

Experience Studying Abroad

By Peyton Comerford

“The world is the true classroom. The most rewarding and important type of learning is through experience, seeing something with our own eyes.” – Jack Hanna

Immersion is defined by Webster as, learning a foreign language by being taught completely in that language. It can also be defined as, complete involvement in some activity or interest. Immersion is a beautiful and unique thing. It is the act of engaging yourself in something special, perhaps a culture. Immersing yourself in another culture can not only help you obtain knowledge, but more importantly, experience. Studying abroad is a golden ticket to immersion.

The study abroad program at Columbia State offered through TnCIS changes the game. Tennessee Consortium for International Studies is a program that helps students further their education by acquiring credit while exploring other countries. You may be asking, “What’s the catch?” The only requirements are that you have a 2.0 GPA and you pick a specific course to take with fellow Tennessee students and instructors from Columbia State or other Tennessee institutions during your travels. The course studies range from music to math, there is something for everyone. Along with the wide range of course studies there are also many different countries to pick from. Some of the countries that Columbia State is providing right now are Brazil, China, Cuba, Europe, England, France and that’s just a few! These programs also vary from year to year. Along with studying your course material, you will also be exploring and living in a new culture. This type of studying will lead you to experiences that will stay with you for a lifetime.

Another obstacle that keeps people from traveling around the world is money. Traveling has and will always be expensive. However, obtaining educational and personal enrichment opportunities is priceless. Columbia State agrees, which is why they award their study abroad students with scholarship opportunities. The scholarship for your study abroad program can cover up to 60% of your expenses. This includes plane tickets, food (two meals a day), transportation there, housing, and many thrilling activities your program has you doing during your visit. This leaves you with only 40% of your program expenses, your passport, money for any extra souvenirs for your own guilty pleasure, and you will also be responsible for purchasing one meal on your own. Although the money coming out of your own pocket still seems like a rather large number, if you have any dream or desire to travel at any point, this scholarship opportunity is the most inexpensive way to experience a different culture, while furthering your education. More detailed information about scholarships can be found at: <http://columbiastate.edu/StudyAbroad>

While trying to find out more about the Study Abroad program, I got the chance to sit down and talk with Ms. Basoa, the international studies director at Columbia state. She herself

has taught many programs and has been to many different countries through TnCIS. She has a love for learning and traveling that makes her work through the study abroad program personally rewarding. When I asked her if she could choose one place to be her favorite that she has visited through this program she simply could not pick just one. Ms. Basoa is a living example of how fulfilling studying abroad can be.

The walls around you while you sit in a classroom can be suffocating, the TnCIS study abroad program opens doors that otherwise may have been locked shut. Reading about a culture has no comparison to walking through it, talking to its people, and clearly seeing its raw beauty.

I also asked Ms. Basoa why she thought it was important that the students at Columbia State take the time and money to study abroad. Her answer was spot on. Ms. Basoa believes that students from a rural school like Columbia State can walk away with understandings that can be life changing. Students leave the study abroad program with so much more than a college credit. She stated that the journey is always “eye opening” and can “expand the horizons” of all the students that have the opportunity to go. The experiences that you will gain studying abroad are ones that will only come around once.

Everyone should take the time to find out more about TnCIS and begin to expand your horizons further than you ever dreamed possible.