

## **Students abroad increases 8 percent**

By Stephanie Doctrow | IDS

Sophomore Thomas Gaither could be spending his summer shadowing doctors in the United States.

Instead, he will volunteer in a health clinic in Cochabamba, Bolivia, for three months.

“We have problems here, and college is expensive, but you can’t get that kind of firsthand experience in a third-world setting without going abroad,” Gaither said.

More students like Gaither are choosing to study abroad despite the economic recession.

The number of IU students studying abroad has increased 8 percent throughout the last year, and 233 percent in the last decade.

More than 1,600 students from IU-Bloomington are currently enrolled in study abroad programs in 36 countries and 16 languages.

“At IU, study abroad is an integral part of the degree program,” said Kathleen Sideli, associate vice president for overseas study. “Students and their families don’t consider it an extra, but part of the degree.”

Sideli said though many other IU departments have had to cut back their budgets to prevent a shortfall, the Department of Overseas Study’s funding has not been cut.

She said the department continues to grow because IU President Michael McRobbie and the University have made international exposure a priority for students.

“Indiana has a very long tradition of international activity,” Sideli said. “Our attitude has always been for a state in the middle of the country, it’s important to take students outside Indiana and into the world.”

Steven Marnell, a 2008 Kelley School of Business graduate, took advantage of the study abroad opportunities available at IU by spending a semester in Hong Kong.

There he took classes at the City University of Hong Kong, taught English classes to Chinese students, joined a rugby club, traveled around Asia and made friends with both American and international students.

Marnell said because his semester abroad was through an exchange program, it cost the same amount as a semester of out-of-state tuition at IU.

He said studying abroad was both affordable and enlightening, and it has provided him with an edge in the job market.

“In good or bad times, the ability to stand out is tremendous, but it’s particularly important in the economy right now,” Marnell said.

He said the skills he learned when studying abroad, such as the ability to explore new circumstances and adapt to new environments, fall right in line with what employers seek in employees and distinguishes job candidates from everyone else.

Marnell said his experience abroad opened doors to many other opportunities.

This summer, he will teach students English in South America before taking a job in October at PricewaterhouseCoopers in New York.

Sideli said IU recognizes the importance of study abroad programs and seeks to provide as much financial aid as possible to students.

In 2007 and 2008, students received more than \$5 million in loans, grants and scholarships to finance study abroad experiences.

Gaither is paying for his summer abroad through scholarships, including some funding from the Hutton Honors College.

He said the trip will provide him with the opportunity to learn about medicine from a different perspective and to practice his Spanish skills.

“It’s so important we continue to establish good relationships with other countries,” Gaither said. “In times of economic hardship, it’s the best time to go see how others live and apply it to how we live here.”