International Teaching Lends Professional Growth

The College of Education is marking six years of international student teaching opportunities for elementary, secondary or K-12 teacher candidates. More than 100 education students have completed student teaching internships abroad in either Costa Rica or England.

The international option aims at broadening candidates’ perspectives on education to include local, national and global views. Otherwise, the program is similar in length and structure to internships in the U.S. Schools pair students with cooperating teachers who are certified and recommended by their principals.
Students must apply for the opportunity and undergo a selective interview process. Once approved, they prepare for the internships by taking orientation classes and learning about life and safety in the host country. They also register online with the U.S. Embassy and learn to visit government websites for country alerts.

In England, the college collaborates with Department of Defense (DOD) Schools located on Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Feltwell military bases. Students enjoy free housing and commissary privileges.

Another advantage for students who complete internships in a DOD school is that they can apply immediately upon graduation for positions in DOD schools without the required five years of teaching experience.

In Costa Rica, the college partners with three accredited, independent English-immersion schools in the city of San Jose. OSU students collaborate with a diverse group of multilingual teachers from Costa Rica, Europe and the U.S. and spend the 12 weeks living with host families.

“Living with a host family gives students a sense of home. It allows students to be immersed in Costa Rican culture and drastically improve their Spanish language skills,” says Nadine Olson, associate professor and coordinator of international student teaching.

Graduate Myla Post, who completed her student teaching internship in Costa Rica last spring, says that living with the host family was one of her favorite parts of the experience.

“The families and schools were so supportive of us. They really cared, and it speaks wonders about their country and culture,” Post says.

College faculty members have developed strong relationships with schools and host families since the program’s inception. They travel with students to teaching sites and remain for an orientation period, introducing students to families and schools and making certain they are comfortable in their new surroundings.

Throughout the semester, the students and OSU faculty regularly communicate through email. Students and faculty also provide professional development for schools in both countries.

Internships in Costa Rica and England offer opportunities for weekend travel and exploration. Emily Gorman, who completed her student teaching internship in England last spring, counted travel as one of the best parts of what was a wonderful overall experience.

“The mentor teachers are amazing. Most are certified in several areas and are passionate about what they do,” says Gorman. “I would definitely recommend student teaching abroad. Going into it, I didn’t know any of the other OSU students, but I was able to make lifelong friendships.”

The international student teaching program has been so successful that the college plans to continue and expand it, Olson says.

“The experience has been extremely valuable and helped many students to grow professionally.”

Students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in Costa Rican culture as they live with host families and take advantage of sightseeing opportunities.