

Academic Travel: University of Nevada, Reno

University of Nevada, Reno student Melissa Perez-Rios at the CN Tower EdgeWalk in Toronto.

Tethered to a safety rail and standing on a five-foot-wide ledge nearly 1,200 feet above ground, University of Nevada, Reno student Melissa Perez-Rios let go of any lingering doubts and leaned back over Toronto, Canada, with nothing but breeze beneath her.

Perez-Rios is one of five University students who took part in the College of Business' Academic Travel Program: Toronto last month. As one of the required self-selected experiences for the program, Perez-Rios chose the CN Tower EdgeWalk, a hands-free walk around the circumference of the roof of Toronto's CN Tower.

The three-credit course, hosted by the College of Business in collaboration with Extended Studies, combines online instruction with a week-long trip designed to provide real-world experience in international business by exploring the provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the world's largest bilateral trading partnership between the United States and Canada.

Students study Canadian history, economy, culture, politics and parliamentary process online for three weeks prior to the trip.

"We had to learn it - then we got to see it," Perez-Rios said about the class visit to the Parliament of Canada.

"Everyone yells, laughs - the tone changes so quickly. At one point, the speaker was crying, yet they get things done. Parliament was my favorite part of class."

The students spent mornings in class and afternoons were free for cultural and business meetings. The class met with delegates from mining company Barrick Gold, ISN Network and Spin Master, a toy company based in Toronto, where University alumnus Tim Sullivan is employed.

"Canada's business structure is very formal like ours," Perez-Rios said. "The pace, the intensity are the same. We learned about free trade and the business relationships Nevadans can have in Canada. The Canadian economy relies on U.S. trade - billions of dollars cross the border every year and free trade allows that to happen."

In July, students from the University of Nevada, Reno and UNLV travelled to London, accompanied by University managerial sciences lecturer Mary Groves and a professor from the UNLV business school, for a similar immersion experience.



Students from the University of Nevada, Reno and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, accompanied by professors and deans from both schools, pose with family members and a tour guide during an academic travel tour in London.

Student feedback on the benefits of academic travel included thoughts on the need for Nevada students to travel abroad, exposure to large metropolitan locations around the world; comments on gaining a more worldly perspective, which is critical to personal growth; and the importance on studying how businesses are run in other cultures and locations, which allows students to see other perspectives and bring that view to businesses in Nevada and the country as a whole.

"Communication has been the key to the students' success in this program," Groves said. "They have

adapted their communication to another culture, and at the same time, to each other. They have adapted to different personalities, life-styles, and values and have become extremely close. New lifelong friends have been made. They have learned how to build a team and function as a team, a critical skill they will use in business."

The Academic Travel program, the brainchild of College of Business Dean Greg Mosier, also offers classes in New York and China. Based on short-term courses like the Toronto and London classes, Academic Travel is modeled after a similar program Mosier oversaw at Oklahoma State University prior to coming to Nevada.

"Most major colleges of business have similar programs," Mosier said. "In order to grow the college, we have to have the same types of programs as our aspirational peers. Shorter-term programs are less expensive - and a semester is too long for many students. We want everybody to benefit from international studies and we want to create these opportunities." Since the Nevada Global Business Program began in 2007, over 250 students have participated from both University of Nevada, Reno and UNLV.

Short-term programs allow working students, athletes and other students with commitments outside the classroom to participate in academic travel courses. A study from the Institute of International Education, the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, reported 60 percent of students who study abroad do a short-term (summer or less than eight weeks) course. Fewer than 40 percent of students studying abroad spend at least one quarter up to a semester, and only 3 percent spend an entire academic year.

Mosier said he would like to see more University students study internationally to drive global awareness, and has plans to expand to new venues, including Western Europe and other parts of China.

Projects in the works with China include collaboration discussions on the creation of an international MBA program, and an exchange program for MBA students. University Graduate Student Association President Kylie Rowe is currently participating in an English language global entrepreneurship program in China at Zhejiang University. The College of Business has hosted more than 50 executive MBA students from Lanzhou University of the Gansu Province in Western China over the past two years. Mosier said the College and Lanzhou University have agreed to explore mutually collaborative projects in the future.

"These programs provide incredible value," Mosier said. "We can't pretend we are not impacted by global events and markets. All business is global business, and we can teach awareness and how to operate within that context."

Along with contributing to research and global perspective, exchange programs can also have a positive economic impact. According to research from the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors-Association of International Educators, 2013-2014 international students contributed over \$27 billion to the U.S. economy and created or supported 340,000 jobs.

The IIE Open Doors 2014 Nevada Fact Sheet shows Nevada hosted more than 2,300 international students, with more than 700 in Reno and 240 jobs created as a result.

Compared to IIE national statistics, Nevada ranks 45th in the nation for foreign students in the state, with an estimated \$60 million in international student and family expenditures, so opportunity exists to increase global



exposure.

"International study means familiarity and engagement with people all over the world," Mosier said. "People do business with people they are comfortable with."

Recruiting for program participants begins in September and interested students can contact Jim McClenahan, Director of Corporate Relations, at jmcclenahan@unr.edu.

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