

INTEGRATION OF A CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDY ABROAD MARKETING COURSE

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ABSTRACT

It is no secret that the business world has become increasingly global. Worldwide, over 1.5 million students study abroad, with nearly a third of these students (481,280) studying in the United States (Chronicle of Higher Education 1998). Major universities from around the world now compete for foreign students as a way to increase their revenue (Wheeler 2000). However, in a survey of multinational employers, Webb (1999) found that an inadequate number of students are graduating who can handle even entry-level international business tasks.

The authors describe and explain how to develop a four-week study abroad course in Central Europe, including discussion on promotion and pricing. Interested faculty are invited to explore as guests a study abroad class website to see firsthand the planning and implementation strategies, as well as the curriculum. The paper concludes with cautions and recommendations.

Ideally, marketing students should be exposed to international business concepts as part of their business education. Study abroad experiences are one of the few ways students can gain firsthand knowledge of another country or region in a "for credit" setting. An international comparative marketing and management study abroad course offers students the alternative to study abroad with the opportunity to discuss "real world" issues with business people in all aspects of the global arena.

This particular course provides students hands-on experience in emerging markets and allows

them to comparatively study marketing and management techniques in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovak Republic. The core program remains intact year to year, but slight changes are incorporated as companies and guest speakers are added or deleted. Typically, during the four-week trip, the students visit 12 businesses and four university business programs.

During the trip students visit U.S. and host country businesses including a Häagen-Dazs Ice Cream Retailer (Vienna), McCann-Erickson Advertising (Bratislava, Slovakia), Gratex International (Bratislava, Slovakia), and International Management Center (Budapest) to mention a few. Each participating business invites the class to their facilities for an in-depth presentation on international marketing and management. Between company visits, the students are educated about history and culture by local tour guides. These cultural tours complement the business elements resulting in a well-balanced study abroad course. This class can be previewed by going to the URL: <http://courses.cwu.edu> and logging with username: *guest* and password: *guest* - search for ME498.

REFERENCES

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