

Fast track to China

Businesses wanting to grow where the action is can't help noticing China. With its 1.3 billion consumers, low production costs and enthusiasm for capitalism, China is often hailed as the next economic superpower. Last fall, 13 UT students in the Executive MBA Program (EMBA), along with faculty, boarded a plane to see the story firsthand. On the itinerary: Hangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing.

An international experience is traditionally part of the EMBA degree, but for the program's 10th anniversary, the College of Business Administration planned something special. Don Beeman, director of the International Business Institute and professor of global business strategy, has led six international trips. "All the trips provide hands-on exposure to international business, but China has changed so much," he says. "There are 21 million people in Shanghai and the number of skyscrapers makes New York City look like a small town."

Among the students making the trip was Betsy Steinhauer (HS '96, EMBA '06), occupational therapist for ProMedica Health System. "The program really prepared us for what we'd see and hear, so we weren't too surprised," she says. "Some students were already experienced business travelers and some, like me, were novices." Prior to the trip, the students identified the businesses and industries they hoped to visit and the college worked on arrangements.

"Some of the places we visited were a pharmaceutical company, Lenovo, which makes personal computers, and Audio-Technica, which manufactures high-end audio equipment," she says. "And the U.S. Foreign Service Office, to learn how to start a business in China."

As the group met with leaders in Chinese business, finance and government, Steinhauer (whose trip blog can be viewed at web.mac.com/esteinhauer)



Hard hats across the water

learned that China's future is neither simple nor entirely rosy: "Right now, China's very much an imitator rather than an innovator, but that will change. They're in their Industrial Revolution as far as the way employees are treated, the wages they make and other issues like industrial pollution."

Beeman notes, "The business executives laid it on the line for our students, giving them straight information, nothing superficial."

John R. "Bob" Cryan PhD, director of the Office of Global Initiatives, says, "China is the future of our economy and our future business leaders must experience it now or be left behind while others take their place."

Steinhauer might already be making plans that include China: "I'd love to go back. As their economy grows, their health care will improve and they'll need more therapists. I'd like to use my background as a therapist to work with health care there."

She adds, "Visiting a country opens your eyes in a way that reading the Wall Street Journal can't. When you've been there for a while, you start to think, 'I could start a business here, I could live here, make a life here.' So if you know that you could live in China, you start thinking about what you could accomplish here in Toledo."