

The GENIUS of Global Education

BY MAXINE McDOWALL

We hear about the global economy all the time. Trade and jobs flow across borders, so why shouldn't education? For students at SAIT and its three partner institutions in the Global Education Network (GEN), learning transcends national borders.

SAIT has been involved since GEN's inception in 2000 and partners with Box Hill Institute of Melbourne, Australia, the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) in Singapore and Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

"The focus is to grow the program in a way that provides our students with a high quality educational, social and cultural experience that allows them to function in the global marketplace for their chosen fields," explains Pam Baji, Project Coordinator for Educational Relationships.

And the program of three-week study tours *is* growing. In 2007, SAIT helped six students visit Box Hill. Last year, 32 students studied at Box Hill and ITE.

This academic year SAIT will host 36 students on exchange visits in various programs. In addition, the campus will be the venue for a three-week GEN study tour on project management attended by 30 students from all partner institutes.

SAIT is now expanding into semester-long exchanges and two Hospitality students are currently studying in Melbourne. Baji says up to 10 students will participate in semester exchanges in the next academic year, from Business, Hospitality Management, Film and Video Production and Architectural Technologies programs.

Part den mother, part project manager, travel guru and cultural liaison, Baji has been with GEN for a year. "It takes a lot of work to arrange the visits, helping with logistics and accommodations for the short-term trips and supporting students in getting visas and paperwork in place for the semester-long exchanges," she says.

The selection process is rigorous. Grades, professionalism, cultural sensitivity, knowledge of Canada and leadership abilities are all considered when selecting the best of the best to be SAIT's ambassadors. Once chosen, students receive a \$2,500 bursary to help with their expenses.

"The value of the program is to take students – and staff – out of their comfort zones. Once that happens, they will never again take as much for granted about the world they live in," says Dick Bourne, Academic Chair for Film and Video Production and a chaperone for last year's Singapore trip.

And what do students get out of these experiences? Visit sait.ca/gen and enjoy the video testimonials to find out. ■

SAIT Business Administration student
Natasha Jadavji in Singapore.

