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Scottish students to study United States criminal justice system as part of visit to UWF

Pensacola, Fla. – June 14, 2016 – The University of West Florida Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice is currently hosting 24 students and three instructors from Scotland from June 11-25 as a part of an annual international exchange program. The two-week visit will provide the Scottish students an in-depth study of the U.S. criminal justice system – in and out of the classroom.

Faculty from UWF and guest lecturers from Florida Atlantic University will lecture on American politics, law and the criminal justice system, as well as specialized topics, such as sex offenders and police body-worn cameras. Students and instructors, who are staying on campus in the Village East Apartments, will also travel to the Escambia County Sheriff's Office, Blackwater River Correctional Facility and several other locations as part of their visit.

"We really want to tap into the expertise of our faculty here on campus as well as the resources we have here in the community," said Dr. Matthew Crow, chair of the criminology and criminal justice department at UWF. "We have a variety of different criminal justice agencies in the area. The idea is to give them that classroom activity, then illustrate how it works in practice."

UWF students will also have the opportunity to work with the visiting students, comparing and contrasting crime and justice across the two countries. The Scottish students and instructors are visiting from the University of the West of Scotland and Edinburgh Napier University.

Frances Abderhalden, a Fall 2015 graduate of the UWF criminology and criminal justice master's program, attended the 2015 trip to Scotland and returned to help UWF with the Scottish students' visit this summer.

"I hope to provide them with the same experience we had," said Abderhalden, who now serves as a research assistant in the department and will attend the University of Central Florida this fall to pursue a doctorate in criminal justice. "Experiencing another culture and seeing how their criminal justice system differed from ours was so eye-opening. I think it's important to expand your mind, get out of your comfort zone and see a different mindset."

Abderhalden said she also experienced personal growth from the trip abroad and hopes the visiting students gain similar insights. "I hope they'll be able to leave with an expansion of the mind and knowledge, using that as a base for looking at differences in culture and criminal justice systems, and applying that information to shape how they continue to educate, learn and study."

Students will also have the opportunity to engage in activities throughout Pensacola, attending Gallery Night, a Blue Wahoos baseball game and a tour of the National Naval Aviation Museum.

This year is the second time UWF has hosted, the first being in 2012. UWF students and professors will travel to ENU in 2017.

“With each experience, I think students walk away with not only an expanded view of issues related to crime and society’s response to crime, but also a better understanding of our own criminal justice system,” said Crow. “And with the Scots, I think through seeing our system, they come to better understand their own as well.”

The exchange program is in partnership with five universities – UWF, FAU and Washburn University in the U.S. and UWS and ENU in Scotland. The program functions on a rotational basis – where an American university hosts the Scottish students one year, and a Scottish university hosts American students the next – in hopes of providing students with an educational and cultural experience.

To learn more about the UWF Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, visit uwf.edu/justice.

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