



Photo: Gregory Baker

Exploring Ghana through Immersion

From June 23 through July 2, Dr. Gregory Baker led Santa Clara University's first immersion experience in Africa. He and visiting professor Dr. Vincent Amanor-Boadu from Kansas State University traveled with twelve SCU business undergraduate students to Ghana. Highlights of their trip included visiting an AIDS hospice, a cocoa research institute, a microfinance company, a Habitat for Humanity village, a monkey sanctuary, a slave castle, and a school. The group also stayed with host families for part of their trip.

"The immersion experience allowed us to deeply experience life in Ghana," said Baker. "Our experience living and working with the villagers of Nkwantakese gave us a view into life in Africa that most Americans will never have. We had many opportunities to explore the role of business in society and to reflect on what that meant to us."

Reflecting on their experience, some of the students wrote:

"Going on this immersion trip to Ghana was easily one of the best decisions that I have ever made. It expanded my horizons, pushed me out of my comfort zone and challenged me to reexamine how I view the world," wrote Winston Yu. "Immersion trips are the first step to realizing a universal truth, the truth that despite all of our differences, we are all intertwined. We are all related, bound up together by the common thread of our humanity."

Janna Ciabattari wrote, "This immersion trip has encompassed everything I have received through my experience at Santa Clara, building a stronger understanding of business inside and outside the classroom while integrating my knowledge and passion for my major on a global scale."

Kaylie Rossi wrote, "I learned so much, met incredible people, and saw a world completely unlike my own. It was simply unforgettable."

Immersion participants Jamie Stevens '10 and Kelsey Martin '10 climb across a rope bridge in Ghana.

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Ghanaian students at the school visited by the immersion group.



Undergraduate students with Drs. Baker and Amanor-Boadu at Kakum National Park.

Marcale Jones wrote, "I dreamed Africa would open a window and show me glimpses of history. The Ghana immersion trip was the most amazing experience of my life."

This immersion was tied to a course taught by Baker and Amanor-Boadu, BUSN 196 Business, Economic Development and Social Change in Ghana. "I was extremely impressed with the sense of justice and passion for positive intervention that the students brought to the course and the immersion trip to Ghana," said Amanor-Boadu. "I think the course objective of sharpening their appreciation of the role business can play in addressing social justice lapses was achieved."

"The immersion trips organized through the Leavey School of Business provide our students with a truly global perspective. The Ghana immersion led by Dr. Baker, as the first SCU immersion to Africa, was an extraordinary example of integrated, hands-on, first-person understanding of business in practice and its larger impact on the world," said Dr. Drew Starbird. "This immersion provided an eye-opening, comprehensive educational view of history, culture, social justice, agriculture, and economics far beyond what books and lectures in a classroom could never provide."

The students are raising funds this year to build two houses in the Nkwantakese habitat village where they stayed with families. The students have already raised almost all of the funds needed. They sold raffle tickets for an iPod and held a benefit concert on campus. They only have about \$500 remaining to raise to accomplish their funding goal of \$5700.

"I am proud of their commitment to not only learn but put their knowledge into action exemplified by their willingness to contribute to building a house in the village they stayed at to alleviate the housing problems they saw," said Amanor-Boadu.

The Food and Agribusiness Institute hopes to offer more business immersions to developing nations as part of the Food, Hunger, Poverty, Environment pathway.



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Immersion participant Jamie Stevens '10 playing with Ghanaian children.