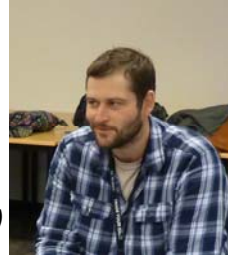




Chanticleer Tales from Abroad

“The ADVENTURE of going abroad as a student was a learning experience that took me beyond the classroom to UNDERSTAND OTHER CULTURES and BUILD cross-cultural RELATIONSHIPS that I will TREASURE for years to come.”

By Charles Stackhouse (BA, Intelligence and National Security Studies, 2016)



I grew up in small town South Carolina about one hour west of Myrtle Beach. My small town roots and family farm values kept me pretty sheltered while growing up. As a kid, and through my teenage years, I did not really experience much of the world outside of the two rivers that bordered the sides of my hometown. I chose instead to spend my time working on my dad’s farm, hunting, and fishing rather than understanding the complexities of how the world actually functioned. Upon my high school graduation, I felt it was my patriotic duty to serve in the United States Army after September 11, 2001. The Army provided me with the first major sense of adventure, learning opportunities, and the desire to serve something so much bigger than myself.



Charles Stackhouse during deployment in Middle East

Shortly after joining the U.S. Army, I deployed to the Middle East and South Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. After this life-altering adventure, and amidst the chaos of war, my experiences led me to Coastal Carolina University to major in Intelligence and National Security. More importantly, my experiences in this first adventure emboldened me to learn more about other cultures, and the diversity and perspectives they bring to everyday issues in the international community.

During my senior year at Coastal Carolina University (CCU), I worked with one of my professors – Dr. Richard Aidoo – to apply for the International Student Festival in Trondheim (ISFiT) 2015 in Norway. I viewed this as the opportunity of a lifetime to travel abroad and learn from students all over the world, dealing with a major international issue, which happened to be global corruption for ISFiT 2015. ISFiT 2015 brought together over 450 students from over 130 countries to come and discuss the issue of corruption in various designated workshops, furthering our knowledge on this global challenge. I was separated from my fellow CCU colleagues into a workshop of students from every six of the seven continents, from a wealth of diverse cultural backgrounds. During our first workshop session, I was outside of my comfort zone, surrounded by people from different races, colors, ethnicity, and creed. I quickly made friends and eagerly embarked on a very unique interactive learning experience. This was an adventure that shaped my perspective about an international community that has immense diversity, but a common humanity.

Through open dialogue, we all shared our definitions of corruption, our experiences of corruption, identified various underlying factors of corruption, and the effects of corruptions on the global society. Our workshop leaders posed corruption related questions, and started dialogue in our breakout sessions, which were often made up of colleagues from at least 5 different countries, at a time. We discussed, debated, and built friendships; effectively interacting with one another in a peaceful learning environment and far away in a country that I would have never thought to visit - Norway.



*Charles Stackhouse (fourth from left) in a breakout session with fellow ISFiT 2015 participants. **From left to right:** Alexi from Russia; Jessica from Brazil; Grace from Sri Lanka; and Apollo from Chile.*

My workshop colleagues brought many different perspectives, as did I, which promoted a wealth of cultural experiences. ISFiT 2015 was very focused on challenging the global status quo on corruption in civil society, and challenged and trusted young lives to bring about change in our various communities, countries, and the world. This study abroad experience went well beyond our discussions in classrooms, as I gathered with my newfound friends to learn more about their backgrounds through sharing our belief systems, values, politics, education, food, or sports.

We were afforded the chance to listen to influential speakers such as John Shapiro of the World Bank, Peter Eigen the co-founder of Transparency International, and the His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This was a rare honor, and a learning adventure that will shape my perspectives for the rest of my life. The opportunity to live with a Norwegian host family who treated me as their own son and had fellow housemates from Belgium, Taiwan, and Rwanda gave me time after workshops to continue to learn and forge friendships that will remain strong long after the ISFiT 2015 study experience.

I cherished the experience of ISFiT 2015 and my travel abroad to Norway as a student. The opportunity to travel abroad and learn from my peers from every corner of the world is unparalleled. The ISFiT 2015 experience was a great addition to my degree in a number of ways – from learning about other cultures, the international travel experience, discussion of complex international issues, and the ability to work as a team in support of a common goal. I highly recommend current CCU students to participate in international student programs or semesters abroad. My first adventure sent me abroad as a soldier, which I take pride in, but the adventure of going abroad as a student, was an endless learning experience that took me beyond the classroom to understand other cultures and build cross-cultural relationships that I will treasure for years to come.

For more information about study abroad programs, international internships or other international opportunities, please check out our website at: coastal.edu/studyabroad.