2008 Andrew Heiskell Awards: Best Practices in International Education

By Shannon Bishop

The University of Tulsa's NanoJapan program eliminates barriers for future scientists and engineers to study abroad. St. Louis Community College, Forest Park convened a Global Education Committee to tailor a global education plan to meet the needs of its diverse community. The University of Georgia has partnered with the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education to engage in their efforts of educational reform.

Honoring all these initiatives and more, these pages describe eight winning programs for IIE's seventh annual Andrew Heiskell Awards for Innovation in International Education.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) created these awards to promote and honor the most outstanding initiatives that are being conducted in international higher education by IIE-network member universities and colleges. By recognizing excellence and innovation, the Institute hopes to support IIE-network members in their endeavors and to signal a new and important role for international education on campus. The winning programs, profiled below, are noteworthy for their success in removing institutional barriers to international study and broadening the base of participation in the international elements of teaching and learning on campus. They are among the "best practices" in internationalization, which we hope will encourage and inspire other campuses.

You can find the profiles of this year's winning initiatives and a collection of profiles of the past seven years of award-winning programs on IIE-network's Best Practices Web site: www.iienetwork.org/jpn/bestPractices.

RICE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA
STUDY ABROAD
WINNER
NanoJapan: Summer Nanotechnology Research Program for Undergraduates
Nomination submitted by Sarah Phillips, Engineering International Programs Administrator at Rice University and Cheryl Matheny, Associate Dean for Global Education at University of Tulsa
As international partnerships become increasingly indispensable in solving major science and engineering problems, U.S. researchers and educators must be able to operate effectively in teams comprised of partners from different nations and cultural backgrounds. The NanoJapan program, administered through the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department of Rice University and the Center for Global Education at the University of Tulsa, provides future scientists and engineers with these skills by combining a traditional study abroad experience in Japan with a targeted research internship in the field of nanotechnology.

NanoJapan was established with a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF-PARE) in 2003. The program is a twelve-week summer program that involves sixteen first and second year science and engineering students from U.S. universities in research internships with Japanese nanotechnology laboratories. The program has already had a large impact on the students who have participated. Six of the sixteen students who traveled to Japan in 2007 have taken immediate steps to continue their studies in Asia. President David W. Ledson of Rice University notes that NanoJapan also encourages international research collaboration among Rice faculty and staff.

Targeting science and engineering students, this program serves as a model for increasing study abroad participation for students in these fields. In the past, most engineering students were forced to choose between spending their summer in a traditional study abroad program unrelated to their future academic or professional career or staying within the U.S. and completing a traditional research internship in academia or industry. “Programs like NanoJapan fill a critical void in international education offerings available to U.S. technical students,” says Roger Blair, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Tulsa.