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## 2010-06-28: Seeing business in a new light

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## Seeing business in a new light



Elisha Clark worked as an English instructor during her international co-op in India. *courtesy photo*

**June 28, 2010**

When Elisha Clark began her co-op in India last January as an English instructor, her interests were focused on the social sciences. Now, one successful dog show later, she sees the value in pursuing a future in business.

The **international affairs** major at Northeastern worked as an instructor in the Deshpande Fellowship Program. The program uses a rotating curriculum of 30 modules to train young men and women -- many of them from poor villages with substandard schools -- to become leaders in the business or development

sectors.

For a class project in the social entrepreneurship module, Clark's students staged a dog show, a small-scale version of the famed Westminster Kennel Club's show in New York City.

They combed the area for different breeds, asked veterinarians to serve as judges, and obtained sponsors. The show, which included 110 dogs, was a hit, said Clark. It gave something new to the area, attracted media attention, and raised money for the fellowship program.

The experiential learning opportunity showed Clark that entrepreneurship could make a difference, leading her to consider business school.

"This job has shown me that business isn't just finance or the corporate life that I had always envisioned, but can really be just the practical side of big ideas," said Clark. "A friend put it really well -- business is 'how you get things done.' I think that is the side of the MBA that I find appealing."

Clark's experience is yet another example of how **Northeastern University's co-op program** broadens horizons and changes outlooks. Since March, Clark has taken on varied management-oriented responsibilities, including mentoring and consulting roles in recruitment, strategy and business planning, with the goal of making the fellowship program independent from its original funding agency.

She is also supporting the program's alumni who need help starting new organizations, creating a guidebook for customizing the program to students' particular skills, working on an economic impact assessment, and searching for and training three people to replace her when her commitment ends in mid-July.

From the beginning, said Clark, her biggest challenge was teaching students to think critically, beyond the surface of a problem, and to be innovative. "They'd see a story in the newspaper, and repeat exactly what happened without thinking critically about what might have caused the situation to occur," she said.

"My job was to get them out of that habit and ask them, 'What would you do to alter the situation?'"

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