

Students Set to Travel Despite Diplomatic Tension

Contributed by Benjamin Evans III -- Black College Wire
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Four-month trip to China planned for FAMU business students

Ten students from the Florida A&M School of Business and Industry will head to Shanghai, China next month for a 4-month study abroad program in the midst of verbal sparring between the new Obama administration and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

President Barack Obama's nominee for U.S. Treasury Secretary, Timothy Geithner, told U.S. lawmakers recently that Obama, "backed by the conclusions of a broad range of economists -- believes that China is manipulating its currency."

The ministry strongly denied the claims with a statement. An official from China's Ministry of Commerce said, "We never have used currency manipulation or exchange-rate manipulation as a means to gain an advantage in international trade." The statement, provided by an official from the ministry's news department, also said China does not rely on to promote exports.

Despite these issues, the FAMU students said they still plan to take advantage of the opportunity.

Scarlett Williams, 22, a senior business administration student from Jacksonville said this is the perfect time to be exposed to the inner workings of China's financial and trade markets. "China has a strong trade dependent economy but during this time of economic downturn, China was least affected, I can see how this could raise eyebrows," Williams said.

Williams said she would like to start a marketing firm in 10 years with a location in Shanghai.

The study abroad program was offered through a partnership between SBI, the World Education Group and Shanghai University. While in Shanghai, students will immerge into the Chinese culture, business and language.

Elijah Bowdre, 23, a senior business administration student from Long Beach, Calif., said he reads books about the Chinese culture and sits in on a Chinese literature class at FAMU to prepare for the trip. Bowdre also said he will work with the Chinese Communist Party. "Shanghai, China is the center of Asia's economy and I look forward to gaining an international perspective on financial markets and systems of government," Bowdre said. "China has a systematic means of teaching and I would very much like to adopt this discipline."

Bowdre said his plans are to start a charter school for inner-city youth based on Chinese teaching methods.

The remaining students on the roll are Richard Ferrin, Veronique George, Rayvin Julien, Carey Jacobs, Deandria Johnson, Tiffany Davis, Andrew Ward and Geena Lewis.

For \$3,495, the study abroad program will allow students to have 12 transferable credit hours toward their education and cover tuition, fees, room and board, meals and health insurance. Students will be housed in furnished single rooms with a TV, an air conditioning system, a telephone and a bathroom, which includes a shower.

Tiffani Davis 23, a senior business administration student from Dallas, said she plans to learn more about the Chinese social and business setting.

"I am excited about learning Chinese culture and language," Davis said. "This is a great opportunity to learn about un-westernized ideologies.

Students said they were also given one student visa to travel freely through out the country.

"I plan on visiting all the big cities and even small villages," said Andrew Ward 24, a graduate business administration student from Milwaukee, Wis. "I want to walk the Great Wall of China, view the mummified Terracotta Army discovered in Eastern Xi'an and sleep in a Montessori with Monks."

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Benjamin Evans III writes for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper, which originally published this article.