

Students gather experience sailing a semester at sea

By Heidi White
Staff Reporter

Spending a semester traveling across the globe may sound like a dream to some students.

Jennifer Thompson and Nicole Clifton are living that dream by sailing the oceans as part of the Semester at Sea program.

Thompson, a junior Spanish major, and Clifton, a senior psychology major, are currently on board the S.S. Universe. The ship acts like a floating college campus, housing a library, classrooms and student union.

The ship set sail Sept. 13 from Vancouver, British Columbia. The 18,000-ton ship and its 400 students have already docked in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and India.

The students on board, including the two from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, represent 178 colleges and universities from across the United States and the world. They will return to New Orleans Dec. 23.

Jennifer Babin, director of admissions and financial aid for the Semester at Sea program, said it was administered by the Institute for Shipboard Education.

The program is academically sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh, but courses are transferable to each student's college or university. Applicants must be full-time college students, Babin said.

She said 400 to 500 participants were chosen each year from a pool of almost 900 applicants.

"All kinds of students with all kinds of majors are chosen to participate in the program," Babin said.

Between 50 and 60 courses are offered each semester, she said, depending on the faculty on board. The faculty include visiting professors from universities around the world.

Babin said the diverse faculty allowed for a wide range of classes, including business, writing, communication, psychology and anthropology. The classes incorporate material about the countries visited on the trip.

Students on board will soon visit



Bret Gottschall/DN

Egypt, Israel, Ukraine, Turkey and Morocco.

"They just left India and are on their way to Egypt, which is one of their longest voyages," Babin said.

When the students reach a port, she said, they have many activities to choose from during their three-to-six day stay.

Activities include home stays, university visits and traveling to places of historic, cultural and religious significance.

Students also can go out on their own to experience the countries, Babin said.

The visits give students a chance to collect cultural information for

another part of their experience — the Vicarious Voyage Around the World program.

Babin said the travelers will interact by mail with elementary students around the United States. The children, who are usually in third or fourth grade, receive items such as pictures, newspapers, maps and stamps from the travelers.

After the elementary students share the items with their classmates, Babin said, they send letters back to the college students and tell them what they learned about each country.

Another unique feature of the voyage is the senior adult program. On each trip, about 40 retired adults ac-

company the students.

"They are usually looking for a learning experience, and not the environment of a cruise," Babin said.

The adults can audit the courses and explore the countries visited along with the students. Babin said that although they have special activities of their own and often travel in groups, they form special bonds with the students.

"It's common for the students to adopt one of the seniors as their grandma or grandpa," she said.

A spring voyage will depart Feb. 3 from Nassau, Bahamas. The trip will venture to Venezuela, Brazil, South Africa, Kenya, India, Vietnam, Hong

Kong, Taiwan and Japan. It will return to Seattle May 13.

A summer program also will be offered for the first time and will run from May 22 to July 18. It will focus on the environment and culture of the South Pacific.

Students interested in applying can call and request a brochure and application at 1-800-854-0195. A \$25 application fee is required.

There is no deadline for applications, but Babin said applicants should apply as early as possible.

Semester programs cost \$12,580 and pay for tuition, room, board and passage fare. The summer session rate is \$6,775.

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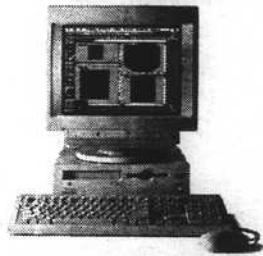
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