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CHAPTER 2

A Native’s Flashback into the University of Dayton Global Education Seminar

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The 2018 Global Education Seminar (GES) provided me with the opportunity to look at Ghana through a different lens. For someone who was born and grew up in Ghana, I was not expecting anything new in terms of the culture when I was embarking on the GES journey. However, I found myself overwhelmed by the “*parts unknown*” to me.

Before this journey, for example, my knowledge about the transatlantic slave trade and the Cape Coast Castles were all from what I had learned from the history books in elementary and high school. For my entire life growing up in Ghana until I left for graduate school in the US, I had never visited any of the transatlantic slave trade’s transit points. However, the GES provided me the opportunity to dig deeper into my roots. A visit to the Cape Coast Castles provided a better experience and deeper knowledge of the slave trade than I had learned in the history books. Going through the dungeons and staying there only briefly (even less than two minutes) was enough to provide palpable experience about the inhumane

treatments that people went through as a result of slavery. There also couldn't have been a better way to contrast the tangible differences between life as a slave and life as a slave master than to witness the well-ventilated rooms available for the masters and to see the church sitting on top of the dungeons.

Even though the Cape Coast Castles were insightful, a more positive experience was the warmth that embraced the cohort throughout the country. The people we met were very generous with their hospitality. Their desire to share their time with us and to give us gifts was always instantaneous. With smiles, they were ready and willing to listen to us concerning our journey and about ways that the two institutions could collaborate. They provided us with courtesies that on an ordinary day would be devoted more to school administrators. They truly hosted us, making sure that our stay was a success. A good example of this hosting came at the University of Ghana in Accra. Even though a break in communication had us **not** on the Dean of Engineering's agenda for the day, he still accommodated me and one of my engineering colleagues in the cohort with a half an hour of his time discussing opportunities for collaboration. It was during this discussion that the Dean also showed interest in visiting the University of Dayton (UD) as part of his business tour to get inputs into UD's new manufacturing program. In fact, it is worth mentioning that the Dean visited UD during the fall 2018 semester. Moreover, through my involvement in the GES and meeting with the Dean, I was able to collaborate with a faculty member from the University of Ghana on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in spring 2019.

In a similar vein, GES provided another opportunity to collaborate on COIL with a faculty member from Ashesi University, another university in Accra. We both were teaching project management in the fall of 2018 and were able to get our students to work collaboratively on the same project. Each of us also taught a topic for the other. In addition to these collaborations, it was humbling to give a talk (with the cohort) on active learning practices.

A GES visit to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, was also a time well spent. Starting



with a lecture from the Provost, a position equivalent to UD's Dean of Engineering), we got a peek into their business incubator. It was refreshing to learn about the business opportunities they were providing students and about the international institutions they were partnering with. And another highlight in Kumasi was the cohort's visit to the Manhyia Palace. Even though I missed that to be with my family, I was able to get a friend to escort the rest of our group, and the Ghanaian hospitality was at full display.

The GES also took us to Togo, a neighboring country to the east of Ghana. It was my first time visiting the sister country. Initially, I thought communication was going to be a challenge since Togo is a francophone country. However, I was surprised and impressed by how the people I interacted with were able to express themselves fluently in English. My best experience in Togo happened at the University of Kara. After our team leader's speech in French, we had the opportunity to interact with the students. Those that I interacted with were shy to start a conversation (probably due to their limitation in expressing themselves in English), but when I made the most important step by starting a conversation, a lot more of the students

drew closer and had more questions for me than the answers I could provide. I was happy at that moment because I was able to interact with the students and answer at least some of their questions. I know they would have loved to talk to me for hours if our schedule had permitted. They also were happy to receive memory sticks with UD brochures and pens. (As an aside: We also had the opportunity to explore the food in Benin because we were able to legally cross into that country from Kara.)

The GES provided me with the opportunity to examine Ghana and Togo for opportunities in a way that might have otherwise remained uncharted. The experience from the Kakum National Park, Elmina Beach Resort, and the Cape Cost Castles were extremely humbling. And one other thing that made it a great learning process was the cohesion within the cohort. We bonded together and looked out for each other in a way like what we usually profess for the UD community. The learning experience was great, opportunities for collaborations abounded for whoever wanted to tap into them, and the people of Ghana and Togo were extremely loving.