When she arrived in France in early 2001, Amanda Grinde discovered that grocery stores were only open until 7:30 p.m. Stores were closed on Sunday and sometimes Monday. Absolutely nothing stayed open all night. Accustomed to 24-hour service at home, she adjusted her habits and expectations but found the change was stressful for a while.

Andy Johnston found himself making similar adjustments. “I had to figure out how to function in a society where I couldn’t communicate,” says Andy. “I didn’t know French. I was challenged to learn to use public transportation, something I rarely did at home. Because I learned to adapt to another culture, my outlook changed.”

Amanda and Andy are two of five Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Business students who participated this year in an exchange program established by the College and the Institut de Formation Internationale (IFI) in Rouen, France. In exchange, two students travelled from IFI to Mankato for a year of study at MSU.

All seven say the experience of living in a new culture changed them.

Pierre de Padirac, IFI student, explains, “In the United States and in South Africa, where I lived once for six months, my stereotypes were challenged. I learned to adjust to see things in new ways. Away from home you learn a lot. After a while you realize you’ve changed because of the experience.”

Classmate Renaud Valpremit agrees, but adds that this personal growth and the benefits of study abroad do not come without real effort. “It’s not all that easy to be away,” he says. “You have to be ready to be open and try hard. You have to reach out. That’s not always easy in a new place.”

IFI, a four-year “Gran Ecole,” is an institution that has earned the highest level of accreditation attainable for a French collegiate school of business. Four hundred students, all fluently bilingual in English and French, attend the school. All study additional languages and are required to spend their second year of study abroad. Additionally, each student completes a six-month internship outside of France.

MSU students studying in Rouen typically enroll in five classes, all taught in English. International Marketing, European Business Studies, Business Strategy, French Language and French Culture. MSU students have the option of living in a dormitory or with a French family. They are offered opportunities through IFI to tour some historic sites in the Normandy region.

The opportunity to travel during the year abroad is a plus for students on both continents.

“Part of the learning experience is meeting new people, traveling, experiencing a new world,” says Angela Minner, Minnesota State University, Mankato senior. Fellow MSU student Andy Johnston exemplifies the wanderlust most students share. During the course of one semester he managed to fit in travel to Spain, Austria, London, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Greece.

In Minnesota, Valpremit and de Padirac travelled extensively as members of the MSU rugby team and were enthusiastic about the friendships that developed in the process.

“The people in Minnesota are really nice,” smiles de Padirac. “We had lots of great times. People welcomed us and were happy to talk with us. Besides the team, I had a really nice roommate who invited me home and helped me when I had questions.”

And while the fun of travel is often uppermost in their minds, program participants are well aware that study abroad has long-term career benefits. Some even say it’s changed their direction.

“Before I went to Rouen,” says MSU student Meurer, “I assumed other countries in the world were not as good, or as developed, as the United States. Stereotypes I had heard about people in France and other countries in Europe were wrong. We are all the same in some ways. Only our cultures separate us, and differences from place to place make us unique. My career goals did change (in Rouen). I know I could definitely live in France or another European country, and international business will definitely be a part of my future.”

FINANCE CLUB


MARKETING CLUB

During the academic year the Marketing Club meets weekly. Club activities are both education- and service-oriented, including service projects, guest speakers and discussions, fundraising projects, and social events. Projects during the 2000-2001 academic year included the Adopt-a-Highway clean-up project, Homecoming activities, the Settorns Fun Fair, a job fair, face painting, scholarship awards, fund-raising activities in cooperation with Pizza Hut, member awards, skiing, the College of Business Etiquette Dinner, development of a website, and a marketing project that focused on the unveiling of MSU’s new student-built solar car; the MSU Northern Lights Seven solar car.

ACCOUNTING CLUB

Accounting Club activities for 2000-2001 were rich in educational content. Featured speakers included representatives from Abdo, Abdo, Eick & Meyers; Ernst & Young; Northeast Airlines; Pricewater & Company; Rochester Mayo Foundation; U.S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Department; and Wolff Filter. The club toured LAWCO, and also enjoyed service activities such as the fall clean-up (in cooperation with the Minnesota Society of CPAs) and participation in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). Approximately three hundred returns were completed by Accounting students.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENT ORGANIZATION

Members of MSU’s International Business Organization attended a gathering sponsored by the International Business Organization in Saint Paul. Representatives of three regional international companies were featured presenters, including: Noor Dojia, Director of the Minnesota World Trade Center, Ross Dahl, Manager of the International Division of Andersen Windows, and Sandra Renner, President/CEO of Global Resource Associates. MSU’s student group also organized a field trip to the World Trade Week. During June, the second International Business alumni reunion was held in the Twin Cities area.