities function but like when we’re in Bacharach the owner of the hotel and his wife and his daughter eat with us and you know help arrange things and you know last year at about 10pm I went down to the pool and the daughter and the owner were swimming with the kids and interacting so there’s so I try to build those types of relationships so that will happen but the biggest one is obviously with other students so we do it at both University of Potsdam and at Podderborn so we have during the first part of the Germany business and culture part of it we have two case competition days with deemphasize on the competition I mean like the awards for the competition are you know chocolate and you know such things and it’s more about the interaction and so it’s we’re always making it a you know intercultural situation so like in fact our negotiations case day at Potsdam is called Intercultural Negotiation Day and so we spend all day when we get there in
the morning we do this cases and presentations and then we all have dinner together and then
generally all the Potsdam students meet our students in Berlin and take them out and so and I
love that people always ask me what my favorite part is and it’s always watching those
interactions so I try to just create as many opportunities for that and then as I said get out of
their way like when we’re at dinner I’m all like we’re officially done here so if you guys all want
to you know you’re 22 and we’re at a restaurant on campus it’s not the most exciting place to
be if you guys want to take that trains in and I’m always encouraging the Potsdam students if
you guys want to come in and join them they would love to get a local’s tour of the city and
they’re all like yeah yeah and they for the next half hour they’re all organizing this is the only
time I’m still happy they have over the 8 years I’ve done it the cellphone use has gone from
almost 0 because no one could afford to do it to over 50% of them have working cellphones this
is the one time I like that because they have much easier interaction with their local
counterparts so they can get more organized etc. so I mean I do that and then obviously the
whole class I mean one of my key I’ll say unwritten objectives of the course is I get to watch you
guys hang out with your counterparts and interact I mean the first day Kelly was there the one
time I pair them all up and they have just sit and get to know someone and then introduce their
counterpart and I did this and I actually got yelled at by the faculty member in the room next
doors because I’m like ok go and this roar came out as everyone started talking to they were so
eager to meet that person you know to create that you know their enthusiasm I’m like ok talk
quietly with each other because there’s like a chemistry class going on next door and we just
created this roar but I mean I love that road that’s my favorite point right there that’s getting
them engaged so and even walking by a group that’s working on their case at the pub you know
and there’s beers on the table and they’re back and forth and I know 60% of what they’re talking about is life and 40% is the case and that’s perfect that’s why I don’t give them a super like during the case comp-during the class shit to do but during those case competitions it’s an easy case and the point isn’t how much you’re going to learn from the case itself but how much how interesting it’s going to be to interact so

W: what’s your biggest success with the trip

E: that’s a great question I mean I guess I’d prefer you to ask that from the people who went but I’ve come back with the same number I’ve left every year now I always tell them that the study abroad office only requires me to bring back 80% and they stare at me and they can’t quite decide whether I was being honest I still think the class the negotiation is the most successful part it is what makes my program unique both because it’s a very practical thing to learn regardless of where you learned it and then to put it in that environment makes it really special

W: and what’s the one thing you want your students to take away from the trip?

E: it’s a bigger world than they think it is but they can probably navigate it anyways

W: so a taste for travel?
E: well not just travel but a taste for a taste for experience and a taste for the respect it takes to do that well that the differences are probably pretty overcomable I think I made up a word there but you know I mean you know the experience I mean just from your time in France you know there’s just that whole process you have to go you go through where it’s like you start to realize that you know my view of the world was through a pretty narrow lens and I think the more we can open up help people understand that there are other views there are other lenses and that those lenses there’s not a necessarily a value judgement to those lenses so I mean I think sometimes there are I would consider for instance certain parts of the world don’t don’t respect females the way other cultures do and I will accept that while I’m visiting but I wouldn’t want my country for instance or the culture I’m to more in that direction but it’s also interesting to understand it etc. Germany I don’t you know don’t necessarily have that issue certainly but when I say I’m not going to value judge that’s not entirely true but I want to most of what the differences are are not they’re not that acute but people sometimes you know they’ll create the smallest things I think the other thing is travel’s an interesting time to do it because it’s almost the worst time everyone’s stressed travelling it doesn’t matter where you’re travelling you know the reality is when we go on vacation it’s really stressful and it’s like I gotta get on a plane and go even I’m going to Jamaica to sit on the beach there’s all the logistics and the fact that there I’m not in my home environment and then we ask them to be culturally sensitive while we stress them out so it actually is a whole new challenge

W: do you think everyone is capable of having that wide view of the world?
E: no I don’t I don’t think they are I think some people are even you expose them to it they are almost incapable of separating or understanding their value judgements are because of a lens they’re wearing not because there is an actual value judgement there or at least I would say there is a very wide band when you say can everyone get to a certain point I think there’s you know up here there’s certain people who are going to be able to achieve up here other people are never going to get much past here and other peoples are going to be in the really like remedial stage of trying to understand that and I mean I’ve had some people on the trip who I don’t know that I think they enjoyed the experience they loved it but I’m not sure it made the impact I would have loved it to make because I’m not sure they’re ready to let that impact happen yet and they may never be ready so I mean I could argue in the US right now if you went to a Trump rally they’d be a lot of people incapable of what I’m talking about not supposed to put politics into it but I would in that case you know they’re they absolutely going to treat everything as a right or wrong value judgement completely from their side of the equation

W: do you still think it’s necessary to include these people?

E: I try I mean I the only thing I ask out of the students is they’re not going to embarrass us or themselves and they’re willing to at least try it but I mean I’ve had students I had one student and I guess almost thankfully did not stick around with us for the 3rd week that was by intent they weren’t you know but I used to be where some there’d be I’d have 25 on the first and then
only 20 would stay I remember one of them leaving and I’m think that’s probably a good thing because you’re really struggling with accepting that there is a different view

W: do you have students sign up for the 3rd week and then not

E: now it’s an integrated program so yeah this is the first like last year I pretty much told them that but I it was still marketed at two this year it’s marketed as a single program I’m not even interested in anyone we no longer even have the question on the application like do you plan to stay for the extra class it’s just you’re either in or you’re not so

W: so you talked about creating cultural experiences by letting the students interact with the local students is there any other or with locals really in general is there any other ways you like try to cultivate cultural experiences?

E: well I kind of try to preview things talk about things so you know a funny experience one time in Germany when you talk about personal space for instance which is a somewhat fundamental thing that people most people don’t think about when they think of culture but they have a tighter personal space than we do I mean we have one of the largest personal space and so we had just finished talking about that and I said we’re going to a festival I want you to kind of pay attention to how that plays out and I talked about you know the German people always ask me how to say excuse me in Germany and I always say it’s Entschuldigen Sie but you won’t really need to say it because when people bump into you it’s not an excuse me moment most often
it’s just it’s a busy train station we’re probably going to bounce off of each other occasionally and people just keep going but we go to this festival and Dr. Egert’s meeting me and we’ve just finished talking about this and he walks right up to here like 8 inches out of my face and we start talking and I look over and the students are literally like pointing like there it is! I’m like and I did not pay him to do this you know this is just his natural you know we just stand close to each other which I’m sure you experienced in France too where you know it takes a while as an American to not feel creeped out by that but I’m like but again as I would point out to people there’s nothing right or wrong about that it’s just it’s culturally what’s evolved within their culture and everything so I will use like that was one example I had another one the one time where we talked all about the difference between the way a German classroom functions at a university and a US one and how we came in and the professor at Uni Hamburg and we used to visit Hamburg also gave a perfect German lecture very and afterwards people were like wow that was I’m like that was cool but it was definitely not what we were used to and so I just I try to preview and then let them experience especially if I know we’re about to go somewhere where it’s likely they’ll experience it you know what I want to do is given them a different frame of reference to watch the experience by or even another way to say it I want to give them something specific to look for while they’re in that experience something cultural so

W: and you said for the most part people say their favorite part was the negotiations class? Like the overall?
E: yeah I mean it’s interesting that’s and again I think it’s a combination they really appreciate what they learned because negotiation is so practical but I also think them they lookback on it that was like the coolest interactions they have with the other people

W: you do a follow up survey or something with them

E: I do yeah they have a paper to write and one of them is I ask for top 5 bottom 5 type thing so

W: what are some of the bottom 5?

E: the favorite bottom 5 in reason times and I joke the more they put it on the bottom 5 the more I’m definitely going to keep it is we do a walking tour of Berlin with this guy who’s like a socialist anarchist you know vegan etc. and he takes them into really shitty neighborhoods and tells them that the nice neighborhoods are terrible because they’re gentrified and it’s great to take college of business students who live in nice neighborhoods and grew up in nice places and remind them there’s a different world view and they all hate it plus they hate the walking because they’re Americans that’s my one little I’m going to force you to do this and make my own little stand you know the funny part was we finished touring the three neighborhoods we went from most gentrified partially to almost own we finished there myself and then I the students are in essence not allowed to stick around with me it’s like you now go find your way back but I mean Marcel and I we went back to this neighborhood to have dinner like don’t get me wrong it’s like I don’t really want to hang out in the neighborhood either but I love the fact
that this guy and he’s an American actually who’s immigrated to Germany and I believe he got his citizenship this year I mean he just has a totally different world view and I tell him to just express that worldview challenge these folks so that one they don’t like but I’m like that’s fine because I want that challenge for them so

W: do they ever struggle with the language?

E: not really I mean a we do everything in English and because you know you don’t have to speak German to go to Germany especially when we’re hanging out in university settings so I mean yeah there’s a little bit of language most of it’s just funny though you know the first time when they look at Herren and Frauen and try to figure out which bathroom to go in and they think well Herren’s got her in it so that must be it’s funny sometimes to watch the logic they use to I’m like well you know I always laugh too and I can just let them make that mistake because no one is going to call the police in Germany you know I’ve been in the men’s room while the female cleaner of the bathroom is working and no one cares it’s just a different you know sensibility about those things

W: how do you I know you all travel separately and you meet there how are we doing on time?

E: I got about 5 mins
W: perfect, last questions I know you travel there separately how do you prepare you said over like 50% of your students have never left the country

E: well or they’ve done what I would consider Michigan travelling they’ve been to Canada Mexico the Caribbean so they’ve been on vacation

W: right ok with their family

E: with their families generally

W: this is for the most part I would say a large majority of your students’ first trip alone

E: first trip alone I’ve had people it’s their first flight ever

W: yeah so how do you prepare them for the trip alone

E: I have a whole document and I try to get them to partner up with people

W: you do ok

E: they can come as I joke and sit with me and I’ll be Eckert travel agent but no that’s actually a fundamental part of my trip if you go back to one of my fundamental goals is to get them out of
their comfort zone and get them to experience I don’t want to do group travel now it’s totally different with Duke in Thailand that’s a whole different journey but you know you land as you know if you land in Charles de Gaulle Airport it might be in France but it looks like O’Hare with cool architecture if you land in Heathrow they’re speaking English but you can’t understand them if you land in you know Amsterdam they’re speaking English and you can understand them and it looks exactly like Detroit Metro you know it’s like so I’m like this is not that hard and it’s been amazing that I’ve never I mean I’ve had people once they get to Berlin they get lost and can’t find the hostel I mean the one girl last year wandered around for 3 hours because she basically had the map upside down and she’s like eh turned out to be fun and except she’s like I sat in the square and finally asked someone for help and realized at that point that everyone around her could speak English if she would just ask so you know I’m like if that’s the worst thing that happens to you on the trip we’re having a great trip so I really do it I mean it’s to the point where you know I’ve had people who ended up late because of travel problems and everything and people are like what are you going to do and I’m like when they catch up with us they’ll catch up they know they have all the documentation I have a thing where they have to have the itinerary on them at all time which shows the hotels and everything and if I catch them without the itinerary they own me a drink

W: good punishment ok well thank you I think that covered it for the most part

E: does that help?
W: yeah

E: so if you need any follow up let me know I do have to run

W: yup
Wei Li: alright so tell me what got you interested in study abroad

L: actually the first time I really ever thought about it I was in a class classed media virtual reality ethics and it was actually a class taught by Sandra Boding **** or Dr. Boding*** she’s a com. Professor. And then at the end of class you used to always talk about study abroad I guess meetings or ramp up meetings or something. And I decided to go on that and I went and she’s actually advertising a trip that was new and I went to it and it sounded good so I decided that this was something I wanted to do. London was like always kind of the city I wanted to go to I know that’s kind of basic but that was always the city I was interested in going to so I thought you know why not? And then it was like the program its self was really interesting to me also because at the time you know I was a journalist major and we were going to like the BBC we pretty much were discussing mass media as a whole in London and you know London is like probably the biggest news market in the world so you know that and New York so it just everything about it seemed like a huge benefit to me so that’s really what got me interested in it

W: yeah and did you have any previous travelling experience?

L: not internationally I mean of course domestic but yeah that was the first place I travelled internationally unless you want to count Canada
W: up to you

L: no

W: and after your London trip did you travel around Europe anymore?

L: so after the first trip I didn’t I didn’t travel I did on the second one though

W: but what made you what made you want to go on another exchange?

L: well one I obviously I mean I just kind of fell in love with it over there and then it was just so much more that I wanted to see that I didn’t see because I didn’t travel after I left London so im trying to recall what made me want to go to Germany I don’t know. I did I remember coming back after the trip I was actually kind of looking at my credits and you know how that would play out by the time I graduate and actually worked figured out that if I went on a study abroad trip I could actually make the study abroad trip be my very last class but that’s kind of how I worked that out and when I was researching other trips to go on Germany just seemed the most interesting it seemed like it would be the most relevant because I was at the time I was also studying economics so I kind of wanted to get I don’t know some more business acumen it would change the pace for me too because it was kind of a more salesy trip and then also use that as an opportunity to travel around Europe a little bit more, went back to London, went to
Paris, so yeah so yeah I don’t know I just like pretty much I wanted to go on that trip again just the other trip made me want to go on another trip because there was so much more I wanted to do and see

W: and what was I can’t remember what degree did you graduate with?

L: so I ended up graduating with a communications degree

W: ok and you don’t remember how you got into the Germany specific trip?

L: I think I would say I was sold so you know they do the study abroad fairs so I was actually working the study abroad fair from my previous trip and I was walking around and I remember talking to some people at one of the older trips from like last year and it just seemed cool. Eckert actually held like a info session so I decided to go on it go to the info session and then I applied and actually if I’m not mistaken you applied for the same trip but then you ended up not going because

W: yeah

L: it might have yeah so I just went to it and I knew a few people who were going including you and I was just like this will probably be cool so that’s how I kind of got into that
W: yeah good. And tell me about your trip. I know it was a while ago so dig

L: the first one or the second one?

W: the second one

L: so yeah it was kind of like a year and a half ago so yeah I don’t know it was kind of a blur, we **did a lot of drinking** but no it was it really **it was pretty awesome** cuz I really like the way Eckert has the trip set up because he gives you a good change of pace by taking you to you know it’s one thing to take you know you can do like a Euro trip marathon where you go to all the big cities and you know you hit all the major parts but it’s not really a change of pace from the stance of like you take **he took us to Berlin you know the most major city there and then he also took us to the like literally like the smallest city in the world in Bacharach so you get like the full Germany experience** from like the big city sense and the small city sense so that was really cool as far as the tourism stand point like going to Berlin you know like seeing where the Berlin Wall used to stand some of the remains of the Berlin Wall which was really cool and then also kind of just comparing it to like bigger urban type cities like in the US like **you really don’t think about it like this but like a lot of the European cities are like very similar to like our big cities like Chicago and NY and things of that nature.** So that was really cool to see. I think im trying to think back about the first major activity we did. I think I think the second day we went on this bike tour throughout berlin, and it’s really cool because **biking is really big in berlin like a lot of people don’t have cars they just bike everywhere** and like **they have like legit like laws like to enforce**
biking like so like if you’re biking and you’re like on anything you can get like a ticket. Like it’s pretty intense. And we did that, and actually I almost got ran over while we were on that. I almost got smoked by a Porsche I mean it’s kind of a cool story if I didn’t die but yeah so aside from that while we were there, we visited a ton of companies so we visited Volkswagen we visited this brewery I believe it’s called Berlinder? Berliner and Kindl? Is a brewing company in Berlin which is really famous we got to visit a winery and I think that’s it. But yeah that was cool cuz not only did we like tour the facilities of all the companies, we got to sit down with like some pretty big you know higher ups in the company to tell us about tell us about their you know I suppose footprint not only like in Germany but in the global stage, some of their strategies things of that nature so that was like really cool to see. The Volkswagen trip was probably the biggest one that was more of a day thing but we actually travelled to Volkswagen, Germany which was where the headquarters was at and it’s really massive, like I’ve really literally have not seen anything like it like Whirlpool has some pretty impressive manufacturing facilities and like this Volkswagen one puts it to shame and it actually is really cool cuz like people had to like it’s almost like a tourism destination also because they had this thing called auto stop which is pretty much a museum of their history and they had all these different buildings for all their brands. So Volkswagen was pretty massive. Like they had Volkswagen Audie Porsche I believe they had Lamborghini also and Bugatti and they had some other brands also that are more a typical for Europe and like for each one of the brands they have a separate building where they have like a museum where they have the different models of cars that they display so it’s like really cool. We actually had a we actually met with trying to remember his title but he was the I believe he was the brand manager for Volkswagen auto group so he’s the
brand manager for all their brands. He had a presentation and then he kind of would go through their marketing strategy on a global level you know their approaches to marketing on a global level. So he was like compare and contrast how they might run a Volkswagen commercial in Germany versus how they run the same commercial in the United States. So he’s just like a really good perspective on the differences in your customer base cuz I mean you customer base is going to be different you know for a variety of reasons but in this sense it’s different because culturally people respond to different things differently and like for example in the German commercial it was pretty serious like very how to live right on the edge the US commercial was more comedic because they know you know the German customer is prone to something that was more straight forward and that the US customer responds to humor a lot better so that was really cool to see when we compared and contrasted that. But other than that after we moved on that was our time in Berlin and then when we moved on from there we went to this is when we went to Bacharach which is a really small city in Germany it’s like on the Rhine river it’s probably like 200 people live there and pretty much when we went there that was more of a tourism time period on the trip it was just really cool to see all these mountains and like castles like they literally have like huge massive castles like on these mountains and that’s really cool to see that part of Germany cuz it’s probably more

W: wait you’re cutting in and out say it again

L: hold on, give me a second I’m like on a bridge over the water
W: alright

L: can you hear me?

W: kind of

L: give me like 5 seconds hello?

W: yeah

L: so what part didn’t you get?

W: you were talking about I think you were saying that Bacharach was more of what you expected in Germany

L: yeah Bacharach was more of what I picture when I think of Germany, like I don’t know some reason like when yeah so when I think of Germany I don’t really think of a city like Berlin which is very urban you know reminds me of a Detroit or Chicago type city where Bacharach you know is a little city off the Rhine River this massive river just surrounded by mountains and vineyards and things of that nature. There’s castles everywhere that’s why when I think of Germany that’s what I picture. So that’s why when I think of Germany that’s what I picture. So that was really cool to see that goes back to what I was saying about how Eckert set the trip up
to take us somewhere like Berlin and then also give us that side of Germany when we go to Bacharach so we can see both sides and experience both of them culturally. And then towards the end of the trip we sent time at the city of Padderborn which Eckert likes to describe as the Kalamazoo of Germany. Which probably has some truth it kind of reminds me of it it’s kind of a cozy little city we spent time with the students at the university of Padderborn and that’s where we conduct our week long negotiations trip. So not only did we do negotiations every day we also we given projects. So we all grouped with the students at the university of Padderborn and we were given a project to pretty much do I suppose I’m trying to remember the project what exactly we did, we each got a country and we pretty much had to talk about business etiquette business acumen in each country and how they differ from other countries. So for example I was given South Korea and we had to research and you know pretty much present to the class you know different business etiquettes and acumen in South Korea how they differ from Germany or the US’s business etiquette you know talk about S Korea’s businesses like you know where they prosper like six down, you know things of that nature. And it was really cool to work with the German students because they all like everyone works differently. Like the way we work and they work is totally different and you don’t really think about it until you actually are in groups with them. Like for example especially made you understand students, US students are much more talkative, so they’re more likely to like throw ideas off of each other and just be more collaborative whereas German students are a lot less reserved they’re a lot more reserved I should say I don’t want to say they’re more in the box thinkers but they’re more straight edge workers
W: what do you mean

L: like so for example Eckert used this example like a thing that US students or US workers do
tend to do a lot of times is figure out the solution to something and then work towards like
fixing it like then figuring out from there whereas like german students or german workers
would take it step by step until you can find the solution if that makes sense so they go they
take it step by step moving forward whereas we figure out what we have to do and then work
backwards if that makes sense

W: yeah and in your experience it was true?

L: yeah so it was kind of we did run into challenges sometimes just because you know when you
don’t work with when you’re working with different people you know already it can be difficult
but if you work with different people who have a different style then you know it raises some
challenges and that was some things we had to work to as to as for working in groups together
which is honestly a good experience just cuz you know that’s something you had to do when
you’re you know in your degree, you have to work with people so working with people with
other styles you know that’s a great beneficial to us, and it wasn’t just German students like
technically they’re all German students but they’re a pretty diverse groups of students. So we
had somewhat were from Germany we had some that were Spain we had some that were from
Vietnam they had some that were from Canada so it was a pretty diverse group of students so
that was a really good experience to work with all those type of people so we did that project
and then every day we were giving a case study a negotiation case and we had to pretty much prepare our negotiations with one of the other students for the next day which was pretty intense like we’d be in class all day from 9 to 4 and then we’d have to go home and prepare the negotiations, our negotiations case and then we would do that case in the morning and we did that for a week straight and that was pretty intense but it helped a lot especially now that I ended up signing on to sales having those like basic fundamentals of sales and negotiations you know helped me a lot to. I did mention that we went to the University of Potsdam and we did a negotiation day at their university also with their students where we matched up in groups of twos with so that was that....

W: wait say you cut out, what about the groups of two

L: so we were put in groups of two so it would be myself and a german student and then we would team up against so we would go against another US student and a german student in a negotiations case

W: ok

L: and then we competed and actually Eckert and Don Veeck professors actually deliberated and then actually came up with results as far as who won each case and they awarded people like the top negotiators so like me and the guy I was with he actually gave me second place for like top negotiators. So we actually came into like second place we were like top negotiators so
yeah I thought that was pretty cool especially because I’m not a sales guy from a trip with sales people. But yeah so yeah after the negotiations week we had like a really like cool big celebration, Eckert took us out to a restaurant there we had meals and then we all they had us park there in the middle of the city it’s cool cuz you can drink like they don’t have open carry laws there so we all went to like liquor stores and we were all carrying 16 packs of beers and we pretty much took over this park and were playing like drinking games and like corn hole things of that nature in a park and so that was a really cool celebration and then we all at the end of it us and all the German students went to this club afterwards and we pretty much just took over the club and had a big like celebration so it was really cool like working with them for that entire week like we pretty got pretty close with a lot of them and I still keep in touch with some of them to this day not only from like a student and professor stand point was it beneficial but we also got a chance to build like real relationships with the students

W: well good, what was the memorable part of your trip?

L: socially or like from a like school stand point cuz I was like because I would say I was too

W: in general

L: in general I would say the most memorable part was actually the last day on the trip where we got together with all the students and celebrated you know being done with the class and went to the park and celebrated you know played games drinking eating and then we went to
the club and you know all you know had a good time cuz you know like a week before we didn’t
know each other from anything you know and then we had all these cultural differences you
know language barriers but like we all at the end of the trip came together and had that nice
big celebration which I thought was really cool

W: yeah and tell me what you learned over the trip

L: I learned a lot. Where do I start, so I was the first thing I learned and this is something I
learned for like personal growth is I suppose how to like manage being in teams with other
people and I suppose changing my style of communication and or leadership to fit you know
that groups of people just cuz you work with so many different type of people different cultures
different ways of working so I thought that was a pretty important a pretty important aspect
that I learned that I have been able to apply now like in my career that I don’t know if I would
have learned if I didn’t have that opportunity to go on that trip and didn’t have that opportunity
to work with all those different people so I think that would be one of the biggest things that I
learned from the trip and in addition to that of course I learned like different things about
negotiations business etiquette when dealing with people from different cultures you know
basic sales views things of that nature I think that we might just as well learn on the trip

W: can you tell me a little bit about the difference between your first study abroad and your
second?
L: yeah well I mean one was it was 2 different subjects you know the first one was a you know communications trip and you know this one was a business trip. And there’s less students on the first one that trip it was myself and it was 9 other girls and including the professor 10 so it was just me and three women so that was kind of a challenge. Versus being in a male dominated trip which the Germany trip I think usually is a male dominate trip and that’s different itself because guys and girls are honestly totally different so having to go through that experience with you know people of different genders actually does make a difference at times especially depending on how people are like you know a lot of the girls on the trip were I don’t know they were really panicky

W: which trip?

L: the London trip, so it was like when anything did not go to plan they all would like kind of panic like I had to be like the mediator to keep people calm and things of that nature whereas in Germany the people on that trip more or less went with the flow of things and were kind of more open to doing things which did make Germany more enjoyable because a lot of the girls who went to London with me weren’t as I suppose open or just spontaneous spontaneous is probably the word I’m looking for like just go out and enjoy the city and mingle things of that nature but those two things being two different subjects and the type of people on the trip were definitely probably the biggest differences as far as like actually activities it was very similar where you know it’s a culture trip so a lot of the learning lot of the school time is coming from doing different activities and excursions in the city so they were pretty similar in that
sense. Like we would go to different places and tour different businesses so they were similar in that extent so I would mainly say that it was mainly just the subject matter and the people were different on the trip and then obviously you know Germany and London are different right. The cultural barrier is not as big in the UK as it is in Germany. Germany is I mean excuse me the UK is more closely related to like the US I mean for the simple fact that it’s an English speaking country. So it felt more I mean I never really had culture shock while I was in England cuz there’s really not much to adjust to. Whereas in Germany I don’t really want to say I had culture shock but I did have some time where Dylan would say actually I would say that the first time I kind of had culture shock was when I was there and I had never had mineral water, even when I was in the UK and then someone gave me a glass of water in Germany and it was mineral water and I couldn’t believe it, and I was like this is disgusting and that was just something that I really didn’t deal with while I was in the UK. Like the little things like that.

W: is mineral water sparkling water?

L: yes, like that really hard tasting water?

W: it’s got carbonation though?

L: yeah carbonation yeah

W: ok was that you’re biggest culture shock moment?
L: I don’t know

W: well tell me about some of you’re the culture shock you experienced

L: so the water moment was definitely one of them the next one was probably I think it was when I went to a McDonald’s so I went to a McDonalds and they didn’t have McGriddles and that was like a big deal for me because I was like really into mcgriddles at the time. It’s kind of weird but that was a culture shock for me. Another culture shock that I noticed that the portions there are so small in comparison to the US and so you order these meals and it’s like a fraction of what you would get back home so that was something that was really noticeable. Public bathrooms are not free well probably the most obvious one, is in the UK they drive on the opposite side of the road which can be really confusing when you’re trying to cross the street but it’s really cool cuz they put messages in the road to tell you which was to look because I bet they get a lot of tourists. That was that’s definitely the most obvious one they drive on the opposite side of the street. I’m trying got think of other ones that kind of stood out to me. They do in the UK they do some of their jarring is weird maybe weird’s not the right word, it’s just different.

W: their jarring?
L: their jargon like the words that they say like yeah like their vernacular is kind of is really different like a lot of times you’ll speak to someone that’s British and they’ll you know, like for example someone will say the word, they’ll say like are you taking a piss, and you know if someone says are you taking a piss to me here like not I’m not urinating like why are you saying that but to them taking a piss to them is like the equivalent of someone here saying are you shitting me are you kidding me things of that nature so that would happen a lot where someone would use some phrase in a weird way that I had never heard before.

W: ta-can you talk a little bit about if and how your professor on either trip prepared you for the culture shock or just the differences

L: I’m sorry what was the question again?

W: can you talk about if and how your professor prepared you for the cultural differences

L: yeah so I would say in both Dr. Eckert’s case and Dr. Borden’s case like we did have like our pre-trip meetings when he would you know kind of discuss like both of them would kind of discuss some of the things we should be prepared for when we go on the trip like as far as you know thing you need to bring things you should expect things you should avoid but at the same time you can talk about these things but they don’t really seem real until you actually go there and you you actually experience them yourself like you can someone can tell me they drive on the other side of the road all day but it doesn’t really hit you until you get over there and you’re
like trying to cross the street and you’re looking the wrong direction and almost get hit by a car so like we talk about these things but it can kind of give you a heads up I still don’t think you can really I don’t know how much you can really prepare for culture shock you know it’s just one of those things you have to experience and then perhaps if you’re prepared you can like work your way through that process of culture shock a lot more you know seamlessly but I think that it’s something you really can’t truly prepare for but they did try to work with us letting us know what we should expect things we should do things we should not do things we should avoid etcetera.

W: can you tell me a little bit about Germany

L: like culturally?

W: yeah or just in general

L: I mean Germany is kind of going back to like what I was saying like we spent most of our time in Berlin and kind of what I learned from being in London and being in Berlin while we do have cultural differences like you know basic differences like they drink mineral you know they have to pay to go to the bathroom you know their food their portions a lot different, are a lot more different things of that nature the city is like we’re not really that like all these places aren’t that different like once you get there and you start to understand the cities like I don’t know it’s
kind of hard for me to maybe identify like to talk about the city specifics it’s kind of hard, I haven’t been there in a while so I’m trying to recollect.

W: that’s ok

L: Germany’s really cool though like Berlin specifically like I said it’s a big urban city really cool architecture one thing that was really surprising is that it was it’s pretty dirty like it’s honestly one of the most dirt cities I’ve ever been in which I don’t really get why like it smells really like bad in Berlin but I actually learned that it used to be a swamp so that’s kind of the reason why it kind of has that odor like a musk smell but yeah Berlin is really cool where we stayed in Berlin was pretty much the heart of the city, they have really walkable streets it’s pretty easy going it really is kind of like any of the big cities you would go to in the US but yeah once you go into the other parts of Germany the Bacharach other places like that it’s not as industrialized, really small cities but yeah I don’t know I’m trying to recollect that trip was a year and a half ago so

W: yeah I know so going back to your London exchange can you tell me a little bit about how you were chosen? Like the process you had to go through?

L: yeah so so what the application you had to I believe you had to have a certain GPA I’m not sure what that was but you had to have a particular GPA you had to be I believe at least junior standing and you also had to have a personal statement saying why you wanted to go on the trip and how it’s going to benefit you in your schooling or your career and then I believe you
also had to have two recommendations and then I believe that was it. There was no interviewing process or you know any other vetting that was done it was also it kind of helped me out because I said earlier that I already had Dr. Borden in one of her classes and that’s how I found out about the trip so she we already had a relationship built up so she knew who I was so I’m pretty sure like when I put in the application like it was probably pretty easy decision to you know accept me to go on the trip.

W: and how does that differ with your experience applying for the Germany trip?

L: it was the process was much in the same but yeah I think it was I definitely had to put in a little bit more effort to get accepted into the trip cuz you know I’m not I wasn’t in the business school like I didn’t know Eckert, like at all so im just like this random com student that trying to go on this sales trip which I’m pretty sure a lot of students want to go to on the trip so I did the same thing I did the personal statement also had to get the recommendations but then I also you know make sure I went the extra mile to make sure I went to like info sessions and you know speaking with him and things of that nature. I think it really helped a lot that I had already been on a study abroad trip and you know always had that reference and I think he I actually think he spoke with Dr. Borden cuz I think Dr. Borden actually used to consult with Dr. Eckert whens he was preparing her trip about things she should do you know as far as planning the trip it was pretty much the same I just had to put in a little more effort to make sure that he would consider me worth going on the trip because I wasn’t a business student
W: did you interview with him?

L: I did not interview with him

W: ok did studying abroad change how you feel about travelling alone?

L: yes definitely before when I studied abroad in London like even in the USA I really hadn’t don’t that much travelling and I definitely hadn’t travelled alone and essentially on both trips I just did it myself so now I’m definitely not against travelling alone while I still prefer to at least have someone with me just cuz it’s always usually better to experience things with other people I’m definitely not against travelling along cuz it’s just one of things where if you allow not wanting to travel alone to stop you from doing things like honestly you’ll probably never ever do anything cuz it’s so hard to plan trips now a days with people not everyone has finances to go to places a lot of times people back out it’s just one of those things where you have to just be more open to step out of your comfort zone and just take that leap of faith and just go somewhere by yourself.

W: yeah can you tell me a little bit about your reasoning not to travel after your London trip?

L: well mainly I would say it was mainly finances it was a lot more expensive to travel in London and at the time the British pound was like $1.80 to like a British pound so it was like super expensive so we were like paying double for everything and then also not only the money it was
like at the time I wasn’t all for travelling by myself and I wouldn’t have had anyone to travel with so

W: now I know your experiences were a year and a half ago but how have they helped you in the workplace or shaped how you think about your professional career?

L: like I said working with you know meeting and working with people from different cultures different work styles definitely something I’ve been able to apply to my career right now especially because all I do is work with people I don’t work with hundreds of people like I can’t remember people’s names I work with so many people and everyone’s different and you have to take a different approach to working with everyone and just that experience honestly that experience is invaluable because I wouldn’t say I have it down to the T but I like I thank I’m pretty good at working in groups working with different people no matter what their you know if they’re like super reserved if they’re like super in your face like no matter what I feel like I’m really good at working with people so I think that’s helped me a lot being on that trip because it also made me step out of my comfort zone cuz I would consider myself more reserved overall and when I was on that trip I did start to come out of my shell a bit and in addition to that it’s pretty much made me want to at least one day perhaps work overseas like you know I’ve seen a lot over there and there’s still a lot I want to see like a lot I still want to do and I feel like there’d be no better way than to then to do it then to work overseas and have the opportunity to live there while working and that’s also something that studying abroad has done for me.
W: great and one last question what’s your next travel destination

L: that’s a good question well I went to the DR this past may when I met with Devon after his trip but we are actually been talking and we’re either thinking like a south American country like Argentina or perhaps we’d go to like Mexico or something we’re also thinking about Thailand and then also perhaps doing a Euro trip you know going to like Amsterdam Germany that whole thing so we really haven’t I really haven’t really thought about it too much there’s honestly a lot of domestic travelling I want to do that I haven’t done but I do plan on trying to go overseas somewhere sometime perhaps next spring and I think if I was to give you a short list it’d be between Thailand, Europe and maybe like Argentina.

W: ok great, I’m going to turn off the...
Wei Li: alright so we will start with just tell me what got you interested in study abroad

E: honestly it was just kind of a spur of the moment thing yeah I was like my one friend was interested in doing it and I was just like oh ok maybe I’ll look into it and then that day I started like applying for it so yeah I didn’t even tell my parents about it until after I was accepted.

W: did you go with her into like the office then?

E: no she didn’t end up applying so. Which I think is good because if she would have gone, I would have like she’s kind of like a friend who I feel like I let her do everything so I just kind of follow so like I feel like if she would have gone I would have just I wouldn’t have had the experience I did

W: interesting, yeah so how did you choose your program?

E: well that was the one I applied for at first because it was the one I’d heard most about and I don’t know I just thought Germany was a good pick it was long enough where I could be away but not short enough where I wouldn’t get a full experience.

W: and it’s a 2 it’s like
E: like 3 weeks

W: yeah did you have any previous travelling experience

E: I've been to like Mexico and Canada so that was pretty much it so that was also another reason why I wanted to go

W: you just said you liked the time frame and you heard really good things about it that’s it that’s good. So you chose the Germany trip, tell me about the trip

E: ok so I flew there by myself

W: was it your first time

E: flying by myself? Yes. So that was a little nerve-wracking especially for like such a long time and then having a connection flight I was like how will I know where to go? My parents always tell me what terminal to be at but it was super easy I did have trouble finding the hostel so I was like walking around Berlin with my luggage for like 3 hours there were 2 people on the trip who were on my same flight and they took a taxi but didn’t include me in the taxi so I was a little salty with them and then I got there and everyone was like oh yeah Drew and them said you were on the same flight what took you do long? And I was like I’ve been walking. So we got
there and we all just had a casual night the teacher like talked to us about the rules and then the next day we had to be up for the Volkswagen tour which was really nice and cool we got to see them make a car we got to talk to a guy who’s like the vice-president of like their brands or something like that which was nice and then we had dinner all together, the food it was ok I wasn’t used to it so yeah I kind of stuck to like schnitzel and then just like throughout the trip you get to know like the people you go on with I think my favorite part was when we went to the Rhine and stayed in Bacharach which is like this old like 1500 town like it’s been around forever and just like hanging out there with everybody oh I liked the bike tour in Berlin that was cool we got to see like we were like standing on like Hitler’s old bunker which was nice not nice but like cool I don’t know it was just like really nice to like tra-be able to travel somewhere else with like people who were from your like university and then like an instructor who like knew what he was doing and then like just getting to know them

W: so tell me a little bit about the differences in food

E: like their lettuce in salads kind of tastes like dirt I didn’t know if they washed it or not I didn’t eat it I gave it to somebody else what else oh they’re like they don’t have like pizza it’s called like flammkuchen which is like it’s like a healthier version of pizza and that was good you drink a beer with like every meal so you I mean I gained a couple pounds from that trying to think they put like wiener schnitzel with egg on it which I thought was weird

W: what is it?
E: it’s like wiener schnitzel?

W: I have no idea

E: it’s like I think it’s like pork that’s what I think it is, I’m not really sure. It’s like a thin piece and it’s like fried and then they put like a sunny side up egg on it. They have white asparagus which I didn’t know was a thing until I went there it’s pretty good though so

W: was it milder?

E: I don’t I’ve never really eaten asparagus like I’ve had it a couple times, but I wouldn’t say I’m a fan of it. But I do like white asparagus

W: did you try different kinds of restaurants or were they did you see most of the same kind of food?

E: so a sometimes we’d have like planned meals with everybody and they would have like a set menu that we could choose off of or like we could choose the whole menu there was like a lot of different food in Berlin when we would go because I mean that’s like a big city it’s like the capitol they have like donors which is like those big sticks of lamb you know? And then there’s like cabbage and lettuce and like all this stuff it was really good they have some sauce on it.
didn’t find a burger until we went to Paderborn yeah and all their burgers have to be cooked like I think it’s like medium well because of the mad cow disease that happened so you don’t get a choice in what your burger’s cooked and then pretty much they if you went to like a German restaurant they would have like kind of the same things like wiener schnitzel, like bratwurst but like different versions of them so I mean when we were in the bigger cities there was like a lot more options so

W: yeah no that makes sense, alright so what was the most memorable part of the trip, your favorite part?

E: I don’t know if I can talk about that. Cuz there may have been alcohol involved so

W: it’s fine, tell me about it

E: alright so we were in this so the Bacharach is a small little town and they have it’s along the Rhine and the Rhine has like 32 castles along it or whatever so there’s this castle there do one night when we first got here I got off at the wrong train stop so my friend waited for me and the teacher and she’s like you owe me a bottle of wine so we bought a like 9 euro bottle of wine from like Dirk and we drank it all before dinner and at this point we didn’t have anything in us we’re about to go get dinner and then at dinner we’re tasting wine and we’re kind of not tasting it we’re just like throwing it back and like then our teacher we tried 4 kinds of wine and then our teacher buys a bottle for our table so we’re on like out 6th bottle of wine and we’re all
like just being stupid and loud and then we went up to the castle with like 3 more bottles of wine a bunch of us and we were just like hanging out talking playing games and then we went back to the hotel and there was like a swimming pool and like everybody else who wasn’t with us at the top of the castle was there so it’s just nice to be like kind of in a small area and all like actually hanging out for once instead of going our separate ways like we did in the big city so

W: you mean the group being able to spread out you liked it when you were able to hang out

E: yeah

W: alright tell me a little bit about what you learned on your trip

E: ok so I learned that I need to work on my presentation skills, I learned a lot about negotiations I hadn’t really like practiced any skills before I went on that tactic I was like not very good at it but then like after the short week of the class that we had I would say I became more confident in my skills to negotiate I learned a lot of techniques and strategies through that course I learned how to prepare for going into a negotiation I learned also how to like interact with people from other cultures and how our cultural differences might come into play when we’re negotiating with somebody from somewhere else so

W: like what kind of things
E: just like how so like we’re obviously American and people can perceive us as too friendly or something like that and so like or like how we’re kind of sporadic with notes or stuff like that and how a German let’s say is like going point by point like they have to go like A one A, two A, when they’re negotiating something I’ll be like oh let’s skip to three and they’ll be like no we have to go straight through so stuff like that

W: so adapting to other people.

E: yeah

W: can you tell me a little bit about Germany?

E: it’s a very pretty country when we were on the train you would just see like yellow fields like you know how in the sound of music she’s running through that patch and it’s like all yellow? Like I kid you not, like I swear it was filmed there but it wasn’t. it’s just I don’t know each different city was unique in its own way, like Berlin was like a bunch of crazy people and like

W: what do you mean?

E: like so we were there on like Man’s Day or something like that and so these all these boys are like half naked in the streets and you can have open containers when you’re walking and stuff so that’s also different because they’re just like chugging a beer on the street and we’re like you
can’t do that but you can and they have like boom boxes blaring music and then like when we went to like Hamburg it was more of like calm there was the Reeperbahn though so and I don’t even know how to describe it there’s like a good section and bad section and the Reeperbahn is kind of like like what is it like a strip club places places like that and there’s some clubs where like girls can’t get into and that’s where all the craziness happens and then when you’re walking there’s not just people walking and having a boom box there

W: where was it?

E: The Reeperbahn? In Hamburg. But that was a neat experience, I’m trying to think.

W: did you go there with your group or

E: yeah a bunch of us went there one night with one of the girls had studied abroad there before so the guy she had her good friend she met came and like went out with us and stuff. Oh the shops are not open like 24/7 in Germany they’re not open on Sundays which was something we had to get used to.

W: anything else?

E: that’s all I got right now
W: that’s ok, so tell me about your biggest culture shock experience

E: I’m going to say when I was lost for 3 hours because it was my first encounter and everybody well everybody I talked to at least didn’t really understand me or they didn’t know where the hotel was and like it took me at least well it took me 3 hours to find somebody who could finally tell me where I needed to go. I’m going to go with that because it was my first encounter with anybody from there and

W: you said that there was 2 people on your plane who were in your program

E: oh yeah there was two people and they took a taxi and they didn’t invite me because I had a class with this one kid and there’s they met up for a group project and I couldn’t meet up and then I asked them if I could do anything and they were like no like we got it all handled like you’re going to present the whole thing and so like he didn’t really want to talk to me because of that

W: but they knew you were on the flight and everything

E: yeah yeah

W: and did you guys have any meetings before leaving?
E: yeah **we had 3 meetings to go over the itinerary like to introduce ourselves get ev-like know who is going early or who’s staying late like stuff like that and then like what to pack not to over pack and bring a huge suitcase**

W: anything else?

E: no

W: alright and do you think your experience will help you in the workplace?

E: I do think it will help me in the workplace because of the negotiation skills I learned I learned **how to adapt better communicate with people** I learned to present better so when like when I’m presenting a project in the work world I like don’t move a lot or like I’m doing it right now I can tell putting in filler words

W: did it spark an interest to go other places or maybe return back to Germany?

E: it did I actually was considering doing the semester at Paderborn in Germany but I’m supposed to be graduating in the springtime and you can’t do it in the fall there because their semesters don’t match up so well not this one anyway, spring and it cuz you doing the semester long you have to go 3 months early to take a German course for Paderborn so I just felt like it would be too long of a time to be away from here and home so I was looking into maybe a
summer semester at CHIMBA but that Italy program but then I found out that that’s just basically all American students at a university in Italy so I didn’t really want that because I wanted to experience like and meet like other people from another country

W: you didn’t really meeting a lot of people from other cultures

E: yeah so we took this one course at Potsdam and we were in a class with 13 Russians and like 20 something Germans and then us and then it was kind of a compact course where you got a lecture from a Russian professor, a German professor and then Dr. Eckert and you couldn’t [Dr. Eckert didn’t want us to sit next to anybody who was American so we had to sit next to somebody else so we started conversations and then we ate lunch with them] and then we had to negotiate and then after we went to dinner with them and then they took us out to a club so

W: who took you out to a club

E: the German students in Berlin and they were super fun they stay out way too late for me though and then like in Paderborn we kind of didn’t really start to talk to them like we knew them prior to the full week course because we did a full day course there and we didn’t really start to talk to them or like get to know them until like maybe the 2-3 day of the class just because we’re meeting new people for the first time is like and then after that we started talking to them we like would hang out with them we went to the park and all hung out in the park together we had another group dinner with them where we couldn’t sit by somebody
who’s American and then like I still keep in contact with some people from the trip I'm friends with a lot of them of Facebook and they’re like always talking about if you come back like let us know or if we come there we’ll let you know just so we can like meet up or something

W: yeah that’s great, yeah I think we’re done
Wei Li: so, can you tell a little bit about how you got involved in study abroad?

N: so I have this in front of us. Well, I came to Western in 2000, the fall of 2002, and I started gain a passion in my last position when I was at another university and I talked to Western Michigan and said be interested in study abroad related work and one of the programs, one of the countries most interesting to me was France. So I talked to the dean here and then I talked to the head at that time of a Higgie over there well they weren’t study abroad at that stage and they said there was a program in France that had been sort of neglected and he was wondering if I wanted to continue and sort of work with that to try to gain some students to go to at that time their name was Negosia in Paris and. So that started me off on the passion not only for traveling specifically to France but to other countries and trying to get students involved in as the years have gone by I’ve grown in more excitement and passion and you know the whole excitement of not only myself participating in going overseas and learning about new cultures but more importantly to help bring students to that exciting kind of experience that I never had when I was going to undergraduate program.

W: so tell me a little about your interest in France?

N: you know I don’t know how I could have been Francophile even before I never been overseas but whatever reason Paris it always been a fascination Europe in general but for some
reason Paris was exotic enough and of course I read Hemmingway’s stories and a variety of other literature that sort of based around France and I guess I always thought if there was one city outside the United States that I had to see if I had to choose it was going to be Paris and if I were perfectly honest it’s never disappointed and it’s to me still the most amazing city and I’ve spent probably an accumulative 4 or 5 weeks there in my time and I could spend a month there and not do everything so it’s just always going and one things, the great things that is I was there with an open mind and with very little if any language abilities in french but the Parisians and the french in general always very generous and I argue much more friendly that big cities in the United States so it’s just fascinating country. But for that point on I expanded and did some traveling in Europe and then some other countries so it’s one of those things that our students need to take that first step and then go overseas to study and it doesn’t have to be even you know in a place where the language is different they go to England or go to Ireland or go to places also where there’s a even Germany where English is spoken extensively and get their feet wet and that passion and that candle of desire start to be lit and I think that’s a lifelong you know excitement about going and finding out things about new cultures.

W: so you really came to Western with the intent of improving and working on study abroad?

N: and it was one of those key aspects and one of the reasons that I would willing to come to Western. When I was tenured I thought I would spend the rest of my career here I liked the university. I was in Ohio but that was one of the things that brought me here and made me
change universities. I love Michigan and am from the area originally but that was a key aspect I wanted to explore.

W: and had you ever traveled before?

N: never been besides Canada. So that was just jumping on the plane for the first time was exciting and thrilling and scary and it’s sort of that way every time. You know every trip I go someplace I still get a little nervous but that’s also the fun part of it.

W: yeah. Did you, were you aware that Dr. Duke ran a trip London-Paris once?

N: he wasn’t here. I was here before Dr. Duke.

W: so, were you, do you remember that they did one year?

N: no, no. What happened was actually Dr. Wagner and I went actually to London-Paris and developed the summer trip.

W: uh huh.

N: So we had developed that but I couldn’t go that summer with the group.
W: that’s right.

N: So it’s actually Dr. Wagner and didn’t Anne Ganz going with it? I’m not sure did Duke go with them also? He probably did that time. Yeah, he took my place. But Brent Wagner and I actually developed the trip and actually did a pre trip to get that set up for the students.

W: okay. Okay. Perfect. But that trip is no longer in existence, correct?

N: No, but we’re rethinking about that’s a trip we could do every year and get a full group of students. So it’s more a matter of just deciding where our priorities lie and the last few years my priorities lied with working with MBAs down to South America and Chile but no question in fact I would like really considering maybe trying to bring MBAs over to Paris and France. The problem is as you know, there’s a issue particularly in the summer time during the prime season to get hotel rooms. Very expensive. There’s a lot of logistical things that happen particularly at that time of year. But Paris is specifically and in France is a place we could find 20-30 students every year willing to go. It’s more a matter of just deciding what we are going to be focusing on.

W: can you tell me a little bit on the creation process of creating because you have several different study abroads?
N: So part of the thing is and I will pass an article myself, Dr. Wagner, Dr. Creachee, Jim Eckert, and Mushtag Luckmontee, we wrote about that whole process of developing short term study abroad. So I’ll give you that so you can look at it.

W: that will be great.

N: But in essence what we really first decide is the **key aspect of study program is finding a passionate leader**. So unless you can’t say we’re going to Paris and then start looking for somebody because nobody’s mentioned they’re interested. So **what usually happens is that we have a group of faculty who a lot of times have been sort of the secondary person on a trip. So part of our process is when we have study abroad trips particularly short term trips, we try often to bring somebody who’s never been there who has an interest in this and get them sort of excited understand the whole procedure of doing it and then more times than not, like Karen Lancendorfer, who has one of the ideas that she then develops her own and they from that point on. So we try to do this process in mentoring that goes on but what happens is a faculty member says I’m really passionate about Paris. I’d love to take students to Paris this year. And so **once we’ve decided that then the question is do we think there is market for it**. So then we make some determinations for places like Paris or really most places in Europe. That’s a pretty straight forward assessment that we can decide whether the thing can be enough. We can do some surveys but things like South Africa even the beginning things like Thailand you know that’s a little different so we really have got to consider there is going to be a demand that justifies the course. So once we do that we’ve got a faculty member that is passionate about it.
We’ve decided that we think there’s some potential there. So what usually happens is that we outline some course or time of year that we are going to present it and there is some money given to that individual for the first time to go sometimes 6 months, sometimes a year earlier, to actually explore what’s going on. They tend to meet, to look at hotels, they tend to talk to people and this is done beforehand too but eventually that culminates to that travel trip to make sure the logistics make sense. So after then the initial research then they go off and do an actual, pseudo run through and making sure they know where the students are going to go. Then becomes a process of starting to market the program so we decide whether we are going to market to undergraduates or graduates. That’s usually determined before that. And so we start to do that. There’s a sigh up period and you have to have we shoot for about 20 students for most of these short term trips to go because just the cost revenue kind of analysis going on. And that can vary. Sometimes the MBA program we take less because we want MBAs. We only got one MBA program focused in study abroad but other programs like Duke’s and the one in Germany you know they hover on 20-25 people most of the years. So once that’s done the recruiting is that we market it. During that whole time the faculty members are suddenly at some stage say that we are going to market it, it’s a go ahead, we are starting to make reservations, sometimes you have to get some money up front to pay the hotels, sometimes there’s a whole bunch of budget that has to now be refined to make sure this makes sense. We had an idea of what the cost will be per student but then all of a sudden that starts to refine specific costs. If we need some extra money we start to decide whether the global business center or there’s some other options to gain some money to credit grate and we at least break even on the trip. And then obviously once that’s all taken care of most of the programs have
two or three sessions beforehand, in classroom sessions at Western to prepare them for the trip. We go over the culture. We go over you know what’s going on in the country. We go over the history kind of things. We go over a lot of the basic logistics and language and manners and currency and things like that. And so largely for undergraduates almost all the students except those who are more well-travelled, tend to fly the same plane, usually from Kalamazoo all the way to wherever the destination is and then the experience happens and the leader is there and usually with one of the faculty member we like to have for most cases two on board in case somebody gets sick or student has a problem. I think one of Duke’s, two years ago one of Duke, two of Duke’s students went into the hospital. So Dr. Eckert actually spent a lot of time, Dr. Wagner spent a lot of time at the hospital, making sure they were alright so Duke could take the class to locations they were suppose to go to. Then there’s an evaluation at the end. Then we decide whether the faculty wants to do again. Whether we think there’s a market. Whether we should do it yearly, annually, every other year and so we make those general assessments.

The issue is that you have faculty members that are passionate about this because it’s so much easier to spend 6 weeks in a summer course teaching 3 to 6 hours a week and going home. Any kind of comparison between the amount of hours you spend not only preparing but actually on site, huge responsibilities with your students and a lot of pressures going on compared to like a general classroom. It just is not so. Faculty member is not doing it for money, they are not doing it to get the extra class. They are doing it cause they care about the students and also have passion about traveling themselves. That’s great.
W: do.. I know some of the trips have kind of a like a major theme, such as like the Dominican really works on advertising. Is that just because of the lead professor?

N: It usually is. Like Eckert’s, Jim Eckert’s, class to Germany, is largely filled with sales students so they do all these things involve culture in the first place so that’s a universal thing. So even if it’s not a focused area the idea of actually getting overseas and experiencing your another it really doesn’t make a difference what you study beyond being a guest. So Dr. Lancendorfer’s focus, she has a lot of advertising related and then recruits advertising students for though it’s broader than specifically advertising that is a central focus. Eckert’s is very much like that where he has a session of negotiation with German students across the way so he has a focus and that kind of thing. As far as Duke, though there a little bit of things that Thailand that relate to food and other industries that uses food. He teaches food. For the most part that is much more general kind of study abroad trip that anybody can take and is not focused on one major area. The MBA program to Chile is very much like that broad business major along with this other culture things like that. As you know from our semester long programs there it’s just business it isn’t necessarily any one specific area though we could argue like I don’t know well I don’t know if we can argue could we say that Navancia’s is a little I mean is there sort of a focus to their business school? I mean it’s little sales little kind of other things so for the semester long program it’s more general business opposed to a specific area.

W: has the business college ever paired with another college in the university to do a study abroad?
N: no, what we have done is pretty much gone to other universities or had interactions with them overseas. We haven’t worked with another university for it.

W: I mean like colleges like say the engineering college.

N: oh! No, in terms of college, no, we haven’t.

W: okay.

N: And that’s something we'd consider in the future and possibly doing it however for instance the short term trip to India that Dr. Palmer, have you talked to Dr. Palmer?

W: yes.

N: Tim Palmer.

W: yes. Very different.

N: Yeah, and do they have a number of students from other majors, don’t they? He had a number of students that I think that other related majors. And also I believe that Dr. Al and Duke for Africa. They may have a number of students outside of the college of business. But for
the most part it is pretty focused on business and we haven’t dueled teamed with other things.

I think that definitely can happen.

W: okay.

N: The issue that happens also however is because we have specific scholarships by the college of business that they have to be business majors to get those scholarships. However Higgie also gives 4 or 5 scholarships for other majors that may or may not be business to come along.

W: and other colleges might have

N: and even Chile had one person that was a spanish major and I don’t even think she had a business minor so I mean so there’s a little bit of sprinkling but mostly folks and us.

W: can you tell me one thing that would help facilitate your, to make it easier when working with these. You have so many different ones. I don’t know which ones to ask about.

N: I mean you talk about from a faculty perspective?

W: yeah.
N: You know here’s once again I think the key is that particularly for those people and it isn’t just those people I mean you can go travel as a tourist anywhere so it’s not as if you are or are not well travelled. **But is almost essential that before you take your first trip that you go with somebody else and get a feel for what’s the trip’s like.** And just makes things so. And Al’s case in Ghana it’s a little bit different that he sort of has the background there, but **Duke is going along as. So he’s going along as he’s mentoring Al although Al is the leader of the trip, he is there to help make sure that these things straighten out where the cultural things that obviously Al knows a lot about, South African culture, but the fact is that Duke is the one to understand and is part of the planning and don’t spend too much time in the bus and make sure that the hotel is close to some of the sites and make sure that you have this worked out. All those things really apply sort of generally across culture and you need to have some sort of person with experience that mass things a lot easier.

W: I’m… sorry. Going back to the creation of a trip, what’s the timeline usually?

N: Well you know it maybe someone’s thinking about this for years as they are working through it in their mind. In terms of getting that process started and really being in areas, what you should really do is you should come to our meeting about a year and a half before your trip and to the global business it’s called Ibeck, international business education counsel, and what you do is talk to myself or Dr. Q and say that I’m interested in maybe doing this. So for the first step is putting out the idea. Now before any new programs can be established the counsel and the college of business has to agree to it. So we have to vote that this makes sense. We also got to
be a little bit careful about diluting, having too many programs, because what will happen is that if you take away from other ones then you end up not having enough students to justify any of the things. So all of these things have to be sort of developed, a plan has to be put together, and a proposal has to be given to the Ibeck counsel to make sure that you know this makes sense and we agree that this is a good program to pursue. Once that happens then like I said things starts to happen. So I would say that process and that approval process is probably going to be a year and a half before the actual trip starts. Approximately. Though like I said for many of us the idea of trips may percolate if our mind for many, many years. You know Brent Wagner and I have talked about a number different trip possibilities we may consider in the future. So in essence it may be you know 10 years in the making in a very broad, abstract sense.

W: do you know, fact this is offhand so you might not, the percentage of students in the business college who study abroad?

N: Yes, well, the percentage is students is a little tougher. Let me, I just have actually got, where did I put my, C4, I was just looking it up, we have a list, oh here it is. This a report we got from the study abroad office and what was interesting about this and I’m not sure about the percentage but what it is is these are the percent, these are all the people who studied abroad during the school year during that year. Short term versus long term. But I thought it was really interesting is that you can see this is is the five most study abroad majors was business is business management and marketing. So the idea of as a college I think they talk about the college it’s a percentage of HCoB doing that but the ideas that we as a college of business
specifically in terms of the number of students are really, really have a program that sends probably as a percentage as many people study abroad as any college.

W: this is for only 574 for the entire college study abroad?

N: for the entire university.

W: that’s so small.

N: the goal right now as we try we’re trying to get ten percent of our students to study abroad and you know that barriers we try to overcome in terms of this. And it’s probably you know the biggest barrier is financial. Now part of the university committee has really put forward a plan to try to not only gain scholarships but one of the proposals that we had was that every student if you come to Western we will actually facilitate and pay for a passport for you. And in addition we would give everybody that wants to a thousand dollars toward any study abroad education opportunity when they’re here at Western. Now we haven’t got final approval and it’s a lot of money but those are the kind of things we need to do to try and get more and more students to study abroad.

W: yeah, yeah. Wow.
N: but anyway as though we’re not at the level we want to be the college of business as a percentage probably sends as many people study abroad as any. In fact, more than almost any other college if not the most of all.

W: that one is a little too general for you. You’ve got too many. Can you tell me about the greatest challenge you’ve faced with one of your trips?

N: I think the greatest challenge that I have always faced is to make sure that I felt that first place that students were safe. So you’re always worried about something happening because as we know we’ve got a structured, usually most days are very structured but you know students can be students and also strange unexpected things can happen like the two people who were ill and you know about the study abroad we had in the Netherlands, right? You know what happened to him. It was a vacation weekend, he was studying at Utrek in the Netherlands, he decided to go off hiking in the mountains and he fell off a mountain and was killed. Western students two years ago. So I mean those kind of things are not anything that we had anything to do with which on one thing, thank god, that’s the problem you just always worry about something unexpected happening that you know you hope that you can avoid. So that’s always a constant issue of safety and security of our students. That’s another one of those key aspects we’ve got to feel like the place where we’re going or the leader’s safe and to make sure the students know what there’re doing. So that’s it and as far as I’ve been very lucky up to this point you’ve probably jinxed me now for my next trip but it’s been students we’ve had have been mature. Short term program’s a little easier than long term. One of the students
I’ve had, probably only one student I ever had, went to France that literally got so homesick and was going to quit the program. you know it was one of those kind of issues that you just fight through that first month and once you get past that you feel better and he eventually stayed and made it through the whole process. But that’s another issue. The other issue we have in long term programs as you probably know is the idea of particularly in Negocia in Nevancia is housing is a hard to find in certain schools. Most of the university are just live here at the university housing. But I know as an example that’s what you think about but that’s the most important worry about to make sure the students are safe. And then obviously I want the students to learn a lot. I want the experiences to be good. And when I’m there I come back exhausted because you know I just don’t sleep much and want to make sure that things are happening so it’s a little exhilarating but also it’s a tiring experience when you really concentrating on making sure this program goes with 25 students. That’s another great reason to have somebody, another co-sponsor, another faculty member that you can work and talk over things and hand off some responsibilities if you have to.

W: can you tell me about all of your trips, do a tally of all of your trips that you run?

N: okay, we’ll start with the trips I’ve run and then we’ll talk about some programs that I helped establish as part of that. Well, for the short term trips what I’ve done is I’ve gone to Chile now it’ll be now it’s been three times, four times. That’s one of our one focus program, our MBA program, and this was South America we wanted to extend into South America, particularly we did some investigation of variety countries like Brazil we thought and we also thought
Argentina. But Chile came up for a couple of reasons. Probably the number one is probably the most advanced and stable country, surprisingly after all their history. It was. They love Americans. there is a cultural thing. It’s a really easy transition. And we also thought we wanted to go to a country that actually spoke Spanish because at least a spattering of our students have taken Spanish class in high school or in college. And so that is nice little combination. And that has been a fabulous trip. We’ve actually that is one of the easiest trips because we work with another organization to help us plan and they do the work that. As far I know this is the only program at this point that the individuals that helped develop it didn’t spend a lot of time personally contacting the businesses to visit. We oversee everything. We tell them what we want. We decide whether certain companies make sense or not. But they do all the legwork and obviously they get a fee for that but it saved us a lot of time and hassle and it created some great trips. Almost all the other trips I’ve dealt with literally I’m talking to the hotels on the phone I’m visiting and walking through a lot of things and that’s a big issue. I’ve been on the Germany trip with D. Eckert with undergraduate students. There definitely is a maturity level difference between bringing undergraduate students and bringing MBA students. I mean there’s really night and day but if you look at Dr. Duke’s trip which I had a chance to go on and had to cancel at the last minute is that he tends to take sophomores and juniors where as the SBM students tend to be more seniors. So there’s a little bit different thing but you know you’ve got issues with you know drinking age is less so when they go out you’ve got to make sure they’re careful. You’ve got other issues that are sort of this is their last experience and this is their last class before they graduate so it’s a whole other different things going on. So that’s that was the experience but once again everybody comes back. I don’t think I’ve ever had a trip
that everybody has not one back and said that this is one of the best things I ever did in my life.

Couple of the other programs I have worked with Dr. Wagner for the whole school in the Netherlands Utrecht. That is now becoming our most popular semester long program next to Chimba and I’ll talk about that’s a separate issue. Chimba is a little different situation, a home school. But him and I visited it two or three times there. We started the relationship. We had I forgot how we had got established, interconnected with them. But that’s a program. The Netherlands is a great transitional country too. Everybody speaks English. So if you’re really concerned about the language, the French or going to Spain, it really is that kind of thing. You can go there and then experience Europe but still have that comfort of really being able to communicate with everybody. I’ve been to Japan. We had two universities, one we had Kao as a university. We had a long establishment outside the business school. But Kao is maybe the number one school in all of Japan. So we had a real association before I was here with people that were from Japan back in the sixties came and studied at Western so there’s a very huge Western contingent in very influential business people over there and that is a prestigious school I worked with Enriko is another university in Tokyo that we have students there and that’s a actually I think it was I don’t know if it was a originally established by a minister going over to Japan and it’s a excellent school once again all taught in English Novancia in Paris is obviously my first love if you can say in terms of that and once again I went over there with a program that we hadn’t sent hardly any students over there in the business school and then sort of developed contacts and so that grew in that case as part of that Swinburne was all Dr. Wagner UNIBE is something that has been established but Dr. Lancendorfer has dealt with this and Dr. Wagner and I also developed the relationship with Cantabria but that and that issues
certain program issues we have with that deal so but you know my real two favorite programs obviously are in France in Novancia and also I really like Tokyo I had a really great experience with them too so I’d like to sent more students there but you know Japan isn’t quite the popular business destination that I was in the 1980’s and 90’s when they were really leading you know the world with some of their business practices

W: the only two lead you lead though are the Chile and the Novancia

N: the Chile Novancia and then I also the Enriko university if anybody from the business school is interested I’m the contact and then Dr. Wagner and I work together for the Hogeschool school

W: do you actually go over with students who are going on a semester long exchange?

N: usually what happens is we try to get over there once very 2 or 3 years and we will stop by so for instance Dr. Wagner, I , and Ann Ganz went over and we visited a new school in southern France cuz we want to check that out we stopped at Novancia and spent a few days there talking and then obviously the students that were there we took them out to dinner and you know had some interactions and then also we did that with the Hogeschool in Utrecht so that’s the kind of thing we do and eventually I want to try to get back to Japan and we probably are going to try to figure out a new relationship somewhere in Spain we hope
W: but you only go every couple years so ok

N: every couple years unless there’s something else happen but also almost everybody like the reps in from the Hogeschool were just here a couple weeks ago so they come here and visit with us we’ve had visitors from Novancia a number of in fact Paula I wonder if you ever met Paul he sort of teaches on and off there but he came over and was a guest lecturer for a week here so those kind of things happen when they make their trip to the US they stop here so we’ll see them usually every school every couple years

W: can you tell me a little bit I guess more for your Chile trip cuz you actually lead it can you tell me a little bit about it and some of your objectives for the students

N: well once again the objectives are a little bit different because it’s a majority of MBA students so expectations are a little higher but also we the discussion that we have with businesses is much more in depth much more complex if you will but for instance we in one of the last trips to Chile we actually visited an olive grove and had an hour and a half discussion with the two vice presidents about their issues and how they should market olive oil in the US so it was a really and we’re talking about people we had a president of a company that was one of our students there one of the MBA students that was finishing up her degree we had I guess we had one undergraduate and then we had people who were varying from you know probably in their late 20’s all the way like I said she was 57 years old so we have a variety of experience
levels and a variety of business related stuff but all of them you know come in with a base knowledge of things that are going on so what was your question again

W: just tell me some of your objectives

N: oh ok so the objectives #1 is that we want to make sure that there is a cultural experience that they have to understand not only business but the idea of what life is like there we try to make sure the interaction with individuals not only in shops in restaurants in what’s going on in the city but much broader than just the business sense the 2nd thing for that course objectives we want to make sure that our students better understand the role business plays not only in their country but also internationally how they export imports and how their relationship with the US is at that state so we want them to understand those interactions that are going on as part of that process and 3rd we also want to have is we want to have recreational fun time that incorporates culturally things but also incorporates things maybe they’ve never done before so the Chile trip two of the favorite things well actually there’s a number of favorite things but 2 of the favorite things that we do the students that is extra is #1 we go to a mountain lodge on the Saturday and we have a traditional Chilean meal in this really great lodge we actually take horseback up the mountain and so we do a horseback ride we come down it’s along a beautiful river and so they have a big cookout I think the last one was goat they had the traditional way of cooking goat over a fire they’ve got on sticks and you know obviously experience those kind of things going on and the second thing we do is I take students who are interested in skiing in the mountains so that was another cool thing the opportunity to do that process but also what
we all want to do is not only what we find doesn’t work is having businesses come largely and talk to us in the hotel lobby or some other building or even a corporate headquarters one of the biggest industries is copper and for the first 2 sessions we went to the big copper companies it was the students hated it we couldn’t get in a copper mine so we want to be able to do that first but that last trip we decided not to and what we’ve replaced that with is we’ve gone to winery spent the day there we’ve gone to the olive groves we talked about that we spend a little but more time on the road but experiencing really what the place is like the factories the business and try to get them sort of interacting with really what’s happening in terms of that so that is a process we’ve tried to incorporate so they understand that business prospective but also give them experience they’ve never had before and if I could think almost everyone who went on the ski trip said that was maybe the best thing they’d ever done one of the best things in their lives that little extra kind of thing that doesn’t necessarily relate to business or whatever else we try to throw all three of those areas in like I said the Chile trip we had last time in fact every Chile trip I’ve thought it couldn’t get any better and it’s gotten even better every time it’s been a fabulous thing but you know how much it really matters to have mature MBA students you know I think for that trip that’s really important because I think undergraduates because we expect the business part to come out we expect the discussion to be you know upper level as opposed to undergraduates just sitting there listening to a lecture not really paying attention

W: would you say these are you kept talking about the country you’re in very broad would you consider these objectives similar to your semester long
N: somewhat but no a little bit different because there’s two things that are happening if you’re a semester long program your immersion is much much more deep so that’s the first one but also understand is you have to understand a little bit different is in some ways we’re combining a hol-a travel tourist with educational things in the short-term long-term you’re taking classes you’re a student so the great news and the different thing is that you’ve got classes to go to every day of the week usually of 4 days of the week you’ve got assignments to do you can do your travel on the weekends but it isn’t like I mean in some ways it’s like truly being a part being a student in the other country as opposed to being just a tourist so there’s a much deeper level of you know the immersion is part of that and in some ways you know more broad and less intense does that make sense you I mean that’s a whole different issue but I do think it’s much better to go a semester I mean in terms of your overall really understanding because I just think you being there for such a long time really changes the first is a experience you know 10 days or 2 weeks is a long time and so I do think there is a change there but you know learning to live I mean really just being somebody if not a citizen at least a resident of a area for 4 5 or 6 months it’s a whole different ball game and I think your comfort level changes and also your prospective changes you know I think in a positive way for the most part

W: so how much of the culture do you I know we talked about a cultural experience in the country that they’re in for the short-term how much what would be your goal for them to understand about the culture they’re visiting
N: well first I think culture has to be the basis of the historical things so we have assignments from the beginning for Chile that they at least have to know the general particularly the last 100 years I mean broader there’s more things that have gone on in terms of the development and the settlement of it but because of the revolution that happened you know relatively short period of time it’s so important for them to see how this transition moved from one government to the next to finally a stable democratic you know largely at least to a certain degree capitalist country is huge so understanding the history and then beyond that so we understand where the broad base of it but then also just the interaction in everyday lives of you know part of it’s a great thing because in essence there may be more hardship there maybe there’s some differences I think people are really just living they’re surviving they’re interacting so it’s part of a great notion that we want them to understand that though there are differences there I mean human beings are ultimately you know have the same goals and the general and same drive and their lives revolve around you know that interaction those relationships they have so that’s really important

W: how do you approach culture shock with your students before going a couple of them had mentioned if it the business college or solely the study abroad office

N: no it’s there anytime we have a program we almost we really try to work focusing well the short-term programs we spend a number of sessions before we go that talk about culture and try to get that now short-term once again short-term programs are a little different cuz we’re staying in a hotel you know sometimes you stay in hostels and things like that and so
that’s something we really try to make sure they understand but it’s not quite the thing and then also really Higgy and the study abroad office tend to be doing stuff like responsibilities you know what you need to do what you have to be aware of you know what sort of dangers are out there so there’s a little bit of cultural for that but I think we as leaders want to make sure they understand that as much as possible now as far as individual programs like France and stuff like that you know it used to be a lot more time to spend students really I would sit down and we would go over and read but once again France you know when you really think about it there’s some culture related things that are happening that they need to know about but there’s not a shock involved Thailand would be a shock if you end up being there for the first time but with Duke there it makes a big difference and really you think about it and Japan is a shock have you been to Japan

W: no

N: Japan friendly nice people but they don’t there’s no communication even in Tokyo you would think there’s no other city big city now Cantabia and Santender is a little bit different but all of the other cities that I’ve gone to in other countries Paris even Santiago in Chile even though it’s a lesser extent than Paris they’re all some degree of people that can speak the language I will tell you Tokyo I got lost and you know you really when trying to ask for questions and where things are going so that probably was the most culture shock now if you go to China I can imagine that’s even the next degree maybe if you go to India though India has you know
the background of British empire so there’s a lot of English language there so it’s a little bit different there so sorry what was your question again

W: how do you prepare the students for culture shock

N: so what we try to do is we try to develop having at least one or 2 sessions that go over and talk and in addition we require MBA student to watch certain videos and have certain books and we’ve spent a lot of time listening actually Dr. Q spent more time I gave him a hard time there’s a long list of like 50 videos he wants the students to watch before they go but I think that’s part of it it’s our responsibility to give them a good background and so general background history and then general background cultural norms and things that you’d expect and some of the behaviors that we expect but Chile is an easy country too once you get down there

W: a lot of can you tell me about how you prepare as yourself or another professor preparing a trip to another place maybe they’ve only been once how do you help non-native professors understand the culture the culture of a country they might have only visited once

N: so are you talking about having a partner in the study abroad to go with you and to prepare for just to be sure
W: like Dr. Duke is a native of Thailand so he understands the culture and he’s lived here so he can help present it to Americans like when you go to Chile you’re not from Chile how did you prepare to understand that culture to present it

N: well part of the deal with Chile was a little bit different because obviously I did the same thing the students did to prepare but because we had this really strong organization

W: you work with yeah

N: that really helped us it literally was they helped guide us obviously now I know what’s going on down there but that first trip and I think the key issue is like you said if you have somebody native to lead that first trip than it’s his or her job to make sure we do that for those people who have never been down I mean you do as much prepping and the cool thing about it is like France I mean I didn’t know anything about France you go there prep as much as you can and I read so many book watched a lot of videos and figure out what’s going on but you know what it’s just going to be there and part of that’s good right? To think you’re ever totally prepared if I was totally prepared every time I went that would not be a good thing because it would be boring and it wouldn’t really stretch me a little bit but you now obviously we do the obvious thing but to have someone that has been on that trip before or is part of that culture is key for us to transition into somebody else leading trip

W: it’s hard because we don’t have as many professors from all over the place
N: yeah and you think about the college of business I mean all of them Duke is in Thailand obviously Al is from Africa

W: Ghana

N: so he’s all set and but Dr. Palmer’s not from India though we have a lot of professors from India so yeah a lot of the things and what’s interesting is that well we had Dr. Tang you know the accounting professor he actually took a short term trip to China and he’s from China originally so I mean the issue like you said is we don’t have people from the countries necessarily as part of it so some of us have to take that plunge and you know do the best that we can

W: so to prepare they’re just researching as much as they can

N: researching talking to people on the phone especially Wagner and I went over and did some preplanning I mean you’re meeting people we try to make contacts with universities there we have individuals that we’ve known and a lot of the times what happens is if we have a passion for that let’s say and this didn’t happen specifically well I guess it did a little bit is the director of Higgy well they weren’t Higgy they were study abroad actually studied in France so part of the deal is he had already made contacts so when I went over there the first time he had set up meetings so there’s the idea is you’re not I’m not going to suddenly jump in and go to I don’t
know Uzbekistan because I don’t know anybody there so if I really had a desire I thought I want to go to Russia or wherever else then you would the contacts we’ve made and the great thing about Western in general is we probably have people either from those people or contact with those countries you know all around the world so that’s really cool but that’s the start once again it’s the relationships you got to build so

W: is there a formula you try and follow when you’re creating a short term exchange I’ve noticed a lot of professors have reoccurring events can you tell me a little bit about it

N: yes and you’re talking terms of like the agenda the itinerary or

W: it seems like there’s a itinerary formula to me

N: let me you know I don’t know the itinerary formula at least the way I think of it is is that we probably have we have a period of time so we know there’s a transition period so part of it is just how we’re going to group our get togethers so for me we get in and fly the first day and then obviously you can’t do a lot of intense stuff though actually in Chile we do a little bit of intense stuff and so we realize there’s that transition period moving in and then what happens is we end up over a 2 week period the first 2 or 3 days we try to do 3 days of businesses one or 3 businesses a day and also realize the weekend we’d end up having some sort of relaxing recreational time one of those days the skiing day is an optional day the lodge day is not so we have that going on and then we realize that we start the week off so there’s a structure in
terms of no more than 2 businesses any one day we try to cut down as much travel but for instance we went to the olive grove we had never been there before it was literally almost a 3 hour trip there and so you’re spending 6 hours on the road so this better be great the good news for that is it was and we have good transporation so it’s not like you know people are sleeping and it’s a comfortable bus but the fact is that’s the kind of decision you have to make too is how you’re working so almost every day has some business related kind of travel trip usually 1 to 2 a day and then we try to interact that with some interesting and also for our Chile kind of thing we go it’s like one of the day we go to a winery one of the days we go to a like was an expat day we had two individuals from the US that started businesses one of them was a bicycle touring company so we try to make it eclectic we try sort of be broad and we try to make it fun so we have a traditional thing we’ll go to UPS which has always been my the worst one I don’t like but so we do try to do a little bit logic but I don’t know if there’s a structure to it and the reason I’m looking this up is that I want to give you if I can find there’s a copy out there of that little paper that we wrote

W: oh yeah that’d be great

N: and I don’t know if there is but we’ll see

W: perfect so last two what’s one thing the one thing you hope your students take away from their experience
N: it’s one of the best experience of their lives

W: ok

N: I mean I’m not kidding even the MBA students you’d think they’re older and they may or may not have had a lot more experience and a lot of them haven’t had a lot of experience overseas the idea that they come back changed and they can say it verbally or nonverbally but it’s like the Chile trip’s a great trip too because we end up at the last day we usually end up at the winery and then often times we go from the winery to the airport sort of end the whole trip off and every bus we have we have a microphone and there’s a speaker because what happens when we’re travelling two students have to do an in depth overview of the business we’re visiting to prep the other students to understand what they’re doing and they have to lead questions and things like that but what happens is we have everybody come up and stand up and this last time actually was at the dinner we had at the winery we asked everybody to talk a little bit about what they had thought about the experience and it just is sort of cool when at that stage after a lot of work and everything that has gone on you know there’s always a few issues that are happening I mean people are like literally crying and just you know emotional that this was just something special and they can’t believe it and of course every time you go on these kind of trips when you feel that way you think I’m going to come back you know but the ideas it has you know changes their lives and that’s cool even if it like I said eventually over the years if they never do make it back it’s always going to be there as one of those cool things so it’s just is that’s ultimately because it’s no classrooms experience can ever can ever do what
that trip does I mean you can’t spend all I mean it wouldn’t be all the time it’s just that’s huge isn’t it

W: yeah

N: I mean I know there’s extra cost involved but I mean I think anybody I’ve taken on a trip nobody has ever said oh man this wasn’t worth it I wish I didn’t do it it’s been exactly the opposite man this is something else in fact a lot of the MBA students are saying get another trip find another place we can go because we want to go and really experience another timeframe and a couple of the people had never been overseas one of the women on our first trip we took to Chile she’s I’d say early 40’s but she had never been away from her husband and her kids since they’d been married I mean for any length of time so this was like this really wild and she was just I mean it was just great she just loved it that’s my point it was a long winded answer to that

W: yeah no but and tell me about how you create a cultural experience for your students

N: you know once again the cultural experience has to be in a vacuum of security with a little bit of risk involved and things so I think ultimately what it is is we have to create a complete experience and I think one of the things that I really emphasize is ultimately the most important thing is just getting away and immersing yourself as much as you can in the culture so the business part is really important but for me ultimately what it is I want them to go out and
experience sort of what it’s like to live in a city to be in a country to sort of you know just do different things this is the other issue that’s a little nerve wracking a little less with the MBA students some of the most important time happens after they get back to the hotel and they go off on their on that night with a group of people they feel comfortable and they go to a restaurant it’s a little nervous and they’re ordering don’t really know what to do and then they go to a store and buy some wine or whatever else the cool thing is that all those little exciting nerve wracking little risky things are ultimately man that gives you great confidence that’s the cool part about this

W: but how do you keep them safe while doing that is that the risk part

N: well obviously the first thing the hotel should be around we also have somebody talk about certain parts of the city they shouldn’t go to but you know ultimately it’s a part of it but now first the MBA students I’m 45 years old I’m saying I say I still say Zach and I say be careful make sure don’t go alone don’t leave anybody behind blah blah blah but you know you just have to lay the framework as much as possible and you know students and individuals are going to take risk too I don’t know about you but I've been in Paris in certain areas of the city I probably shouldn’t have been late at night and I've seen I mean so it was my own fault or you know you have to work through some of those issues too

W: perfect well thank you so much
N: let me give you that article
Bibliography


