



Altruistic Dynamism: Working in Romania

By Shandin Rikards | June 13, 2011

I studied abroad in the UK in my junior year at Oregon State University, and fell in love with Europe and with the field of International Education. As I started my fifth and final year as an undergrad, I knew that I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to go abroad as a student again, I knew that I wanted to return to Europe, and I knew that this time around I wanted to experience working abroad. As soon as the idea was born I began searching for opportunities, and it was no time at all before I came across FEAC. My heart beat fast as I read the description – it had it all: flexible dates and duration (anywhere from 10 weeks to six months), internship credit awarded through my university, location in Eastern Europe (a region I wished to experience), English-speaking workplace, and opportunities to learn and experience the field of International Education! I spontaneously and determinedly applied for the internship through the organization IE₃ Global Internships, and four months later I was on a plane to Romania!



Whilst I reflect on my internship at the Fulbright Educational Advising Center (FEAC) in Bucharest, Romania, there are some key elements of my time there that jump out at me: diversity in tasks and activities, cultural cooperation and exploration, flexibility and dynamism, and networking with brilliant and inspiring people. My time in Romania was a life changing, eye opening adventure – both within and outside of my internship duties.

As a U.S. student I was immediately regarded as an expert on U.S. culture and university admissions, which made me a respected ambassador of my country from day one. This role suited me spectacularly – I loved visiting high schools and universities and having students of all ages visit FEAC to discuss the opportunities involved with U.S. study. Outreach activities – my favorite part of the internship – were numerous and diverse and included presentations at local educational institutions and at the Center, maintaining information booths at educational fairs, promoting EducationUSA webinars as well as hosting our own, and creating unique sessions for FEAC's U.S. Culture Club project. One of my best memories is of working on a Culture Club session of my creation called "The Great American West" in which I discussed American west coast culture and history and used a Powerpoint presentation, Youtube videos, personal photos, and a Trivial Pursuit-style game to engage the audience whilst teaching them all I could about my home.

On days that the Advising Center had no scheduled outreach events I assisted with general office administration and made other contributions to FEAC's mission by doing internet based research, editing, and other project work to improve the Advising Center website. I planned a new website design, edited web pages, and starred in a short video

highlighting the reasons that Romanian students should consider studying in the U.S. The video project was creative and fun, and will be lasting evidence of my fantastic internship.

The work that I did for FEAC utilized skills I already possessed as well as challenged me to grow exponentially. I learned something new every single day, and loved being kept on my toes in the dynamic work environment! The Fulbright Educational Advising Center team and the other Romania-U.S. Fulbright employees are truly remarkable people who bring their hospitality, generosity, creativity, and passion with them to work every day. Due to the nature of the Commission – the sponsorship of the U.S. and Romanian governments and the educational exchange of American and Romanian citizens – I was frequently able to attend networking events at which I met inspiring and driven people, some of whom became friends and others who are now very useful contacts in my pursuit of a career in International Education.

I whole-heartedly recommend the internship at FEAC to my fellow American students and young professionals: the job offers extraordinary personal and professional growth opportunity the chance to make a real contribution to Romanian students and communities. My advice to future interns is to be proactive and creative: the internship will be what you make of it, and you will get back just as much as you put in! The potential to combine your internship duties with your passions and interests is endless at FEAC.