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## USFSP STUDENT TO TEACH ENGLISH OVERSEAS



*Kevin Ramirez, while traveling as part of the USFSP Study Abroad trip to Nice, France, in 2015.*

Bonjour, Guyane Française! One USF St. Petersburg student has been selected to spend seven months teaching English at the secondary level as part of the French Ministry of Education's Teaching Assistant Program. Kevin Ramirez, 23, has been accepted to serve in its overseas program in French Guiana, a region of South America that is bordered by Suriname and Brazil, as well as in close proximity to the Caribbean.

"I'd love to see how that mixing of different cultures and languages influences life in the region," said Ramirez, a senior History major and French and Francophone Studies minor who will graduate in Summer 2016. He also serves as president of the USFSP French Club.

Depending on the needs of the school at which he will be located, he may serve either as an assistant to the head teacher, or he may be asked to run classes on his own beginning Oct. 1.

"Either way, I'm up for the challenge," said Ramirez, who found out about the program two years ago while enrolled in his French 2 class. "It seemed really interesting, but at the time I never expected I'd be proficient enough in French to actually be accepted to the program."

Learning French didn't come naturally to Ramirez, who says he struggled for a long time to begin feeling comfortable conversing in the foreign language.

"When I received my acceptance letter, it brought back all of the times I felt so discouraged trying to learn French or when I wanted to give up learning it altogether," said Ramirez. "I'm so glad that I didn't give up and that I met a lot of people who encouraged me to keep trying. I hope that message can reach a student who is currently struggling in learning another language, like I was, and perhaps inspire them as well."

This is not his first overseas experience during his time at USFSP. In 2015, Ramirez traveled to Europe as part of the USFSP Student Abroad trip to Nice. The program inspired him to go back to France, which motivated him to apply for the teaching position.

"I think my greatest take away from the Study Abroad program in Nice was a greater sense of confidence in myself. Before the trip, I kept having doubts on whether or not my French skills were good enough, or if I'd be able to make friends, but I ended up having an amazing time and I made memories I will always cherish. I'm so thankful for my time there, and I can't wait to continue my travels to French Guiana."

Dr. Martine Wagner, associate professor of French who had Ramirez in her classes, said this type of experience is an opportunity for USFSP students in French to develop their professional, language, and cross-cultural skills to make an impact in the world.

"That's what we strive for in the USFSP World Languages program: To turn our students into global citizens who can be agents of change locally or globally by putting into practice their foreign language skills and cross-cultural competency in a professional setting," Wagner said. "These skills are at the core of any leadership position today in the U.S. As ambassadors, students represent the good work USFSP is doing in preparing them for the current job market."

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