eXperience

THE SPIRIT OF STUDENT LIFE AT JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

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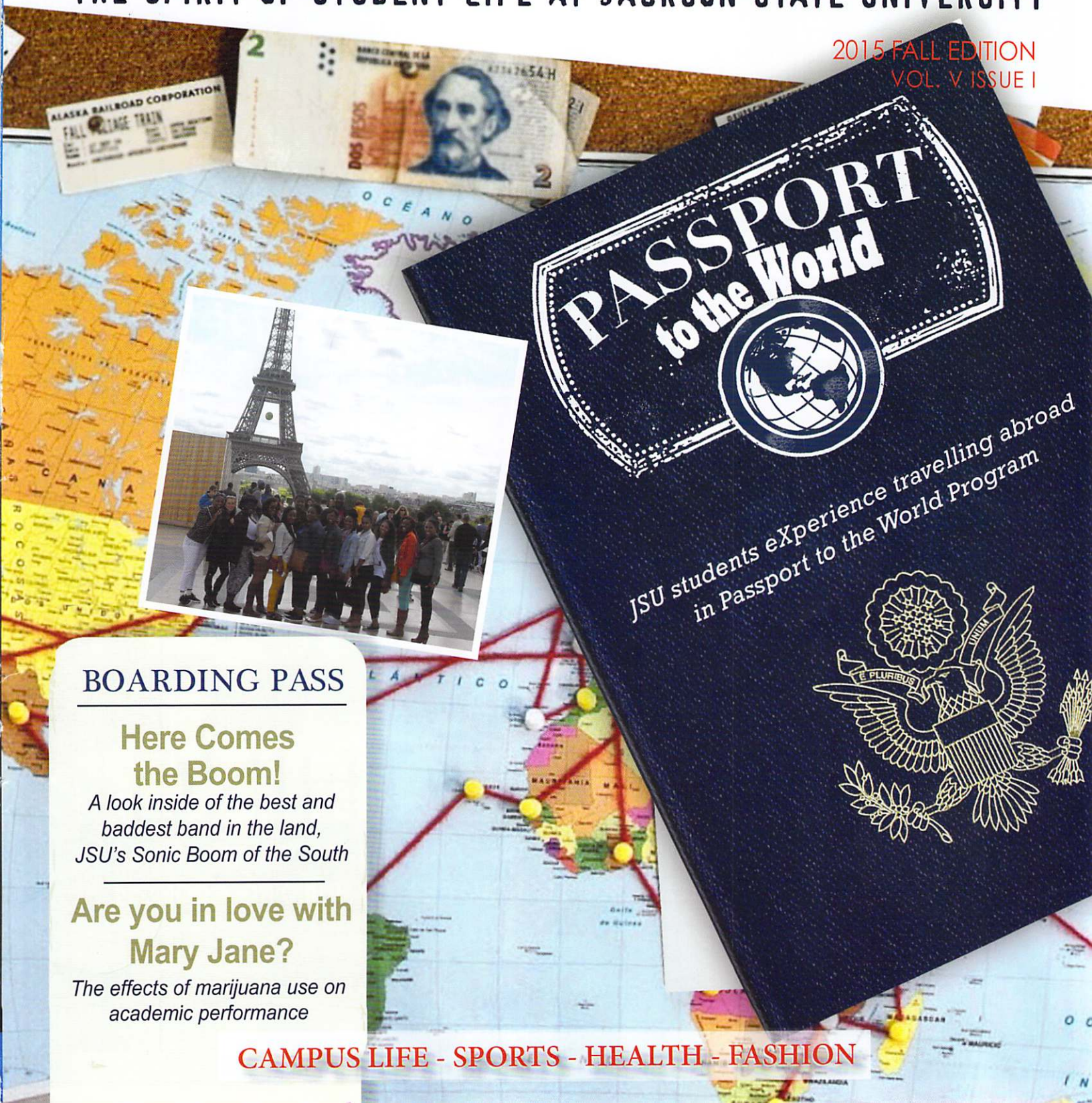

BOARDING PASS

Here Comes the Boom!

A look inside of the best and baddest band in the land, JSU's Sonic Boom of the South

Are you in love with Mary Jane?

The effects of marijuana use on academic performance

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PASSPORT to the World

By Shane Savannah

Photos courtesy of JSU Global and Community Colleges

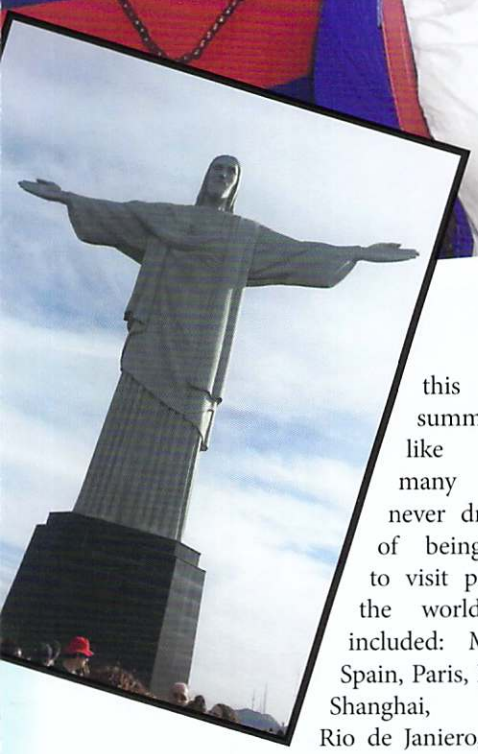
As an army brat, Cory Davis is no stranger to traveling and living in new places. However, the chance to travel abroad with the Passport to the World program provided the opportunity to do something he had never done before, travel internationally.

After hearing about the program, offered by JSU Global, Davis along with 72 other students clamored for the chance to visit destinations only dreamed about.

The endeavor was led by Dr. Priscilla Slade, special assistant to the Provost for JSU Global and Community Colleges. Slade said, "If we are going to educate global leaders as our mission statement reads, then we need to get students abroad."

She added: "There are many reasons why it's more important now than ever before for students to gain a level of global competency prior to graduation. Technological advances have created a world without boundaries. Our students must be able to compete for jobs globally. Study abroad increases employability and earning potential. Studies show that students that study abroad tend to have higher grades and have higher 4-year graduation rates. The Sage Research Project showed that over a 50-year period, study abroad had a positive long term effect on a persons' career path and global engagement."

Through Passport to the World, the 73 students were exposed to many different cultures and ideologies



this past summer, and like Davis, many had never dreamed of being able to visit parts of the world that included: Madrid, Spain, Paris, France, Shanghai, China, Rio de Janiero, Santo Domingo, Dominican and Salvador Da Bahia, Brazil.

"Studying abroad really allowed me to be more open to meeting new people," said Davis. "This experience has allowed me to view the world from a totally new perspective. I'm honored that I embarked on such an amazing opportunity."

Tyra Greene, a junior graphic design major from Chicago, Ill., was selected to travel to Salvador da Bahia.

"We visited a lot of churches and historical sites in Salvador da Bahia. We learned about candomle, which is a religion that slaves from Africa practiced. Since the slaves couldn't't practice their own religion, they practiced candomle – a mixture of the catholic religion and African spirituality. I found that very interesting," said Greene.

Money was not a problem for most of the JSU students studying abroad. Scholarships and grants for their travel and lodging were provided as well as other monies from fundraisers.

"Before the trip, I didn't know how I was going to be able to pay for the trip but fortunately the University was able to get a lot of grants together for us and they were also able to offer us a lot of scholarships," said Davis, a senior mass communication major from Vicksburg, Miss.

Even with scholarships and grants, some students, like Davis, still had to pay a small amount. He believes that the experience was worth the investment.

The four-week international travel experience was faculty-led and exposed students to new cultures, research opportunities, and experiential learning activities. Through this program students spent two weeks abroad and two weeks on the campus at JSU.

When the day came for the first group of students to begin their journey, many say the plane ride itself was an experience they will never forget.

"It was nearly two hours from Jackson to Chicago. But from Chicago to Shanghai, it took 14 hours!" said Davis, who was very apprehensive about being on a plane for such a long period of time.

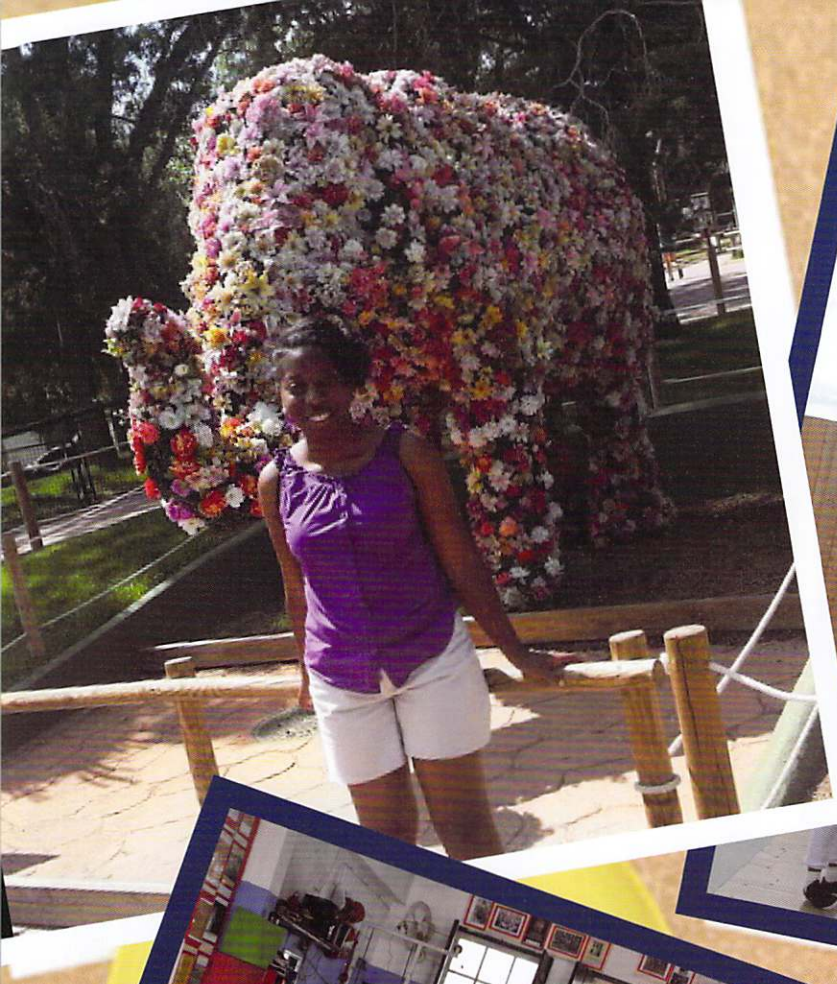
"The turbulence flying over scared the hell out of me but after a few hours, I finally became comfortable."

Davis said that he really didn't know what to expect upon arrival because he had only seen China in movies and documentaries, but the actual landing into China was a memory he will never forget.

"It was simply beautiful," said Davis.

For some students, their fondest experiences came from their ability to connect with people of different cultures and customs.

"Since I earned my bachelor's degree in French, I've always wanted to be immersed in the French culture.



"This is your chance to make memories."

This trip really gave me that opportunity, from hearing their language every day to eating there foods," said Erica Handy, an English major from Jackson, Miss. who studied in Paris, France.

Jameson Hamilton, whose international destination was Rio de Janiero, was most impressed by how non-materialistic the people in the country were, as opposed to people from the United States.

"I was intrigued by seeing people's everyday lives in comparison with our lives in the U.S. In the United States, people are so focused on image, but in Rio de Janiero, the people were more laid back," said Hamilton, a senior civil engineering from Centreville, Miss.

Shantwanza Hill, a junior forensic chemistry major minoring in sociology from Glendora, Miss. who studied abroad in Rio de Janeiro.

"Traveling abroad has impacted my life with amazing information, and now I know my life will never be the same. Overall, my trip was awesome and I plan to study abroad next year," said Hill.

Other student participants said they learned to appreciate things they normally take for granted in their international destinations.

"After weeks of eating foods native to China, I was so happy when we were given McDonalds for lunch one day," said Davis. "I was never thought I would be so glad to see a McChicken and fries." Davis jokingly added that McDonalds tastes the same everywhere.

Most students in the program state that they were glad that instead of passing the summer away doing mundane things, they had the opportunity to experience other places and cultures.

As people all over the world are still reeling from the terrorist bombings orchestrated by the al Qaeda faction, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or in Paris, on Nov. 13, 2015 and took the lives of 129 people and injured 350, many wonder if the study abroad programs offered by JSU will be affected.

The attacks had victims from at least 19 nations and touched people in all parts of the world, including students at Jackson State University. Slade hopes that JSU students who want to study and travel abroad will not let the recent events dictate their desires.

"I would imagine that there maybe a little apprehension of the students because of what's in the media now. I would hope that we as Americans will never decide to live in fear. It doesn't matter where you are. The news media has also said that New York and Washington D.C. are now targets, so are we not to go there? I would never recommend that [living in fear] to anyone, my children included because I have a son that lives in New York," said Slade. "You don't live in fear. We abide by the shelter of the almighty and he even has assigned personal angels to hold us up lest we cast away our feet against the stone. For those people who are fearful of anything, not just travel, Psalms 91 is there for the members of the household of faith. It tells you about your God, and how he protects you."

Slade also stated that safeguards are already in place to help protect students when they study abroad. "We do have a whole risk management level of activity for anyone who studies abroad. Yes, students must sign a university form to get permission to travel abroad. We also have 24/7 emergency care for students. We have insurance, if they should get ill or anything like that. We work with the council on international educational exchange to provide a whole risk management package for our students. Students do not travel alone, they always travel in groups with the faculty as well as with staff on the ground with the counsel of international exchange," said Slade.

For those interested in joining the Passport to the World program next summer, there are a few requirements you must meet.

1. Must be a full-time student
2. Must have at least a 2.5 GPA
3. Must provide one letter of recommendation from JSU faculty or administrator

Students must also attend an information session. Then think of potential place to go and research those places. Reach out to a Study Abroad coordinator and get ready to take flight. Finally, be prepared for the eXperience of a lifetime and just go!