

Drexel University: Globalizing

How do you create excitement in a university education?

Send students to the Greek Island of Crete to work for six months to learn a new culture and language—broadening their ability to work in the world of global economies. Drexel University offers this Cretan Scholars program and other such exciting opportunities to its undergraduate students. Driven by the desire to be innovative and creative while advancing in the field of Cooperative Education, Drexel has created a new strategic plan for strengthening its programs that fall under the Steinbright Career Development Center (SCDC).

This plan provides strong direction for the career development office with enhanced levels of funding for new programs in experiential education. As a part of this initiative, SCDC has launched a new co-op orientation course that prepares students for their first co-op job by teaching them how to write a résumé, how to conduct an interview, how to use the online systems for the job board, and how to begin their career planning.

Recognizing the need for more national and international work place opportunities, placements outside of the immediate Philadelphia area have been increased by approximately 33% in the last two year period.

Drexel is excited to have initiated the world's first online masters level degree programs with a cooperative education component blending the practical career advantage of online learning with the valuable professional experience afforded by a work integrated learning/cooperative education experience in the field of advanced study. A new electronic job board system for posting part-time jobs for students, immediate full-time jobs for new graduates, and professional/career opportunities for our alumni have won praises from employers and job seekers alike. Supporting the academic offices of the univer-



sity, a new electronic record system has been developed and made operational to allow closer monitoring of students on co-op. One of the most well received changes has been the opportunity for students to take free courses while they are on co-op, strengthening their connections to the university during six month work terms.

Drexel University is a comprehensive research based institution which annually places over 4,400 students on fulltime jobs for periods of six months with 1,500 employers, making it one of the largest co-op programs in the world. These experiences provide up to 18 months of full-time work experience by graduation; our students develop maturity, self-confidence, professionalism, and a better sense of career planning; skills and attitudes that may not be acquired through classroom education alone.

The idea of globalization has moved in recent years from its status as an industry buzzword to become the core of contemporary business practices. Drexel University has

Co-op for the 21st Century



Drexel President Papadakis (left), the only Greek-born president of a U.S. college or university, John Vidalakis of the Vidalakis Family Foundation and Christine Detris, a communication student at Drexel who is among the 2007 Vidalakis Family Cretan Scholars. Christine is working at Crete's Aldemar Knossos Royal Village in the resort's guest relations department.

positioned itself in the forefront of this trend, providing opportunities through its specialized programs for select students to live, work and learn in several countries. Participating students have come from numerous disciplines and have worked on nearly every continent. Whether their experience has been working in finance in London, bio-medical engineering in Italy, or the film industry in Mumbai, students have universally reported that living and working abroad for six months is one of the most rewarding and challenging parts of their Drexel education.

Drexel offers a variety of options for students who wish to go abroad, including academic and work exchanges, home country placements, and work-only employer experiences. For select countries, the university offers direct funding to cover costs involved in travel and living abroad. One example of this innovative model is the Vidalakis Family Cretan Scholars Program. In this endow-

ment funded program, eight students annually travel to the Greek island of Crete to live for six months in jobs that are designed to enhance their career interests and knowledge of their major study disciplines. The university provides each student with US\$ 6,000 prior to their departure to help offset the costs of travel and living expenses. This program and other similar international programs in Ireland, India, and Italy have encouraged many students who might otherwise not consider an international work experience to make the break with the university to live in a new environment and culture. In essence, these programs provide more students with the opportunities to learn a great deal more about the differences in world cultures. As a result, the newest generations of Drexel graduates are better prepared to work in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

To learn more about these programs, please visit our web site at www.drexel.edu/scdc/coop_abroad.asp.