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National Student Exchange offers travel option for students

Summary: The National Student Exchange (NSE), a consortium of U.S. and Canadian colleges and Universities that includes the Morris and Twin Cities campuses, offers an affordable travel option for students.

(September 5, 2007)-Study and travel abroad have long been a part of the collegiate experience for students at the University of Minnesota, Morris. A similar option for UMM students is the National Student Exchange (NSE), a consortium of U.S. and Canadian colleges and Universities that includes the Morris and Twin Cities campuses of the University of Minnesota. Participating students can choose to study in-residence at a host school anywhere in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands or Canada for a semester or a year, while maintaining their UMM student status.

A studio art major and business minor, UMM student Kristin Backman's interests gravitate toward the music business. So it was a natural fit that she chose to attend Tennessee State University in Nashville through the NSE program during the 2005-2006 academic year.

While in Nashville, Backman "worked in venue management, booking bands to play." It was an ideal program for Backman, who recognizes that a career in the music business requires "knowing people." Since she didn't want to leave Morris and Minnesota for long, attending a school in the U.S. through NSE that fit her career goal was a perfect match.

"I took a lot of 'generals' – accounting, introduction to business and economics, digital photography," shared Backman, the daughter of Brad and Jonna Backman of Donnelly. She also held internships each semester: one at a record label company another at an artist management company.

Outside of the classroom there were "perks" too. "I saw Keith Urban (popular country recording artist)," beamed Backman. She also worked at Ted's Montana Grill, where she talked to her customers about ice fishing and made "a couple of good friends. [Her customers] called me 'Minnesota.'"

And there were more sobering experiences.

"I was in Nashville when Katrina hit [the Gulf Coast]," said Backman. "I met people who were affected I shared the boxes I used when I moved in and saw their gratitude."

I learned to appreciate what I have," she added, "how good UMM is and how good our faculty are."

"Communities are a very important part of the NSE experience," said Neil Leroux, NSE coordinator who works with Tom McRoberts in the Center for International Programs. "Some students scope out potential grad schools as well."

An option for the past five years at UMM, NSE offers students an affordable option for study and travel.

Backman and Leroux encourage interested students to participate in NSE at any time during their years at UMM,

“especially the freshman or sophomore years,” said Backman. Applications are accepted beginning this fall through the second week of February.

“It’s an easy application process,” added Leroux.

For more information about NSE visit the UM-TC Web site at [Off-campus study](#). All UMM students should contact Neil Leroux at (320) 589-6270 or Sharon Van Eps at 231 Community Services, (320) 589-6464.

Photo: Kristin Backman and Neil Leroux

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