

Summary of Final Reflections

“Everybody says that the world becomes smaller and smaller. It didn’t seem that way to me when we were in Europe. The...countries that we have visited seemed to be galaxies away from one another. ... My perception of the US also changed.... Seeing all this anti-American spirit in Europe made me wonder about America’s present and future. I think that I am more interested in American politics and especially international relations not that I am back from Europe....”

“I have never gotten to be such close friends with anyone so fast and I really value the connections we share.”

“I think that the United States could benefit from learning how to be more enthusiastic about their jobs....Business and organizational practices seemed different in each country. The businesses in France were more stricter organized. They are a highly motivated people and also very individualistic. Everywhere in Germany and also in Austria, business was much more collective and people oriented. I think that the business in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are would compare better to Germany than to France.”

“Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to not want to return to the United States when it was time. I learned that there is so much to see and do outside the United States. I feel like this trip helped me to become more accepting of cultural differences and gave me the desire to learn new languages and travel more. ... I began to feel less attached to the United States as time went on and began to miss it less and less each day. I learned that other countries have just as much, if not more, to offer in all aspects of life. I found myself dreading a return to a place where people are cruel and fake, self-centered and materialistic, and where violence is a common occurrence. ... This trip opened my eyes to the faults in American culture. I learned how to accept myself for who I am and to always be grateful for what I have been given. My self-confidence was strengthened by this trip and I learned that I am capable of doing anything I put my mind to.”

“It really helped to stay in a variety of places because you do get a good feel of the culture and your surroundings.... My initial expectations of the trip were definitely fulfilled....The presentations [at the schools and businesses] were very interesting, but they differed in how they were delivered....This experience has changed my perspective on a lot of things, mostly everyday tasks. I realize that Europe is a lot more environmentally conscientious. Now I am more aware of what is on and I always turn it off when I leave the room or the house. I realized that the United States is very materialistic. This trip helped me to realize that it doesn’t matter what you have it is who you have around you to make the situations better. ... The trip made me more aware of myself and how I deal with stressful situations and my surroundings and environment. I had a great time and would do it again in a heartbeat.”

“I learned that first impressions are often not very accurate, and you should always give everyone a second chance.

“This trip is a continuation of my personal growth from last semester. So there are things that I have been trying to think about such as careers and everything, so even though I am having a lot of fun, its been a pretty curvy rollercoaster for me. It is really good for me though and I am so excited to be here.”

“I think that the US could learn more about structure, organization and punctuality from European companies and societal practices.... I think that European firms could possibly learn from the US is how to be a little more flexible and maybe slightly less formal.... Although ...I don’t know a lot about business practices in the US, I have learned quite a bit about European businesses in the past three weeks.... It is important to note the differences of a culture because it helps you understand where people are coming from and how they were raised, but it’s just as important to note the similarities.”

“I fulfilled my expectations pretty well. I surprised myself with how well I was able to fit in and stretch my limits. The group helped bring out my personality and have fun, but it was also stressful because I was not used to traveling with such a large number of people. I would get sucked into other’s negativity (for not being used to traveling and living out of suitcases), and when we had free time we would split up (but not wanting to leave anyone out, this sometimes became stressful). I was impressed with how I was able to compensate for this.... I enjoyed having classes and going out with our German buddies.”

“I think my experiences abroad this summer have changed my perceptions dramatically. First off, I had no idea how much a country’s culture could influence their way of business so much and that business practices could be so different around the world. My views of myself have changed a lot too. I realized that I’m not as open as I thought I was when it comes to accepting and experiencing new and different cultures. I noticed that my ability to adapt and adjust fluctuates a lot. My perceptions about the United States probably changed the most. I think the fact that I became very homesick helped me appreciate my country more. We have many opportunities that other countries don’t have, and the salary to cost of living ratio seems to be fairly proportional. ... not bad to be an American as long as I am able to keep an open mind and try to stretch it as often as possible. I should consider myself lucky to be an American citizen.”

“It was hard to work on our project under all the other circumstances we have been facing, like staying with host families [and not having cell phones and computers with internet access all the time]. I couldn’t help but wonder how international businesspeople pull together presentations in minimal time, with minimal resources, in a foreign environment. This type of work must be very rigorous and take a lot of tie to adapt to, if you ever do adapt at all.”

“I was trying to print something in the computer lab at the school in Germany. We couldn’t understand how to use the printer and everything was in German (imagine that!). I was experiencing serious rejection phase. I did learn something from this episode though. I suddenly had a ton of compassion for any exchange student at Coastal who didn’t know how to do something in the computer lab. I made a small personal quest to help anyone when I cold because this student really helped us out and saved our presentation.”

