Tales From Africa:

How to adapt to the culture of Ghana

The difference in priorities between the U.S. and Ghanaian cultures has been interesting to witness. My friends and family in the U.S. have e-mailed me asking, “How do the Ghanaians feel about the War in Iraq.” Before coming here, I too asked those same questions and now I have found answers, but they are not the answers I had expected. Yes, Ghanaians are mostly supportive of the U.S. efforts in combating the global War on Terror, and yes, they do like Americans for the most part. But most Ghanaians are rightfully concerned about where their next meal will come from, rather than who is killing who at the moment.

For example, this week civil unrest broke out in neighboring Ivory Coast, but people here are not in the least worried that the violence will spread to Ghana. In fact, the only way I became informed about the situation in Ivory Coast was by reading international news online.

Besides soaking up the culture and people, my volunteer work has been an important element of my fulfillment in Ghana. Helping Women in Progress, my non-governmental organization (NGO), strive in its overall mission, I have conducted intensive research that will allow us to export products made by Ghanaian artisans to the U.S. market, which will contribute to increasing revenues for these highly skilled artisans that have become my friends and mentors. I have analyzed American trade agreements, U.S. and Ghanaian customs laws and found ways to streamline our operations so that exporting can become a simple, routine and cost-efficient process. Instead of sitting behind a computer all day or working from a comfortable office, I have done most of my work “in the field,” by meeting with Ghanaian government and international officials in Accra, and observing how other NGO’s work. I have also gained insight and knowledge from other volunteers, who come from Switzerland, the Netherlands, Hong Kong and the United States. Besides becoming more equipped with technical expertise, I have been fortunate to be part of an incredibly intelligent and motivated team. We have been highly successful in working together on various projects and formulating “team” conclusions that have been invaluable in decision making.

I have also adjusted well to Ghanaian food, a huge part of the culture. Everyday my meals consist of yams (called cassava), rice, beans, cabbage, plantains and other local staples. Particular spices are used that give the dishes a lively and distinct flavor. I have prepared several meals with Ghanaians in which I have pounded fufu, smoked fish and stirred stews—all of which are local specialties. While I love the food here, I will be eager to sink my teeth into a slice of pizza and drink a Snapple.

In adapting to life in Ghana, I have purchased a goat that I have named Kebab. Goats are very common pets in Ghana, though most become someone’s kebab for dinner. I share Kebab with another volunteer, who will be able to raise the goat when I leave. We take Kebab everywhere— to the market, the office, in taxis, etc.

Nevertheless, living in Ghana has been an incredibly enriching and meaningful learning experience. While living for weeks on end without running water and electricity has been strenuous, the real challenge will come when I return to the States, in attempting to turn my experience and the perspective that I have gained into something that will yield a positive outcome. I hope to persuade others to travel to places like Ghana and share their families, co-workers and others the problems that are pressing to people in other countries. The more of us that understand and take part in the world, the better our chances are of a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Letter to the Editor: Littering on campus is unacceptable

To the editor,

I’m writing to express my disappointment in certain Rider students. On Tuesday morning, I left my building to be greeted by workers struggling to clean up massive amounts of litter left on the ground by members of our campus.

We must look nice to potential students and their parents. It makes the entire University look sloppy and reflects badly on faculty and students alike.

As a future teacher, I would explain to first graders why littering is bad. This is common knowledge for college-age kids who should know better. The fact that I have to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper about it is even worse.

Honestly, would you treat your own house or yard in that manner? Many students consider Rider their second home; everyone should respect the campus in the same way.

I hope the next time people think of littering, they will reconsider. Whether it’s one bottle or a ton of garbage, there’s absolutely no excuse for students to throw their crap anywhere but in the trash bins.

Sincerely,
Amy Danese
Junior

From the Counseling Center: Emotionally completing college

"And I step once more Through a hoop of tears and walk on, holding this Buoy of flowers in front of my beauty, Wishing myself the good voyage." —W.S. Merwin

STOP! In the weeks leading up to graduation, seniors sometimes do not take the time to acknowledge the multiple feelings they are experiencing. Feelings of sadness, anger, fear, and excitement may go unnoticed and may even become anesthetized amidst all the partying. Emotionally completing college is important to psychological health because it eases closure. The task of emotionally completing college can be facilitated in the following ways.

First, it is primary to attend and identify the feelings one is experiencing. Next, it is helpful to articulate and express these feelings to a significant other. Finally, it is meaningful to reflect upon the intellectual and psychological changes that have taken place since the beginning of college.

Senior year is a good place to begin reflecting upon developmental moments. It conjures up visions of eighteen-year-olds saying goodbye to their parents, setting up dormitory rooms and meeting roommates. Mental images of buying stacks of textbooks and going to the first college classes come to mind. Excitement and anxiety abound as the separation and individuation process begins. Freshmen learn strategies to cope, learn to manage freedom and gain competence.

There are many developmental moments to reflect upon from the sophomore year. Getting to choose a roommate is one such moment. Declaring a major is another moment and sophomores may form attachments to faculty members. Excitement may give way to boredom since sophomores are not beginning the first time, as they were in their freshman year. In addition, they may be overwhelmed by the three-year stretch ahead. Sophomores tend to have conflicted feelings, search for meaning and struggle with identity.

Developmental moments during the junior year include career exploration and vocational choices. Juniors may trade short-term relationships for long-term commitment and risk saying, “I love you.” More decisions are made and juniors take more personal responsibility. They tend to think and feel more independently. Juniors often consider spirituality on a deeper level and may acknowledge a need for God or something larger than themselves.

Finally, there are developmental moments during the senior year to reflect upon. Seniors may be resolving authority issues and may experience apathy toward final academic papers. They are imagining a post college world and are continuing to move toward autonomy. Some may be lost in transition as they enter the process of completion and separation. Seniors usually have a deepened sense of life and death as they bring closure to their college career upon graduating.

This brief look at emotionally completing college may motivate some to contact the counseling center for more information at x5157.