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mary klayder

thank you

gift planning

KU Study Abroad named an elite program

< Michael Wade Smith, KU senior from Goodland, Kan., and Loren Cressler, KU senior from Hoxie, Kan., pose with Mary Klayder after completing what students call the "trifecta," which is when a student has traveled on all three of Klayder's study abroad programs. Klayder's trip to Costa Rica this winter break marks her twenty-fifth study abroad trip with the KU OSA.

Director's philosophy keeps students coming back for more

Written by SARAH BLUVAS

Mary Klayder has only three rules on her study abroad trips. 1. Have a good time. 2. Let her have a good time. 3. Don't let rule number 1 interfere with rule number 2.

While these may seem light-hearted, they are indicative of the educational philosophy that Klayder, an Honors Lecturer in English at KU, carries when leading students abroad.

This winter break, Klayder will lead a group of students to San José, Costa Rica, on her twenty-fifth study abroad trip through the KU Office of Study Abroad.

Klayder's journey abroad with KU began in 1990 when she was asked to participate in the British Summer Institute as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. On the BSI, students travel to London and Scotland, participating in classroom discussions and visiting cultural sites related to their readings in English and Art History.

Klayder began leading her second study abroad program, the London Review, in 1998. Throughout the spring semester, students plan and research a trip to London that takes place over spring break. While in London, the students participate in group activities as well as visit sites individually and then spend the rest of the semester writing and producing a journal of their experiences abroad.

For her third program, Klayder wanted to go somewhere completely different, which led her to Costa Rica, a place she wanted to learn more about and that, according to Klayder, is the perfect place to go during winter. On this program, students attend a class led by Klayder on the KU campus and also travel to Costa Rica on a twelve-day program devoted to issues of politics, culture, ecology and tourism.

Although all of her programs are different, each one exudes Klayder's philosophies about teaching and learning. Each program includes a written component that requires

students to reflect on what they learn and see and to relate these experiences back to their own lives. This emphasis on reflection is an important part of Klayder's trips that sets them apart from other study abroad programs.

For Klayder, too, study abroad offers her a new way to teach students within unconventional classrooms. "It's amazing just to watch people grow and change—even in a week on the London Review," she says. "It's a huge motivation."

Klayder's relationship with the students is part of the reason so many people apply for her programs every year. (As she notes, the London Review, for instance, was originally planned to run with twelve students every other year. Now it goes every year with 25 to 28 students traveling on each trip.)

Loren Cressler, a senior from Hoxie, Kan., has participated in all three of Klayder's programs, completing what students affectionately call [Klayder, continued on next page.](#)

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Mary Klayder



Klayder, continued.

the “trifecta.” Cressler first traveled abroad with Klayder on the London Review in spring 2008. He was drawn not only to the location and flexibility of the program but also to the chance to travel with Klayder.

“She’s an enabler,” Cressler says. “She wants you to see and do things but she doesn’t want to tell you to do them or make you do them. She wants you to find things out for yourself.”

After going on Klayder’s programs, Cressler studied abroad for a fourth time on his own Student Initiated Program in summer 2010 to Vienna, Austria; a trip he felt ready for after traveling with Klayder.

“The trip to Vienna took a lot of awareness of being in a place that is not your own and making it your own, and that is something Mary’s programs really prepare you for,” he says.

Annie Frizzell, a KU admissions counselor and 2010 graduate, was also drawn to the structure of Klayder’s programs.

“She was open to any experience anyone wanted to have,” she says. “For her, it was about completing that person’s idea of what the ideal study abroad trip was.”



▲ Mary Klayder, first row, far right, poses with students in front of Eilean Donan Castle in Scotland during the BSI in summer 2010. Klayder first got involved with KU OSA in 1990 when she led the program as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.

Frizzell participated in the London Review in 2007 and the BSI in 2008, and, like Cressler, gained experiences that would help her in future endeavors.

“When I went on the BSI, I spent an afternoon in the gallery at the British library and thought, ‘Why can’t I put together displays like this?’” she says. “I was an English major anyway, so going on these trips made me realize that I could turn my experiences into something that would put me in a good place for the future.”

But students on her trips aren’t the only ones who benefit from Klayder’s teaching. Ann Martinez, a PhD student and GTA in English, participated in the BSI with Klayder in 2010 as one of the GTAs on the program. For Martinez, working with Klayder provided her the opportunity to work with a terrific mentor.

“She taught me so much about how to teach students in situations that can sometimes be difficult—like being abroad in a different culture—and how to continue to challenge them to think about their experiences and to learn from them,” she says.

Ultimately, it is Klayder’s philosophy of learning and teaching that makes her the “glue” (which she calls herself on the BSI because her course ties together the English and Art History courses the students also take on the trip) on all of her programs. It’s also the reason that you usually won’t find students breaking rule number 3 on her trips.

“Mary’s students are all fans of Mary. They want to impress her,” Martinez says. “But this is a great motivation. They want to be the students Mary wants them to be.”



▲ Ann Martinez, left, and Denise Giannino, center, were the two GTAs who joined Mary Klayder on the BSI in summer 2010. “She is a fantastic mentor,” Martinez says of Klayder.



Thank You!

^ Through the generous support of our alumni and friends (listed below for endowed funds and donations received between November 1, 2009 and October 31, 2010), and the Office of the Chancellor and Office of the Provost, approximately 12% of the 1,026 KU study abroad participants received scholarships toward their experience abroad in 2010. A total of 122 KU students received financial support for their studies in various countries. Scholarship amounts ranged from \$250 to \$2,000.

Our goal is to increase both the number and size of the scholarships awarded to KU study abroad participants and make studying abroad a reality for more KU Students.

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UCR alumnus continues support of Early Start Program

Richard S. Paegelow studied abroad at the University of Costa Rica through KU in 1967. The longest running exchange in the Western Hemisphere is still near and dear to his heart, and he shows this by sponsoring KU students who participate in the exchange's Early Start Program. In order to meet the language requirements of the program, students who have had only four semesters (or the equivalent) of college-level Spanish must participate in a one-month intensive Spanish course (Early Start Program). Students who participate in the program receive an additional three credits of Spanish on top of what they will receive during the semester. Students wishing to brush up on their Spanish skills may also participate in the Early Start Program.

Paegelow's scholarship is open to KU students who have been accepted into the Costa Rica semester program (either Fall, Spring, or the Academic Year). The amount covers most of the expenses (tuition, room and board, on-site assistance, and an excursion) connected with studying in the Escuela de Filología for the month.

"The program also makes sense because KU (and most other universities) have reduced (or eliminated) their language requirements for graduation. Consequently, on a general level, the average student today is probably not as prepared for a study abroad program that involves instruction in another language as in the past," states Paegelow.



▲ Adam Benfer conducting excavations at the Nuevo Corinto archaeological site, summer 2010.

A student's perspective

Submitted by Adam Benfer -
2008 Participant in the Early Start Program

"After four semesters of Spanish courses, I had fulfilled my foreign language requirements, but was not able to communicate well in Spanish. I was disappointed to discover that four semesters of Spanish was not enough for me to study abroad for a semester at the University of Costa Rica. Then the KU Study Abroad program announced the new Early Start Program. I jumped on this option, which allowed students at my then limited level of Spanish proficiency to study abroad for one extra month of accelerated Spanish classes before being placed alongside students with semesters of Spanish courses more than I had. It ended up that I was the only person to participate in the Early Start Program during its first semester.

At first I was intimidated by the fact that I was the guinea pig for the Early Start Program, but I was determined to gain a working knowledge of Spanish as quickly as I could. It was the best decision I made while working on my bachelor's degree. I wanted, I needed, to be able to communicate well in Spanish, but I did not want to be a Spanish major.

The Early Start Program is the perfect option for students like myself, for students who do not have the time to spend many courses studying Spanish literature as a Spanish major but want to be able to conduct research or even work in a Spanish speaking environment.

The Spanish course the Early Start Program enrolled me in was taught by a native Costa Rican and the students were from all over the world. Unlike a Spanish class in the United States, where students default to English when they aren't sure how to say something in Spanish, we had to communicate in Spanish all of the time. Spanish was our *lingua franca*, our only common language.

Everyday after a long class of Spanish I would return to my host family's house where once again I had to speak Spanish. This gave me the opportunity to immediately begin to practice the new vocabulary and the rules I learned during class.

By the time the other students from Kansas arrived in Costa Rica, I was already at or near their level of Spanish proficiency; a level I had managed to achieve in only one month.

Before I enrolled in the Early Start Program I would never have imagined that I would be able to successfully communicate in Spanish after only a month abroad nor that I would be able to operate effectively in courses at a Spanish-speaking university after only two months abroad."



▲ Adam Benfer at the ruins of the old church at Ujarras, Costa Rica.

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KU Study Abroad ranked in Top Ten

The University of Kansas is among nine public universities in the nation cited by U.S. News and World Report for having the top study abroad programs, which the publication said education experts agree on as a key ingredient to student success.

KU offers programs in approximately 70 countries throughout the world. Students can study in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia or Europe. Twenty-seven percent of KU students study abroad at some point in their time at the university. U.S. News described the selected programs as “stellar.” KU and the University of Texas were the only Big 12 Conference schools cited.

The study abroad listing was among several high rankings the university collected in the past month from U.S. News, the Princeton Review and the “Fiske Guide to Colleges.”