



# Passport to Learning

Study abroad students return home with far more than school credit.

By Shelley Seale '08

**Sofia Martinez '13** knew her internship in Angers, France, was accomplishing big things when the mayor of the city, Jean Claude Antonini, asked her to translate a letter to the president of Mali.

Calling it a “daunting task,” Martinez felt up to the challenge in her role at Angers City Hall, which lasted four months and consisted of translating, researching, evaluating employment résumés and assisting ambassadors to the city. “I was completely unsure of what to expect. I was welcomed, however, with open arms and received as much of an education there as I did in my regular university classes,” Martinez says.

Her contributions helped broaden the department’s reach into the international political scene and were significant in developing her French business language and international relations skills. The internship was “nothing short of educational and eye-opening,” according to Martinez, and gave her insight into daily, real-life workings in a global business setting that had only been touched on in her Business Management class.

Martinez’s experience exemplifies the goal of the study abroad program in the School of Management and Business. Through global strategic partnerships developed by St. Edward’s, students are provided opportunities that go far beyond travel to other countries. Students study the culture and international business practices for a true experiential global education. Experiences can take the form of an internship, like Martinez’s, or exchange courses with a partner university, research, service work and cultural immersion; the curriculum can last anywhere from a week to an entire year. Faculty also benefit from the program through global teaching and research opportunities.

“The Global Business Programs have adopted a strategic approach to identify international locations and projects years in advance,” says **Les Carter**, director of the School of Management and Business’ Global Programs. “This approach has allowed the school to provide a service to the global community through real-world projects that are consistent with the mission of the university.”

**Tom Evans**, associate vice president of Professional Education and Global Initiatives, agrees. “Students can experience much more than just ‘studying’ by working on internships, consulting projects or through service learning,” he says. “We would like them to be as engaged in the location they are in as they would be in Austin by doing community service or working directly with or interning for entities ranging from multinational corporations to nonprofits.”



Top: Sofia Martinez '13 (center) tours Angers on two wheels with Stephanie Davila '12 and Katie Adkins '11.  
Bottom: SMB students traveled to Prague, Czech Republic, in June 2011 to learn about doing business in Central Europe.



Top: Catherine MacDermott takes a well-deserved break during a busy semester in Angers that involved teaching and organizing more than 300 hours of community service for students.



Bottom: Stephanie Caulo '12 gets an up-close look at public art in Central Europe during an SMB study abroad trip last spring that included stops in Slovakia and Austria.

St. Edward's University students in France logged more than 300 service hours last fall by working with entities such as the English language library, at a local school, and for the city of Angers. "I know from personal experience and from seeing others experience the same that the learning that takes place personally and intellectually while studying abroad occurs at a more rapid and profound rate than in any other type of learning environment," Evans adds. "Living, studying, working and playing in these new surroundings allows one to adjust more easily to changes they will face at school, work and any other social situation and serves them very well as more flexible, open-minded, caring and understanding people."

This community service aspect is something that the Global Business and Social Justice Institute focuses on, aiming to provide sustainable business solutions that improve the education, health and welfare of economically, socially and politically excluded people anywhere in the world. In Angers in 2012, the institute, in collaboration with the School of Education, will deliver a daytime program to assist immigrant students at the Jean Vilar High School with culture sharing, goal setting and English language skills. Past programs in Costa Rica and the Czech Republic have delivered solutions to challenging human and organizational issues.

"Our students report to us that the experience is transformational in how they see the global world and in how they gain the personal confidence to navigate its challenges into the future," says **R. Gary Pletcher**, director of the Global Business and Social Justice Institute. "The uniqueness of the program also allows business school students to 'practice their craft' by implementing the theory learned in the classroom."

**Catherine MacDermott**, professor of Business Communication, has witnessed these transformations first-hand in her students. She has seen them kneel and weep at the thousands of white crosses on Normandy Beach in France, walk in complete silence and disbelief through the gas chambers of Auschwitz, and play with Roma children in the streets of Prague.

"We all come home changed," MacDermott says, and calls these experiences "feeling history." "Because we are engaged in social projects we go, not as tourists, but as pilgrims on a journey of discovery — discovery about ourselves as much as discovery about others and cultures of the world."

## On the Job Abroad

In addition to traditional study abroad and student exchange programs, the School of Management and Business offers three programs that give students a taste of living and working abroad.

**Study Abroad Immersion Experience:** A six-week summer undergraduate program during which students attend an on-campus preparation workshop, a four-week faculty-led study abroad experience, and a final week of summative reflection on their experience. This program allows students to take two faculty-led courses and work on a social responsibility project in a foreign country.

**Study Abroad Consultancy:** A traditional graduate course in which graduate students are assigned to consulting projects and work with a client in a destination country. During the semester, students visit the client in the designated country for seven to 10 days, as well as experiencing the culture of the country.

**Study Abroad Discovery:** A traditional undergraduate course and graduate course in which students learn about doing business in a foreign country. Students study about the economics, politics and culture of a country and travel to that country for seven to 10 days to experience what they have studied. Destination country lectures and presentations are arranged to provide local emphasis and better understanding of the country.