

Introduction

What follows is a brief report regarding the Instructionally Related Activity (IRA) sponsored course (UNIV-391) that visited Detroit Michigan between March 17 and March 24, 2017. Led by instructor John Griffin, a total of 14 students enrolled in the course. In addition to travel to Detroit and other parts of Eastern Michigan, the students conducted research that led to findings related to auto industry practices. The students used Professor Michael Porter's Value Chain Analysis as a framework for their research.

Pre-Trip Preparation

Students met three times prior to departure for Detroit. During the first meeting agreement was reached on team assignments, required readings and research methods. The second meeting students reported on their progress and presented an outline of the work they expected to complete. The third meeting was a get-together with selected students who had previously visited Detroit with the instructor. During that third meeting, students gained insights into how best to prepare for what they were about to experience.

The Week in Detroit

The group departed on Friday, March 17 and arrived at the Comfort Inn at Greenfield Village after a full day of travel. Because departure from LAX was very early, most students were anxious to retire after a meal at a local pizza eatery.

Much of the study of the historical and cultural features of the area were conducted over the weekend



Transplanting Seedlings with Keep Growing Detroit

of March 18 and 19. On Saturday we visited the Eastern market, a large open-air farmers market that has operated for over 100 years. We next went on to a two-hour walking tour of the historical sites in downtown Detroit. The group then participated in a service learning assignment transplanting seedlings for an organization involved in urban gardening named Keep Growing Detroit. For dinner we visited the historic Lafayette Coney diner. We finished up with some recreation at the Garden Bowl, a 100-year-old bowling

alley near Wayne State University.

On Sunday, March 19 we started at the Detroit Institute of Art where students experienced the renowned Diego Rivera exhibit along with countless other artifacts. Next was a visit to the Detroit Historical Museum where exhibits detail the founding and development of the city. At 3 PM we toured the elegant grounds and home of Edsel and Eleanor Ford, now a historical site. In the early evening we

returned downtown for a ride on the public transportation system known as the People Mover and a visit to Greektown.

On Monday we spent time in the Henry Ford Museum and toured Ford's Rouge factory where students saw Ford 150 pickup trucks being assembled. Later in the day we visited the Heidelberg Project, an open-air art exhibit and school for young artists.

On Tuesday we visited the headquarters for the United Auto Workers union where we met with UAW vice president Cindy Estrada. Students learned about the role of the labor movement in bargaining for good wages and working conditions in the auto assembly plants. In the afternoon we



Touring Tier-2 supplier Challenge Manufacturing

visited Challenge Manufacturing, a second-tier supplier to auto manufacturers. There we toured one of their manufacturing facilities with a representative from the human relations department. From Challenge we traveled to the Pewabic Ceramics facility that has been in operation since 1902. We finished the day at Al Ameer, the Middle Eastern restaurant in Dearborn. Detroit is home to the largest Middle Eastern population in the United States and the food was excellent. For many students it was their first experience with authentic Middle Eastern food.

On Wednesday, March 22, we toured the headquarters for Quicken Loans. Our host, Buddy Henika walked us around three buildings in the downtown area and provided lunch. He was very interested to recruit some of the students to do an internship at Quicken Loans over the summer. As it turns out, one of the students applied and is currently working for the company in Detroit. We then went over to the headquarters for General Motors and spoke with members of their executive team responsible for environmental sustainability. While there was some focus on fuel consumption of their product line most of the discussion centered on the management of waste byproduct of the manufacturing process. To finish the day we visited the Ford College in Dearborn where students of the Culinary School prepared and presented a wonderful meal.



Quicken Loans tour

On Thursday we visited a new enterprise called Startup TV and interviewed one of their founders. We went on to meet with JD Power executives based in Detroit. Two students from previous trips are now

employed by JD Power at their California headquarters. From there we went to the GM Heritage Museum in Sterling Heights. This Museum is home to an extensive collection of over 1,000 cars that span the entire history of the auto industry in the United States.

On Friday prior to her departure was visited Ann Arbor, home of the University of Michigan. At UM we visited the Transportation Research Institute and the Ross School of Business. In both instances students were presented with interactive exercises and met students working on transportation research projects. We arrived back to our cars in Los Angeles just after midnight on Friday.



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Post-trip Project Assignment and Campus Presentation

In the final part of the course students prepare a 10-page analysis of an assigned segment of the auto industry value chain. In this instance, students chose to write about the following topics:

- Human Resources
- Inbound Logistics
- Infrastructure
- Marketing and Sales
- Operations
- Procurement
- Service
- Technology Development

Students also prepared a poster that was used in our presentation of findings to the campus community in the Broome Library on May 5, 2017.

Conclusion

Through this experience students were challenged to take a deep look at a 100-year-old industry that has had a profound influence in our lives. In Detroit we visited 20 points of interest, interviewed 16 Detroiters and sampled the cuisine at nine unique Detroit eateries. The experience radically altered student's impression of this sometimes disparaged region. The experience also highlights the fact that any region, no matter how prosperous, can be dramatically transformed as a result of disruptive change.



The Research Crew in downtown Detroit