

## Students Develop and Diversify in Dublin

### Brand New Ireland Study Abroad Program Greatly Impacts Participants



*A breathtaking glimpse of one of the many castles throughout the countryside of Ireland.*

For the first time in the UCF Nicholson School of Communication history, 31 students studied in Dublin, Ireland, for four weeks this summer. Led by communication faculty members Dr. Kristin Davis and Ms. Ryan Sheehy, the Communication, Culture and Connection excursion, which occurred May 17 – June 13, 2008, immersed students in the sights, sounds and culture of the Emerald Isle. The international program was created for students interested in either interpersonal or mass communications and featured two distinctively different tracks - intercultural communication and international public relations case studies.

### Anything But an Ordinary Classroom Experience

"The intercultural communication class was perfect for

me because my studies directly correlated to what I experienced firsthand," noted Interpersonal/Organizational major Lauren Mole. Ten students who enrolled in intercultural communication (COM 4955) explored the intricacies of life in a foreign locale including the culture, traditions, personal identity and cultural conflicts. Davis encouraged students to immerse themselves in the culture and experience life in Ireland on their own. Students were advised to communicate with the locals, absorb the energy of the environment, observe the daily on-goings of Irish folk, ask questions, listen actively and pay attention to anything that creates a sense of fear or annoyance within them.

"I loved the relaxed environment of the course," stated Mole. Class meetings took place in coffee shops, lush parks like Iveagh Gardens, cafés and more. As a final project, students were challenged to fully analyze a small part of the Irish culture, and write 10-12 page ethnography about their subject of choice. Topics ranged from motherhood in Irish culture, to buskers (Irish street performers), to neighborhood bar culture, to Polish immigrants, and even Garda (Irish police).

"Davis was particularly proud of her students' willingness to step out of the



*Communication students and faculty members Ms. Ryan Sheehy and Dr. Kristin Davis gather prior to a tour of the Book of Kells at Trinity College in Dublin.*

box and open their minds to the unfamiliar environment. She was overjoyed to see each student evolve during the trip.



*PR students visit the national independent talk radio station, Newstalk, for a tour and meeting with on-air presenter George Hook.*

The additional 21 globetrotters studied international PR case studies (PUR 4955) and analyzed the global perspective of the field. In addition to reviewing the complexity of PR and international cases, students engaged in scenario planning about ethics and even developed a campaign for a highly-acclaimed water-colorist. Class sessions were also held in various iconic landmarks such as St. Stephen's Green, City Hall and The Garden of Remembrance.

To observe the business environment abroad, PR students visited three prominent Dublin-based companies and gained a real-world business perspective. The Javelin Group, a local advertising agency, showcased a recent *Best in Brand* Toyota campaign. Students observed how the agency creates campaigns that appropriately connect with the Irish market and learned how to ensure effectiveness. During a visit to NewsTalk, the independent national radio station, popular Afternoon Presenter George Hook provided his insight on how to break into the industry and how to best engage target audiences. The global PR firm, Edelman, presented an in-depth look at the organization and discussed cutting-edge trends in the field. All three corporate

visits ranged in diversity, broadened students' scope and provided a glimpse of the international business culture.

"Professionally, the program helped expand my understanding of different cultures, traditions, industries, learn to better understand other people and become receptive to differences," commented Karlee Kunkle, an advertising/ public relations major at UCF.

### **UCF Students and Faculty Found Second Home in Ireland**

"The four-week experience really made us feel like locals," said Kunkle. A large majority of the students resided at the Harrington House, a hostel in the heart of Dublin and became true city dwellers. Students shopped at a farmers market, visited numerous cafés and took in the nightlife – all within blocks from their home away from home. Because the program exceeded its expected limit, a small group of students was split between two different accommodations in Drumcondra, a suburb north of City Centre. At the Annandale House and Almanii Bed & Breakfast, students and faculty forged friendships with the B&B owners, became part of the community and truly enjoyed the warm hospitality.

"As a locale, Dublin was great. The city provided a good mix of the new and old. It's an up-and-coming city that's so rich with history," said Kunkle. While devoted to an academic experience, students were encouraged to fully discover Dublin. In-town activities included tours of Trinity College, The Book of Kells, Guinness Storehouse, St. Patrick's Cathedral, a diverse collection of museums and more. On the weekends, students and faculty escaped to the countryside and neighboring countries.



*A small group of students and faculty member Ryan Sheehy pose on top of the Wicklow Mountains just south of Dublin.*

Excursions included visits to the Wicklow Mountains and Glendalough, Belfast, the Cliffs of Moher, Galway Bay, Blarney Castle, Killarney and the Dublin coastline. Some even ventured to England and Scotland.

"The study abroad really gives you such a good perspective of life. You discover yourself in a different capacity. Plus, traveling with fellow peers gave us a chance to make lifelong friends," stated Kunkle.

### **Study Abroad to Continue in Summer 2009**

"The Irish embrace we received was far greater than I expected – from prime ministers, to poets to pub owners, we all felt at home," said Ryan Sheehy. Due to the success of the 2008 excursion, Davis and Sheehy plan to continue the

program in the summer of 2009. For details about the 2009 Communication, Culture and Connection expedition, interested participants should attend the study abroad fair on Wednesday, November 19 in the Student Union Pegasus Ballroom from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. For more information, contact the UCF Office of International Studies at (407) 882-2300 or visit web site: <http://studyabroad.ucf.edu>.



*The study abroad PR class gathers in Iveagh Gardens for a meeting with local Dublin poet, Tom Kinsella.*