

MCCC Study Abroad:

Gearing Up for Next Summer's Trip to Spain

by Jocelyn Moyer
Staff Writer

Summer for a college student can be almost too ordinary. Some students work overtime to try to pay off loans. Some “veg out” on their parent’s sofa. Others get lost in a sea of internships.

Getting involved with Montgomery County Community College’s Study Abroad program can make your summer memorable. For the past four years, the program has sent students to study at the University of Salamanca in Salamanca, Spain.

Interested students can attend the first of several information sessions on Sept. 14.

Georgina Elortegui, an MCCC assistant professor who coordinates the school’s Spanish program, has organized the trip for the past two years. “It is a way for students to live and learn,” she says.

Students participate in what the study-abroad program calls a “full-immersion environment” to learn the Spanish language and culture. Students live with local families selected by Professor Elortegui.

“Their whole environment becomes a language laboratory,” she says of the importance of the experience.

Student Pete McManus said Study Abroad provided him with a truly memorable experience.

“I learned an incredible amount about Spain and the Spanish language,” he said.

The trip takes place during Salamanca’s art festival. There, many cultural activities are held in the Plaza Mayor. The festival features dancing, free art exhibits and walking tours. There are also popular films to watch – in Spanish, of course. “Salamanca is a great spot for

this program. Salamanca is safe and highly pedestrian-friendly,” says McManus, adding that many streets in the town are closed to automobile traffic.

Aside from sight-seeing and events, students take Spanish language, cooking, and history courses. The history course also features lectures on art.

McManus said he found the challenge of being in a Spanish-speaking classroom rewarding.

Kimberly Libby found that the experience directly affected her field of study. “I am a nursing major,” says Libby. “As the Spanish speaking culture is growing drastically here in



Provided by Dr. Georgina Elortegui

Professor Georgina Elortegui and students at welcome dinner in Salamanca.

the U.S., I feel that knowing the language will help me in my career in order to communicate better with Hispanic patients.” Libby’s desire to learn Spanish was strengthened on the trip. She found the Spanish classes and cultural activities enjoyable and educational. Both were beneficial to her goal of becoming fluent in the language, she says.

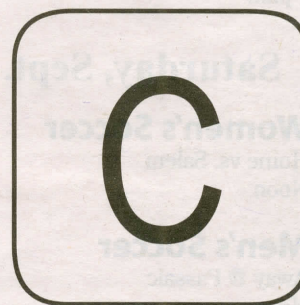
Libby also remains close to her host family who had a key role in her studies. “I enjoyed spending time with the family I lived with,” she says, “They helped improve my Spanish conversation and listening skills drastically.”

Typically, eight to 10 students go on the trip. Elortegui plans to hold several meetings to help with trip planning and budgeting.

The Benjamin Gillman Scholarship is one of several opportunities for students to raise money.

The program’s first information session will be held 12:20 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. Sept. 14 in Science Center 303. West Campus students interested in studying abroad can attend the session via a video conference held 12:20 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. Sept. 14 in South Hall 132.

For more information, contact Georgina Elortegui at GElorteg@mc3.edu.



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