Business students acquire skills in Malaysia

by TRACE KENDRICK
Last Updated: July 08, 2009

A select group of 13 Wichita State business students recently returned from a work-experience trip to Malaysia as part of a research effort through Spirit AeroSystems.

As members of the Wichita State Barton International Group, these students sought to gain insight into the global connections and interactive cultures utilized in today’s business world.

Tim Wilson, a WSU senior and student-leader of the Barton International Group, noted, “the students in this group are some of the school’s most promising business students.”

Although the WSU students were acquiring personal knowledge and hands-on experience, their focus was studying ways in which Spirit AeroSystems could make their worldwide business more inclusive for members of all cultures.

Their research was based on the 7-S Framework of organized and effective business, which emphasizes seven factors of in forming a successful company: structure, systems, style, staff, skills, strategy and shared values.

Students spent many hours touring the Spirit factory, shadowing workers at all levels and observing the differences in language and culture. Each night, the students met to discuss and document their findings.

“I was really motivated by how unique this group is,” sophomore Joseph Woodward said.

The group will continue to meet throughout the summer to prepare its final analysis, which will be presented to leaders of Spirit AeroSystems in August.

“We definitely have enough information to provide Aero with a quality deliverable that will exceed theirw expectations,” Wilson said.

The Barton School of Business’ Assistant Dean Kate Kung-McIntyre formulated the idea for such a trip. She thought that having undergraduate students perform international work for local companies instead of attending summer classes overseas would be more beneficial for the students and more productive for the companies.
Woodward said the hands-on experience made his education more practical because he was able to be on the ground-floor experiencing business models and a new culture.

“You hear all this stuff about different cultures and you get these preconceived notions of what things are going to be like,” Woodward said, adding that he was most surprised to realize how alike people are “even across the ocean.”

Doug Hensler, Dean of the Barton School of Business, has worked to promote Kung-McIntyre’s ambitious idea and make it available for current and future members of the Barton International Group. He has seen interest from a few other local companies and hopes that this will be the first of many trips for business students at WSU.

Wilson was quick to point out that this type of hands-on experience is very rare and that students were lucky to be a part of a proactive business program at WSU.

“A classroom can only teach you so much,” he said.