HONORS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

Basic Information
Full Name:        Kamree Maull
College:        Carl H. Lindner College of Business
Major:        Operations Management and International Business
Title of Project:        The Chinese Experience
Thematic Area (choose only one): Community Engagement, Creative Arts, Global Studies, Leadership, OR Research
Expected Project Start Date: 05/10/15
Expected Project End Date: 05/30/15

Project Information

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

On May 8, 2015, I plan to board an airplane and leave for China for a three week, faculty-led study abroad opportunity at the Beijing Jiatong University and the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics (SWUFE). During this three week opportunity, I will have the luxury of travelling to Beijing, China, Chengdu, China, and Hong Kong, Hong Kong were I will be exposed to the competencies needed to do business in China, while also learning about historical and cultural influences that contributes to China’s business relationship with the rest of the world. The ways in which I will become more knowledgeable on these topics are through sightseeing, lectures, company visits, and group discussions with academic and professional experts. This opportunity will allow for me complete certain requirements for my second major in international business.

While exploring in China and Hong Kong, I will take careful notes on the differences between the American culture and the Chinese culture. I will document in a journal, the differences as it relates to diet, work ethic, and how the Chinese effectively build relationships with foreigners. While there, I will utilize my project advisor to connect me with an American business professional that lives in China, so that I can gain insight from him or her about some of the challenges he or she faced while matriculating into the Chinese culture and the differences between corporate America and corporate China. Also, through my unofficial business mentor for this trip, I seek to gain insight regarding the differences between how the Chinese does business and how America does business.

This opportunity is personally meaningful for me because I have the desire to work in the manufacturing industry and China is where most of manufacturing is being outsourced to. This trip is geared towards operations management majors and will give me great insight on what it is like to do business with China. By gaining this experience as a college student, it will serve as a tool to leverage once seeking full-time employment. Also, I really would like to know if China is a good fit for me. As a supply chain professional, there may be opportunities for assignments in China. It would be beneficial to know if I would enjoy it now, rather than later. This opportunity is also meaningful to me because it will allow for me to step outside of my comfort zone and experience a completely new culture. I have never travelled out of the United States (besides Toronto, ON) and because of that, I have never been exposed to something that made me uncomfortable for an extended period of time. Having to immerse myself in a completely new culture for three weeks will be an excellent way for me to grow personally. This opportunity could fuel my desire to study abroad more often and possibly for an entire semester.

As for my time commitment to this project, I will be in China for about three weeks. Assuming that I will be actively participating in my project for 12 hours a day, 12 hours x 20 days = 240 hours. I use 12 hours per day because all interactions, whether it is in the classroom, sightseeing, or company visits, will teach me about how business in China has been influenced culturally and historically, how to adapt as an American in China, and the lifestyle of the Chinese people (both as business professionals and as a citizen).

Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:

2. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)

- Interact with individuals from different cultures and express a sensitivity, appreciation and respect for the complex range of experiences of diverse peoples


This experience connects with this particular learning outcome because I will be engaging with Chinese civilians and professionals who will give me great insight on the interaction between their culture and my own. Through my interactions and from gaining that knowledge, it will increase my appreciation for both cultures in the understanding that although there are some ways that they are completely different, there is a “sweet spot” that exists which allows us to do business and coexist with one another. I am certain that during my time in China, I will have some experiences that make me uncomfortable or there will be instances where I am offensive (due to ignorance) but ultimately, it will allow for me to reflect upon that experience and use that experiential learning to better the experience of international students who attend our university. This experience will give me the opportunity to understand how international students may feel when they come to America from their native countries with very little preparation towards cultural differences.

- Possess global literacy, including knowledge of geography, history, current world issues and similarities and differences among cultures

This experience relates to this learning outcome because during this experience, I will be sightseeing to learn more about the historical importance of certain geographical aspects of China, like The Great Wall of China, and the plethora of natural resources that China possesses (crude petroleum, iron ore, natural graphite, etc.). Sightseeing and lectures will give me the opportunity to learn about how China’s geographic position in the world affects business, primarily within the realm of supply chain and having immediate access to the Pacific Ocean and a multitude of seas. Also, through lectures and meeting with my unofficial mentor/American business professional who will be assigned by my project advisor, I will be able to learn about how history has shaped China’s business environment and how specific issues in the world has influenced China’s business with certain nations. As for similarities and differences among cultures, I will be interacting with the people of Chinese for almost three weeks, gaining a wealth of knowledge about dieting habits, interpreting the differences of non-verbal communication, and company culture. Because of my active reflection of the Chinese culture and how it relates to my own and utilizing resources (American business professional and my project advisor) I will definitely become more aware of the similarities and differences amongst cultures.

3. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories (include reference list, as appropriate)

A. This study abroad experience fits into my academic and professional goals in a number of ways. First, this opportunity will allow me to become more competitive in the job market by allowing me to complete requirements for an international business major, coupled with another major in operations management. Because of my interest and passion for supply chain and manufacturing, this opportunity is ideal in the sense that I will be exposed to a plethora of manufacturing companies that have outsourced to China during my program’s company visits. By having this exposure, it will show potential employers that I’m open to experiencing new cultures and languages, something that is beneficial when pursuing employment with a multinational company who has a vast supply chain stretching across six continents. With exposure to the Mandarin language, I will find it easier to learn when I begin taking Mandarin language classes in the fall. Being conversational in Mandarin will prove very important as a supply chain professional after graduation, primarily because China is the number one manufacturing economy in the world with a 17.4% share and nearly 1.2 billion people speak the language. As a supply chain professional, there will be opportunities for me to travel and possibly live in a China for assignments, so having this experience will inform me if assignments in China are a realistic option for me. If I am not satisfied with my experience, it would teach me that there are other study abroad options that I should consider so that I can find the best opportunity before I am placed somewhere, as a professional on assignment, that I am unfamiliar with.


I chose the readings by Pierre Ostrowski and Scott D. Seligman for a number of reasons. Part of what makes my experience unique is that I am actively trying to learn proper etiquette so that I can work to assimilate into their culture as best as I can in such a short span of time. I chose *It’s All Chinese to Me: An Overview of Culture & Etiquette in China* because I believe that this reading aligns with the way I view that area of the world. The title indicates that it is for those who are very ignorant regarding the culture, as I am, and I believe this book will provide the blueprint for what to expect and how to mitigate some of the differences between both cultures. This book provides tips, background information and offers graphic impressions of the Chinese culture. It will serve as an aid in my survival of the cultural difference that I will experience. I chose to read *Chinese Business Etiquette: A Guide to Protocol, Manners, and Culture in the People's Republic of China* because it too will provide me with the
necessary information regarding Chinese etiquette but it also focuses on how to succeed, avoid embarrassing situations due to misunderstandings stemming from differences, and ways to interpret behavior and make positive impressions. Because I want to immerse myself in the culture and get the best experience possible, I believe that this book will prepare me well enough so that I am able to interact with the Chinese positively and will serve as a jump start on learning their culture.

I chose to read *Guanxi for the Busy American: What You Don't Know About Chinese Business Customs Can Really Hurt You* because this book is a guide on how to cope with being a victim of American business culture (transacting business as quickly as possible and moving on to the next challenge; lack of mastery), teaching me how to do business in China efficiently and effectively. This would be an interesting read because it will highlight American business professionals’ flaws (which I can learn from) and prepare me for the Chinese business environment and culture so that I am not naïve or unprepared during my time in China. Although this will relate better with my professional career, it will allow for me to practice certain habits now, if there was ever a time for me to have an assignment in China as a professional.

4. Initiative, Independence, and/or Creativity
The previous experience that I bring to the table for this particular program is that I have Co-Oped at Toyota (a Japanese company) which has given me some insight as it relates to differences in work ethic and company cultures of Asian companies compared to American companies. This will allow for me to delve even deeper into differences that I am already aware of and learn about differences that I may have overlooked or haven’t experienced. A skill that I have that is beneficial for this experience is the ability to be open-minded and accepting of new ways of thinking and new opportunities. I believe that is very important when travelling to a region in the world that is completely different from what I am used to.

My involvement is unique compared to other participants because I will be actively working to understand the cultural differences between Americans and the Chinese, something that isn’t a requirement for the study abroad program. During this time, I will also seek to be connected with an American business professional in China who can serve as a mentor to me to better my understanding of differences between both places corporate culture. This too, is not a requirement for the program. I will also actively reflect on the differences that I notice and the things that I learn so that I can become more knowledgeable to make a more informed decision on whether employment in China is a realistic option for me. During my experience, I will actively engage with the Chinese people so that I can gain a greater understanding of the language and hopefully learn some basic Mandarin.

5. Reflection
During this experience, I will keep a journal. This journal will contain my thoughts and feelings towards my experiences in China, while also shedding light on learning outcomes. During this opportunity I will answer and elaborate on the following questions:

- How was the interaction between the waiter and myself while ordering food?
- Did I find the food enjoyable?
- How am I perceived during my day-to-day interactions?
  - Are the People of China trusting of me?
  - Do I feel as if I’m being accepted?
- While interacting with Chinese counterparts, is there a notable difference between our work ethics?
  - If there is a difference, how is it different? Is the difference something that can be mitigated?
- While meeting with an American business professional who resides in China, I will reflect on the following questions
  - What were some of his or challenges when moving to China?
  - How did he or she adjust to the Chinese workforce and lifestyle?
- What are some of the differences between Chinese corporate culture and American corporate culture?

At the end of my experience, I will ask myself:

- What have I learned during my time in China?
  - How has China’s business environment and decision making been influenced historically and culturally?
- What fascinated me about the geography of the area?
- What was the greatest piece of advice that I received?
- Was I comfortable with adapting to their culture?
- Is China a place that I foresee myself living and working post-graduation?
I will actively compare and contrast what I learned through my reading and what I experienced while in China.

6. Dissemination

When sharing this experience, I will utilize several channels. First, as a mentor through UC’s African American Cultural and Resource Center and through the Lindner College of Business, I will host a program for more than seventy students that will be focused on sending more under-represented minorities abroad. During this program, I will have a panel of students (myself included) who will share our experiences abroad through personal testimony and introducing students to cultural foods. After the program, the other mentors and I will work with students on the planning aspect of going abroad. Personally, I will make myself available to help students choose an option that best fits their professional goals. I will assist students with their applications, applying for passports, and identifying scholarship opportunities. This particular audience is relevant because there is a disparity of African Americans studying abroad. By providing personal testimonies and personal coaching, it will increase the number of African Americans who make the most of their collegiate experience by studying abroad, which will make them more marketable for employment post-graduation.

I will also be a Resident Advisor (RA) next year. As an RA, I will host a similar program as the study abroad through my mentoring organizations. Because I will be an RA though, I will have access to over 500+ freshman students which allows me to plant the idea of studying abroad early on in their collegiate careers. Lastly, as an ambassador for the Lindner College of Business, through my recruitment efforts, I will speak to high school students about coming to UC; while doing so, I will also stress the importance of studying abroad in a today’s global society. This audience is relevant because it encourages students from all backgrounds to step out of their comfort zones early, so that they can make the most of their collegiate experience and become more marketable for employment.

7. Project Advisor(s)

The project advisor for my honors’ experience will be Ruth Seiple, the Director of the Bachelor of Science Industrial Management Program and BBA Operations Management Program. Ruth Seiple is also an associate professor in the Lindner College of Business who leads the “Doing Business in China” study abroad experience that I will be participating in. Mrs. Seiple was a past Operations Management professional who worked with both domestic and international markets, so I believe she would be able to better my understanding of the Chinese economy and the interdependence that it has on other economies of the world. She would be able to help me understand how the political system of China affects business. Also, because she has led this trip for several years, she would understand the interaction between Americans (like me) and the Chinese. With that experience, she would be ideal for understanding the differences between both cultures as it relates to eating habits, work ethic, and non-verbal and verbal communication practices. Because she is so fascinated by international business and supply chain management, she would be the perfect advisor for this experience.

8. Budget (if applicable)

| Program Fee: includes lodging, internal flights, breakfast, guides, entrances fees, one group meal per city | $2,200 |
| International Airfare (on own)                          | $1,800 |
| China tourist visa                                       | $210  |
| Personal spending money                                  | $500  |
| Total expenses before UC International Block Grant       | $4,710 |
| UC International block grant                             | ($400) |
| LCB International block grant                            | ($500) |
| TOTAL estimated cost                                      | $3,810 |