



This is how we do

Public Affairs!

Cultural Competence



Kunti Bentley and Lali (Photo: Kevin White)

by Madeline Reising, undergraduate in Anthropology and Spanish, Student Worker at Study Away Programs, and past study abroad student in Jordan and Mexico

This May, a group of Missouri State students will once again travel to the Middle East to participate in Dr. Bethany Walker's short-term archaeology field school in Jordan. Among these students are Elizabeth Deckard, a history major with a strong interest in Middle Eastern studies, and Kunti Bentley, a double major in anthropology and global studies. In addition to their academic pursuits, both Elizabeth and Kunti are mothers. What's more, they are mothers who wish to provide their children with a global education and a tangible sense of the vastness and diversity of our world. As such, Kunti's daughter, Lali (5), and Elizabeth's son, Jordan (8), whose name was perhaps prescient, will accompany their mothers to Jordan this summer.

At five years of age, Lali has already traveled more than many people decades her senior. This winter, Kunti and her family spent three weeks studying in Valparaíso, Chile through International Studies Abroad (ISA). Lali can now point to Chile on a world map, and in a few months, she will be able to identify Jordan as well. Much more importantly, she will carry these memories and experiences with her throughout her education and her life. This was precisely Kunti's motivation in deciding to study abroad with her daughter. Kunti explains, "I want [Lali] to develop a solid concept of the world that goes beyond the textbooks and presentations she'll see in class. Especially since we live in the middle of this country, I want her to know that those places are real. I want her to smell the foods, see the markets, meet people, and to have a tangible association with the global community."

Elizabeth Deckard shares these sentiments. In explaining her desire for Jordan to accompany her on the trip, she states, "I want [Jordan] to see that there's so much more out there than what is here in the Midwest. I want him to meet new people, see different cultures- to realize that it's not the same everywhere, and to be okay with that."



Elizabeth Deckard and Jordan (Photo: Elena Bravo)

Continued on next page...



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...Continued from previous page

This sense of respect for cultural differences is undoubtedly among the most important benefits of studying away. And as study abroad programs grow in number and popularity, the opportunities they facilitate expand. Elizabeth and Kunti are a testament to this. Because of short term study away programs such as Dr. Walker's, students like Elizabeth and Kunti do not have to choose between their roles as mothers, and the prospect of adding an international component to their studies. Instead, they demonstrate that one can simultaneously be a student, a mother, and a world traveler.

As for Jordan and Lali, perhaps these two young minds represent the future of their generation in this ever more globalized world. Maybe one day in the not-so-distant future, all students will have the opportunity to experience our world as a classroom: to not only locate a country on a map, but to see its beauty, smell its foods, speak its language, and appreciate its culture firsthand.



Dr. Bethany Walker



Above, left to right: Dr. Frank Einhellig, Dr. Jim Baker, Mr. Jack Yang, and Dr. Dennis Hickey

MSU Partners in Taiwan Academy

by Dennis Hickey

On February 24, officials from Taiwan visited the Political Science Department to sign an agreement establishing MSU as a partner in the "Taiwan Academy." The Taiwan Academy is a "soft power" program launched by Taipei to promote "Chinese studies with Taiwan characteristics." Dozens of other universities in the USA and overseas are "partners." For example, the University of London SOAS became a partner in December.

The picture (*at left*) shows Dr. Frank Einhellig, MSU Provost, Dr. Jim Baker, MSU Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Mr. Jack Yang, Director-General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Kansas City and Dr. Dennis Hickey, Director of the Graduate Program in Global Studies, at the signing ceremony. Numerous MSU professors from across campus, students from Taiwan and America and members of the local community attended the event.