

MSU Students Win Irish Award

Two MSU urban and regional planning students, Ryan Cook and Scott Pitera, along with the Irish village of Mayo Abbey, recently won the Ireland all-island Pride of Place competition, small village category, for community development work done during their study abroad program.

Pride of Place, sponsored by Co-operation Ireland, is a competition designed “to highlight communities which have demonstrated a high level of commitment to community work,” according to Cook.

The students became involved with Mayo Abbey last summer through the Community Engagement in Rural Ireland study abroad program. The six-week program is based on a partnership between MSU and the Irish Tóchar Valley Rural Community Network through which students’ academic and professional interests are matched with community projects in Ireland.

Cook and Pitera’s project involved researching, compiling, and presenting the story of Mayo Abbey with a focus on the impressive range of community development work conducted in the parish in recent years. Working with local mentors Ger Maguire, Maureen Lally, and Paddy Gibbons, the students gathered information from meetings with community groups and leaders and from informal contact with local people. According to Diane Doberneck, faculty leader for the study abroad program, “The students led the project. Ryan and Scott did a great job. They kept it moving.”

The students created a 44-page comprehensive community guide and 25 storyboards, each highlighting a different community group, using a jigsaw puzzle theme to emphasize the importance of each of the pieces to the whole. Entitled “Many Pieces Coming Together to Build a Better Community,” the presentation materials were used by parish members to describe their community to the contest judges. The materials were also designed to help the village in the future by providing a framework on which it can expand and which can be used to help obtain grant funding for future projects.

“We couldn’t be more pleased,” Lally said of the students’ work. “The lads did a tremendous job at



MSU students Scott Pitera (left) and Ryan Cook (right) pose with Paddy Gibbons, one of their local community mentors, in the village of Mayo Abbey, Ireland. The students worked with the village to win the Republic of Ireland’s Pride of Place competition.

capturing the spirit of Mayo Abbey.” The parish received a prize of 2,000 euros and a crystal trophy for its winning performance.

The study abroad project has also led to professional recognition for Cook and Pitera, as a poster of their work in Ireland was selected to be displayed at the American Planning Association’s 2007 National Planning Conference in April. The students gave a presentation on their experience during the conference.

Cook found the study abroad program beneficial in other ways. “Community collaboration and viability in lieu of individualistic happiness were reoccurring themes throughout my experiences in the Irish home and while working with the Mayo Abbey Parish. Managing this culture of multiple community voices and transforming it into a single, unified, presentable story while considering the historical context of where the community has developed from made my work in Mayo Abbey more challenging, but also more gratifying.”

— Christine Barden, Office of Study Abroad

For more information about the Community Engagement in Rural Ireland study abroad program, visit <http://studyabroad.msu.edu/programs/irecommengage.html>

New Innovative Program in Ireland Focus on a Comparative Study of Disability and Related Services

Already highlighted in *The New York Times* this past November, one of MSU’s newest study abroad programs, Disability in a Diverse Society, is expected to draw majors with and without disabilities to participate in a unique program focusing on disability issues. The program will run for the first time during summer of 2007.

Taking place in Dublin, Ireland, the program is sponsored by the Office of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies in the College of Education and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD). Students who participate will have a variety of opportunities to explore their own attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities through formal instruction, as well as a service-learning component. By combining coursework and service-learning in an international setting, students will gain knowledge and experience that will increase their awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of various aspects of disability in the U.S. and abroad. Coursework, field trips, personal experience through the intentional blending of diverse student groups,

and the service-learning opportunities make this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students with an interest in disability studies.

Cindy Chalou, associate director of the Office of Study Abroad states, “This is a groundbreaking opportunity for students with disabilities. Many students have commented that had it not been for this program, they would not have considered study abroad.”

The experience will also impact the lives of students without disabilities, who can, in turn, influence those individuals they encounter in their future careers and personal lives.

Dr. Michael Leahy in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Special Education, and Valerie Nilson in the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities coordinate the program in collaboration with the Office of Study Abroad.

As an additional incentive, generous \$3,000 scholarships are also available for students with a documented disability and demonstrated financial need.

— Christine Barden, Office of Study Abroad



In 2006, MSU students did internships in Spain, worked in business in Japan, explored natural science in New Zealand, and studied sociology in Ghana, all with help from the MSU Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU) Endowed Scholarship for Study Abroad. Established in 2003 as a \$2.5 million gift from MSUFCU, the scholarships allowed students to study in these and many other countries this past year.

Since the scholarship’s inception in 2003, 173 students have received awards totaling \$198,500.

Many of the 2006 scholarship recipients shared their experiences with MSUFCU board members at a luncheon on November 6, 2006. They are pictured here with Provost Kim Wilcox and Acting Dean of International Studies and Programs Jeffrey Riedinger.

When fully funded later this year, the endowment will provide approximately 130 scholarship awards annually. The amount of the awards ranges from \$1,000 for summer or winter break programs to \$2,000 for academic year programs – the highest of all study abroad scholarships available through the Office of Study Abroad. The scholarships are available to all majors and are awarded twice a year.

For more information about this and other study abroad scholarships, visit the website at <http://studyabroad.msu.edu/scholarships/msuosascholarships.html>

— Christine Barden, Office of Study Abroad

MSUFCU
Scholarship
Recipient Luncheon

Two former MSU students, Jillian Ingold (seated, left) and Tanya Palit (seated, right), attended a "Village Organization" meeting in the Manikganj region of Bangladesh during the 2003 Internships at BRAC program. The meeting involved women receiving microcredit through BRAC. The students' research on this program focused on the impact of BRAC microfinance lending on gender relations in Bangladesh.



MSU Offers Array of International Academic Internship Opportunities

The Michigan State University achievements in the development of diverse study abroad programs is legendary, with more than 240 current programs in over 60 countries on all seven continents. But MSU students also have a wide variety of international academic internships available to them, complementing the diverse offerings of the study abroad program.

MSU's international academic internships offer students hands-on work experience in an increasingly interconnected world. The array of opportunities available allows students to experience their chosen career in the context of a new culture. And all MSU-sponsored programs offer academic credit as well.

Some programs are geared toward students in specific fields. Business Internships in Stuttgart, Germany offers students opportunities to participate in projects related to marketing, materials management, finance, or human resources. Students can also pursue communication internships in Singapore, environmental sciences in Japan, or internships with the New South Wales Police Service in Australia.

Several programs offer internships in a range of different fields, from agriculture to the arts, politics, and journalism, in such locations as France, Ireland, the Philippines, and Germany. Internship sites are as varied as a theatre in the United Kingdom, the World Health Organization in Switzerland, a multinational corporation in Spain, or a government agency in Thailand.

A unique internship program in Bangladesh offers students a chance to develop an individual research project working with BRAC, the world's largest NGO (non-governmental organization). Students learn about and work on such issues as poverty alleviation, community development, microfinance, women's empowerment, public health, and education.

Unlike many internship programs, Multidisciplinary Studies in New Delhi combines coursework with an internship experience for each student. Students help with service delivery through placements in health care service agencies, sustainable agriculture groups, child development centers, marketing and media agencies, and others.

While knowledge of a language other than English is not an explicit requirement for many of MSU's internship opportunities, students with good language skills can find an internship to be the ideal way to practice with native speakers in a work environment. Internships in France, Germany, Mexico, and Spain actually require students to have four or more semesters (or the equivalent) of relevant language study.

— Christine Barden, Office of Study Abroad

For more information on MSU international academic internships, visit <http://studyabroad.msu.edu/internships/index.html>