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Press release : 2014 : 10 : 03 : Passion for Education Leads to Unprecedented Partnership

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[Passion for Education Leads to Unprecedented Partnership](#)

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From left: Kate Greene, Shiloh Gilbert, Dylan Gambill and Dr. Madhu Pandey

She has been teaching at USF St. Petersburg for five years and the opportunity to build a partnership with a university in India began three years ago. It wasn't to be missed.

This is the first collaboration between the Indian School of Mines (ISM) in Jharkhand and an American university. ISM is listed as one of the Top 10 universities in India and is recognized for petroleum and mining engineering.

The program was orchestrated by Dr. Madhu Pandey, instructor of Chemistry. "Teaching was always in my heart," Pandey said, as she shared the journey that led to this accomplishment.

Creating a study abroad program for USFSP students to travel to India was a huge undertaking and it took immense work and collaboration with Wendy Baker, USFSP's Study Abroad coordinator. And it did not come without trepidation for Pandey, as a woman. India and specifically the ISM is male-dominated and the challenge is real for a female to lead such an academic program. Even Pandey's parents questioned her decision, concerned for their daughter.

"I was a bit afraid about the trip, but I made myself strong," Pandey said.

The drive and determination to offer this learning experience to her students won out, motivated by her incredible passion for education. Pandey and ISM developed the course and was told that there was not funding to send two professors. She would have to go alone with three students.

The ISM welcomed Pandey and her students, Kate Greene, Dylan Gambill, and Shiloh Gilbert, with a formal ceremony and great celebration. ISM invited the Press to attend too. This collaboration was a huge achievement for them. An article about the event made front page news in the Hindustan Times the following day.



The students were in for a grueling two weeks of studies, with four classes every day, six days a week, and gained significant knowledge through the courses on the environmental impacts of mining. The program title was: Mining, Environment, and Sustainable Development.

“The school was quite a culture shock,” Greene said, referring to the long days in class. “But we learned so much and it was interesting to see how the school system works in India.”

The group had the opportunity to visit two mines, the Sonpurbazari Open Cast Mine, and the Tata Steel, an underground mine. Additionally, the course study took the students on excursions to a geological museum and various labs. They learned about mineral processing, mine ventilation, gyro-theodolite and gyromate measurements in land surveying, air, soil, water, and geological.

On Sunday, they had time to rest and experience the local culture. Pandey, as a native of India, felt empowered to speak in Hindi, and she said the people were excited to see American students.

“I saw respect in their eyes for my students,” said Pandey.

Recently, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Frank Biafora, hosted a luncheon, serving authentic Indian cuisine, during which the students shared their 21-day experience with

friends of the USFSP Study Abroad program. Greene, an Environmental Science graduate student, and Gambill, an undergrad, presented a slide show.

“As dean, one of my primary goals this year is to raise funds for faculty-led study abroad scholarships so more students can participate in these transformative, life-changing experiences,” Biafora said.

Challenges with funding cancelled the trip last year because not enough students could participate. This year, the program successfully embarked with just three students and Dr. Pandey.

“I was very excited when ISM accepted my request to run this program,” Pandey said. “It was challenging being the only mentor, but it went smoothly.”

In the end, the overall sentiment was that this trip provided an incredible opportunity for USFSP students, and that more students would be inclined to participate in this kind of learning with more funding and scholarships.

For more information about USFSP’s Study Abroad programs, please visit <http://www1.usfsp.edu/studyabroad/>