THE FIRST YEAR OF THE UF DISNEY ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAM HAS COME TO A SUCCESSFUL END

Gainesville, FL -- The International Disney Academic Exchange Experience is an opportunity for international students to receive up to 12 University of Florida credits as well as invaluable experience with a paid internship at Walt Disney World®. Currently the partner universities for this program are the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and Brock University, which are all located in Canada, but we hope to partner with other universities in the near future. The program started in May 2014 and came to an end in mid-December.

The students had a very enriching experience on the Walt Disney World Property. With free entry into the parks as cast members, they were able to explore every inch of all the parks which was an added benefit to the entire experience. The students also were enrolled in Disney's collegiate courses that spoke about different topics such as Communications/Marketing, Hospitality, and Corporate Analysis from a broad perspective as well as specific examples from Disney. All the classes had a field experience component where the students were able to explore various parks to find evidence of topics discussed in class.

Another aspect of the program that the students thoroughly enjoyed was the opportunity to attend a University of Florida football game. They went during Homecoming Weekend when Gator spirit was at its highest and got the full experience with a typical tailgate experience followed by the full game. Despite the utter defeat the Gators experienced the students had a great time; one of their most memorable experiences from the program.
At the end of their 6 month experience in Orlando, the faculty members who taught the UF courses as well as one of the professors from Brock University made a trip down to Orlando to see and evaluate the students’ final presentation. In this presentation they were asked to analyze an event they participated in or observed during their internship and discuss what made it a success and what can be done to make it better. The presentations were very in-depth and perceptive but also emotional since these students journeys had officially come to an end.

To see the success of this program as it came to an end of its inaugural year makes EFTI very excited. Throughout this process we have taken the necessary steps to evaluate every aspect of the program to make strives to make it better for next year. The recruitment process for 2015 is well underway with interviews scheduled for the first week of March.

The Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute is committed to building a bridge between the tourism industry, organizations, destinations, and higher education through excellence in interdisciplinary research that provides strategic information focused on a wide array of travel, tourism and hospitality opportunities.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Arielle Gousse (Program Manager and Marketing/Public Relations) at agousse@ufl.edu (352.392.3992).