

Semester at Sea: A Program That Will Float Your Boat

By Verne Thalheimer

One of the most popular non-St. Lawrence abroad programs is the Semester at Sea, offered through the University of Pittsburgh.

Each semester, a handful of St. Lawrence students participate in the 100-day program.

Upon acceptance to the program, students begin to plan a schedule of courses which complements their studies on their home campuses.

Students are required to take one core course titled, "International Studies 100: Comparative International Studies."

This course is interdisciplinary in nature. It is designed to introduce students to comparative studies on a global scale.

The program offers a variety of liberal arts courses, ranging from anthropology, to fine arts to women's studies. Students must take a minimum of 12 semester credits and no more than 16 semester credits.

Approximately 50 days of the semester are spent at sea aboard the S.S. Universe. Students attend classes six days a week while at sea, and have access to many educational aids on board the ship.

The other 50 days are spent in various countries around the world. During a typical voyage, the ship will stop in nine to ten ports.

These stops include such



SLU students take a break on Semester at Sea.

File Photo

countries as Spain, Yugoslavia, Turkey, the Soviet Union, India, Hong Kong and Japan. The length of stay in a given port ranges from three to seven days.

It is during the stays in these ports that one of the most important aspects of the program is accomplished.

Students take trips while in port which supplement their formal classroom experiences. It is a practica or fieldwork component to the program. Practicas are administered in three ways.

The first usage is called the "Standard Practica." It consists of programs which

relate broadly to the nature of the voyage.

The content of these practicas vary greatly because they do not fit into any specific academic discipline. They are set up by the administration of the Semester at Sea program for use as general guidelines.

The second usage is the "Faculty-Directed Practica." These practicas are led by individual professors and directly relate on-ship course work with in-port practical experience.

The last usage is the "Independent Field Practica." This allows students to devel-

op and pursue their own independent projects while travelling during in-port time.

The overall importance of the fieldwork component is that it gives students an unparalleled opportunity to compare and contrast their culture with that of many other international cultures.

On any one voyage, there are students participating from approximately 150 schools across the country and around the world.

In addition, 17 to 20 professors are drawn each semester from campuses around the world to teach the 500 students on the ship.

These factors together allow for a strong diversity of personalities on board the ship.

Thomas Coburn, a religious studies and classical languages professor, taught in the Semester at Sea program in the spring of 1987. He serves as an informal advisor on campus for students wishing to find out more about the program.

Coburn found the experience to be very rewarding for two basic reasons. First, according to Coburn, students and faculty alike are forced to make connections between the classroom and the real world.

"It's exciting for the faculty to take the kids out of the classroom and put them firsthand into the stuff being taught," Coburn said.

Coburn also noted that instead of studying just one culture like one does during a program in Vienna or Kenya, students are able to make comparative observations between the different places.

Kim White ('91) was also a participant in the program last fall. She said that she made friendships on the voyage which will last a lifetime.

White summed up her semester by saying, "It was the most amazing experience of my college career."

Lindsay agreed and also added,

"It totally complements a liberal arts education."

Ford Foundation Sponsors Grant To Enhance African Studies at Home and Abroad

By Lindsay Driscoll

St. Lawrence University received a grant of \$262,000 from the Ford Foundation to strengthen African studies on campus and in Kenya.

"The Ford grant is just a small part of a larger plan to strengthen African studies at St. Lawrence," said Marlene Guzman, coordinator and facilitator of the Ford Foundation grant.

The grant supports three initiatives over the next three years. The first initiative is faculty development. This money will send St. Lawrence faculty to Kenya for five weeks during the summer of 1991.

During this time the faculty from St. Lawrence, combined with the Kenya faculty, will study together in intense seminars, to strengthen their teaching skills and knowledge

This aspect of the grant will also allow for faculty who are interested in furthering their knowledge in African studies to develop their own individual aspect of African studies in their field.

In addition, this grant will allow for an additional professor to be hired for a course titled "Environmental Resource Use." This course will have special emphasis on Africa as well as look at the environmental issues of other third world countries and the United States.

This grant will also make funds available to students to go to conferences, and to perform individual research in African studies here on campus or in Kenya.

Finally, the funding will allow the University to host a national conference for three days in 1993.

The theme of this conference will be how to teach African studies at undergraduate liberal arts colleges. Papers will be commissioned to be written in the different areas of African studies and read allowed at the conference. A three day discussion will take place that will result in a book that will be published.

Ahmed Samatar, project director, believes the African studies program needs to be strengthened through adding more faculty and having more speaker series available to students and faculty.

Samatar said, "I would like to see more students get involved in African studies and take part in the Kenya program. It's the best in the country."

Samatar also hopes to see professors from Kenya come

here to teach while our professors go there. Unfortunately, this is not part of the grant.

Samatar believes Paul Robinson, 10 year director of the Kenya program, deserves a great deal of credit for the improvements in the Kenya program.

"He has done a wonderful job," he said. "He has proven his worth to the University through excellent management of the program, making it one of the best in the country. Robinson deserves to be granted tenure," said Samatar.

The African studies program at SLU, which focuses on culture and development, was established 14 years ago. It is one of the few such undergraduate programs in the nation. The University also promotes a highly competitive

program abroad in Africa, based in Kenya.

A faculty group consisting of Ahmed Samatar, David Lloyd, Patricia Alden, Peter van Lent, Paul Robinson, and Al Schwartz worked closely together with Marlene Guzman, program coordinator and facilitator. The process was long and took a great deal of work from everyone. "The African faculty committee went beyond the call of duty in developing this grant proposal," said Guzman. "It is very gratifying to see their dedication and commitment rewarded in this way."

President Peterson was also highly involved in the process of receiving the grant. Through the entire process she communicated with the faculty and the Ford Founda-

See FORD, page 18