School of Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences

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Study Abroad: An opportunity for KSU to form more globally-oriented Students

Getting more students to enroll in study abroad programs is one of the priorities of the school of Lifespan Development and Family Studies (LDFS) this year. Kent State University has understood the tremendous impact that these programs have on students every year, and wants to keep them going. The College of Education, Health and Human Services (EHHS) is not lagging behind as far as giving students opportunities to discover other parts of the world and grow from it is concerned.

Study abroad programs have been proved to positively impact students’ life. Benefits range from the opportunity to immerse into another culture, another language and a different education system, to just being able to rediscover oneself. In the school of LDFS, students can choose from an array of trips that meet the needs of different majors, and different interests. These Faculty-Led programs are even open to international students. Dr. Maureen Blankemeyer, Dr. Anne Morrison and Dr. Karen Kritzer all lead study abroad programs respectively to Ireland, Italy and Mexico.

STUDY ABROAD: DESTINATION IRELAND

2016 was a special year for the study abroad program in Ireland. Dr. Maureen Blankemeyer coordinator of the Human Development and Family Studies program, lead her fifth trip to Ireland. In addition to that, the number of students who have taken part into the program since the beginning in 2012 has reached a total of one hundred this year.

The course taught in Ireland during the summer intersession is entitled Human Development and Family Studies and provides an analysis of interpersonal relationships and families across the lifespan in Ireland and the US. Societal influences on families such as religion, traditions, history, immigration, and the economy are also explored.

Batt Burn; International Story Teller from Ireland Meeting the 2016 Study abroad group

One important thing about the opportunity of studying abroad is that it is open to all majors be it Nutrition, Special Education, Nursing. It is also open to domestic as well as International Students and counts towards Experiential Learning Requirements.

Kent State University students going there are lucky enough to be hosted every year by the internationally-known story teller Batt Burn from Ireland. Batt is a member of the Center for International and Intercultural Education (CIIE) Professional Advisory Board. With his help, Blankemeyer and her students are able to visit famous places such as Blarney Castle, Dublin, Killarney, Galway, as well as the remote village of Sneem. Students are given opportunities to talk to families and family support providers. They also visit a grade school where, in small groups they meet with the children and later with the principal to learn about the family-school interface in Ireland. (more on p. 2)
Ireland Study Abroad Continues:

As part of their program they also volunteer their time in Senior center which holds programming for older adults in the community.

The study abroad trip is always enriched by the perspective of local speakers that Batt Burn usually helps find. Last summer Sister Stanislaus Kennedy, a nationally-recognized nun and social innovator got to speak to the group. She is well known for being a champion for the homeless. She has founded The Sanctuary which is a meditation/spirituality center in Dublin. Sister Stan as she is called also established a national organization working to promote the rights of immigrants and founded the Young Social Innovators (YSI), a national initiative providing an opportunity for students to become involved in social issues. Another speaker was Father Liam O’Brien, a Catholic priest who discussed the influence of the church on families. There was also someone in Belfast speaking on the after-effects of the political conflict in Northern Ireland and the effect it still has on children and their families today.

To create a team that learn from each other and help each other, a Facebook page and a blog are created prior to leaving the country. Therefore all the members of the class get to know each other, and at their return keep sharing their experience with each other and with the instructor.

Participants’ own words

"Overall I am very grateful I was able to come on this trip, travel all across Ireland, learn some history and important life lessons, and meet some truly amazing people. I couldn’t be more grateful for Kent’s study abroad program and all that it has brought me these past two summers." - A. Uveges 2016 participant.

For more information visit http://www.kent.edu/ehhs/centers/ciee/study-abroad

Morrison: ITALY ONE DESTINATION, TWO CLASSES

For years now, Anne Morrison has been taking Students in the Educational psychology and those in Relational learning in Education class to Florence Italy. They are Teacher candidates but as Morrison said the class is open to everybody in the university and depending on participants majors she create a relevant curriculum for them all.

One of the greatest idea she has had to help students grow is to use those who have already been with her in Educational Psychology class to go along with the students in the relational learning one and peer mentor them. The class consists in two weeks face to face in Italy at the Florence campus, and 5 weeks online class once they are back into the United States. The peer mentoring helps students go through the 5 weeks course that would otherwise be 15 weeks by sharing their success, past assignment and helping them review for their exam. This gives them a really nice relational experience “ says Morrison.

Students visit many places while in Italy. In Rome they can enjoy a hop on hop off bus tour, go to see the Vatican, the Coliseum, the Roman Forum, the Pantheon. This summer they had the immense honor to go to mass and see the Pope.

As far learning is concerned the participants visit schools and get to learn more about the Reggio Emilia approach to education, an International Baccalaureate (IB) school and an English as a first language school. Students get to interview people, shadow students and learn more about the education system there. “Seeing 5 years old kids switch between 3 languages: their home country one, Italian and English is a great opportunity for my students to deconstruct their box about learning languages.” says Morrison. The trip doesn’t end there. Students write two research papers. One on a topic of their choice that they teach to the group in Italy and another one that is at least ten pages long that they will submit when they return.

In a nutshell, study abroad programs help students grow and give many opportunities to travel and learn at the same time. For those who don’t want to stay abroad for a long time these faculty-led programs are perfect since they are short term ones.

This edition of the READ REVIEW was written by Abdoulaye Fall.