SEED Program Wins National Innovation Award

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By Abigail Kosiak

Out of 53 universities, the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship awarded first place to Utah State University’s Jon M. Huntsman School of Business for Excellence in Co-Curricular Innovation for its Small Enterprise Education and Development (SEED) Program. The SEED Program is a transformative, international internship opportunity where students of all majors can make an impact in the world by teaching basic business-building principles to small-business owners in developing regions of the world. SEED interns study entrepreneurship, micro-finance, and small business consulting for one semester before spending three months in Ghana, the Philippines, Peru, or the Dominican Republic.

Throughout their internship, students help individuals write business plans, launch new ventures, set goals, create budgets, develop accounting practices, and organize inventory management systems. On a deeper level, SEED interns work to empower less fortunate individuals and families to help them break the poverty cycle, become self-reliant, and improve their standard of living in a sustainable way. This impactful experience is often entirely new for students who have never experienced the strained conditions in which some of their clients live.

“Development can be a difficult field of study for a student in Utah or the United States as a whole. We are so far removed from many of the fundamental challenges that much of the world faces that we can easily lack the human element behind the theory of the classroom—despite instructors’ best efforts,” said Zach Malcarne, a former SEED intern in Ghana. “The SEED Program is pretty unique in that its core purpose is to enrich students and support sustainable development in rural communities abroad.”

SEED provides dedicated and passionate students with the opportunity to empower individuals, families, and communities by teaching local entrepreneurs enterprise creation and sustainability. According to Dr. Mike Glauser, executive director of USU Huntsman’s Center for Entrepreneurship, SEED students “become immersed in these international communities and the everyday lives and businesses of the people they help. They get to see first-hand how business can change lives and impact a family’s future.”

This ability to create a lasting impact is deeply meaningful to many SEED interns. “It was an incredible experience being able to use the knowledge I gained in the classroom to make a difference in the lives of small business owners in the Philippines,” said Josh Feigelson, a former SEED intern in the Philippines. “Each day presented new challenges and experiences that have helped me become a better student and professional. The cultural awareness, diverse perspective, and lifelong friendships I gained are invaluable and will benefit me the rest of my life.”

The SEED Program distinguishes students from among their peers by building their confidence and developing their problem solving and research abilities. SEED students master the skills of business development, significantly impact the lives of others, and have a transformative life experience in the process. According to Dr. Dan Holland, an associate professor of entrepreneurship at the Huntsman School, the SEED
Program's impactful learning opportunity is "educational innovation at its best."

You can find more information on the SEED Program here:
https://huntsman.usu.edu/seed/