Loyola law students learn overseas
By Daniel I. Dorfman
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For Angela Inzano, a 23-year-old student making her first venture outside of the United States, her trip to Beijing presented some challenges.

Specifically, those challenges occurred when she and her Loyola University Chicago School of Law classmates went to a restaurant where little or no English was used.

"There were a lot of times when you would go out and eat, point at something on the menu and hope it was something you like," Inzano said.

But the occasional game of chance they experienced at lunch or dinner just added excitement to the trip for Inzano as the Cleveland area native visited China this summer as part of Loyola's summer session in Beijing. She came home excited about the prospects of international travel, and her future law career may very well incorporate much of what she learned in Beijing, both inside and outside of the classroom.
"I've always wanted to travel and never had the opportunity," Inzano said. "This is a great melding of law school, which is one of my great passions, and traveling, which is one of my potential passions. Now I've got the bug."

Inzano’s trek to the Far East is just one aspect of the growing opportunities Loyola students now have to study internationally. There are also classes taught by U.S. Supreme Court justices in Rome, excursions to Chile and Strasbourg and moot courts all over the world. These are all parts of a strategy as Loyola strengthens its worldwide presence.

A learning experience

Inzano, who also attended Loyola for her undergraduate work, earning a bachelor's degree in political science and English, dreamed about going overseas this summer.

She initially considered Loyola's long-established course in Rome, but eventually opted for the four-week course in Beijing, believing that the trip would provide more structure in terms of opportunities to travel throughout the country.

So at the end of May, Inzano took the 13-hour flight to China and met up with the rest of her classmates, most of whom she didn't know very well. In addition to the educational opportunity, Inzano wanted to gain perspective on the most populous nation on Earth and gauge the differences of the cultures.

While Inzano saw the Great Wall and the Terra Cotta Warriors, what struck her deeply was the great wealth in some parts of Beijing, juxtaposed right next to extreme poverty. She also noted the influx of Western staples, for example, a KFC seemingly on every block.

"It was interesting to see the Western culture clashing with Eastern values and culture," she said. "That was the most surprising."

But there was also the matter of her course work that came from four different classes, many of which centered on international law. As opposed to just reading about the subject matter, the students got to directly see what the instructors taught.

"For instance, in international business transactions, we read about counterfeiting in China. You read about those things in China when you are in the U.S.; it is a totally different thing to go to the market and see the problem and see what is happening there and experience it first-hand."

Once she got back, Inzano had some reverse culture shock, particularly finding that her BlackBerry was not quite the necessity as before she left.

Inzano filled up the rest of her summer by interning for Cook County Circuit Judge James D. Egan. A career pursuit of juvenile law still remains in place, but the Chinese experience may mean it will now have more of an international twist.

Overall, Inzano said the experience gave her a broader perspective on the rule of law at the outset of her career.
"It helps put our legal system in perspective and to realize you are dealing with an international system of courts, and not everyone is going to view it as you do. China has a civil law system, and it is so different than what we are used to. Here we have such a litigious society and that is so new to them."

A different perspective

Inzano's experience is the kind of outcome David N. Yellen imagined five years ago when he became the dean of Loyola's law school. Yellen made it a priority to expand the international opportunities for his students.

"In the modern world, more lawyers than ever before will have some international component to their practice, so classroom and extracurricular exposure to how law works in other countries is going to be really important for any lawyer who is going to be doing work in a transnational basis," Yellen said.

Yellen was personally able to add to the course selections through his friendship with several U.S. Supreme Court justices - including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who taught comparative constitutional law in 2009, and Antonin Scalia, who this past summer led a course on separation of powers with some international comparison to the way other systems handle the issue.

Yellen knew the justices from his time as dean of Hofstra Law School, and he was able to successfully recruit the justices to teach in Loyola's program over the four-week period.

"Spending time talking about ideas with a Supreme Court justice just brings the Supreme Court to life," Yellen said. "After you spend time with any of the justices, for the rest of your life when you read a Supreme Court decision it has a human dimension that just makes it so much richer. You understand the dynamic of how justices think about the case, how their judicial philosophy has formed, because both justices are very generous in talking about their ideas. Studying with one of them brings this incredibly important institution to life in a way that just reading about it can't."

Yellen said other Supreme Court justices have been invited for future summer courses, and he fully expects one to come on board in 2011 and beyond.

With about 150 law schools offering international programs, Yellen acknowledges that it is a challenge to entice students, but he says that besides the star power of the justices, there are some built-in advantages to the program.

"In Rome we have a very special situation because our university owns a campus there, so it is not a patched-together program where you are using someone else's space," Yellen said. "It is Loyola's campus, and that provides all sorts of services and opportunities from housing to transportation."

Then he added, "Rome is also an incredible location to spend a month in the summer."

That Loyola has Supreme Court justices teaching shows how far the program has come since 1983 when professor Thomas M. Haney had the brainstorm to make use of the university's Rome campus during the quiet summer period.

"Another professor and I were convinced students would benefit from being overseas and studying law in that setting," Haney said. "We realized the university had a campus where they had been teaching undergraduates during the school year, which was underutilized during the summer."
For the first five or six years, Haney said the program only enticed a small number of students, but when the Loyola administration began to lower the tuition to compensate for the costs of travel, room and board, interest in the opportunity began to pick up.

The success can be shown in the number of students attending the Rome course, which has swelled from roughly 15 in 1983 to 65 in 2010.

The Rome and Beijing trips are just two aspects of an international program that sends Loyola students to Vietnam, Chile and Germany, among others.

Professor Margaret L. Moses has been leading a group of 16 students each year to Vis Moot Arbitrations all over the world since 2000. Lawyers today must be prepared to handle issues that cross borders in this globally connected world, Moses said.

"If they practice in the U.S., they may well be doing international business," she said. "We have lots of lawyers in Chicago that are handling these international disputes, and the arbitration may be in Switzerland or France."

Future programs

Loyola's next big offering will be for students to pursue an LLM degree on the Rome campus, studying the development of the rule of law. The aim is to have countries that are looking to build legal systems to be more democratic. Loyola has received a $1 million grant from Gates Foundation to launch this degree.

The goal of the programs is to make the students well-rounded lawyers as they start their career.

"The students who come back from having these experiences then have a better sense as to what questions to ask," Haney said. "The more they get exposed to that overseas, the better they are."