

**REPORT OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS FUNDED TRIP TO
SPAIN UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES INITIATIVE OF THE
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

TO:

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FROM:

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PROFESSOR OF SPANISH

AUGUST, 1999

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Introduction:

The fact-finding trip, funded by SDSU's International Programs office, spanned the period from July 20 to July 31, 1999. I returned from Europe on August 11, 1999.

During those 11 days of formal discussions, I was able met with groups of people representing four Spanish universities and the Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which also has a highly developed educational program in Business Administration and Business Spanish for foreigners. One of the four universities already has an agreement with SDSU, but I thought that it would be appropriate for me to touch base with the vice rector (vice president) of the University of Alcala, since I was in Madrid and so close to Alcala.

This report is divided into two main sections and a final section of recommendations. In Section I of the report, I will include a brief explanation of what I accomplished at the University of Alcala and the Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In Section II, I will provide a more fully developed explanation of my visits with university officials at

three Spanish universities with which SDSU has no agreements. At this time, they would like very much to enter into formal agreements for student and/or faculty exchanges, as well as become sites for groups of our "junior-year abroad" students, for summer, semester or year-long programs of study outside the purview of formal one-to-one student or faculty exchange agreements.

Section I: University of Alcala and the Madrid Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

SDSU has a formal agreement with the University of Alcala. Alcala de Henares is a small city within the "Comunidad Autónoma" of Madrid. The concept of "Comunidad Autónoma" is something equivalent to the concept of state in our country. There are 17 "Autonomous Communities" in Spain, Madrid being one of them. Alcala resides within that "community" or state. I met with the vice rector (equivalent to our vice president) for international studies, Luis Beltran. We spoke of the success that their three female students had at SDSU this past year and the fact that two of those three students will return in the Fall, 1999. Incidentally, I had lunch with two of those students while I was in Madrid. I wanted to meet with Vice Rector, Luis Beltran, as a way to indicate that we want to continue having a friendly relationship with the University of Alcala. Also, SDSU should be sending students to Alcala for meeting our quota for the three students who came to SDSU last year and for the two who will return this year. We spoke of that issue as stipulated in the formal agreement signed by officials of the two institutions.

While in Alcala, I also met with the new mayor of the city of Alcala de Henares, Dr. Manuel Peinado Lorca, who is a university professor of biology. One of my

extracurricular activities is being the current president of the San Diego-Alcala Sister City Program, which answers to the Office of the San Diego Mayor. Dr. Peinado has been to SDSU before and is now interested in making a visit to San Diego as the Mayor of Alcala. He wants to meet with San Diego's mayor for discussions around commercial trade. Tentatively, he plans to travel to San Diego in Spring, 2000. He told me that he would attempt to bring the president of the University of Alcala on that trip. It would be important for Steve Weber to hold meetings with his counterpart from Alcala, Dr. Manuel Gala Muñoz, Rector (President) of the University of Alcala, one of the most prestigious universities of Spain.

In Madrid, I met with two people from the Madrid Chamber of Commerce: Juliana Moreno Fernandez and José María Servet González-Cano. Juliana Moreno is in charge of the Madrid Chamber's Spanish for Business program. SDSU is authorized to administer their certificate exam here at SDSU. I administer that exam twice a year for our students and for any other persons who desire to take that certificate exam. We discussed new dates for future exams. In addition, we discussed the Madrid Chamber's academic program in Business Administration, which is as well developed as any at Spanish universities. The Madrid Chamber would be interested in exploring an exchange program with SDSU in the area of international business.

The second person, Jose María Servet González-Cano, is Director of International Affairs of the Madrid Chamber. He is also planning to make a trip to San Diego toward the end of this calendar year, to meet with his counterparts at the San Diego Chamber of

Commerce and the US-Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Our own CIBER and International Business program should also participate in some way with the visit of this Director of International Affairs.

Section II: Three universities: Antonio de Nebrija (Madrid), Oviedo (Asturias) and La Coruña (Galicia).

Universidad Antonio de Nebrija

This is a private university with all the academic quality of other national public universities and acceptance by the National Ministry of Education of Spain. I met several functionaries and the "Secretaria General", Begoña Macaya Solachi. She explained in general terms what the Antonio de Nebrija University could provide our students, which is virtually all the regular or normal liberal arts curricula offered by most liberal arts colleges in the U.S. Ms. Macaya believes that some students at her university might be interested in being part of an exchange program with our students. More importantly, she expressed strongly her desire for SDSU to send students to her university in a typical "Junior Year Abroad" program. Thus, both types of study programs exist for SDSU students: a real exchange program (one-for-one) and a group program for our students in Madrid. In the latter case, since the Antonio de Nebrija University has two campuses, one in Madrid and one in the outskirts of Madrid in pine-scented foothills, SDSU students could have the experience of studying, for example, in Madrid for 3 days and 2 days in the foothills of Madrid. I brought back brochures of this university. I will explain this university's program to the

faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. The information will be available to any other persons at SDSU who might be interested in knowing about that university.

Universidad de Oviedo

This university is located in the north of Spain, in Asturias, the only Principality of Spain, but which is also another “Comunidad Autónoma.” Asturias lies on the northern coast along the Cantabrian Sea. It is the area where the “reconquest” of Spain began in the late 700s, as Pelayo and his warriors began their drive south against the Moors, who had invaded Spain and had overrun it during the 700s AD. Finally, in 1492, some seven and a half centuries later, the Catholic King and Queen, Ferdinand and Isabel, drove the last of the Moors from Spain. Oviedo is a suitable city for SDSU students, who are serious about studies in the Sciences or the Humanities. This university has a strong academic program in the biological sciences and chemistry. Several of its science programs are top-notch. It is particularly strong in biochemistry, which supports a very fine medical school. However, students interested in the traditional Humanities will find a panoply of offerings well worth the experience of studying in Spain. I met Dra. Carmen Benavides González, Vice Rector for International Relations. She provided me with the university catalogue and other pieces of information pertaining to the university and the city of Oviedo. I met several administrators and faculty members, who seemed very positive about my visit, especially to their College of the Sciences. Any student of the sciences, who might be interested in studying at this university, should already have a well developed proficiency in Spanish. Thus, a native speaker of Spanish, who may be a student of science, would be a good candidate for study at this university. Other students

who want to learn more Spanish and the culture of Spain, or take courses in International Commerce, would also be good candidates for study at the University of Oviedo. Finally, I should mention that the people with whom I met would be amenable to exploring exchanges of graduate and undergraduate students, as well as faculty.

Universidad de La Coruña.

La Coruña is located in the extreme northwest of Spain, in the Comunidad Autónoma of Galicia. Two official languages are used in Galicia: Gallego and Castillian Spanish.

Although one might hear Gallego, it is not used for official university instruction. Thus, students will always be “at home” with Spanish in all their daily activities. La Coruña is a large city on the Atlantic coast, just where the Cantabrian Sea begins. It is a relatively modern city, -- a sea port, really. Galicia is a beautiful area of Spain, well worth exploring in depth. SDSU students would be offered a wide array of curricular offerings in practically all traditional areas of study. The university is situated in three main areas in the city, one downtown and two on the edge of the city. SDSU students who might study in one of these two peripheral sites would take a bus from the university to downtown, a trip of about 10 minutes. In addition to the possibility of studying a robust curriculum, students will find Galicia a very beautiful and interesting area of Spain to explore. The people are extremely hospitable, as are all Spaniards, in general. My host at this university was Dra. Josefina Martínez Barbieri, a very enthusiastic and energetic administrator. She is the university director of international relations and exchanges. I was given appropriate literature about the university, academic programs and a student

guide that can be reproduced for any group of students who might want to study in La Coruña.

At all three new universities (Antonio de Nebrija, Oviedo and La Coruña), I was impressed by the warm reception I felt from all university officials with whom I spoke about an exchange. I am struck by the idea that all three universities want to “do business” with SDSU, in the sense of signing an agreement for student and/or faculty exchanges. Each university has a fine reputation and a very good curriculum. Each university has a modern infrastructure and up-to-date equipment for whatever area of study SDSU students might want to pursue.

Obviously, details must be scrutinized and disclaimers made in order to prevent any particular person from assuming that there won't be any “surprises.” Housing, for example, will be adequate, but probably different from the norm assumed here in California. However, once an SDSU student becomes acclimated to his/her new environment, living conditions usually will not be an issue. There are student residences, and families where SDSU students can find housing, but the usual mode is to share an apartment with other Spaniards. I would recommend this approach, because the student has the freedom to come and go at will and is made welcome by his/her peers. Usually this includes being invited to the roommates' homes to meet the families and get involved in that environment. Food is abundant, nutritious, and tasty. There should be no problem with the food of Spain. Spanish professors are very approachable and personable.

There may be, among the many professors, one or two who might tend to be less personable than the rest, but that goes with the territory of university life.

Recommendations

I would recommend that Dr. Bob Pozos (SDSU College of Science) be asked to contact the people I met at the University of Oviedo for the purpose of exploring an exchange of students (undergrads or grads) in the field of science, in general, and biochemistry, in particular. I am able to pass on to him all the information I have from Oviedo. The administrators and faculty, whom I met, are exceptionally fine people and open to the idea of an official exchange.

Another recommendation is to further explore a modest beginning for an exchange with both Antonio de Nebrija and La Coruña, as two new programs, in addition to the other programs already "on the books": Alcalá, Salamanca, Valladolid (in Spain), Monterrey and Guadalajara (in Mexico), Valparaíso (in Chile), as well as all the others in other parts of the world. I also recommend that an on-line "brochure" be commissioned and developed to transmit information to SDSU students and faculty about all the possible foreign study sites offered by SDSU, including any new programs that may be the result of the newly established initiative for international education, as issued from the Office of the Vice President and Provost. In my opinion, such a brochure should include a description of all the programs that SDSU could make available to students. My recommendation is to promote two possibilities: groups and individuals. I know that many times, due to unique personalities, a student prefers to travel alone to experience a

university and its city life and culture. Such a student finds that being in a group is too much of a temptation to revert back to his/her own cultural patterns while living in the new culture. Other students find that being in a group is more compatible to their personal needs. To promote interest among SDSU students, a brochure of options should, in my opinion, be developed and distributed to students at the beginning of their careers at SDSU. The on-line "brochure" should provide information about each university, the culture, transfer of credits, the appropriate contact persons and other aspects of the experience abroad. The important thing is to make the concept of study in the "international arena" an interesting idea that becomes the SDSU norm and not the exception.