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School of Education Holds First Joint St. Charles-Belleville Study Abroad Trip

July 13, 2017



This spring, the Lindenwood University School of Education conducted its first study abroad trip, an 11-day exploration of the religious, historical, political, and socio-economic factors affecting education in Ireland, Wales, and England.

Education professors Dr. Mary Ruetters and Dr. Paul Sharp led the group of 32 undergraduate and graduate students and three additional faculty members. The faculty and students came from Lindenwood's St. Charles and Belleville campuses, and the trip constituted a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the St. Charles and Belleville campuses.

Beginning May 10 in Shannon, Ireland, the group visited the Ring of Kerry, numerous castles, including the famous Blarney Castle, and other sites, proceeding to a guided sightseeing tour of Dublin, which included a stop at Ireland's oldest university, Trinity College, as well as St. Patrick's Cathedral and other sites.

On May 14, the travelers headed across the Irish Sea to Holyhead, Wales, to visit the Snowdonia National Park and experience the cultural differences among the small villages in the countryside. Other stops included Beaumaris Castle on the Island of Anglesey and the town of Beaumaris, and the "haunted" Hand Hotel in Llangollen, Wales, followed by a hike to the 943-foot peak of Castell Dinas Bran.

In England, the students were provided a sightseeing tour of Stratford-upon-Avon, including tours of William Shakespeare's birthplace and family homes, followed by a visit to Oxford, the oldest university in the English-speaking world. After arriving in London, the group visited Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Parliament Square, Windsor Castle, Stonehenge, the Roman city of Bath, and numerous other locations, returning to St. Louis on May 19.

"Studying abroad was a life-changing experience that I will never forget," said student Haley Holman. "I cannot put into words the knowledge and experiences I have gained from stepping outside my comfort zone to experience cultures different from my own."

Student Abby Miller said she sees a direct benefit from the experience toward to her professional pursuits.

"I am confident that the knowledge I've gained is what will set me apart from my colleagues in interviews and other career opportunities," Miller said. "In addition to professionals in the field of education, attaining global knowledge is essential in almost all other professions."

As a result of this course, Ruettgers and Dr. Lynda Leavitt, also of the School of Education, are conducting a two-year study for the university: *A mixed-method investigation on short term study abroad experiences and a student's cross-cultural and critical-thinking competencies.*

Ruettgers and Sharp will be offering the course again on both campuses in spring 2018. Interested students can learn more about the course and travel opportunities by visiting www.efcollegestudytours.com/1974232ju