

Above and abroad

Faculty couple teaches students through study-abroad course



Dan (left) and Marcia Tilley take a break in front of Kensington Palace during a recent trip to England. Behind the couple stands a statue of Queen Victoria. (Photo by Brady Sidwell)

For students and faculty members, summer break is a time to get away from classes and relax. For those participating in a study-abroad experience, it is a time to travel to diverse places.

Teaching as a husband and wife team, Dan and Marcia Tilley, both agricultural economics professors at Oklahoma State University, have traveled the world, sharing their years of experience teaching study-abroad courses for participating students.

“My wife and I are teaching a class on the trip, which is our responsibility as faculty members,” said Dan Tilley. “It’s important for us to work as a team. Since both men and women participate in the program, it’s important to have a couple guiding the trip. What better than a faculty couple?”

The couple has dedicated three summers to offer College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources study-abroad trips for CASNR students. They have traveled to Turkey, England, Scotland and France with students while teaching agricultural issues, cultures and diversity.

Each year, CASNR offers summer study-abroad trips to students who wish to

participate. In AGEC 4803 International Agricultural Economics Tour, 25 to 30 students travel to Europe and conduct research while observing the agricultural practices and cultural differences. The itinerary includes Scotland, France and England.

“Students should have learning experiences outside of the United States,” said Dan Tilley. “By traveling to other places, students gain self-confidence, having survived in other cultures. They gain an international perspective of life and of agriculture.”

For students traveling with the Tilleys, a wide array of activities and work has been set up for the trip. Having taught the study-abroad trip together several times, the Tilleys already have witnessed the sites for themselves. This has allowed them to better instruct the course while enjoying the excitement and amazement of students when they are first introduced to the United Kingdom.

“Before we ever leave for the trip, we have a pre-trip scavenger hunt,” said Marcia Tilley. “This not only helps students to become motivated about the trip, but also allows them to learn more about the culture and places they will be visiting.”

Edinburgh Castle, the Tower of London, the Eiffel Tower, Windsor Castle and Westminster Abbey are just a few of the more well-known places students will tour on the trip. While there, students can choose where to visit and how much time they wish to spend at each place.

“Most museums in the UK have no admission charge,” said Marcia Tilley. “This allows students to see first-hand some of the most well-known pieces of art in history. British museums cover worldwide contents, some with sections for North America.”

By participating in a study-abroad program, students see more places and do more things than if they were to go independently, said Dan Tilley. Some parts of the trip are planned activities, which are required, while other times students can choose what to do next.

Participating in the study-abroad trip includes traveling to famous places, attending classes and doing independent research.

“As a requirement for the course, students must write a term paper about their experience,” said Dan Tilley. “They must first propose a topic and turn in an outline before we leave. This turns the trip into an independent study, which allows students to pursue their own interests and take their own paths.”



Windsor Castle, with its fairy tale turrets and towers, is the largest continually inhabited castle in the world. Standing for nearly a millennium, Windsor Castle is the ancestral home of Queen Elizabeth II. (Photo by Dan Tilley)



Westminster Abbey has been the setting for every coronation since 1066, as well as numerous royal occasions. While visiting, students are able to see tombs of kings and queens and view historical British architecture. (Photo by Dan Tilley)

“It is difficult to describe the trip and the way students bond together without experiencing it firsthand,” said Dan Tilley. “Our students become friends and a support group for each other. Sometimes they are in small groups going their own ways, yet other times they group together and go in the area of common interest.”

While on the trip, students participated in classes for various agricultural issues. To better understand the U.S. trade issues, students visited the U.S. Embassy and learned how the issues were handled.

“We communicate well, discussing plans for the next day and the students’ reactions,” said Marcia Tilley. “We’re constantly communicating about the trip before, during and afterward. By doing this, our preparation has become much better and the students have more time to spend doing their own activities.”

Having been on the trip several times, the Tilleys have worked together to make each day more memorable for students.

“I could not imagine how this trip would have been without the Tilleys,” said Deborah Solie, a senior in agricultural economics and agricultural communications. “They work hard to make sure all students are involved and have an experience they will never forget. They treat students with so much respect, leaving us with more than memories, but with new friends.”

Before returning home, students are able to spend a final night to enjoy what Europe has to offer. On one occasion, several students were able to see and take pictures of Queen Elizabeth II in a horse-drawn carriage. Other activities have included attending classic Shakespearian productions at the Globe Theatre, which was relatively inexpensive and students were able to be at stage level, said Marcia Tilley.

For those wanting to participate in the 2004 study-abroad trip with the Tilleys, an application and \$500 deposit must be submitted by Feb. 3, 2004. The fee for the trip is approximately \$1,800, which includes housing, land transportation and some meals. The remaining balance is due by March 12, 2004.

Students also are responsible for airfare, tuition and enrollment for the course. Three to four meeting times will be scheduled during the spring semester to discuss passports and other arrangements.

“For those interested in their first study-abroad experience, the CASNR agricultural economics trip is a good choice,” said Dan Tilley. “You can feel at home in the UK or Scotland, then return home inspired, confident, somewhat tired, but very much enthused.” ♦ *By Jeremy Porter, Agra, Okla.*

For more information on study abroad programs, contact David Henneberry, assistant dean of international programs, at

CASNR Study-Abroad Programs ▲ Spring 2004

International Agriculture Study of England, Scotland and France (AGEC 4803)

Daniel Tilley
Marcia Tilley
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Japan Historic Garden and Urban Landscape Design (LA 4990)

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Steve Hallgren
Forestry

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Plant and Soil Sciences

Agriculture and History of Italy (AG 3080)

Leon Spicer
Animal Science

(405) 744-9712 or Adele Tongco at (405) 744-9781. Information is available in Room 139 Agricultural Hall.



Standing outside Windsor Castle, Marcia Tilley and several students pause for a snapshot of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity before beginning their tour: Gretchen Adams (left), Lyndsay Davis, Katy Crawford, Tilley, Martin Williams and Autumn Williams. (Photo by Dan Tilley)