

# THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION



SPRING 2009 VOLUME XXIII, NO. 5

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# Extra Step for Study Abroad

KERALA TAYLOR AND NICHOLAS FITZHUGH

Let's face facts: study abroad is not always all it's cracked up to be. After all, the common perception of the study-abroad experience as a semester-long party has some basis in truth. This is not to say that students shouldn't have fun overseas, but how can we ensure that they break out of the famous "American bubble" and pursue meaningful cross-cultural experiences?

All too often, the common wisdom seems to be that if we can just get students on a plane, true learning will inevitably follow. As co-founders of Glimpse.org, which publishes stories written by young Americans about real life abroad, we know that is just not the case. While we receive many

insightful, inspiring story submissions, we also get many disheartening ones—stories by students who have spent months abroad and whose most profound cultural insight is that Australians like to surf, or that Brits drive on the other side of the road, or that the French like strong cheese.

Glimpse.org, our user-generated, professionally edited website, acts as a catalyst for more meaningful overseas experiences. With some nice incentives thrown in (career training, online publication, contest prizes) we encourage students to get out there, to talk to people, to pursue cultural adventures. Our contributors and official correspondents have done

everything from exploring gay nightlife in Jordan to visiting a prosthetic foot factory in India to voyaging with Maori fishermen in New Zealand. The first step is getting on that plane, but it's the extra step a student takes on the other end that makes all the difference.

Study abroad has enormous potential when it comes to fostering a new generation of "global citizens"; the challenge is ensuring that it lives up to its promise.

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*Kerala Taylor is editor-in-chief of Glimpse.org and Nicholas Fitzhugh is publisher. Emails: kerala@glimpse.org and nick@glimpse.org*

# Water of Life

ANTHONY ZUENA

Bernard Amadei, a civil engineering professor at the University of Colorado, recently wrote about the grandiose, steel-and-concrete wonders that serve as daily reminders of just how successful and prosperous the human race can be. "The world needs no more big structures that satisfy the needs of only one billion people in the Western world," Amadei wrote. "It needs a massive, sustained outpouring of compassion in action for the billions of impoverished, but resilient people asking to be seen, dreaming of a better life."

Thanks to Amadei's nonprofit humanitarian organization Engineers Without Borders-USA (EWB), engineers and engineering students across the United States are playing central roles in helping build a more sustainable future for those living in developing countries.

Recently, engineers from S E A Consultants Inc., and engineering students from EWB's Northeastern University chapter in Boston participated in designing and constructing a water-distribution project in the Honduran village of Los Planes. The group identified a cleaner, more reliable water source. Then, with the help of villagers, they built a pipeline from the source to the village and a distribution reservoir along with water service taps for each house in the village.

With a new water-distribution system in place, the quality of life for the villagers improved dramatically over the course of a few months through improved sanitation and the ability to irrigate modest crops. The system also helped strengthen the villagers' ability to maintain their community and their culture.

Thanks to organizations like EWB, more engineers and engineering students are taking part in global construction projects that make everyday life healthier and better for people in developing countries. While these projects require extensive design and technical research—and some colleges award credits to students who participate on EWB projects—the students are learning that skills such as compassion, resourcefulness and determination are also necessary. By looking beyond their own borders, our engineers of today and engineers of tomorrow are helping to dramatically improve our world.

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*Anthony Zuena is president of S E A Consultants Inc., an engineering and architecture firm headquartered in Cambridge, Mass. Email: anthony.zuena@seacon.com*