***Prompt 1: Describing your internship site***. Tell us a little about the organization where you are interning, and a little about business / industry you’re in.

Discuss how various “ academic disciplines” are defined and represented at your organization. What I’m looking for here is how knowledge and skills are distributed across the organization – By project? By department? By position? What are some of the most important / valued knowledge and skills in this organization / career field? What transferable skills are in the highest demand (i.e., communication, team skills, computer skills, etc.). How is the organization structured? How are departments, groups, teams structured / organized (as applicable)?

The organization I am working for is called Zenron. Here at my company we specialize in offshore banking where we incorporate all business related skills (accounting, finance, marketing, etc.) to help satisfy our clients’ needs. We get various clients all coming into our company in search of different needs regarding offshore accounts. Some clients can be basic enough to opening a simple private offshore account in a neighboring country or others can be a bit more difficult, for example, opening an offshore account through two different countries to trade crypto currencies and obtaining the appropriate licensing and understanding all the regulations of this particular objective. It is important we get our numbers correct with the various taxation rates in different countries when comparing and filing in our reports for our clients. From a marketing side we provide Zenron advertisements on various websites that relate to banking. Some of the most important skills required for this field of work are attention to detail, mathematical skills, Excel oriented, and personable to be able to reach out to various banks and clients around the world. It takes patience to work in this line of work due to the culture clashes that occur with doing business with different cultures besides your own. Communication and computer skills are the highest in demand due to communication with various banks and clients throughout each day and then computer skills to provide proper documentation through reports and presentations to our clients. The organization and departments are organized to have work completed more on an individual basis, rather than in teams. Most people in the office work solo while handling clientele, although, we are each there to help each other with various objectives when needed.

***Prompt 2: Describing roles and responsibilities.***Tell me about your primary job responsibilities AND the primary job responsibilities of your supervisor.  Also, now that you have gotten started at your internship, what kinds of opportunities exist for you - with respect to gaining experience, enhancing your intercultural communication and competence, and integrating well into your internship environment?  What can you be doing better to help you achieve these goals? (Be specific!)

 My primary job exists directly under my boss, Leo. He directs me with various day-to-day tasks regarding different clients and how I can help him, help them. He deals with his own clients, along with other employees of Zenron, and various people in the office reach out to me to help with their different clients. I’ve had tasks to calculate the employee, employer, and VAT taxation rates of all 28 countries in the EU, researching crypto currency laws in various countries of the EU and Asia offshores, researching and finding banks in the EU that allow international accounts to be opened, etc. My supervisor does work similarly but works more directly with our clients, while I provide the backbone to the research and work being done. I believe that from this internship the opportunities that will come from it exist a huge step towards the finance world of business, which is exactly what I am interested in. Considering my career aspirations lie within being a financial analyst, I believe that the work I am doing will show a strong business interaction with a cumulation of skills relating to business in a broad perspective and a newly found cultural perspective from breaking down barriers of language and working in a new workspace in a with an entirely new culture. With my internship, I can be working harder to research more diligently and more direct towards the objectives of our clients, especially since I have now started understanding our database more. I can also work well to improve my Czech language skills to better converse with my coworkers and supervisors.

***Prompt 3: Identifying your cultural perceptions.*** If you have yet to do so, please read the cultural sojourner article under the Learning Module 2 / Readings tab. No doubt that you, as a cultural sojourner, are experiencing the daily recognition that there are many differences between USA and the Czech Republic. Tell me something about your perceptions regarding Czech customs and behaviors that you have noticed. What makes you feel comfortable and at ease? Which aspects of the culture and/or Czech behaviors make you feel anxious and uncomfortable?  Make a few explicit connections to the article (so that I can see you have read it) - in particular, some aspects of the cultural transition cycle, and the preparation and sojourn stages as related to your own experience.

 As a cultural sojourner, there is a huge experience I am going through learning the many differences between the United States and the Czech Republic. I have noticed a few examples regarding Czech customs and behaviors that are different from being home. From small things like when at restaurants and the menu describes a meal coming with bacon, it is actually ham 90% of the time. Or some restaurants describe a pizza coming with salami when it turns out to be pepperoni, yet I still have not seen a restaurant use the word “pepperoni” here around Prague. Another behavior is that while using the escalator at the metro stations, everyone organizes themselves to stand on the right side in an organized line so that people in more of a hurry will be able pass on the left side. Also, witnessing the driving ability that Czech people possess amazes me. I see these cars driving all over fast and slow, left and right, up and down one way streets, all like it’s no problem and there are so very few accidents that happen here. The driving is just custom to the area but everyone is used to things being like that so it makes it normal. Behavior wise, I have noticed Czech people are just as hard working as they are back home, and this thought eases and relaxes me knowing at work we all diligent workers striving towards the same success. The article mentioned enculturation as learning to think and act similarly to other people in our country. Enculturation plays a huge part in our role here as students and interns because this is not a short vacation trip, this is a long trip in where we must engulf ourselves in this culture and then be able to adjust ourselves back to our original culture when we leave back home. Coming back home will always be different because we will be bringing back newly found perspectives on a different culture that can help shape us to be more open human beings and using this culture to also help shape us as a person. When we come back home from being abroad, no one will ever fully be able to understand our newly found perception and cultural views because they were not there to witness it as we had. We are able to increase intercultural sensitivity, provide alternative ways to behave and interpret the world, improve understanding of why people behave as they do in other countries, etc. It becomes more of a personal experience that we individually grow from.

***Prompt 4: Cultural Engagement.*** Please reflect on your perception of how effectively you are “engaging the culture of the Czech Republic.” Be sure to respond to ALL of the questions!
  Do you seek out unusual cultural experiences?
  Do you strive to talk to as many native Italian people as possible?
  Are you forming healthy friendships with some of the locals? Or do you spend most of your free time with your ASU / USA compatriots or other internationals living in Prague?
  Based on your time here in Prague thus far, what specific cultural adjustments and changes in your thinking and behavior have you noticed?
  How do you think your language skills (or lack thereof) are either helping or hindering your ability to engage culturally?
  Finally, what goals can you set for yourself for the remainder of the program to become more culturally engaged?

***Please be specific and use examples.***

 My perception of how effectively I have been engaging in the culture of the Czech Republic would be pretty successful thus far, in my opinion. I try to seek out as many unusual cultural experiences as I can. I choose to walk most places, unless they are more than three miles or so, so that I can explore and experience as much of Prague as I can. Some unusual experiences I have taken part in thus far have include a Thai massage and climbing to the top of Petrin tower. Thai massages are located all around Prague so I figured why not give it a try and I can honestly say it was an enjoyable, and cheap, experience to partake in. Petrin tower I’ve heard so many great things about so I decided to embark there with a few friends, pay the toll, and climb to the top where I was able to experience a 360 degree view of Prague and it was amazing. I do strive to talk and engage with as many Czech people as I can. I talk to people at my company about daily activities and at restaurants about almost anything in relation to casual conversations. At first, I was mostly hanging out with all Americans because those people were a lot easier to engage with and form friendships with. However, more recently I have gone to different restaurants with lounges where it has become much easier to strike up easy conversations with local and young Czech people and form friendships to go out and do fun things together, such as dine on the river or hit up one of the gardens surrounding Prague. Cultural adjustments with my thinking and behaviors here in Prague that I have noticed are I now shop by day, instead of by week. Here in the Czech Republic I have noticed that most nearby grocery stores are meant for people to shop and cook the day of, instead of buying a week’s worth of food like we do back home in the United States. I have also changed my internal clock as to when I am heading places instead of thinking time to get there by car, I think instead of how to get there by walking or by transit because I am not driving here in Prague. I think my language skills are hindering my ability to engage more culturally here in Prague. I know basic Czech language which is enough to get by, but not enough to have casual conversations with people I meet on the streets or people I work with at my internship. Knowing Czech would greatly help me in the new environment of Prague that I am exploring. Goals that I can set myself for the remainder of this program include being able to continue to throw myself in as many uncomfortable situations as I can to push myself forward and to grow from these situations in various ways, such as gaining a more clear cultural perspective of Czech Republic. I also would like to be able to hold a general conversation in Czech by the time this trip has come to an end!

***Prompt 5: Focus Group 1 Reflection.***Now that you have completed the first focus group meeting, reflect on your key learnings and "aha" moments that resulted from that meeting (and your preparation for the meeting).  What were the most powerful insights you achieved?  What do you wish we had covered more thoroughly in the meeting?  What ideas or suggestions do you have for making the first focus group meeting an even more powerful experience? What might be some learning goals you would be willing to set for yourself based on our focus group discussions?  ***Again, please be specific and use examples.***

The first focus meeting was a learning experience for me. While preparing for the focus group, I was able to take notes on talking points I would discuss for the group meeting ahead. These points were brief and meant to be used as pointers in which I would go more in depth with during discussion, as I had. However, when we reach the “power distance” discussion point, I was completely thrown off. In my preparation, I was misguided by this description and taken a completely wrong approach to how I would discuss this post. Give it that now I am in understanding of what low power distance and high power distance are defined as, I wish I had understood that more prior. That was my most controversial “aha” moment in learning the definition of power distance and hearing everyone else’s contributions to that, along with each other discussion point. I wish we covered more thoroughly discussing our internships and what hinders us and helps us there because I enjoy discussing what I do and enjoy listening to what other’s do and how they perceive their own internships. I think that to make it a more powerful experience would be to set aside a time limit for each discussion point so that it would make things possible to get through all discussion points and help force us to stay on track. Give it that getting off track and letting our conversations flow is fun and an experience, as well, but I also think it would have been interesting to hear about the models of each person’s test results, along with the discussion of what we can do currently to help us more at our internship. Learning goals I would set myself based on our focus group discussions would be to absolutely learn more about the Czech Republic political history. I didn’t realize how much has happened here so recently until hearing other students’ bring up some of those situations in discussion. I think learning a bit more about the Czech Republic’s political history would be beneficial in a variety of ways, including understanding the Czech culture with a different perspective and possibly being able to relate more to Czech people knowing what they had gone through.

***Prompt 6: Decontextualizing and thinking analogically.*** Offer up something that represents your experience thus far in Prague. It can be a photograph, a poem, song lyrics, a piece of artwork. If you're using a photograph here, you’re not actually showing a picture of yourself. Instead, you are finding some other object, image and/or words to characterize your experience thus far here in Prague. If necessary, you can attach a file with your post. Explain the connection and why you chose it.

The photo below was taken in the evening a couple days ago when a few friends and I decided to explore a new park that was known to have a garden including food and drinks. About a 2 minute walk away from this garden was this hill where people picnic and watch the sunset on a daily basis overlooking this amazing view. I feel as though this picture depicts my experiences here in Prague perfectly, thus far. While being in Prague, I have been exploring as much as I possibly can when I’m not working at my internship or working on schoolwork. Exploring in Prague has lead me to discover the most beautiful places of the city. Some of these places include the Charles Bridge for the sunrise, Petrin Tower on a clear sunny day, and now this hill on a perfect sunset evening. While studying here, it has been my goal to explore something new each and everyday, whether that be walking down a different street, taking a different tram home, trying a new restaurant or café, etc. Being somewhere new is always the most influential experience one can partake in. This is my first time to Prague, and my first time to Europe, so everything to me is completely new and almost overwhelming, but I completely love it. I feel as though everyday I am finding ways to put myself in uncomfortable situations just because of language barriers and unknown neighborhoods. These are the experiences, though, that are helping me learn the most. I am learning how to adjust, how to overcome, and how to be completely on my own. With the time I have left in Prague I still plan to continue my journey of exploring more and more here and hopefully discovering more areas as stunning as this one.

(photo on next page)

