

Summer in the City/ SGBS's Summertime Education/ Summertime Learning

For four weeks this summer, sixteen graduate students from around the world joined the Summer Graduate Business Studies (SGBS) program at the Gustavson School of Business. The program was a perfect opportunity for all of the students to study and travel before beginning their professional lives. The cohort of students was drawn from around the world - Germany, Denmark, Singapore, and Australia - being a few of the nationalities represented in their classes. Among them was Lara Petsch, a Master's student in Industrial Engineering at the University of Dortmund in Germany.

Petsch already has a job lined up after graduation and saw the SGBS program as a way to prepare for her career in business. "I have an Industrial Engineering major, not a Business major, so when I got a job offer from the energy industry as a Management Consultant, I knew I had to stack up on some business classes to prepare for work."

The SGBS program is structured around three modules - Global Strategy, Cross-cultural Management and Social Entrepreneurship, all made to foster a global mindset. Petsch was initially worried about the short and intensive program however, she found it a welcome change from her previous educational experience. "In Germany we sometimes have classes with 100, even 300 students. It's more of a lecture back home — here it's a hands-on program where we have exercises everyday and the teachers know everyone's name."

Another novelty for Petsch was the program's commitment to connect the business community with students. The program gave students the opportunity to visit a range of Victoria's premier companies and to speak with some of the city's leading business figures.

Among these was a presentation by David Cowen, CEO of Butchart Gardens. Cowen discussed Butchart Garden's strategies for growth in Victoria's booming tourism market and engaged students on the ways in which tourism businesses can manage to remain sustainable and locally-focused while growing. Students got the chance to explore the business first-hand by taking a trip through the Butchart Gardens, an experience that gave them an in-depth look into Victoria's thriving tourism sector.

"Theory can be taught anywhere, but people coming in to speak and the field trips we take are very special, and specific to Victoria," says Petsch. "That's the key factor that makes this business program unique."

Petsch has been captivated with Victoria. Her four weeks on Vancouver Island were filled with sun and a fantastic group of like-minded students ready to travel and experience everything the city had to offer. "Even without the program, just with the group it's been an amazing time. I wish it was longer, I don't want to go home just yet."

The endless outdoor activities available on the island had surprised her. From surfing waves in Tofino, hiking across the forest in search of a fallen bomber plane, to taking trips with a local adventure company, the experience has been filled with a perfect balance between work and travel.

"Many people say they'll travel later - but you don't as once you start work it's hard." Petsch says. The SGBS program has given her the chance to integrate both her desire to travel and a great educational experience.

As she prepares to head back to Germany, Petsch knows this experience will stay with her. The program has given her a wealth of academic knowledge, friendships, and the chance to experience life as an international student. She already has plans to return to Victoria one day, hoping to take an internship with one of the companies she visited while on the program. For now, she returns home prepared for a job in international business, and with a renewed enthusiasm about the opportunities and knowledge she can apply to her new career.