

Foreign language only barrier to year of studying abroad

By Jane Campbell
Staff Reporter

Steve Beasley says he learned more in his fourth year of college than in the other three years combined. And he wasn't even at UNL.

Beasley is one of about 50 UNL students who left the familiar setting of Lincoln this year to study in another country for a semester or entire year.

"If it's something you want to do, go for it," Beasley said. "It's the experience of a lifetime. There's a certain knowledge you can only learn from being there (in another country) and making mistakes. It's about life and human nature. You learn a different way of looking at your own society." Beasley, an English and Spanish major, attended the University of Seville in Seville, Spain.

The foreign studies program is sponsored by the UNL Institute of International Studies. It includes 11 international studies programs at 11 universities, and the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), which includes 80 universities.

Students must have a grade point average of at least 3.2 to qualify for the international study program, said Joan Blackburn of the institute. Some programs require a higher GPA, depending on the university, she said.

Students also are expected to be able to write and communicate fluently in the language of the country in which they are to study.

Blackburn said several students who have studied abroad report that they lacked confidence in their speaking and listening abilities of the foreign language before they left. They returned to the United States fluent in the new language.

Students may study in foreign countries for one or two semesters, depending on the program, Blackburn said. A student may live with a host family or in residence halls, Blackburn said. Each university has its own housing regulations.

Problems with credit transferrals are minimal in the foreign study program, said UNL senior Stephanie Vandenaek, who studied in Bordeaux, France.

Because a UNL organization sponsors the program, students' credits easily transfer. That probably wouldn't be the case if students attended a foreign university on their own, Vandenaek said.

"They (international study program) also take care of the little bureaucratic things like getting a student visa," Vandenaek said.

Students accepted into ISEP pay a \$100 replacement fee, Blackburn said. The program pays tuition and living expenses for the student.

She said tuition and travel cost from \$2,000 to \$4,000, depending on where students decide to study.

Beasley said he paid the Council on

International Education Exchange — the program he went through — before he left for Spain. CIES allocated his money toward travel expenses, tuition and insurance, he said. The council sent him a monthly check to pay room and board. His fee also included two short group trips to Cordoba and Granada.

Beasley also traveled on his own to

London, Portugal, Africa and throughout southern Spain.

"Africa was like going through a tunnel and coming out 500 years in the past," Beasley said. "It was a completely different world."

Students interested in international study can find information at the Institute of International Studies at 1237 R St., Room 201.



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