

## French Exchange students spend a semester at Vanier College

Montreal, January 25, 2012. The room crackled laughter and buzzed with high spirits when a group of exchange students from France gathered for a farewell party at Vanier College in December. The semester was coming to an end and it was time for certificates and farewells for the fifty students from various French institutions who spent the Autumn semester at Vanier studying Business Administration and the ten who studied in OST: Hypermedia and Micropublishing.



Since 2006 Vanier's Business Administration program has welcomed over 300 students from various regions of France including Belfort, Vannes, Troyes, Grenoble, Paris, Nice, Reims, Montbeliard, Chamberry and Rambouillet. From all accounts these teacher-driven exchange programs have enriched the classroom.

"When we discuss material there is a conscious effort to examine the French perspective and compare it to Canadian practices," states Business Administration teacher George Dracopoulos, the Business Exchange Coordinator who spearheaded the exchange program since its inception. "This leads to interesting discussions and thought-provoking debates. However, this is more than a Canadian-French cultural exchange because Vanier has a truly multicultural environment."

"When I surveyed one of my business classes that included 20 Vanier College students and 13 IUT French students, I found individuals from both groups who spoke common languages other than English and French such as Polish, Italian, and Arabic, and shared a common heritage. As a group these 33 students have lived in 25 different countries other than Canada and France. They bring a global perspective with them to class every day."

For the French students, the experience of living in Montreal has been unique. "The multi-cultural atmosphere in Montreal and the opportunity to meet people from all over the world and experience various cultures at Vanier was amazing," states Charlene Renard from IUT Belfort-Montbeliard. Gloria Leussi from IUT Cergy Saint Christophe adds, "I had a great experience at Vanier. I improved my English language skills, learned to live without my family and met a lot of interesting people."

Vanier students also appreciated the visiting students. "When we worked in teams they brought up new perspectives and taught me to look at things in a whole new manner," says Izabella Kirejczyk. "I am now interested in going abroad." Another Vanier student, Gian Karlo Rossler also appreciated the French visitors, "It is great to have international students in class because it gives us the opportunity to make connections in other nations."

"It's an amazing experience," concludes Rajko Stojic from UT Belfort. "It was my first time on North American soil. I learned a lot and I became completely independent thanks to this experience."

Bruce Norton, OST: MicroMedia Exchange Coordinator believes the exchange programs have benefitted both students and teachers. "Faculty have enjoyed the new challenge and the sense of rejuvenation that the FCTP French Exchange Program has brought to their classes."