

Kennedy Center exists to give students 'international experience'

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BYU students of all ages and in all disciplines are encouraged to plan now to participate in an international study program.

Directors of the David M. Kennedy Center focus on four international programs, allowing over a thousand students each year to make BYU's logo, "The world is our campus," a reality.

The function of the programs is to insure adequate preparation for students in all fields, said Rodney Boynton, associate director of the David M. Kennedy Center of International Studies for the International Study Program.

"The world is more interconnected now than ever before," he said. "The student who doesn't have a global perspective is at a disadvantage. He needs to be exposed to the ideas and issues of the world."

The academic realm encompasses the world, Boynton said.

The Kennedy Center offers four facets of international study which involve students in valuable learning experiences. These programs are study abroad, internships, volunteering and field studies.

Prior to the introduction of the Study Abroad program in the 1960s, students who wanted international experiences accompanied their professors on their summer trips to Europe. Advisors wanted to award credit to students for their experiences abroad, so the continuing education program began to sponsor Study Abroad.

Students could have in-depth and thorough studies abroad, and getting credit for their experiences added incentive, Boynton said.

In the 1980s, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies took responsibility for Study Abroad, adding shorter programs and a wider variety of places to visit. Although most students continued to go to Western Europe, Latin America and Africa also started to become popular, Boynton said.

With the increasing number of countries available to students, unique learning experiences opened up, he said.

"We are trying to teach the students to care about more than their home state or country, but about

the world," Boynton said.

Kimberly Zumbrennen, 21, a graduate in microbiology, recently returned from Study Abroad in England.

"It was really neat, not just to visit another culture, but to live with the people in their day-to-day lives and see the differences," she said.

The second program offered by the Kennedy Center is internships.

Internships are work-study programs that offer on-the-job training, and prepare students for employment after graduation, Boynton said.

"Students who have served an internship have the advantage over those who haven't. They are more marketable," he said.

Although many internships are being filled by students in the business and engineering fields, all students can benefit from getting work experience before graduation, he said.

Volunteering is the third international program.

Volunteers get short on-the-job training, Boynton said. The purpose of the volunteer program is practical application of classroom theory.

Students who volunteer donate their time and resources in foreign countries and perform service projects that are related to their academic programs.

Brandon Wood, 24, a senior from Orem majoring in business management, spent eight months in Honduras last year with the HELP International program.

While in Honduras, students established microcredit banks to assist the poorest of the poor in getting loans and rebuilding their lives after the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, Wood said.

"Being there and seeing people in need made me realize how many walks of life are willing to help other people, but creating an effective, sustainable change in the third world is a much more difficult thing than people realize," he said.

Volunteering is not limited to business majors, Boynton said. The Health Department has been doing service in the Dominican Republic and the Ukraine, and the Education Department is focusing on the schools in Uganda, he said.

The goal is to get all the other departments to come up with volunteer programs that will apply their individual disciplines to service, he said.

The fourth program sponsored by the Kennedy Center is field studies.

"Many programs require a capstone experience, one that targets the independent student, and offers a total immersion experience," Boynton said.

With field studies, success is in the student's hands, he said. Faculty mentors aid students, but students conduct individual research of their choice. The research is written up as a report or thesis.

Service is an integral part of all the international programs. Students are encouraged to take advantage of every opportunity to serve the needs of the people in the host country, Boynton said.

Sharing the gospel is also an important part of international study.

In his Viewpoint article in the winter 1997 issue of International, President Merrill J. Bateman stated, " To support an increasingly global church, BYU must broaden its perspective and prepare for an even greater role in the international community."

Despite the high number of students participating in international study programs, many students are not aware of the programs, Boynton said.

"There is no effort being done on the part of the students to uncover the available experiences," he said.

The Kennedy Center is working to make the programs more available and easier to fit into students' budgets, Boynton said. The goal is to make it no more expensive than what a regular semester would cost.

But the responsibility lies mainly with the students. If students do not plan six months to a year in advance, their experiences will be mediocre, Boynton said. If students plan ahead they will get the best program for their majors, and the best country and language to fit their needs, he said.

"The benefit of international study is incredibly positive, and every student should have (an international experience)," Boynton said.