"Study Like a Star" in LA headlines Summer 2027

KATHRYN HOLMES
STAFF WRITER

"Study like a Star" in Los Angeles next summer in a study abroad course for urban geography. This Summer session I class offers both unique experiences and hands-on learning as students explore the city of angels.

This is not Jason Post's, A-State's assistant research professor of geography, first rodeo.

James Rogers, a graduate sociology student from Benton, Arkansas attended Post's previous study abroad trip to the island of Dominica in Summer 2026. Rogers only had good things to say about the opportunities and said he would recommend the trip

"Especially with Dr. Post as the trip leader. He is very capable and very safe, he will guide you and make sure nothing bad happens. I would highly recommend it," said Rogers.

At the information session Friday, Post delved further into the details of this trip.

This trip won't just be fun, but also educational. However, there's no need to worry about work overload as Post promises no exams and no papers in this 5-week course.

Graduate and undergraduate students can expect to be graded mainly on their participation in the actual trip. Students will keep a journal, field notebook, and write a short reflection on their experience.

Junior psychology major Sami Hammaker from Cabot, Arkansas said her major and educational goals aligned with the trip.

"I am taking a class with Dr. Post, and I told him that I am interested in environmental psychology, which is basically interactions with people and their environment, and he told me that this trip would be something that could involve that," Hammaker said.

Because of these unique educational goals of students, the travel experience of the trip will be catered more specifically based on attendees.

Students will ride to LA on the Amtrak from the station in Walnut Ridge all the way to California. Travel by train is not only more affordable but also allows time for lectures, movies and reading time for students.

Upon arriving in Los Angeles, students can expect to have a plethora of unique experiences in the city.

Post described his plans for exploring the city, hiking in the Santa Monica mountains, beach days at Malibu and Zuma, exploration of unique geographical sites like the Ballona wetlands and more optional excursions for students to decide upon.

Students can potentially go deep sea fishing, attend a Dodgers game, go on a studio tour, be part of a live TV audience and go to a variety of museums. There is much to do in LA, and this trip is designed around these student's educational wants and needs.

Educationally, this trip is not just designed around Geography majors. The class is open to all majors, but specifically caters to environmental studies, psychology, sociology, history, criminal justice, entertainment, disaster management, transportation, and public health.

Dr. Post encouraged students to make their deposits early to secure a spot on the trip, as the capacity for the course is only 14 students. For further inquiries, you can contact him at jpost@AState.edu.

"Bridging Learning and Earning"

Education and industry leaders meet for Catalyst NEA

EVIE ELLIS
STAFF WRITER

Arkansas leaders in education and industry gathered for the second annual Catalyst NEA event hosted by Arkansas State University at the Red Wolf Convention Center. At the event, different panels discussed topics relevant to both the university and its partners in strengthening the state's workforce through education.

Throughout the day, panels discussed a variety of topics, including the integration of AI, the future of Arkansas and rural health.

The session titled "Bridging Learning and Earning: Strengthening the Workforce Continuum" provided students and employers with information about how workforce development extends into education, beginning in early childhood.

Edie Stewart, CEO of Forward Arkansas, a statewide nonprofit organization focused on improving student outcomes and career readiness in K-12 education, shared ways industry partners can improve access to opportunities.

"Build relationships with the elementary school down the road, otherwise how will they know you exist," Stewart said. "Include the parents, they need to know what they're getting into, to give the students their next steps."

Stewart discussed ways to strengthen the workforce and identified the biggest barriers to accessing the education needed for employment.

"The number one barrier is just access, there may be an internship that's 40 miles away so we have to be creative and think of a way of getting there," Stewart said.

Stewart explained that Forward Arkansas works to widen access to education. Access to education also depends heavily on educators, a topic that panelist Robin Myers, representing CREST at Arkansas State University, discussed further.

"The number one influence on students' education is the teachers in the classroom," Myers said.

Myers explained that schools need a steady pipeline of teachers entering the classroom to provide students with a quality education.

Teachers are most often hired directly out of college, making it an important step in creating quality educators. Annette Hux, dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Science at A-State, discussed the options available to students interested in entering the teaching profession.

"We have several different pathways to get teachers into the classroom," Hux said.

Students interested in teaching can participate in a one-year residency program partnered with schools in Jonesboro or an apprenticeship program that incorporates their work into their field experience.

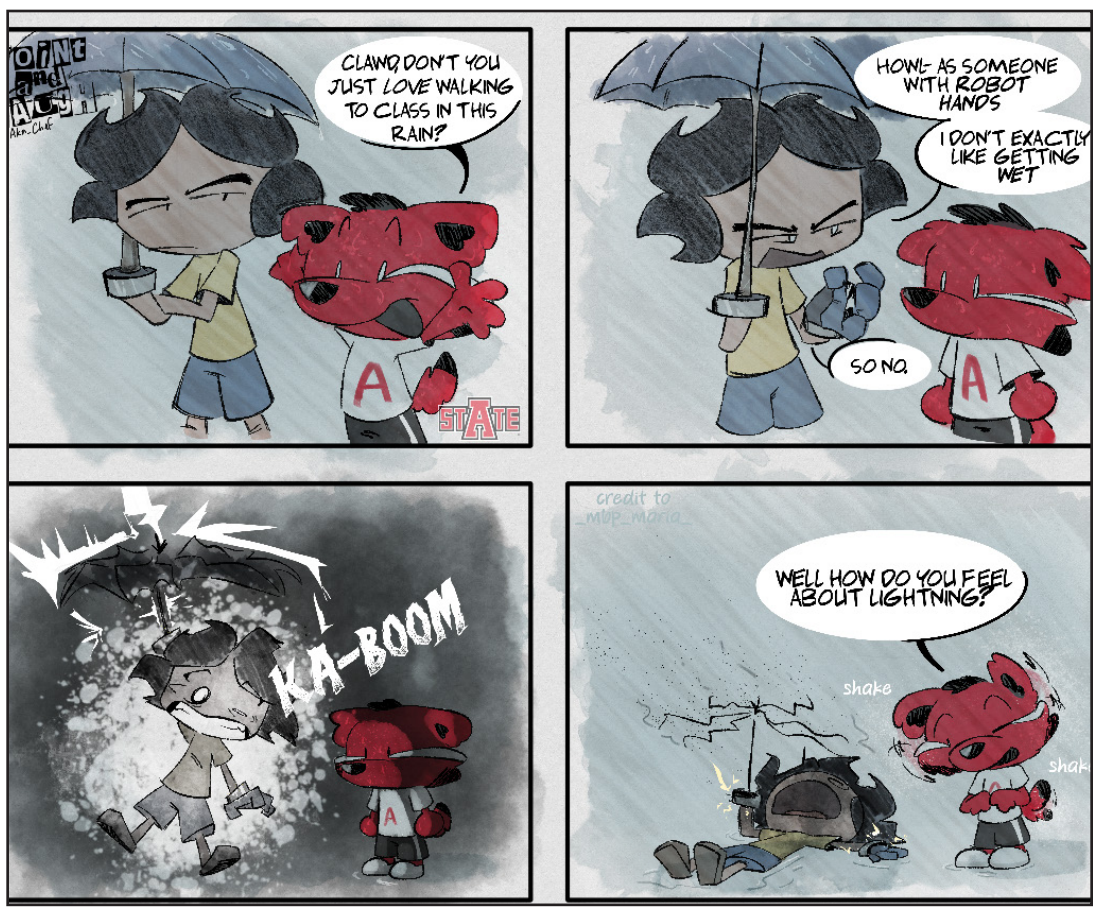
Shifting the conversation from teachers to industry, Randy Zook, president and CEO of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Arkansas, offered advice on employee training for industry leaders.

"You've got to have talent in the building that is up to speed on all the new technologies and knows how to handle them," Zook said. "Every 10 years you better have some better way to improve a person's capabilities."

Zook emphasized the importance of keeping even experienced employees up to date on emerging technologies, including those used in data centers.

The panel highlighted how Arkansas State University connects education with the workforce and discussed strategies for preparing students of all ages for future employment.

A stormy day on Arkansas State campus



Comic by Ivory Roberts | Staff Artist

"Grunt Spades" brought to A-State campus



Photo by Ella Dobson | A&E Editor

Arkansas State employees and community veterans join R.B Porter, a U.S. Army veteran and founder of "Grunt Spades," a clear, consistent standard rulebook of the card game Spades, in the A-State Student Union. Porter said the goal of "Grunt Spades" is to create regular opportunities for camaraderie, friendly competition and stronger social connection. "Everybody knows how to play Spades until you sit down at the table," Porter said. "So this system here is my way of trying to standardize that."