

7-21-1995

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "07/21/1995 - Eastern's International Programs Offer Abundant Opportunities" (1995). 1995. 326.

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95-248

July 21, 1995

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EASTERN'S INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFER ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES

CHARLESTON -- *STUDY ABROAD! Travel to a foreign country. Learn a new language. Enhance your career opportunities. Change your life. Spend an exciting semester at Eastern Illinois University, located in beautiful Charleston, Ill.*

To many of us, Charleston doesn't seem very foreign and the natives all speak English, but to the dozens of students from around the world who choose to spend a semester or two studying at Eastern, it is "a once in a lifetime opportunity" to live and study in a foreign country.

Eastern offers several international programs through its Graduate School and Research which includes the Office of International Student Services and the Study Abroad Office.

Brigitte Chen, advisor for the Office of International Student Services, coordinates activities and provides assistance to the approximately 125 international students who study each semester at Eastern.

Chen feels that Eastern's international student programs not

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only benefit the visiting scholars, but also provide American students with a wonderful opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures.

"I have always felt that it is important to expose our own students to the other countries in the world and to get them interested in countries beyond their own. More and more, our students will need to function in an international environment. Having international students in the classroom is an enriching experience," commented Chen.

This summer Eastern is hosting students from a number of countries including Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Japan, South Africa and Russia.

For the second year, students from the University of Passau in Germany are participating in a summer study program at Eastern. Located northeast of Munich, the university requires that students enrolled in its cultural studies program (a broad-based business program) must study at least two foreign languages and spend one semester abroad.

Thomas Starke and Dagny Neumann are among ten students from Passau who have been in Charleston since May. They each took one course during EIU's intersession and two courses during the summer session.

Starke, who is nearing the end of his cultural studies program, will return to Germany after his semester abroad to take final exams. He will graduate in October. Neumann, an English

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studies major, plans to be an English teacher. She will return to work on her thesis.

Both wanted to spend time in the United States for the "experience."

"I really wanted to get a feel for the culture and to get to know the American people beyond the stereotypes, in order to see what their ideals are and what they really think about things. The courses are not as important to us as the opportunity to experience the culture," said Thomas. "Spending several months here gives one a different perspective. It feels so different from when I was previously in the United States for a short time," he observed.

Although Neumann's program of study does not require a semester abroad, she felt that as a future English teacher it would be beneficial to spend time in the United States.

"The young people in Germany really like the U.S. I thought it was important for me to know more about it, to have experienced the culture myself," said Neumann.

For many students in universities around the world, proficiency in a foreign language and study abroad is a requirement for graduation. In the United States, although such experiences are often optional, more and more students are choosing to study abroad.

David Lair, a 1990 graduate of Charleston High School, is currently a business major, minoring in German at Eastern. During a three-year stint in the U.S. Army, Lair learned Russian

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and served as a translator. He was stationed in Fulda, Germany for a year and a half.

"I wanted to learn something while I was in the Army that would be useful when I got out. I thought that learning another language would be valuable someday," said Lair.

Lair's previous international experience inspired him to participate in Eastern's scholarship program with Cologne University, Germany. He will spend four months at the university beginning in August.

The Cologne University program, which was initiated as the result of contacts made by Chen, provides two EIU students with tuition waivers and a monthly stipend of 470 deutsche marks (approximately \$310 U.S.).

Since Cologne's academic semester runs from Oct. 1 to Feb. 1, Lair will take a special intensive German course for international students before the start of the regular semester.

"I was really interested in the opportunity to immerse myself in the language," said Lair. "I guess, I am doing this for the experience and the opportunity to meet different people. I know it sounds like a cliché."

"I hope to be able to actively use the languages I've studied sometime. I think society will need people who are bilingual more and more, or at least I hope so," commented Lair.

Eastern's program with Cologne University is just one of a number of programs that offer students the opportunity to study

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abroad. Eastern has negotiated a similar study scholarship agreement with Innsbruck University in Austria.

Wolfgang Schlauch, EIU's study abroad coordinator, feels that study abroad programs offer students the opportunity to "really penetrate the culture and language of a country." He is responsible for advising EIU students who are interested in pursuing study abroad programs.

The cost of spending a semester abroad varies, but the average student, according to Schlauch, may spend over \$8,500 on travel, tuition, room and board, etc. He said that financial aid, grants and scholarship programs are available.

Through Schlauch's office, students may apply for a variety of grants and scholarship programs including Fulbright scholarships, National Security Education Program scholarships, Rotary scholarships, Marshall scholarships, Rhodes Scholarships, Midwest Study Abroad grants, Illinois International Fellows and DAAD Grants, which are provided by the German Academic Exchange Service.

Students interested in studying abroad must obtain permission from their academic advisor/chairperson, the study abroad coordinator and the university registrar in order to have their credits for study abroad approved before they depart.