

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES GRANT REPORT

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Study-Tour to Ecole Supérieure d'Agriculture in Angers, France (June, 2011)

The primary purpose of my trip to Angers, France in June of 2011 was to supervise University of Wyoming (UW) undergraduate students during a portion of their study-abroad tour at Ecole Supérieure d'Agriculture (ESA). Dr. Ed Bradley (UW Dept. of Agricultural & Applied Economics) has organized and coordinated this study-abroad tour in the past. I will take over the organization and management of the program once he retires (within the next few years). I attended the study tour this year to



Main building of ESA.

familiarize myself with the curriculum and to develop a personal relationship with the program supervisors in Angers. What I learned on this trip will help me to assist with recruitment and program development here at home, in Wyoming. The relationships that I developed with faculty and staff at ESA also have strong potential to lead to faculty exchanges in the future, which leaves open the possibility for potential research collaborations.

Angers is located in the Loire Valley in western France. It is the most productive agricultural region in France, with beef and dairy operations and significant fruit and vegetable production, most notably wine grapes.



Angers is on the Loire River (left). It is the largest city within a 50-mile radius and has a cathedral (middle picture, background) as well as a castle originally dating from the 9th century (right).

The study-tour is four weeks long. The curriculum, developed by faculty at ESA, covers agribusiness, crop production, and viticulture, as well as courses in French history, culture, and language. The students had four weeks of coursework, interspersed with an average of three visits to agricultural enterprises per week. One student from UW remained in Angers for an additional month to participate in a farm internship program.

Field Tour Examples. To the right is the picture of the proprietor of Domaine des Rues. The livestock operation that has been in his family for three generations. The students were particularly interested in this field tour asked many questions about the differences in livestock production methods between France and the US—in a nutshell, they have smaller operations, less technology, and more widespread emphasis on production techniques that add value in the marketplace. Other examples of company visits were a cheese factory, complete with instruction on how different production methods result in different tastes and textures, and a salt flats near the ocean. Because harvesters in this region adhere to traditional methods of harvesting, they are able to sell their product at a significant premium.



Milk and cheese tasting after cheese factory tour (left). Salt flats (middle). Vineyard and wine storage facility (right).

Follow-up Plans. The University of Wyoming has been exchanging students with ESA for over 20 years. As a result of Dr. Bradley’s efforts, this program has flourished, providing UW students with an opportunity to study a rival food system and experience another culture. However, Dr. Bradley and I would like to see more students benefit from this excellent program.



Study-tour participants, on a free weekend in Paris.

Dr. Bradley and I are discussing ways to increase student enrollment, primarily through changes to the existing marketing strategy. We plan to be more aggressive about finding interested students earlier in the academic year. We will do this within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, but we will also target programs elsewhere on campus, whose students are likely to have an interest in a sustainable foods and farm culture study-abroad program: International Studies, the Institute for the Environment and Natural Resources, and the new Food Systems minor. It is also clear that the most significant barrier to increased student participation in this great program is funding. We are seeking to improve students’ knowledge of existing sources of funding (for example, scholarships through the Cheney International Center and federal financial aid) and to increase funding opportunities for them as well.