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Area Colleges Developing More Foreign Study Programs

By JAIMY LEE - 3/3/2008

San Diego Business Journal Staff

Student interest in globalization has pressed higher education to develop tailored study abroad and immersion programs for individual majors.

In San Diego, the link between the United States and Mexico has been a factor in local education for years, yet several colleges and universities recently announced new programs to further meet student demand.

The University of San Diego will send five students to a month-long immersion program at Tijuana's Universidad Iberoamericana for the first time this summer. The private Catholic university currently enrolls 5,000 students.

The University of Notre Dame, Georgetown University and the University of San Francisco have previously partnered with the Tijuana-based program. Costs run about \$2,000 for tuition, room and board and program activities.

"Students learn about border issues and issues related to globalization," said David Shirk, director of the university's Trans-Border Institute, who hopes that next year up to 30 USD students will join the program. "They will use the border as a lab ... to study the challenges related to globalization."

Program participants, who include business majors as well as a growing number of political science, international relations and nursing students, will learn about the local maquiladoras and border issues facing countries such as Spain, Russia and China, according to Shirk.

International Programs

"International programs are exploding at college campuses across the country," he said. "There's a real interest in international experience."

At San Diego State University, which enrolls up to 35,000 full- and part-time students, Dean Popps has noticed an increase in international business majors turning their focus away from traditional language studies in Spanish, French and Italian.

The director of the international business department said that the department recently added Arabic language studies and is working to ensure a partnership with a Middle Eastern university. It currently has partnerships with 51 universities worldwide.

(All SDSU international business majors are required to study abroad in a country that speaks the language they study.)

And, on Feb. 25, the university announced that it was offering a new dual degree Master's program with the University of Malta focusing on marketing and communications.

Already a leader for small research universities, SDSU ranked second in the country for the number of its students who study abroad, according to a recent report issued by the Institute for International Education.

The same report, which came out in November, stated that the number of students studying abroad was up 8 percent, with increased exposure in Asia (by 26 percent) and the Middle East (by 31 percent).

It also said that the percentage of business majors going abroad has increased 4 percent during the last

10 years.

In the 2006-2007 school year, 1,600 students at SDSU studied abroad, an increase of 160 over the previous year. In the 1997-1998 school year, less than 170 students went abroad.

Recently, the university even entered into talks with the University of Hong Kong to open a secondary campus in the Chinese region, although Popps said that state education requirements will probably prevent it.

In early January, the university said it was partnering with the U.S. Mexico Chamber of Commerce to establish internship programs for students with local companies, continuing its relationship with Mexico.

In 2006, the school launched the first global M.B.A. program that required students to travel to three universities in China, India and the Middle East for 12 weeks each.

Because SDSU's programs act in an exchange format, tuition costs are not affected. Popps said that SDSU will award about \$26,000 in scholarships for study abroad students this year — a \$9,000 increase over last year.

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