Ajith Chakkedath has returned from an intensive, but scenic, summer study abroad program in Madrid, Spain.

The third-year PhD student in materials science and engineering visited Spain from June 26 through Aug. 4 as a program assistant for the 2014 Summer Engineering in Madrid program. Eleven MSU undergraduate students accompanied him. Program leader was Carl Boehlert, professor of materials science.

Chakkedath’s trip was supported by MSU’s Office of Study Abroad through a doctoral study abroad fellowship. Sponsored by the Office of Study Abroad, the Graduate School and Faculty & Organizational Development, the fellowship is intended to provide professional development to doctoral students seeking a qualification that will help them lead future study abroad programs.

In Spain, Chakkedath assisted the instructor in teaching MSE 426 - Introduction to Composite Materials, served as a mentor during the international program, and worked to advance his own research.

“My main responsibilities were to give proper guidance to students during their stay in Madrid and guide them during the cultural activities arranged as a part of Spanish language course. I was also involved with my own research project.”

Chakkedath’s research focuses on developing light-weight Magnesium (Mg) alloys for automotive applications. It is part of the National Science Foundation’s Materials World Network project, which involves collaborative research between Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, IMDEA Materials Institute in Madrid, the Magnesium Innovation Centre in Geesthacht, Germany, and MSU.

“This program helped me to learn about the financial and planning aspects of study abroad programs. The on-site experience with the program leader helped me to gain insights on successfully organizing programs of this kind.”

He earned a bachelor’s degree of technology in mechanical engineering in 2010 at the College of Engineering, Kerala University in Trivandrum, India.

“Being an international student at MSU, I have experienced both eastern and western cultures first-hand,” he said. “I believe that the experience I have gained through exposure to different cultures in the past few years will help me to lead intercultural activities in the future.”
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