EMU’s Global Focus Profiled in Report

By Paul Yoder
Staff Writer

A report sponsored by the U.S. Department of State will feature EMU and five other institutions, including Yale, for practicing global awareness in education.

The Intercultural Programs, international involvement of the Conflict Transformation Program, and the number of international students at EMU will be featured in the report, which is to be distributed in April 2003.

The Association of International Educators (AIE), formerly known as The National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA), is working to promote cultural awareness and understanding. The AIE selects from over 120 schools that submitted applications.

Reporter Chris Connell visited campus Oct. 11-17, meeting with directors and students. Blough identified EMU’s mission statement and the Board of Directors’ commitment to internationalization as important.

The school’s language assistance initiative and the high number of faculty and staff who have spent significant time in other countries also drew praise. Blough said she received 79 responses by e-mail from faculty and staff when she asked who had worked overseas.

“[Connell] seemed especially surprised by the chapel he attended,” said Director of Cross-Cultural Programs Don Clymer, referring to the cross-cultural celebration chapel service.

“Something fascinated me that was the first thing [Connell] told me about. I went to a chapel service and it’s very unusual,” said Clymer. “It was like he was going for the human interest side of the thing rather than the institutional side.”

Clymer said EMU’s cross-cultural program exemplifies the school’s commitment to the international view. “I think there’s something about the milieu of having been missions and service oriented over the years that has made this program. It just wouldn’t be possible at a major university,” he said. Indeed, Clymer’s NAFSA colleagues “just about fall off their chairs when they hear it’s required. They’re just astounded that we are able to make it a requirement and carry it through,” he said.

Clymer identified a piece by Lawrence Yoder for the Cross-Cultural Annual capturing the core of this commitment, which underlies EMU’s internationalization efforts. “Today a high number of Memnonite Church members have lived, studied and served in cross-cultural situations, forever changed in the way they look at the world and its peoples,” it reads.

While the report is not an award, the recognition is beneficial and gratifying. “I hope that getting the name recognition for this will be a good thing,” Blough said. “I think we don’t market our cross-cultural program to the general public.”

The report will profile EMU, Yale University, San Diego State, Indiana University, and University of Pennsylvania.

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Forty-two percent of students use four cards or more.

An ABC Internet press release stated that 92 percent of college students who actually have cards. The average student credit card balance is $2,327. At graduation, the average student has $32,262 in credit card debt.

Students are much more aware than they used to be. Feelings towards credit cards in general are mixed on campus. “Credit cards are very dangerous things,” said first-year Alexa Sauder, citing uncontrolled debt as the reason that cards should be avoided.

The statistics are even more startling when it comes to the amount of debt that college students are accumulating. Bankrate reports that the average student credit card balance is $2,327. At graduation, the average student has $32,262 in credit card debt.

The problem with this debt is that some students won’t be responsible about paying it off. One in five college cardholders has a debt of over $10,000, according to another ABC Internet press release. This could be due to the fact that 42 percent of students use four or more cards.

This doesn’t mean that all students are getting into debt. In fact, the majority of students obtain cards simply to start establishing a solid line of credit. The same ABC press release stated that just half of students applying for cards did so in order to begin establishing their credit.

Credit card companies also believe that students have the ability to use their cards wisely. “Most of our college students use their cards responsibly,” Discover Card spokeswoman Cathy Edwards said. “Students are much more aware than they used to be.”

“College students are enticed [to get credit cards] by prizes, T-shirts and koozies,” said Rudy Cavazos, director of corporate and media relations for Money Management International. “It’s a statement of freedom—a statement of adulthood.”

Sources differ on the percentage of college students who actually have cards. The ABC press release stated that 92 percent of college students have some sort of credit card while a Bankrate article put the percentage closer to 83. In either case, student credit card use has risen dramatically in the past few years, approximately 24 percent since 1998, according to Bankrate.

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On the other hand, some believe that wise credit card use can be healthy. “I find that credit cards are useful if I have self control,” said first-year Melanie Kratzer. Kratzer uses her card mainly to make Internet purchases. “It is just so easy,” she said.

Though Kratzer isn’t worried about the security of her information on the Internet, it is definitely a growing concern for many people. There are precautions that can be taken, however, to ensure that credit numbers are protected. Tips include making sure that purchasing sites are well known and checking that the site has a policy on what they do with information given online.

Kratzer is confident that most students can handle the responsibility of having a credit or debit card, but recognizes that there is risk involved. “Since students have more disposable income than the majority of the older population, banks are aggressively marketing the college market,” he said. “The hard part is when it comes to responsible use of the card.”