

Proposal for filling the requirements of  
**Global Understanding**

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## **Introduction**

The goal of the Global Understanding Requirement, as stated in the HIED Handbook and Policy Manual 1999-2000, is to “assist students in developing a holistic perspective of higher education through knowledge of its internal and external constituents, as well as to understand the interests and concerns of the global community. By meeting this requirement, students will demonstrate an understanding of one or more non-U.S. cultures and their effects on post-secondary education.”

One of the ways to gain a clear understanding of the relationship between higher education and a society is to study a culture in which there is a contrast to what one is familiar with, or one in which there has been tremendous change in the recent past and present. Bulgaria meets both requirements.

I've chosen to work in Bulgaria for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to challenge myself by choosing a culture in transition, where higher education is likely to play a significant role in the change going on in the country. Second, I wanted to challenge myself by choosing a culture that would be significantly unfamiliar to me. I do not speak Bulgarian, and at this point am unable to read Cyrillic lettering. Third, I've come to understand that Student Affairs as a profession might have a unique role to play in the evolution of higher education in the formerly communist countries.

However, I wanted to choose a location that would provide some support for me as well. Although I have traveled to Western Europe, Morocco, and China, those trips have been for very short durations (1-7 days each) and I have been with closely escorted tourist groups. To build in some support, I've chosen a site that has hosted a BGSU HIED student in the past (Dean Harwood, summer 1998), is an American University, and has an internship supervisor who is American.

## **American University in Bulgaria**

Founded in 1991 as a Bulgarian and American joint initiative, AUBG provides a model of a Western liberal arts higher education in an emerging democracy. AUBG represents an unparalleled investment in the future of Eastern Europe. The American University in Bulgaria is chartered by an act of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. In December 1998, AUBG was granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

- Brochure, *International Study in Bulgaria*

Bulgaria is on the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered by Romania on the north, the Black Sea on the east, Greece on the south, and Macedonia and Yugoslavia on the west. AUBG is located in Blagoevgrad, which is about 100 km south of the capital city of Sofia in the southwest section of the country. It is very close to the Macedonian border.



## Internship

I have been offered, and have accepted, an internship in the Community Living Office and Enrollment Management Office. For five (5) weeks' work, I will be paid \$200 US and room and board in a residence hall.

The student services division includes offices for the functions of counseling, career services, admission, health services, sports, and residence life.

My primary internship supervisor will be Jill Rasmussen, Director of Campus Living. We have been in contact by e-mail, and met at the NASPA conference in Indianapolis. Her contact information is:

Jill M. Rasmussen  
Director of Campus Living  
Student Services #1  
2700 Blagoevgrad  
Bulgaria, EUROPE  
Tel: (+359) 73/254 21 (ext. 224), 73/252 93  
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We are still in the process of finalizing my projects. However, the following are projects on which I might be working.

Kosovo Project: AUBG is hosting a group of 30 students from Kosovo to provide team building and leadership skills training. The program will be led by student leaders from AUBG. The program will run from May 10-May 31, so I will join it after it has begun.

Assessment and Evaluation: AUBG is going to be reviewed for accreditation, and will be preparing for that site visit.

Enrollment Management: Admissions created and then finalized the plan in the month of June. It is my understanding that my supervisor might have the opportunity to return to Kosovo with the students from the project in the month of June, so I will then shift my focus to this office.

Women's Center: This is a new initiative. At this point, the project is likely to involve reviewing and expanding library resources.

RA Training: This program is established, but will be reviewed and planned for the 2000 training period while I am there.

Orientation: This program is already planned, but they might need some support in finalization of planning.

## **Learning Objectives Related to BGSU HIED Program**

- Gain awareness and some understanding of Bulgaria; its history, culture, and people.
- Learn to sound out Cyrillic lettering and recognize and speak basic phrases in Bulgarian.
- Gain awareness and some understanding of other Balkan countries through students and perhaps some travel.
- Gain a better understanding of the current political events in the region, particularly the conflict in Kosovo.
- Understand the challenges of student services and student affairs in a formerly communist culture.
- Learn more about the unique mission and accomplishments of AUBG.
- Help to AUBG students gain some understanding of the role of student affairs in higher education, perhaps consider a career in student affairs or a student affairs function.
- Identify changes over time in Bulgaria, and differences of perspective according to American background, by comparing my experience to that of Dean Harwood (AUBG intern, summer 1998.)
- Reconsider my views and assumptions about the role of higher education/student affairs in an American society, by examining a higher education system trying to meet the needs of a newly formed national government.
- Further strengthen a BGSU-AUBG relationship such that:
  - It is an established and rich doctoral internship site, open for future interns.
  - AUBG students learn about BGSU.

## **Other Objectives**

- Gain a personal sense of confidence and competence travelling independently in a non-Western, non-English-speaking culture.
- Tour, learn about, and enjoy the historical sites, natural beauty, and culture of Bulgaria.
- Become familiar with travel in the region for possible future travel in Slovakia to pursue genealogical interests and/or Greece to explore historical interests.

## **Preparation and Learning Resources**

In order to arrive at AUBG early enough to be present for the Kosovo Program and to be present to work with my primary supervisor, I will need to leave very soon after the end of the spring semester. Therefore, I do not have time to an extensive literature review. However, I have already prepared using the following resources.

Dydynski, K. et al. (1999). Eastern Europe. Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Bousfield, J. & Richardson, D. (1996). Bulgaria: The rough guide. London: Rough Guides.

Zepatos, T. (1992). A journey of one's own: Uncommon advice for the independent woman traveler. Portland, OR: Eighth Mountain Press.

I attended the following sessions at NASPA:

Rasmussen, J. M. (2000, March 20). Campus living in Eastern Europe: A perspective. Presentation at the meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Indianapolis, IN.

Rybalkina, O., & Gosetti, P. P. (2000, March 21). Student affairs in the newly independent states: A post-Soviet perspective. Presentation at the meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Indianapolis, IN.

Websites:

Lonely Planet [www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/bul.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/bul.htm)

Bulgaria on the Internet [pisa.rockefeller.edu:8080/Bulgaria/](http://pisa.rockefeller.edu:8080/Bulgaria/)

All About Bulgaria [www.cs.columbia.edu/radev/bulginfo.html](http://www.cs.columbia.edu/radev/bulginfo.html)

Currency Converters [bin.gnn.com/cgi-bin/gnn/currency](http://bin.gnn.com/cgi-bin/gnn/currency) or [pacific.commerce.uuubc.ca/xr](http://pacific.commerce.uuubc.ca/xr)

I will read the following book before and during my trip. It was recommended by two travel books and my supervisor.

Kaplan, R. D. (1994). Balkan ghosts: A journey through history. New York: Vintage Books.



## Bibliography

- Bousfield, J. & Richardson, D. (1996). Bulgaria: The rough guide. London: Rough Guides.
- Dydynski, K. et al. (1999). Eastern Europe. Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1994). Balkan ghosts: A journey through history. New York: Vintage Books.
- Rasmussen, J. M. (2000, March 20). Campus living in Eastern Europe: A perspective. Presentation at the meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Indianapolis, IN.
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