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Michelle Grenier, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology Travels to Brazil

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International Perspectives

Center for International Education

MICHELLE GRENIER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF KINESIOLOGY

Professor Michelle Grenier traveled to Brazil in July to attend the International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity held in Rio Clara.



Prof. Grenier (left) with colleagues in Brazil

Despite its paradoxes, Brazil is a modern country with an interracial blend that creates a complex population and a mosaic of ethnic cultures. Attending the International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity in Rio Clara this past July was a rewarding experience that enabled me to establish cross-cultural connections with educators from Europe, South America, Australia, and North America.

The day before I was to leave I received notice that a co-presenter from the United States would not be able to attend because of VISA issues. As a result, I invited an individual with cerebral palsy to fill in for my missing colleague with the intention of grounding the theoretical aspects of my presentation with the experiences of a person with a disability.

The choice proved successful on many accounts. Most importantly, it

served as a catalyst for future collaborations investigating the construct of inclusion and how its meaning is shaped by cultural expectations and linguistic variations. It also spawned the development of a collaborative, cross-cultural manuscript on the inclusive education.

Yet, listening and participating in the presentations was only a small part of the experience. Traveling the streets of Rio Clara with wheelchair athletes in search of a restaurant was an event unto itself as we navigated the potholed roads and the rampless curbs. Driver mentality is very different; all things are treated equally, irrespective of your mode of transportation. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, bicyclists, and automobiles all jockeyed for space on the road. These excursions proved an exercise in timing, anticipation and the art of dodging moving vehicles.

While at the conference, I was also able to participate in some early morning running sessions with two blind athletes from Germany and Norway. Each was Paralympian in their own right and easily outpaced me on the runs. Their ability to understand their environment minus the use of their vision taught me that there are many ways to operate in the world and that, really, much of it has to do with desire, opportunity, and curiosity.

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Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Center for International Education for providing financial support to attend the conference. Attendance at the conference far exceeded my expectations for collaborations and opportunities for future scholarly engagements.

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