In December, business students traveled to India to learn and experience the intersection of business, social responsibility and sustainability in an international setting. Led by Dr. Tim Palmer, these students learned how business is conducted in India’s unique cultural, political and economic environment.

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MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

Ryan Trierweiler, B.B.A.'04, says a career is not a race and that you sometimes need to slow down to maximize future potential. Now vice president at the international firm Bloomin' Brands, Trierweiler is crafting his career in human resources.

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LEADING AMERICAN AXLE IN ASIA

Donald L. Joseph, B.B.A.'77, M.A.'93, who launched his career at General Motors before joining American Axle in 1994, will now lead operations in Asia as the President - American Axle & Manufacturing, Inc. Asia, located in Shanghai.

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Last year, India launched an ambitious mandate requiring companies to give two percent of their net profits to charitable causes as a means to share the cost of development in support of India’s growing economy. Businesses and non-governmental organizations are now establishing how this law will be implemented locally.

Seizing an opportunity to investigate the evolving role of business in society in India, a group of WMU business students led by Dr. Tim Palmer, professor of management, toured parts of India with business and social work students and faculty from Christ University in India and Griffith University in Australia, who teamed up on not only the logistics of the trip but also the curriculum.

“Our goal was to expose students to the spectrum of social stratification across India, giving them the opportunity to critically analyze the role of business in society,” says Palmer.

The trip was purposefully designed to focus on corporate social responsibility by integrating social work with business perspectives. “The insights of these two diverse groups were invaluable to helping understand the depth of the social challenges in India that business can help address,” adds Palmer.

During this short-term study abroad course, students toured one of India’s largest and fastest growing cities, Bangalore (officially known at Bengaluru); attended and participated in cultural events; and visited non-governmental organizations as well as businesses to learn the many forces at work in this expanding economy.

“India has the opportunity to make change on a very large scale, and businesses are poised to do that,” says Audrey Frank, who graduated with a B.B.A. in accountancy in December.
That change is taking place in many ways. “Whether we were visiting schools and programs trying to ensure that children made their way through school and on to higher education or work, or companies such as Infosys with a state-of-the-art global education center, we saw a strong focus on the development and long-term success of individuals,” says Joseph Williams, a WMU electronic business marketing major.

During the trip, students toured a mix of large and small companies that are conducting business while remaining mindful of the world around them. “From the microenterprise, Anuspandhana, that uses recycled materials to create and sell products from a small room to Akshaya Patra, which mass-produces healthy meals for 1.3 million school children daily, we saw a wide range of roles that business can play,” says Williams.

Students were also exposed to societal issues and learned about their influence on the business environment in India. According to Palmer, it was an important challenge for the group to see, firsthand, the living conditions experienced by segments of the global population, often referred to as those at the “bottom of the pyramid.”

“Seeing people live in harsh conditions was eye opening but really sad,” says Ryan Bird, who studied management and interdisciplinary health sciences, and also graduated in December. “With that said, the people that we crossed paths with were hopeful and positive about India’s corporate social responsibility initiatives.”

Students also noted social issues impacting operations. They learned how in Bangalore women are barred from manufacturing jobs after 6 p.m. due to safety concerns and how this impacts the human resources practices of manufacturers in India that require 24-hour production.

The key challenge of the trip was the pace. The two-week trip was filled with opportunities to examine both corporate structures and social issues in India. Highlights included visits and tours of the following:

- Parikrama Humanity Foundation (non-governmental organization)
- Sustainable Development and Green Building
- Visit to BOSCO Mane (non-governmental organization)
- Visit to Janakiramanagar Community (non-governmental organization)
- Visit to Anuspandana- A Microenterprise setup
- Visit to Hosekote Village
- Tour of the colonial city of Mysore
- Visit to Infosys Limited
- Visit to Company Himalaya Drug Ltd.
- Visit to Toyota Manufacturing
- Visit to Dell Call Center
- Cultural Program by Christ University students
- Presentations by participating faculty and students from all three universities
“Remember—what you’re ultimately striving for is to maximize your potential in the long-term. Sometimes that means going slower early in your career to gain skills that enable you to go faster later,” says Ryan Trierweiler, B.B.A’04. During his academic career at Western Michigan University, taking it slow and maximizing his potential is how he eventually crafted a successful international career as vice president of international human resources at Bloomin’ Brands.

Trierweiler focuses on strategy rather than speed – a career is not a race, he says. His strategy for success emphasizes less concern for your job title, and more for how you can advance the company in that position. “Stop worrying about the short term. Focus on learning everything you can, look for ways to help the business, and good things will come your way,” says Trierweiler.

As vice president of international human resources with Bloomin’ Brands, Trierweiler is responsible for more than 220 restaurants with system-wide revenues of approximately $800 million, locations in 20 countries around the world and approximately 12,000 employees. “It’s a diverse and ever-changing set of challenges. My responsibility is to ensure we have locally effective talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies that enable us to deliver outstanding experiences for guests,” says Trierweiler.

Trierweiler used fundamentals and core business strategies learned from the Haworth College of Business to springboard his graduate degree and international career. “My academic experience at the college helped me in two distinct ways: It gave me a broad foundation to understand all aspects of business, including those beyond my core area of focus. Secondly, the human resources focused curriculum enabled me to differentiate myself from peers in graduate school who came from universities without an HR course of study,” says Trierweiler. “While they focused on HR fundamentals, I was able to take broader business courses and focus on my engagement with potential employers.”

Specifically, Trierweiler recalls Dr. Daniel Farrell, professor of management, as an influential force from the college. “A number of management professors had meaningful impacts on my development. Beyond the classroom, though, Dr. Farrell took a personal interest in my development as both a student and a professional—pushing me to achieve a potential I didn’t yet see in myself. He was the driving force behind my immediately pursuing graduate school, which significantly altered my early career trajectory,” says Trierweiler.
Working in an international role, Trierweiler has visited numerous countries around the world, including a period when he lived and worked in Bogota, Colombia. When he is home in Florida, he spends time with his wife and daughter.

**President, AAM Asia**

*Posted on Friday, January 9, 2015*

Donald L. Joseph (*BBA ’77, Industrial Marketing; MA ’93*) has been appointed as President - American Axle & Manufacturing, Inc. Asia (Vice President - AAM Corporate). In this role, he will continue to lead AAM’s regional business, engineering, and manufacturing activity from AAM’s Asia Headquarters and Engineering Center located in Shanghai, China.

Joseph joined AAM in 1994 as a Manufacturing Manager at the Three Rivers Manufacturing Facility. Since then, he has served in various manufacturing and management positions with increasing responsibility throughout AAM’s global operations, including his most recent position of Managing Director - AAM Asia.

Joseph's professional career began with General Motors (GM) in 1977. While at GM, Joseph served in a variety of positions with increasing responsibility at the Hydra-matic and Saginaw Divisions. He also spent time at the NUMMI facility studying lean manufacturing.

**About AAM**

AAM (AXL) is a world leader in the manufacture, engineering, design and validation of driveline and drivetrain systems and related components and modules, chassis systems and metal-formed products for light trucks, sport utility vehicles, passenger cars and crossover vehicles and commercial vehicles. In addition to locations in the United States (Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania), AAM also has offices or facilities in Brazil, China, Germany, India, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Poland, Scotland, South Korea, Sweden and Thailand.

[Click here](http://www.aam.com) to view Joseph’s biography on the AAM website.