Study Abroad 5:00 P.M. 2/11/18 Z.DWYER

Studying abroad is a big part of the UW-River Falls recruitment pitch. UWRF says that its students are “more than twice as likely than their peers” from other colleges to travel abroad. Many are taking advantage of this opportunity and learning new lessons along the way.

Zach Dwyer has the story.

MP3 RUNS : 4:16 Q: STANDARD

ZACH DWYER: WAKING UP IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY IS ALWAYS AN EXCITING PROSPECT; HOWEVER, WAKING UP IN A CASTLE IS EVEN BETTER, ACCORDING TO UWRF SOPHOMORE KARISSA FERGUSON. SHE IS CURRENTLY STUDYING ABROAD AS A PART OF THE EXPERIENCE SCOTLAND PROGRAM. STUDENTS LIVE AND STUDY IN THE DALKIETH PALACE, WHICH IS ONLY ABOUT 8 MILES FROM EDINBURGH.

KARISSA FERGUSON: LIVING IN THE HOUSE IS REALLY NICE, BECAUSE IT’S NOT ISOLATED. I WAS WORRIED WHEN I GOT THERE THAT IT WOULD BE ISOLATED FROM THE COMMUNITY. BUT IT’S A PUBLIC PARK, SO YOU’RE VERY CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY, AND WE’RE NOT ISOLATED AT ALL.

ZACH DWYER: EXPERIENCE SCOTLAND IS ONE OF MANY STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES THAT UW-RIVER FALLS OFFERS TO ITS STUDENTS. CLOSE TO 300 STUDENTS STUDIED ABROAD LAST YEAR AT UWRF, WITH 41 STUDENTS CHOOSING SCOTLAND AS THEIR DESTINATION. FERGUSON SAYS THAT STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO DO A LOT OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING COMPARED TO THE USUAL CLASS STRUCTURE IN COLLEGE.

KARISSA FERGUSON: WE DON’T HAVE A LOT OF TIME SITTING IN CLASS. THE PAST TWO DAYS WE HAD ALL-DAY FIELD TRIPS, LIKE 7 A.M. TO 7 P.M. TYPE FIELD TRIP YESTERDAY. DID HIKING, LOT’S OF STUFF. IT’S LIKE RELEVANT TO CLASS.

ZACH DWYER: A DAY COULD VARY FROM A WINDY HIKE DURING A FIELD TRIP TO ST. ABB’S HEAD IN BERWICKSHIRE, SCOTLAND, TO COMPLETING THE DIFFERENT CLEANING TASKS THE STUDENTS PERFORM AROUND THE DALKIETH PALACE. EITHER WAY, FERGUSON SAYS THERE ARE STILL SOME ASPECTS THAT TAKE ADJUSTING TOO.

KARISSA FERGUSON: CLASSES ARE MODULE STYLE, EXCEPT FOR ONE CLASS, AND THAT’S TAUGHT BY A SCOTTISH PROFESSOR. THAT’S THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE SEMESTER. I HAVE ONE CLASS THAT’S CALLED HERITAGE AND CULTURE, AND THAT’S TAUGHT BY THE SCOTTISH PROFESSOR. AND HE’S PRETTY COOL. IT TOOK A WHILE TO UNDERSTAND THE ACCENT ACTUALLY. THERE’S A LOT OF SLANG IN SCOTTISH CULTURE, SO I SOMETIMES DON’T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY’RE SAYING.

ZACH DWYER: KEELY JOHNSON, ANOTHER SOPHOMORE STUDYING IN SCOTLAND, SAYS SHE HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED WITH THE DIFFERENCE IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

KEELY JOHNSON: THIS IS ALL WITHIN A PALACE. THIS IS OUR HOUSE NOW, SO THAT’S SUPER INTERESTING. AND TO BE LIVING WITH YOUR PROFESSORS, LIKE I’LL WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND SEE MY PROFESSOR COOKING BREAKFAST. IT’S VERY DIFFERENT THAN THE TYPICAL RELATIONSHIP YOU WOULD HAVE WITH YOUR PROFESSOR AT HOME, BECAUSE WE LIVE TOGETHER.

ZACH DWYER: ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS OF STUDYING ABROAD IS INTERACTING WITH THE LOCAL CULTURE. FROM THE FIRST FEW WEEKS IN SCOTLAND, JOHNSON SAYS SHE HAS ALREADY NOTICED A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE FROM HER HOME.

KEELY JOHNSON: A BIG THING THAT WE’VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT IN CLASS, AND JUST AS WE INTERACT WITH THE LOCALS, IS PEOPLE’S PERCEPTION OF AMERICA AND JUST IDEALOGIES ARE VERY DIFFERENT HERE.

ZACH DWYER: THESE IDEALOGIES AND ATTITUDES HAVE BEEN VERY CLEAR IN THE WAY SCOTTISH PEOPLE LIVE THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE, ACCORDING TO JOHNSON.

KEELY JOHNSON: THE PEOPLE THERE ARE VERY BLUNT ABOUT STUFF AND VERY UPFRONT AND KIND OF MORE EFFICENT ABOUT THINGS. IN AMERICA, EVERYBODY IS LIKE WE HAVE TO GET THE MOST STUFF DONE FOR OURSELVES, SO WE CAN BE NUMBER ONE. AND IN SCOTLAND IT’S MORE COLLECTIVE ON HOW CAN THIS GROUP GET THROUGH SOMETHING. IT FEELS MORE LIKE A COMMUNITY, AND MORE PEOPLE AREN’T IN IT SOLELY FOR THEMSELVES.

ZACH DWYER: SONJA JOHNSON, THE EXPERIENCE SCOTLAND AND EXPERIENCE CHINA PROGRAM ASSOCIATE, TRAVELED ABROAD AFTER SHE WAS IN COLLEGE AND HAS HELPED STUDENTS WITH THEIR STUDY ABROAD TRIPS AT UWRF SINCE 2007. SHE SAYS THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS TO TAKING THE LEAP TO STUDY ABROAD.

SONJA JOHNSON I WOULD SAY THE BIGGEST THING I SEE IS A CONFIDENCE LEVEL. I THINK THAT WHEN STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD THEY GAIN A LOT CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN ABILITIES. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY’RE MAKING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS BY THEMSELVES, THEY’RE TRAVELING ALONE AND THEY’RE FIGURING THINGS OUT IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. AND I THINK THEY’VE LEARNED TO COMPARE THAT AS GREAT AS AMERICA IS, THERE’S THINGS THAT OTHER COUNTRIES DO AS WELL OR MOST LIKELY BETTER THAN WE DO HERE.

ZACH DWYER: SONJA JOHNSON SAYS THE EXPERIENCE SCOTLAND PROGRAM HAS ESPECIALLY BENEFITED FROM A HIGH RATE OF RETURN STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS.

SONJA JOHNSON: ONE OF THE REASONS WE HAVE DIFFERENT CAMPUSES IS THOSE STUDENTS HAVE BECOME FACULTY AT OTHER CAMPUSESES AND THEY WANT THEIR STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE. THAT’S HOW WE’RE GETTING THEM IN TEXAS AND FACULTY FROM KANSAS AND MICHIGAN. THAT’S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU’RE AROUND FOR 30 YEARS.

ZACH DWYER: WITH ALMOST 5 PERCENT OF UWRF STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD BEFORE GRADUATION, THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITES BEYOND SCOTLAND TO EXPERIENCE THE MANY BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION. FOR FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M ZACH DWYER.

###