OIP Travel Grant Report
Submitted by Paul Justice, Division of Undergraduate Studies (Liberal Studies)
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Introduction

I was awarded a travel grant to lead a group of nine SDSU students to Keele University in the United Kingdom from June 9th to July 4th, 2012. The program offered four units of course work, all taught by me. Specifically, the course work consisted of:

LING 430: English Grammar for Prospective Teachers (3 units)
GEN S 350: Interdisciplinary Topics (1 unit)

I am happy to report that the program was successful on every level, so much so that I am confident that we will be able to continue this basic program into the future.

Keele University

Having been to Keele in the Summer of 2011, largely to lay the ground work for this Summer’s program, I felt confident that the facilities and support there would be conducive to a successful program. This prediction turned out to be 100% accurate. Keele is situated in rural area in northern England, which helped create a strong sense of community among the group. There is also a great deal of history (very different history, as far as our students are concerned) in the region. One highlights of the experience was a guided tour of Keele Hall (pictured below), led by John Easom, the director of alumni relations at Keele.

Map of the Keele area

Perhaps the best feature of Keele as it relates to supporting our international experience programs is their International Programs Office, led by Annette Kratz and Miriam Mason. The office staff worked hard to create a schedule for us while dealing with some very serious complications, such as trying to find space and time to match our students with the international students they would be tutoring (see below under “course work”). They were also available to troubleshoot every step along the way, often solving problems in ways unthinkable to us. For example, when I went to them on the penultimate day of the academic period to report deafening construction above our classroom that would make the following day’s final exam impossible, they responded by getting construction in that building postponed for the day.
As one might expect, given the description above over the course of our time at Keele, we developed a strong bond with the International Programs Office staff, so much so that we asked Annette and Miriam to join us for a group dinner towards the end of our stay. During the dinner, our students expressed their gratitude for all the support we received and presented Annette and Miriam with very thoughtful thank you cards (pictured below).

Presentation to Annette Kratz

Presentation to Miriam Mason

As I did last Summer, I met with potential collaborators on the Keele faculty and was able to identify additional interested parties, which increases the possibilities for future programs. The greatest potential I see for collaboration is with Jane Essex, who is a science educator in Keele’s education department. We discussed a number of specific ways in which she and her colleagues could collaborate with us in the future and have kept in touch about them since.

Course Work

LING 430 is a class that is now required of most Liberal Studies majors, which made it an attractive option for this Division of Undergraduate studies based program. An added bonus with this class is that it is also required of many English majors, as well as being a class that all Linguistics majors and minors can apply towards their graduation requirements. Its wide appeal was essential for reaching the minimum enrollment to make the class go. Even so, we barely reached the minimum before subsequently losing a few and ending up with nine. Fortunately, both Keele and CES were willing to go with that number of students.
LING 430 is also a very demanding class. This group, however, worked very well together, with the stronger and weaker students working together to their mutual benefit. Also helpful was the setting of Keele, 2.5 miles from the nearest town of any size, which limited the number of distractions that competed with students’ study time. Everyone worked effectively as a group and not only passed the class, but also developed strong bonds.

Because GEN S 350 is a variable topics class, I was able to turn it into an experience that both complemented LING 430 and gave students something they could bring back and apply to a certificate in TESL here at SDSU. Specifically, I created a one unit supervising tutoring experience in collaboration with an intensive English language program that Keele hosts every Summer for international students who want to transition into a Keele degree program during the academic year. As we covered the content areas in LING 430, I presented ideas regarding how the students might incorporate those content areas in their tutoring sessions.

**Cultural Events**

At our request, our partners at Keele arranged several day trips for us during our three weeks at Keele. Specifically, we visited Chester, Manchester, and Liverpool, all of which proved to be worthwhile experiences for the group. Although there was no real connection between the course work and the trips, they introduced our students to many aspects of British history and culture and also helped them build confidence as travelers in a foreign land.

Also on our arranged agenda was a four day trip to London after the completion of the course work at Keele. After a stop along the way to see the Olympic torch passing through the northern England town of Lichfield (pictured below), we proceeded to our central London hotel, from which we were able to experience nearly everything that London had to offer. Some of the students, their travel confidence clearly growing, even arranged day trips from London on their own. This newfound confidence is significant when compared to the attitude some of the students had when they first arrived in the UK. To illustrate, when given the choice between navigating on their own from Manchester to the Keele area by train versus waiting seven hours in the Manchester airport for a shuttle bus to pick them up, several opted for the latter. No such fear of traveling independently existed by the end of the trip.
The Olympic torch passing through Lichfield  The changing of the guard in London

Summary

The Liberal Studies at Keele program was, on every level, a success:

• The students were successful academically and will bring back four units of course work that they can apply to major or certificate requirements.
• Our partners at Keele provided tremendous amenities and support.
• The trips, both northern England day trips and the time in London, were both educational and confidence building, particularly for the students in the group who had never traveled outside the US before.

Since my return I’ve made contact with a variety of SDSU folks, both inside and outside the division, about not only continuing but also expanding the Keele program for next Summer. I am optimistic that this program will thrive going forward.