

## Presenting Research to an International Audience

—*Lisa Landry*

In the summer of 2006, I traveled to China for nine weeks through a grant from the Hamel Center's International Research Opportunities Program (IROP). I spent my time studying childbirth at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, a large teaching hospital in downtown Beijing. The experience of living in China and conducting an independent research project was both challenging and rewarding. I spent the next few months back at UNH, analyzing my field notes and developing a thorough research report.

Since part of the research process includes disseminating one's results and teaching others, I applied to present my research at several conferences. Funded by the Hamel Center, I traveled to San Francisco in April 2007 for the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. My research abstract was also accepted for a poster presentation at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual International Research Congress of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. With the support of both the Hamel Center and the Eta Iota chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, I traveled to Vienna, Austria to attend the conference in July 2007.

I spent my time at the conference attending oral and poster presentations of other nursing researchers, on topics varying from community health projects in Thailand to the development of teaching modules for fathers of autistic children. My poster was on display with about 50 others during the second day of the conference. Although I had previously participated in several similar poster presentations, this was my first time presenting my research to an audience composed entirely of other professional nurses. Though slightly intimidated at first, I was able to speak comfortably to other nurses and explain my research findings. Many conference participants were surprised to learn that I conducted my research as an undergraduate; most assumed I was a master's degree or doctoral candidate. It was especially interesting to receive feedback from nurses who had experience in labor and delivery and offered insights into the perinatal process. In addition, the conference attendees included nurses from 48 countries; I spoke with nurses from various cultures and backgrounds and learned of viewpoints that I had not previously considered. The nurses from Taiwan were especially interested in my research and asked many questions about my impressions of China.

I spent a total of one week in Vienna, so I had plenty of time for sightseeing as well. I had an amazing time exploring the city's neighborhoods, riding the trams, and admiring the architecture. I also took day trips to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, and Sopron, a small town just over the border in Hungary. The experience of traveling to Vienna and attending the conference was a positive influence not only on my professional development as a nurse, but on

my personal development as well, and I thank the Hamel Center for its generous financial support.