LOBACHEVSKY STATE UNIVERSITY OF NIZHNY NOVGORD AND THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA COMPLETE ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL STUDENT EXCHANGE

Gainesville, FL -- Dr. Svetlana Stepchenkova, Associate Research Faculty of the Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute (EFTI) at the University of Florida (UF), and Ilya Kuftyrev of the State University of Nizhny Novgorod (UNN) in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, recently headed up a U.S. and Russian delegation to strengthen tourism education, training, research and industry outreach between the two universities. The objective of this project, which is in its fourth year, is to create a partnership between the tourism schools of UF and UNN. The project focuses on, share and partner teaching methodologies, instructional materials, research initiatives and industry outreach activities both in Florida and the Russian Federation.

The exchange for 2014 is the 3rd in this partnership. It began in September 2014 with 6 students from UNN coming to the University of Florida for 3.5 weeks and ended in December 2014 with a group of 9 UF students visiting UNN for 10 days.

The group of students from UNN received the full Gator experience. They explored campus, as well as attended a UF football game. They were able to sit in a few tourism classes taught by faculty and Ph. D students in the department as well as participate in a few tourism excursions. Some of these excursions included a TRSM mixer at the bowling alley, tour of the Best Western Gateway Grand Hotel and a day trip to Universal Studios. At the end of their time at UF, the students gave presentations on what they observed as far as ways to promote a destination as a tourism friendly place and compared the U.S. methods to the Russian methods. These presentations provided a great way for the UNN students to apply all that they have learned as well as give the UF students insight into how other countries approach tourism.
Although the UF students were not in Russia for as long as the UNN students were in Gainesville, it does not mean it was not as fulfilling. The UF students had the opportunity to participate in lectures regarding Russian culture, Russian politics, tourism marketing and their hospitality industry. The UF students also participated in some cultural excursions exploring the city of Nizhny Novgorod, attending a local ice hockey game and spending the weekend in Moscow. At the end of the program, the UF students shared photos of Nizhny Novgorod and explained why they took these photos and how the photos provide an accurate/positive representation of their city.

Overall the program that Dr. Stepchenkova and Dr. Kuftyrev developed was a success. Both groups of students were able to walk away with an incredible international experience as well as an international perspective on tourism and tourism marketing. Both parties intend to further their partnership to continue hosting these cultural exchanges.

The Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute is committed to building a bridge between the tourism industry, organizations, destinations, and higher education through excellence in interdisciplinary research that provides strategic information focused on a wide array of travel, tourism and hospitality opportunities.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Dr. Svetlana Stepchenkova (Assistant Professor) at svetlana.step@hhp.ufl.edu (352.294.1652) or Arielle Gousse (Marketing and Public Relations) at agousse@ufl.edu (352.392.3992).