Greetings from the School of Arts and Sciences:

We frequently tell our students that learning takes place in and out of the classroom. In past letters, I’ve shared with you the many opportunities we give our students to learn beyond our bricks and mortar. Though I am proud of our excellent teaching in our academic settings, our faculty members know that student learning often just begins in the confines of classrooms.

One of the ways we deepen the learning experience is through our many immersion learning experiences. These experiences, typically embedded in a course, are brief excursions taken during the Thanksgiving or spring breaks. They provide students opportunities to build confidence when traveling internationally and bring them in direct contact with the cultures and histories of various countries under study. Whether they are studying literature and the fine arts, as a group of students did this past fall in our Haunted Britain trip, or are spending Thanksgiving in Rome through a religious studies trip, students travel with their classmates and professors for a wider view of their world.

Beyond these experiences, though, one of our academic programs nurtures future leaders and decision makers by giving them the foreign language competency and problem-solving skills they need to confront the challenges of a globalized world. The Global Studies Program is unique in the nation for its combination of multidisciplinary courses, experiential learning opportunities, and the use of a systems perspective. Students in the degree program receive instruction in research methods, conflict resolution, sustainability, global ethics, and a pool of electives in the social sciences, environmental science, or business. The program also requires 12 credits of foreign language courses and six credits of an internship with a global focus. Our students have interned in settings as diverse as their interests, from a Catholic diocese to an American embassy.
and from a Florida hotel to an agricultural research center in Costa Rica. The most unique element of our program is the inclusion of systems thinking as a problem-solving tool. **Systems theory** requires that scholars consider the all the interrelated aspects of a society (rather than just discrete elements, such as just the health system by itself or the road network) when forming conclusions about how some societal goals or problems have come about. Students use this interdisciplinary approach in their senior projects to analyze situations encountered in their internships, and present their supervisors with a range of possible solutions.

Because students can customize their program electives, choose their foreign language, and tailor their internship experiences to match their career goals, they are not confined to one discipline and can find employment in a variety of settings. They will also be prepared to adapt to future changes in the job market. Our graduates can find employment with government agencies such as the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, the CIA, or any branch of military service; with religious organizations conducting missionary work abroad; with human rights organizations and other non-governmental organizations; with immigration law offices; and with international businesses.

Dr. Patricia Campion, the director of the program, tells us, “As our tag line says, Global Studies is a passport to the world. Any students wanting to spend part or all of their careers abroad should consider it. It will give them a chance to build their resumes with experience abroad and language skills. Our first interns have all received job offers as a result of their internships, showing the relevance of the major for today’s job market. For instance, one has just been hired as the community liaison for the diocese of Juneau, AK, and another has been hired for the summer at the American Embassy in La Paz.”

So whether our students explore the world through immersion learning or immerse themselves in our rich Global Studies major, they will leave school able to navigate cultures that are new to them with the requisite blend of intellectual skills, consideration, and poise.

Sincerely,

Mary T. Spoto, Ph.D.
*Dean, School of Arts and Sciences*