"Studying abroad enhanced my plans for the future because it opened my eyes to the rest of the world. For the week we were in Geneva, Switzerland and interacting with different people, eating new foods — all of that made me realize I wanted to travel the world and to experience newness for the rest of my life. I plan to be a global citizen just like students at Webster University," said Victoria Bankowski, who is in the TRIO Program at Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD).

Bankowski, who is also a member of the National Honor Society, was one of 26 WCCCD students who spent a week at Webster University as part of the WCCCD’s Spring 2015 Study Abroad Program. Webster is proud of the 670 students who represent 90 countries making up its community of learners. The university is celebrating its 100th-year with banners that read: Embracing Differences – Global Citizenship. The WCCCD students were engaged by Webster faculty representing 25 nations.

Carolyn Hall is thankful for her eye-opening experience in Switzerland. "This has helped to make me an international citizen," referencing to the banners that decked the halls at Webster University.

"I raised my eyebrows when the lecturer mentioned that Swiss women were given the right to vote on the federal level in 1971. The Swiss moved slowly, but I also heard something wonderful… everyone is insured! One of the quotes I wrote was ‘A state is defined by how well it takes care of its weakest! Perhaps our country could learn something from the Swiss!’"

For more than a decade now, Wayne County Community College District has advanced its mission statement to expose students to culturally diverse experiences and globally competitive higher education and career advancement. This philosophy, as manifested in the District’s Study Abroad Program, also changes the future outlook of its students and the way they view the world. Since the inception, the program, more than 1,000 WCCCD students have traveled to more than 16 countries to study the languages; diverse cultures; and experience life beyond the traditional classroom.

At Webster University the students studied the uniqueness of Switzerland and interacted with students from around the world; toured the campus and shared meals with Webster University students.

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“Studying abroad enriches academics and transforms students’ lives by giving them the opportunity to explore the world and interact with different cultures,” said Nicolas Iselin, Marketing Director at Webster University. “Your college should be very proud for being committed to exposing its students to increasing access to international education – some of whom, I believe are first generation students. We are interconnected and the many ways in which the world impacts us is chronicled in the stories that students tell when they return home.”

Priscilla Seabrooks likened her experience using the quote “Spirit of Adventure” from the movie titled “UP.” She said the trip was more than a study abroad program, but a moment to grow intellectually. “This trip was very rewarding for me. I saw some pretty amazing things and made lifelong friends. I needed this as it made me realize there is a whole lot more to life than routine. Often times we get stuck in a daily rut and just focus on getting from point A to point B when it should not be that way; that dull. The journey is more important than the end or the start, and we should savor it, whether alone or with loved ones. Everyday should be an adventure, even if it is just a walk in a park, we should do more than just go through life, we should experience it. The trip really taught me a lot outside of the classroom.”

Maryvelma Smith O’Neil, D.Phil, who teaches the Global Citizens Program at Webster University, said it was a pleasure to meet the diverse students from WCCCD. “I found them later very engaging during the classroom presentation, the cafeteria lunch and the tour of the Old City. Thank you for being such excellent ambassadors of all that is good in the United States and at WCCCD.”

Carolyn Hall captures the window view of Geneva.

Selfie time

The three-legged chair opposite the United Nations Building is a striking reminder of the damage that land mines can do to human limbs.

The three-legged chair opposite the United Nations Building is a striking reminder of the damage that land mines can do to human limbs.

Kendra Mitchell tries a Swiss chocolate during class.

WCCCD students sit in class at the International Committee of the Red Cross. Topics included a lecture on origin of the ICRC and the Geneva Convention.

A group photo with the United Nations in the background.

Students posed for photos with the “bound figures” at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Kendra Mitchell tries a Swiss chocolate during class.