Tackling Global Food Issues In Rome

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Imagine walking past the Pantheon in Rome on your way to work. Now, imagine you are a college student working with international research centers addressing food and agricultural issues. That’s just what a group of seven Iowa State students did this summer. The students were enrolled in the Dean’s Global Ag and Food Leadership Program, which prepares students to address the cultural, ecological and economic aspects of food security issues.

After semester-long preparations the students went to Rome for a four-week working session with Bioversity International and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Both groups lead international efforts to defeat hunger.

The students formed two teams. The first team analyzed food production and consumption in Italy for Bioversity International and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The team concluded that Italians are moving away from the Mediterranean diet.

The second team focused on the importance of maintaining genetic diversity in animals for food security and developed educational materials for the Animal Production and Health Division of FAO.

The instructors leading the group included Joe Colletti, senior associate dean in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Steven Lonergan, animal science professor, Gretchen Zdorkowski, agronomy senior lecturer, and Shelley Taylor, of the college’s study abroad office.

“Agriculture is the basis of life because food sustains us all,” Colletti says. “Our students are working with world-renowned clients to solve problems.”

The experience was amazing, says Lisa Tronchetti, a senior in agricultural business and international agriculture. And adds, “I now understand the complexity of food security issues.”

The program begins its third year in January 2011. 

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