Yegor Gaidar Summer Leadership Program

INITIATIVE

The U.S. Russia Foundation approached Purdue’s Discovery Park for a summer program to provide entrepreneurial training and an introduction to American culture. Discovery Park and the Purdue Research Park, in partnership, planned and implemented the Yegor Gaidar Summer Leadership Program. Since 2012, Purdue’s Discovery Park has hosted competitively selected Russian undergraduate students for entrepreneurial training and mentoring on their business ideas. During the three-week program, these students interact with Purdue students, staff, and faculty and visit cultural spots like the Abraham Lincoln museum, Chicago, and Indianapolis.

IMPACT

The U.S. Russia Foundation was so pleased with the inaugural program that the program has continued every subsequent year. Each year, new educational components have been added to the program: a session on American Culture and History, a session on International Business, and a session on Russian business practices. The number of Purdue student hosts has been increased. In 2014, 10 students were hosted at Purdue. In 2013, 20 Russian students participated in the program. One of the 12 students who participated in 2012 was selected in Russia for the Global Technology Entrepreneurship Development Program. He has continued his entrepreneurial work and has had the opportunity to meet with investors in Silicon Valley regarding his company, CONCO.

Here are a few student comments from summer 2014:

“The summer exchange program helped me to learn more about international business and its peculiarities. Also this program provided information about specific tools for start-up development and how to use these tools concerning my own start-up. Moreover this program is excellent opportunity to learn more about American culture and to master language skills.”

“The summer program let me develop my idea more minutely, figure out some new details for my project and, of course, come to realization how to launch my idea. Also this program helped me to understand how tolerance and liberty can operate to the advantage of the whole country. These changes will help me in launching my project and building international communications.”

“I want to say, that participating in this program, attending the classes, communicating with the American people as well as with students from other parts of Russia was a great and very useful experience. Well, as any life experience, especially a foreign one [sic]. And it changed me a lot as a person. I’ve got a lot of new energy and inspiration to start my own business.”

“Analyzing stereotypes about Americans and Russians was a really good experience for understanding our cultural differences and trying to make our intercultural dialogue better.”