

University College Dublin – Spring 2017



Taking the leap of faith and jumping outside of my comfort zone by studying abroad was the absolute best decision I ever made. When I first began considering studying abroad for an entire semester, I was far from convinced it would be an experience for me. I feared missing out on life here at Purdue and leaving my friends and

family behind for all of the unknown that comes along with living in a foreign country. Now, I realize that this experience shaped me into the person who I am today. Through studying abroad, I gained a new perspective on international agriculture, traveled to places I never imagined I would see, and made connections that turned into friendships I will cherish for a lifetime.



My semester-long study abroad experience took place at University College Dublin (UCD) in Dublin, Ireland – a

university that has a wonderful exchange program with Purdue University. While abroad, I studied Crop Science at the largest university in Ireland. Here, I was exposed to new



crop production practices, learned about different crops around the world, and as a result, now look upon agriculture with a fresh perspective. One of my favorite experiences was spending a day at a farm in Carlow, Ireland, where I was able to immerse myself in the Irish culture. While at the

farm, one of the most rewarding aspects was being able to apply the information I had been learning in the classroom during the semester to real life. My perspective on agriculture changed when I saw the rolling green hills dotted with hundreds of little white sheep, fields of golden yellow canola in full bloom, cattle grazing next to the Atlantic Ocean, and bags of DuPont Pioneer seed corn laying next to a corn field that had just been planted. In those moments, I saw the true beauty of agriculture.



While studying Crop Science, I also had the opportunity to take an Archeology course, which is not a subject that I was previously familiar with. However, this course proved to



be a valuable learning opportunity because it allowed students to participate on field trips and learn about historical sites around Ireland. Through this course, I traveled to several locations about an hour outside of Dublin and saw places like Ballymoon Castle, the Browne's Hill Dolmen, Castledermot, and Cairn at Loughcrew. A few

other examples of my experience include observing Loughcrew after I hiked up a steep hill to take in the countryside view and study the burial sites. Also, after hopping off the bus in Browne's Hill, I witnessed modern agriculture thriving around a portal tomb from 3,000 BC – a place where Ireland's first farmers once lived, worked, and (at the burial site) buried their relatives. Lastly, walking up to the medieval Ballymoon Castle ruins with sheep running around it, stepping over what would have once been a drawbridge, and seeing the organization of the central square were all highlights for me.

Ireland amazed me in many ways. First and foremost, one aspect of Ireland that positively influenced my study abroad experience was the warmth of the people. From the moment I arrived in the country, they welcomed me with open arms and made me feel at home. What I learned was that the Irish



are known for their friendliness; they are always willing to help someone in need, and their hospitality is second-to-none. I found this to be true of the academic advisors at UCD, the students, and almost everyone else who I came in contact with. A second aspect of Ireland that amazed me was the beauty of the countryside. For Ireland being such a small country, it has a lot to offer travelers. Traveling within Ireland, some of my favorite sights were the Cliffs of Moher, the Wicklow Mountains, and Giant's Causeway. Whether it was looking down at the 700-foot tall cliffs or climbing a mountain, the vast difference in landscape leaves you in awe.



Reflecting upon this experience, I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity, everything I learned, and for my friends, family, Purdue's College of Agriculture, and everyone who made this experience possible. Studying abroad helped me grow both personally and professionally and has made me much more aware

of the world outside of the United States. Through this, my eyes were opened to the endless possibilities in this world and international agriculture.