



PREREQUISITE:

BY STACIA MOMBURG

HOW DO CAL POLY MBA STUDENTS prepare for careers at *Fortune 500* companies? They eat fortune cookies, of course.

Actually, they embark on a whirlwind tour of five cities in the People's Republic of China to learn about the global economy firsthand.

As part of the university's 10-month MBA and M.S. program in industrial technology, a group of 31 students and two faculty members trekked through Shenzhen, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Beijing, visiting executive conference rooms, factories, industrial parks, port facilities, local markets, multinational firms, universities and government agencies. Students agreed the 18-day trip invaluablely enhanced both their professional prospects and their personal worldviews.

MBA candidate Dan Beaton said the most important thing he learned is that the United States is not the center of the world. "That changed me as a person," he admits.

To prepare for the trip, students buried themselves in books for nearly six months. They also attended travel information sessions and lectures by academic scholars and industry representatives with experience in Asia.

Chris Carr, associate dean of graduate programs in the Orfalea College of Business, organized and led the tour with the help of Cal State Monterey Bay Professor John Wu.

Carr says many of the firms that hire Cal Poly graduate students will require business travel to Asia. "It's critical to



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expose our students to China from the ground up so that they know what to expect when dealing in Asian markets.”

Zhang Lipin, general manager of Shenzhen NewlyEverRise Electronics, said having Cal Poly graduate business students visit was a wonderful experience for his firm and its managers. “We were able to learn more about the Western market and way of thinking through the eyes, ears and questions of these young Americans,” said Zhang.

Leonard Ng, managing director of CB Richard Ellis in Shanghai, said: “Overseas excursions such as the one that these Cal Poly students have completed are, if anything, understated experiences, and the more we engage in activities like this the more we become truly understanding of one another and other cultures.”

MBA candidate David Lotierzo said the pace of development in China was striking. “I am still trying to get my head around the astounding scale and scope of growth in the country,” he said. “I was struck by how quickly and effectively the Chinese have embraced the free-market system since economic reforms began under Deng Xiaoping.”

To read about the students’ on-the-road impressions, experiences and some of the lessons learned, visit www.calpolymbatrip.com.

For more information about hosting a visit or event in China for next year’s Cal Poly MBA class, contact Carr at ccarr@calpoly.edu. □

