

Some thoughts on my 2005 Study in Mexico trip

What comes to mind when I think of Mexico? My answer to that question is much different today than it would have been before my Study in Mexico trip. I suppose I watched too many westerns when I was growing up. For me, Mexico had always evoked thoughts of bad water, deserts, cactus, sombreros, a hot, dry climate and illiterate and impoverished people. While this may be an accurate description of some regions of the country, it definitely does not describe the nation as a whole.

Staying on the campus of the Tec de Monterrey provided a unique opportunity to meet students from around the world and immerse myself in everyday life in the community. I was surprised to learn the great importance being placed on literacy and higher education in Mexico, definitely a contradiction to what I had grown up thinking of the country. The size of the Tec de Monterrey campus and the high level of technology being utilized there were strong indicators of the commitment to education. The two classes we took on Mexican Culture and Doing Business in Mexico were very interesting. Our instructors, Raoul Godinez and Germán Merino, shared a great deal of insight into the traditions and passions of the Mexican people.

I enjoyed all three factory visits, but I particularly was impressed with the visit to Strongwell. This was our last factory visit - after we had the opportunity to see some of Mexico outside of Monterrey and observe how much of Mexico is living in poverty, without industry and good sources of income. As I walked around Strongwell on our tour, I could not help but observe the employees and contemplate how their personal lives and standard of living would be forever changed by the opportunity to work there. Looking at the introduction of new industry through NAFTA and migrating to other countries to find work through their eyes definitely changed my perspective on both issues. Everyone, everywhere, just wants the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families. Traveling to Mexico enabled me to learn so much more about the people, the culture, the history, and the economy than I ever would have from reading books or sitting in a classroom at home. Participating in the Study in Mexico program provided a unique opportunity to broaden my horizon and gain insight.