

Peruvian exchange begins tradition

From the sunny, mountainous regions of Peru to the icy plains of Oklahoma, nine students and two professors came as part of a Peruvian studio exchange program.

This program is designed so Oklahoma State University seniors in the landscape architecture Design IV class have the opportunity to work together on a design project with architecture students from the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Universidad Peruana de Ciencias in Lima, Peru.

Rebekah Kerwin, OSU landscape architecture senior, said she looked forward to being involved with the project for more than a year.

"The Peruvian exchange program is part of the star on the cake icing of the things that we do. We really want to work with the architecture program," Kerwin said.

The idea for the exchange program began when Charles Leider, professor and program director, was approached with the idea of student exchange by Renaldo Agama, a friend from graduate school, who lived and taught in Peru. Leider, along with department head Dale Maronek, presented the idea to the college before the agreements were signed in October 1993.

Since the landscape architecture and architecture programs are not in the same college at OSU, landscape architecture students

do not always get the chance to interact with architecture like they will do from day to day as a professional, said Leider. The Peruvian studio exchange program gives the students an opportunity such as this.

"Landscape architecture students are going to be working with consulting firms," Leider said. "Many of them are doing projects that are related to Latin America, such as resorts in the Caribbean and the South American coast."

"The architects will also work for these firms," he said. "The Peruvian exchange program is a great opportunity for them to work together."

This year was the first time the students worked together on a real project in the United States. Matthew Kirkwood, landscape architecture Design IV professor, developed the Oklahoma project to bring the two disciplines together.

In past years, the Peruvian students have brought a project with them, and OSU students have worked on that design in Oklahoma and then in Peru.

"It is new for us to work on a project here," said Oscar Borasino, Peruvian professor. "It was an exciting experience to leave our country."

The 2001 project was a water amusement park in Tahlequah, Okla. The Peruvian students evaluated the proposed site during a field trip to Tahlequah. They took pictures and gathered information that was helpful during the design of the park.

The nine bilingual Peruvian architecture students worked on designing the hotel, motel, restaurant and all other buildings on the site. The 13 landscape architecture students worked on the waterslides, plaza, roads, the design of the park landscape and plant material to be used. The students were broken up into nine teams. Each team designed the site plan to best fit the specifications of the investor, Hassan Ziyada.

"It was interesting to work with landscape architecture students," said Adriana Navarro, Peruvian exchange student. "We worked together and learned how to work as a team."

At the end of the four weeks, the nine teams presented their completed models and building plans to a jury. The jury consisted of architects and landscape architects, who gave each team suggestions on how to improve their plans.

The importance of this project is widespread. Not only is this a wonderful learning experience for the students, but the water park, which will be constructed over a five-year period, is expected to be good for the Tahlequah area, said Kirkwood.

The planned economic impact on the Tahlequah community is positive, Kirkwood said.

Barbara Abercrombie of the Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce said she agrees the water park will be great for the area.



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OSU student Teri Andreas and Peruvian exchange student Andriana Navarro work together on the plans for their water-park design.

"It is estimated the park will bring in around \$100,000 per year during the first five years," she said.

Kirkwood said the benefits for the program are twofold.

"Students will gain knowledge in international dimensions and become exposed to other professions, which is important to their future as professionals," Kirkwood said.

The design was measured in metric units, which measured the students' ability to adapt.

"The whole project was measured in meters and then there was the language difference. It was a challenge, but we shared things about our cultures," said Kerwin.

Leider said the benefits are valuable. He also said he believes in the significance of communicating with

other countries, especially because of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Since NAFTA has been established, contact with Latin American countries has become more important. It is beneficial to know your neighbors, their cultures and how to interact with them," Leider said.

OSU students make a return visit to Lima, Peru, every other year. There they work for three weeks on a design project provided by the Peruvian class. This trip enables OSU students to become more familiar with the Pre-Incan, Spanish colonial cultures and modern design.

So in a sense, the journey has just begun for these students. The Peruvian exchange program will help them on their way. *Ej*

*By Sommer Robbins
Ozark, Okla.*



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OSU landscape architecture student Mandy Thomson puts last minute touches on her team's water-park model.