

Aiken native taking Semester at Sea

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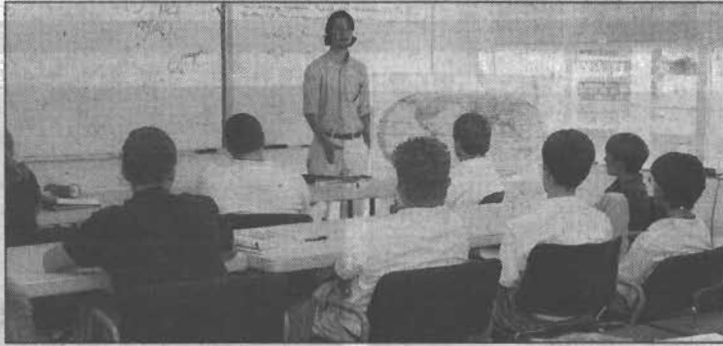
Most college students headed back to dorm rooms on traditional campuses in recent weeks — not Chris Boehner, a graduate of Aiken Prep and junior at the College of Charleston. Instead, Chris' dorm room will be on a cruise ship purchased and outfitted by the University of Pittsburgh for its Semester at Sea program.

"They even turned the ship's casino into a library," Chris told a high school civics class at Aiken Prep the day before he left.

For more than 40 years the University of Pittsburgh has operated floating campuses, allowing more than 38,000 students and their accompanying professors to visit 60 countries while taking up to 15 academic credit hours that are transferred back to the student's home college or university. This semester Chris' ship will carry 650 mostly junior and senior college students, 50 professors, and a team of support staff, including medical and security personnel.

The ship leaves from Vancouver, British Columbia, this week, sailing for a first stop in Japan.

"I will stay for five days



Submitted photo

READY FOR THE WORLD. Chris Boehner, a graduate of Aiken Prep, returns to his alma mater to tell students about the Semester at Sea program.

with a host Japanese family," noted Chris. From there, the ship will sail to Hong Kong, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and India.

Chris told the Aiken Prep High School students, "I expect to learn a lot more about history in Vietnam and Cambodia. We're going to visit the famous Killing Fields, and I'll have to get prepared for that experience. Again, in India, I will live with a host Indian family in a small village for three days. I very much look forward to that aspect of the program," added Chris.

From India the students will journey to Africa, visiting Tanzania then South Africa. "During our five days in

South Africa we will tour the prison where Nelson Mandela was held and learn more about that country's political journey," said Chris.

"Then I'll have an opportunity to learn about the importance of rain forests as we travel to Brazil and take boats up the Amazon River."

The last stop will be Venezuela before returning to the United States, docking in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., on Dec. 8.

Popular course offerings during the traveling semester include comparative religion, communications, foreign languages, history, political science, and earth sciences.

"I looked around, and this Semester at Sea program is the best in the world," Chris

said. "I am a corporate communications major. I'll be taking 13 credit hours to include a mass media class, learning how these other countries' approaches to that topic vary. And I'm looking forward to an African drum music elective course, too!" Chris enthused.

But, Chris' body language and words take on a serious air when you ask about his real motivation for taking this semester-long journey.

"In some ways America is isolated, and yet when we stop and think, we realize how interdependent we truly are. I want to understand how our country affects others and how their countries affect us. Success for me will also be returning home with a more open mind about other cultures," Chris concluded.

Families with college students who may be interested in this program can go to www.semesteratsea.com for more information, including applications and scholarship opportunities. Aiken Prep students and Aiken County residents can track Chris' adventure through his bi-weekly essays, which are a required component of the Semester at Sea program. Chris' essays will be posted on the Aiken Prep Web site at www.aiken-prep.com