

South Africa is a beacon of hope for Africa

Elon senior receives a 6-month internship in South Africa

Taylor Shain
Reporter

Elon University's faculty encourages students to become global citizens. One Elon senior is taking that philosophy to the next level.

James Wesley Lynch was inspired by his 2009 Winter Term study abroad trip to South Africa to pursue an internship with Evo Media, a marketing company there. Beginning on Feb. 1, Lynch will start the six-month position. The company's clients sponsor the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Lynch is just one of 12 interns with Evo Media. He will get free housing, a stipend and will get to watch a few soccer games from the stands. But for Lynch the perks are just footnotes of the internship.

"I've traveled around and outside the United States my whole life, but I've never been to a place like South Africa," Lynch said. "I've never felt that passionate about a place before."

On his previous Winter Term visit there, the culture and the people inspired him.

"There's so much racial diversity," Lynch said. "It's a complete melting pot." He said he was amazed by the harmony between all races and cultures, but horrified by the incredible poverty level.

"The disparities are unbelievable," Lynch said. "There are slums with literally millions of people impoverished, and there are huge mansions just a few kilometers away."

In addition to working with public relations, event management and marketing for several clients, the internship gives Lynch an opportunity

to do service.

Lynch said the chance to do service projects in South Africa is one of his biggest reasons for traveling to the country.

"I'm really passionate about helping others," Lynch said. "And in South Africa, there is a huge need." As part of his Winter Term trip last year, Lynch volunteered at a local school and helped give hundreds of clothes to charity.

While there is rampant poverty in South Africa, there is substantial growth as well. "It's one of the big developing nations in the world," Lynch said. "They are a beacon of hope for all of Africa."

The 2010 World Cup is a big opportunity for South Africa. Hundreds of thousands of people will visit and millions of dollars will enter the country, and it may just put South Africa on the map, Lynch said. Even last year, 18 months before the World Cup was scheduled to begin, the people of South Africa were already enthusiastic about the World Cup, he said.

For Lynch, traveling to South Africa for six months is a new adventure. "I'm basically on my own," Lynch said. "It's unlike anything I've ever done before."

He said living so far away from his friends and his family will be a big adjustment.

Lynch's passion for the country may lead to his permanent residence there if given the opportunity. The Elon senior will have to miss his own graduation. But he said it's worth the sacrifice.

"I left part of my heart in south Africa, so it's great that I get a chance to go back," Lynch said.



"It really influenced me and changed my life in a lot of ways. I knew a lot of classmates, who felt the same way."

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"The disparities are unbelievable there. You go from houses that are literally right on top of each other, to huge mansions, just a few kilometers away."

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