



News Release

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WESTERN STUDENTS VISIT POLAND

St. Joseph, Mo. — July 27, 2005 — Accounting and finance major Ashley Falter said she learned a lot on her recent trip to Poland with the Global Viewpoint class at Missouri Western State College. But one of the most important lessons she learned was that when you are traveling with a large group in a foreign country, flexibility and a sense of humor go a long way.

Falter was one of 32 Western students who visited Poland this spring as part of the Global Viewpoint class taught by Dr. Matrese Benkofske, assistant professor of business. The goals of the trip were for students to learn about businesses in a developing country and understand the impact of Poland joining the European Union. The group was in Warsaw when the European Union met there in May.

The trip was the final phase of the semester-long class which featured lectures on Polish history, the European Union, and tips for traveling. Because 93% of the population in Poland is Catholic, the class even visited a Catholic church in St. Joseph to ensure that the students felt comfortable in those surroundings.

While in Poland, the students visited several different types of businesses and learned how each company operated, its marketing techniques, and how its products were made.

Among the Polish businesses they visited were the Krosno Glass Factory, where they watched employees blow and shape glass into different arrangements, and the Baltic Wood Factory, where wood flooring is made.

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They visited Coca-Cola and Ernst and Young, two global companies, where they met with employees and talked about the economic future of each company and Poland. They also met with the United States Ambassador to Poland.

The three-week trip was long enough that the students were able to do some sight-seeing as well, said Dr. Benkofske. They visited Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration camp from World War II and went mountain climbing in Wisla, a small town nestled in the hills of the Beskid Slaski mountain ranges.

“One of the most memorable experiences about being in Poland was having a chance to mingle with the locals and talk with them about their culture,” said Falter, from Westphalia, Mo. “I learned so much about Poland and about myself; I have gained self-confidence and made new friends. This was a very valuable experience.”

“This was the first time I’ve taken a large group,” said Dr. Benkofske. “It was really exciting watching the students as they became acclimated to the different surroundings. I think some of them are even considering traveling in the future.”

The 2006 Global Viewpoint class, which will be led by Carol Roever, associate professor of business, is going to Istanbul. The 2007 class, led by Dr. Benkofske, is going to Spain and Portugal.

For more information, contact Dr. Benkofske at 816-271-5975 or e-mail her at benkofske@missouriwestern.edu.

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.