

Students abroad expand horizons

Education majors teach in foreign countries

By April Partridge
Features Editor

As a Spanish speaking education major, Jaquie Benzer always expected to teach Hispanic children. With the Students Abroad program, she can actually teach in Mexico.

"I want to (teach) because I (substituted) for a bilingual classroom, and most kids from Mexico just walked out their schools and into our schools," Benzer said.

The program sends education majors to other countries where they fulfill their student teaching requirement. They earn the same 14 credits as student teachers in Clark County and remain enrolled in UNLV, allowing them to keep their student loans.

While the program is not designed to teach language, it can help teachers become more familiar with the cultures where their second language is spoken, accord-

ing to Mark Bannatyne, chair of the Review Committee for International Student Teaching Placements.

Most teach in schools offering English instruction. Students who speak the other language almost as well as English may teach in that language.

College of Education faculty members who are responsible for the student's safety have contacts in the participating countries. Also, a faculty member from UNLV visits the student at least once.

UNLV students have taught in 12 countries, some bringing their children or spouses along. This is discouraged, however, because work visas are not usually available for spouses. Children are sometimes able to attend school in the respective country but additional fees may be charged because they are not citizens.

The program totals \$350, excluding food, housing, airfare and other expenses. Students can be placed with host families or find their own housing. Either way, a faculty member from the cooperating university in that country must inspect and approve of the



Photo: Gregg Benson/Rebel Yell

Yvonne Alley (left), Jaquie Benzer, Maureen Matchett in class.

arrangement.

Participating students are required to have international health insurance. In addition, they must purchase insurance covering emergency evacuation in case of health or political unrest.

Bannatyne said student teaching abroad does not negatively affect certification in Nevada.

"UNLV has the assurance of the Nevada Department of Education that students who participate in the international student teaching op-

tion will be accepted for licensure," he said.

Bannatyne said most student teachers report similarity between other school systems except for the curriculum. "Everything is the same except the way they do it," he said.

Students Abroad is also available in the summer, usually in Japan and New Zealand because the school year recesses during winter and continues through UNLV's summer break.

Students interested in participating in the fall and spring semesters can select from a variety of countries, including Australia, Costa Rica, England, France, Germany, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Spain and Scotland. Other countries may be available upon request if the College of Education can establish a contact there.

Some parts of the world, such as the Middle East or some African countries, cannot be considered because of political instability. At least six months lead time is required to make arrangements for most countries. Mexico is among the most difficult countries to visit because of problems getting visas.

UNLV President Carol Harter praised the program, citing it as an example of the university's commitment to expanding global involvement.

"International involvement of the campus is really important. I am very eager to have opportunities in international programs. They enrich faculty and students incredibly."

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ACCESS,

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around campus is another facet of compliance with federal regulations. Stockbauer believes UNLV is improving daily in that area.

Students agree the older buildings on campus are the most unfriendly to disabled people. Eric Anderson, director of planning and construction, attributes this to age and outdated disability codes.

"With the older buildings there are structural conditions that cannot change," Anderson said. "A place where you may need a ramp you will not be able to put a ramp there. In that case there are sometimes allowances (within the codes)."

The growth of UNLV's campus has also motivated the department to explore design changes which may help disabled students.

"As far as accessibility, something builders and designers should think about is striving for universal design," Anderson explained. "That would be designing buildings for the needs of the people. It will become important in the next 30 years as the majority of the U.S. population ages. It will be a big change for many people when they get to be at or near 50. So why put in steps when you can use ramps?"

Anderson believes UNLV's handicap codes comply "fairly well, but there is always room for improvement." To make the buildings more accessible to disabled students, adjustments have been made such as texturing walls for visually impaired students and adding handicap access doors for students in wheelchairs.

"We try to hit malfunctioning (doors and elevators) within one to two days," Anderson said. "If it is a mechanical problem, of course it will depend on how long it will take to get parts or what we can do with it."

Disability concerns grow with UNLV, and the DRC must cooperate with other staff to provide the services which allow them to enjoy "the full privileges of students."

"I know there has been a consistent effort in the new buildings (to make them more accessible to disabled students)," Stockbauer said. "UNLV is improving on a regular basis."

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