Graduating Senior Going AIPES in Prague

Almost 12 years ago, Ludwika Chrzastowska and her family left Poland shortly after the fall of communism to start a new life in the United States. Through her coursework at La Salle University, she examined world events that occurred during her childhood in order to better understand the current trends and developments in her native region of Europe.

For the month of July, Ludwika and 120 other students from 25 different countries will meet in Prague, Czech Republic at the American Institute on Political and Economic Systems (AIPES). This cross-cultural education program is sponsored by The Fund for American Studies (TFAS) in partnership with Charles University in Prague and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the program is to create a multicultural learning opportunity for young leaders from Central and Eastern Europe and the United States. Along with proposing advances in economic and democratic initiatives in the region, students will also live and experience the history of Prague, which Ludwika believes is “one of the most extraordinary cities in Europe.”

Since 1993, AIPES has organized programs to Central and Eastern Europe to follow its progress after communism. Faculty Program Director, Jim Lengle, comments “I have found no experience as rewarding as my time here, no students as smart, motivated, attentive, and charming as (them), and no off-campus program with as much potential and value as this one.”

Unlike other summer abroad programs where travel and leisure may be stressed over academics, AIPES warns students that the “pace is intense and demanding” with activities scheduled every day. Like Ludwika, most students are sponsored through TFAS for the cost of the program, so students are only required to cover travel expenses and minimum course fees.

For Ludwika, this program will act as a culmination of four years of study in Political Science, German, and Central and Eastern European Studies. “I was very excited just to learn that such a program exists, and unlike any other time in my life, I am ready to take full advantage of what the Institute’s program has to offer.”

Through her study of politics and foreign languages, active membership in campus organizations, internships that included the Greek Embassy in D.C. and currently the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Ludwika recognizes the importance of “collaboration in today’s interconnected world.” During her senior year alone, she established La Salle’s Central and Eastern European Society and contributed significantly to the Diplomat-in-Residence program.

As most graduates preparing to go to law school while away their summers with family and friends, working, and relaxing, Ludwika will be in her native country tying up memories from her past and embarking on “an amazing adventure in (her) transition to law school.”

James Brightman
International Education Coordinator
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