While winter break is traditionally a time for students to relax and unwind from school, three Widener freshmen took advantage of a weeklong study abroad program in Mexico. Submersed in a new culture and challenged to converse only in Spanish, the students truly had a whirlwind week of learning.

"My Spanish definitely improved in just a week," says Christine Solomon '12. "I learned how to speak more conversationally and feel more comfortable with the language."

Solomon, joined by Lauren Glinski '12 and Ellen Kaufmann '12, traveled to Cuernavaca, Mexico through the Widener in Mexico study abroad program led by Dr. Paul Goldberg, associate professor of Spanish. Goldberg runs the program for one month during the summer. He recently added the weeklong winter trip to help students "get their feet wet" and address any of their reservations about spending an entire month abroad.

The winter trip proved an overwhelming success as all three participants plan on returning for the summer excursion and have requested to stay with the same host—the Gonzalez family. In addition to practicing Spanish around the dinner table and feasting on authentic Mexican cuisine, the Widener group attended intensive language and cultural classes at the Universidad Internacional. Between classes, they traveled to other destinations in central Mexico such as Mexico City and the pre-Aztec ruins of Teotihuacan.

"While the students certainly improve their language skills during the trip, I think the most significant change takes place in their appreciation of the diversity and depth of Mexico and their understanding of Mexican culture," says Goldberg. "It is easy to go into the trip with a narrow view of the country since we, as Americans, are typically exposed to images of Mexico showing either luxury or squalor. This trip gives students a more sophisticated, educated view about the country and a better understanding of Mexican life."

The students celebrated Three Kings Day on January 6, which recognizes the Biblical story of the three kings who traveled to Bethlehem with gifts for baby Jesus. According to Solomon, the celebration resembled Christmas: children opened toys and a delicious family feast was served. Among the delicacies was the Rosca de Reyes—a crown-shaped sweet bread served on Three Kings Day. Decorated with candied fruits to resemble jewels, the bread also contains a tiny figurine symbolizing the baby Jesus. "I found the figure in my slice! I was so excited!"

Solomon recalls, "Whoever finds the baby must throw another party before February 2."

Although Solomon had to put her party planning on hold for Widener's spring semester, she looks forward to more special moments upon her return to Mexico this summer.

The Widener in Mexico program is open to students of all language levels, and programs are available to specialized fields including nursing, business, and hospitality management. For more information, contact Dr. Goldberg at (610) 499-4342 or plgoldberg@mail.widener.edu

—AR
Senior Matt Sosna is living the ultimate dream for a student-athlete. With numerous accomplishments on and off the court, Sosna has relished every challenge and has played a huge role in helping Widener’s men’s basketball team become one of the nation’s elite.

Winning is all Sosna has known with the Pride since stepping foot on campus. He was a reserve on the 2006 squad which advanced to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament and saw his minutes increase in 2007 during the Commonwealth Conference championship run.

But it was not until the 2007-08 campaign when Sosna really took off. Starting every game that season as a junior, he closed among the league leaders in scoring, rebounding, shooting percentage and free throw percentage. His leadership skills and willingness to better his game paid off as Widener captured a second straight conference title.

“Entering my junior year, I felt that I deserved that I should start but I knew I had to continue to work hard in order to earn the spot,” Sosna said. “I was excited for the season and knew that I could play a significant role on the team if I was given the chance. I wanted to prove that I was a good player.”

Playing center at 6’3” seems a daunting task when giants tend to dominate the position. But thanks to smart play and not overextending himself, Sosna has succeeded in his role. Competing with a team-first mentality and helping other talented players on the squad played a huge part in Widener’s No. 7 preseason ranking, according to Small College Hoops.

Off the court, Sosna has excelled in the classroom with a 3.938 GPA in Civil Engineering, which includes a 4.0 in each of his last three semesters. Last season he was named CoSIDA First Team Academic All-District and a member of the Philadelphia Inquirer Academic All-Area Team.

“It is not easy to balance the work load from civil engineering and basketball,” says Sosa. “I have to use good time management. I’m usually either doing work or playing basketball. I don’t have a lot of free time, but I think it is necessary to take some time to relax and recuperate from my busy schedule.”

Widener is shooting to win a third-straight league title for the first time since capturing the Middle Atlantic Conference crown from 1976-78. Last season, for the first time in school history, the squad won an NCAA Tournament game for the third consecutive year.

—Derek Cruelle

Brent Jacquette, who served as an assistant coach for Widener’s men’s soccer team the last two seasons, has been named the ninth head coach in the program’s history.

Jacquette already has played a key role with the program in preparing and implementing practices, instituting goal setting, and assisting in personnel issues. His help this season led to Widener (9-9-3, 3-3 CC) upsetting top-seeded Lebanon Valley in the Commonwealth Conference semifinals and playing in the ECAC Tournament for the fourth time in school history.

The Wallingford, PA native arrived at Widener after serving in 2005 as the boys’ JV coach and assistant varsity coach at Strath Haven High School. He also competed in the United Soccer Leagues with the Pittsburgh Riverhounds in 2003 and the Minnesota Thunder in 2004.