

Project Nicaragua

Wake Forest University's motto is "Pro Humanitate" — "For Humanity." The Babcock Graduate School of Management has embodied the motto by showing its students an MBA represents more than spreadsheets and cash-flow analyses. A concern for people and social responsibility shapes the school's curriculum and guides student conduct. Babcock students employ the principle of "Pro Humanitate" outside the classroom through a variety of volunteer activities, giving back to the community and beyond.

Project Nicaragua is a student-led initiative founded in fall 2006 by four full-time MBA students who wanted to make a difference. In December 2006, a small team of Babcock students conducted preliminary research and identified opportunities to help the Missionary Ventures International Vocational outside Managua. The goal was to assist the students at MVI, which teaches forging and metalwork skills, in developing a sustainable business model in an impoverished and stagnant economy.

That initial trip resulted in the creation of a two-day business seminar, which has become the lifeblood of the project that saw its fourth group of students travel to Nicaragua over Spring Break in March. More than 30 people at Babcock are working on the project, which continues to reach out to aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners in the economically deprived area in and around Managua.

But it doesn't stop there. Babcock students plan to continue the seminars in Nicaragua during the 2008-09 academic year. In June, a group of Babcock students and faculty members introduced the business seminar model, which is also an exercise in poverty reduction, to entrepreneurs and small business owners in Benin, Africa. The main objective of the trip was determining whether the seminar model — which includes marketing, operations and accounting components — used in Central America could transfer to

another culture. The group was delighted to find the Benin participants were just as engaged in the seminar and as excited by the teaching methods as their Nicaraguan counterparts, and the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Artisans has invited them back. It's a win-win opportunity: The local entrepreneurs learn new tools and share ideas with each other and our students learn about a new culture and their business practices firsthand. The University is now considering expanding the business seminar model to other countries.

In addition to having the opportunity to share what they have learned at Babcock with small business owners and entrepreneurs in Central America and Africa, our students have become more culturally sensitive, a valuable trait in a business world centered around globalization. Our students need to be able to operate in a global environment, including having the ability to understand and manage teams spread out across the globe, especially in the developing world. Part of globalization is learning about and understanding other cultures, because the bottom line remains that business is about relationships. Wake Forest is teaching future business leaders to use their international experiences and relationships to find out how they can best contribute to society. Combining learning with service is not only the right thing to do; it is what Wake Forest University is known for — to do well and do good.





Professor Sherry Moss



“How many times in our lives do we have the opportunity to take part in a movement that is so much bigger than ourselves?”

Chris Yuko

Co-Founder and Program Director
Wake Forest University’s Project Nicaragua



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