

Doing Business in the Global Market: DR-CAFTA – El Salvador and Honduras

By Fay Gibson and William Harazin

Competing in a global economy demands a significant knowledge and understanding of the business and cultural environments of consumers, competitors, and the global supply chain. To prepare students to compete in the global marketplace, North Carolina State College of Textiles', William Harazin, Associate Professor, Fay Gibson, faculty member, and Ken Dillo, Director of Wake Technical Community College's Small Business Center, headed to El Salvador and Honduras during Spring Break 2009 for the Third Annual "Doing Business Internationally" program. The weeklong event consisted of an "on the ground" crash course in international trade.

Three NCSU College of Textile students, seniors Giselle Marino and Michael McDonald, completing Bachelor of Science Degrees in Fashion and Textile Management, and Sarah-Margaret Church, a graduate student, participated in this "real world of business" study tour. To prepare, students researched the history, culture and business environments of both countries. They then selected a textile research topic of interest, which related to trade and retail in the DR-CAFTA countries, to study while they were in El Salvador and Honduras.

Along with North Carolina small business owners and personnel from the N.C. Department of Agriculture, N.C. Department of Commerce International Trade Division, and the N.C. Ports Authority, the students networked with businessmen, participated in trade seminars, and met international trade officials. The delegation met with the US Commercial Foreign Service; The American Chamber of Commerce; FIDE, Investment and Exports, a private non-profit organization promoting trade; the Honduran Maquiladora Association; and the Chamber of Commerce Industries of Cortes.

Additionally, the delegation toured the North Carolina textile manufacturing facilities of Asheboro Elastics, Hanesbrands, Inc. and VF Corporation. The tours provided insight into the challenges facing the textile industry in an ever-changing competitive market and impressed upon the Student Delegates the need to be innovative, knowledgeable, and flexible in the global market. According to the students, networking with business personnel and attending business meetings were valuable experiences that they cannot learn in the classroom.

One of the students' favorite experiences was the visit to the Port of Cortes which included a tour of the Port facilities and a tugboat ride around the bay. Other major events included visiting the local markets to view indigenous crafts and handmade items and dining at local restaurants to experience native cuisine as well as customs, music and art.

Students also expressed that overall the program was truly an enriching experience, both educationally and culturally, and that hopefully it will result in the development of many U.S. and DR-CAFTA business relationships in the future.

To read more about their experience visit the blog [here](#)