One Student’s Quest to Study Abroad in Italy

Vanessa Frisina takes advantage of campus programs to help students study abroad

By Stephanie Spearman
Campus Editor

Studying abroad is something that many students wish they could do, but very few actually act that upon. Vanessa Frisina is making happen.

Next quarter, CSU East Bay student Vanessa Frisina, who decided she would study abroad her freshman year after receiving and informational e-mails from the Center for International Education on campus, will be traveling to Italy to expand and expand her horizons.

“I knew I wanted to study abroad since I was in high school,” said Frisina. “I have always been fascinated with living in another country and then I learned I could do it... and it instantly became something I put on my to-do list.”

Frisina chose to travel to Italy next quarter because of her Italian heritage. Having traveled there before, she realized the food and culture there appealed to her.

“I have been there before, and fell in love with it,” she said.

Though she doesn’t know the language and will be taking classes in English, Frisina is learning basic Italian phrases to ensure that she won’t be lost while traveling, but of class exploring the country.

“While I don’t want to get lost,” she added, “and asking for directions could be a little difficult because I don’t know the language well enough.”

Traveling to a different country is a nerve-wracking experience for anyone, especially a student alone and living in a place where the primary language is one aside from your own, but Frisina is embracing it.

“I am most nervous about not knowing how to get around or not knowing the city,” she said. “My first goal is to make one person knows the area and will help me get around.”

Apart from being Italian herself, Frisina is anticipating the worldly experience and knowledge of art and history in its original context.

“I am most excited about seeing everything I’ve heard about, read about, and seen pictures of,” explained Frisina. “The statues and paintings and architecture is worth the trip in itself! I also cannot wait to be in the city that I will be learning about in my classes.”

Preparing for a trip like this can be a nerve-wracking experience for anyone, especially a student alone and living in a place where the primary language is one aside from your own, but Frisina is a seasoned globe-trotter, who has visited countries like Switzerland, France, Thailand, and even Zimbabwe.

“Because of all this experience, she is taking steps to ensure that she will easily acclimate to her new European surroundings.”

“I’ve been walking a lot lately to prepare myself for the constant walking,” said Frisina. “Mentally, I have just been preparing myself for leaving and putting a lot of things on hold.”

Excitement about the learning experience aside, Frisina is nervous about leaving and all of her projects she has here. “It will be pretty hard to leave everyone here,” she said. “That is probably why I am not doing anything the year long program because I don’t think I can be away from them for that long. This amount of time will be perfect.”

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The state—also the lowest level of funding since 1999-2000, and $1.5 billion from fee revenue and our operating budget was roughly $3.8 billion.

“For the 2010-11 fiscal year, the CSU will receive approximately $2.62 billion from the state,” continued Uhlenkamp, “which is still $350 million less than 2007-08 and roughly equivalent to the level of state funding in 2005-06. It should be noted that in 2005-06, CSU enrollment was approximately 405,000, and we are expecting to serve many more students than that this year.”

But the costs are not the only issues CSU students face.

“Because of such a dramatic reduction to the level of state funding,” said Uhlenkamp, “we were forced to implement several cost-cutting measures, including employee layoffs and furloughs and class and enrollment reduction across the system. As a result, the quality of service to CSU students suffered.”

As Uhlenkamp said, there would be a wave of new students interested in taking classes to be eligible for financial aid.

“Fortunately, current economic conditions had not negatively impacted the amount of federal and state financial aid available to students,” said Rhonda Johnson, CSU’s executive director of Financial Aid.

The script for “Scroogie” originated from the minds of students in the Dramatic Activities for Children class, under the supervision of Fajilan, who is in her fifth year as an assistant professor with the university.

According to the Theatre and Arts department website, “Scroogie” is “loosely based” on the Charles Dickens classic, updated with contemporary spirit, ghosts and social problems.

According to Fajilan, although there are new elements, audiences can still expect an old fashioned moral to the holiday story.

Fajilan stated that the key to changing our own circumstance lies in the use of “empathy, kindness and compassion,” and “Scroogie” attempts to convey that message to audiences.

Danielle Martin, a junior at CSUEB, hopes to check out the production as a reminder of what the holiday season should be about.

“Sometimes I think people get more caught up in the commercialism of the holidays, buying presents and all that,” she said, “but they forget about the spirit of what this time of year is all about.”