The ‘Brazil 2014 @UCI’ campaign continues as UCI’s Study Abroad Center hosts various events on campus to encourage students to Discover Soccer! Explore the World! Study Abroad!

During the fall, we held our second annual movie night and showcased Bend It Like Beckham. Over 200 students attended to watch the film and many stayed afterwards to mix and mingle at our dessert reception. UCI’s Student Center was filled with excitement as faculty and students shared their enjoyment of the film and discussed study abroad opportunities.

One of our favorite events thus far, however, was the World Cup Groups Draw! Several international students and soccer enthusiasts showed up bright and early to see which teams will compete against one another in the World Cup brackets. Group G makes for an interesting set-up as the United States is set to compete against Germany and Portugal, both of whom ranked as top 5 competitors. Click here for more analytics on the groups for Brazil 2014 and visit the FIFA website to stay up-to-date with all the excitement!

As we inch closer to the games, we will screen more matches, host academic discussions, and celebrate Carnival! We plan to partner with various departments on campus such as the European Languages and Studies Department, The Cross Cultural Center, and The International Center to showcase not only the thrill that surrounds the World Cup, but the impact that the games have on local communities. Details regarding winter and spring quarter events will be coming soon. Check for updates in a few weeks.

Are you a soccer enthusiast? Did you attend games while abroad? If so, we would love to hear your stories and see your photos. Join us and share on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Brazil2014UCI
UCI Celebrates International Education Week
November 12-15, 2013

(1) International Peer Group mentors creating international posters; (2) Dessert reception following *Bend it Like Beckham* movie screening; (3) Students learn to make Vietnamese spring rolls; (4) Student taiko performers in the Student Center; (5) Students enjoy a speaker at the TEDxUCI Salon: Go, encouraging students to get out of their comfort zone; (6) Students perform a belly dance routine in the Student Center; (7) Entrance to global snack event in the Study Abroad Center; (8) International scholar poster session
“Why are you going to Vietnam?” This is the question I was often asked when I told my friends I would be studying abroad there. To many, living in a developing country would seem like a challenging experience compared to living in a country with a higher living standard such as those in Western Europe. However, I wanted to try something different and study in a country that isn’t traditionally chosen by students. At the same time, I was attracted to the fact that the UCEAP Vietnam program highlighted a joint charity project between the UC and Hanoi University students called “One Heartland” and that one of the courses offered was a Service Learning Course, in which I would volunteer/intern at a local NGO in the capital of Hanoi. Being an International Studies major, I believed that working with a charity and an NGO would benefit my future career prospects of someday working at an NGO overseas. Altogether, Vietnam seemed like everything I was looking for as an ideal study abroad destination. Furthermore, how could I forget to mention the delicious Vietnamese cuisine?

Hanoi, also known as the “City of Lakes” due to its many scenic lakes that are scattered across the city, was my host city in Vietnam. In Hanoi, French colonial buildings and Chinese temples and pagodas are prevalent, and trees dot the long boulevards which add to the charm of the city. These days, something new has propped up against the city landscape - the construction crane. Vietnam has come a long ways since the Vietnam War and is now one of Southeast Asia’s fastest growing economies with new high-rises and Western fast-food chains now juxtaposed alongside local street vendors and rice paddies. Since 2010, Vietnam has been labeled a “middle income” country by the World Bank. However, despite the transformation since the Vietnam War, there are many who have not benefited from this growth and this is where the opportunity for volunteer groups and NGOs come play a role.

In my Service Learning class in Hanoi, I learned the step-by-step process on how to research and contact different NGOs. This meant sending out my CV to various NGOs, making countless emails and phone calls, and making many taxi/motorbike trips to different sites. I eventually found the one I wanted volunteer with, called The Reach Center (http://reach.org.vn/). This center serves as a free vocational school for disadvantaged young adults who come from difficult circumstances and are seeking the skills needed to find better jobs. At the center, I would serve as a co-English teacher alongside the native Vietnamese English teacher. Together, we set up lesson plans for students that were related to food and beverage and hospitality to prepare students for that industry after graduation.
During my time at the center, I was amazed at the dedication of these students. Every student had a story of hardship ranging from being a migrant worker, to living on the streets, to being victims of human trafficking. The fact that I was around the same age of several of these students made me feel more connected to them on a personal level. At the same time, it opened my eyes to different issues that are worlds away from anything I had ever experienced.

On EAP Vietnam, I also had the privilege to work with a joint-charity project called “One Heartland” amongst the UC students and the students of Hanoi University. This is an ongoing charity that was created by previous UC students in 2010 and has been a cornerstone of EAP Vietnam ever since. Throughout the duration of EAP Vietnam, we worked to raise money for the people of Binh Chuan village in Nghe An province to provide jackets, blankets, electricity generators, and even scholarships for children to attend school as this region is one of the poorest in Vietnam. After months of fundraising, we had the opportunity to visit the village of Binh Chuan and hand-deliver our gifts to the people. This experience was definitely the highlight of my experience in Vietnam as I was able to see how our efforts were making a direct impact on people’s lives.

Coming back to the US, it was difficult to relate to anyone else who studied abroad since I went for the sole purpose to volunteer and to experience how it is like to live in a developing country. UCEAP Vietnam has given me firsthand experience on how NGOs operate and how they carry out their mission. This experience has enforced my understanding of social issues facing many developing countries today and has also provided me a wealth of volunteer opportunities I would not have received if I had not chosen to study abroad. I may no longer hear the sound of motorbikes, or street vendors selling Vietnamese sandwiches, but thinking about the amazing people I got to help makes me want to go back more than any other reason. These individuals shaped my future career path and I thank them for the best study abroad experience of my life!
Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." - Mark Twain

This year we’ve encouraged UCI students to ‘Zot!’ Abroad. Every Sunday (aka Zunday) on Facebook, we feature a different student showcasing their Anteater pride! Join us to see who’s next: https://www.facebook.com/anteatersabroad

Pictured: Kathryn Waller, English major in Chile (top left); Patrick Colvin, Anthropology major in South Korea (top right); Brian Wu, Mathematics major in Korea (bottom left with friends); Arely Garcia, Anthropology major in Italy (bottom right).
A Voyage of Discovery
by Jose Ramos, Semester at Sea Presidential Scholar and fall 2013 participant

Participating on the Semester at Sea (SAS) study abroad program had been a dream of mine since my friend introduced it to me in 2011. On March 3rd, 2012, after hearing a talk by the president of the program, I decided to make it a priority of mine to participate before graduating. As a result I had to stay a fifth year and look for a substantial amount of money to make my dream a reality. Therefore I applied for the presidential scholarship and was fortunate enough to be selected as a presidential scholar meaning that my entire tuition, room and board was paid for. Without the aid of the scholarship it would have been impossible for me to participate in such an incredible program...no less on its 50th anniversary voyage!

The best thing about SAS was the unique opportunity of visiting 16 countries in a period of 115 days with a floating university campus. I was able to share my experience with over 600 students from across the US, university professors and life long learners. I learned far more about the world in these past four months than in all my years combined in school. In what other campus do you talk about the Russian Ballet and then the next day you arrive in St. Petersburg? Or discuss the hardships in Ireland and then the next day you’re in Dublin? Or learn about the Apartheid and the next day you’re in South Africa? This voyage has given me the confidence and desire to continue pursuing a global perspective and as a result, I am already planning my next tip to Asia in the summer of 2014.

Alumni Spotlight on the Web — You could be next!
Each one shares fears and challenges as well as inspiring personal growth and career successes. We would love to have your story! Fill out the questionnaire at:

[eee.uci.edu/survey/alumnispotlight]
Of course I gained a lot of great memories and friendships in the 115 day period. Each country offered me an opportunity to grow and learn not only about the world, but about myself as well. One of my favorites was the four day camel trek in Morocco through a SAS field program. Field programs are pretty much tours set up by the SAS field office. Every day we had a traditional Moroccan meal, and we got to stop in a small village before arriving to the Sahara Desert where we spent one night in a camp sight. Riding camels through the desert was absolutely amazing. Even though it was a lot more uncomfortable than I expected (we were all sore for two days after) riding along with my friends was worth it! We had an amazing dinner at the camp sight followed by a campfire where we got to share stories and I was able to have a big toast with everyone.

About a month earlier on our bus ride to where we would embark in Southampton, I had learned a traditional SAS cheer that had been used in previous voyages. Surprisingly no one knew it and so I was able to lead the 60+ students in the best toast I’ve ever done: “There are big ships, there are small ships. There are cargo ships, there are war ships. But the best type of ship, is friendship!”

We spent the rest of the night looking at the sky filled with stars like I had never seen before. After 2 or so hours of sleep we all woke up to witness the sunrise before heading back to Marrakech where we spent our last night and a day in Medina square. By the end of it all, not only had I gone through some amazing experiences, but I also made some amazing friends that will never be forgotten.
Choosing to study abroad is never an easy or straightforward choice for students. We have to rejig academic plans, change our housing situations, apply for visas, file paperwork, reassess our financial obligations, and say goodbye to friends and family. These issues that I faced are the same concerns I am hearing from potential applicants this year. But there is one incentive that I think sends a clear message that the extra work and planning is worthwhile: Scholarships.

Scholarships generously provided by UCI’s alumni send a clear encouraging message that it’s a journey worth taking. Last year I was privileged to receive a $1,000 scholarship from the UCEAP 50th Anniversary Scholarship Initiative. I am incredibly grateful to the donors who made that possible. The application process was competitive and required a detailed study plan and a description of the learning outcomes I hoped to achieve through study abroad. While I honored the core goals of the original application essay I was able to go so much further during my year long stay at the University of Hong Kong. I participated in civil rights protests on the street, formed tight friendships with local students, conducted a field study in rural China, and was able to build a more employable skill set that enabled me to secure an exciting job after I graduate in spring.

This year I am working as a student ambassador for UCEAP on campus and it thrills me to see a continued interest in study abroad and a growing sense that experiences like study abroad can help enrich and empower students at UCI.