



JEFFREY LOWE, The Patriot-News

Christofilis Maggidis, left, is transforming Dickinson College's archaeology program. In the background are students Charles Meade and Justin Solonick. Dickinson has supplied the first undergraduates ever to dig at the Greek site at Mycenae, where Maggidis is assistant to the director.

Digging in at Dickinson

Greek shares passion for archaeology

At 17, Christofilis Maggidis was the youngest archaeologist invited on a major Bronze Age dig at Archanes and Crete. At 30, he became the youngest member of the Greek Archaeology Society. His studies took him from the University of Athens to the University of Pennsylvania to Brown University to Harvard University.

BY FORD TURNER
Of The Patriot-News

That day two summers ago at the Acropolis in Greece, Dickinson College professor and archaeologist Leon Fitts realized he'd made a valuable find.

Not in the 2,500-year-old ruins, but in a 33-year-old man.

He was Christofilis Maggidis, an up-and-coming Greek archaeologist with Ivy League credentials. He volunteered to show Fitts' Dickinson students around, and he spoke with startling passion and knowledge of the historical treasures of his homeland.

Watching him in action got

Fitts thinking.

"By the time he finished . . . I was already convinced I wanted this young man here," said Fitts, an archaeologist and chairman of Dickinson's Classical Studies Department.

Now, Maggidis is teaching at Dickinson and transforming the school's archaeology program.

Once a minor field of study, it has become an interdisciplinary major. Dickinson has supplied the first undergraduates ever to dig at the famous Greek excavation at Mycenae, where Maggidis assists the director.

The college is developing an

Please see HISTORY on Page B5

HISTORY: He gets students to dig it

Continued from Page B1

archaeology lab and an online database on Mycenae. It has trained archaeology students with an indoors, simulated excavation pit — a novel approach in collegiate circles.

"This gives us one of the leading programs in archaeology in America at the undergraduate level," said Neil Weissman.

As college dean, he interviewed Maggidis the year before he came to Carlisle.

"He was just head and shoulders above the others . . . There is no question that his familiarity with Greece, his history, his involvement with the academic community there, and his position at Mycenae were major pluses," Weissman said.

Maggidis grew up 300 miles north of Mycenae. His parents worked for the Greek government revenue agency.

It was in third grade, during a field trip to Macedonia, that the archaeology bug bit him.

"We saw the excavation on-going. I was fascinated. At that point, I said I was going to be an archaeologist. At that point, it was a straight line. I never wanted to be anything else," he said.

At 17, he was the youngest archaeologist invited on a ma-

ior Bronze Age dig at Archanes and Crete. At 30, he became the youngest member of the Greek Archaeology Society. His studies took him from the University of Athens to the University of Pennsylvania to Brown University to Harvard University.

Archaeology, Maggidis said, is "a beautiful bridge" between humanities and science. A site such as Mycenae, he said, possesses a special power.

Dickinson students felt it last summer.

"They felt as if they were crossing the threshold of a church. They were speechless," Maggidis said. ". . . Every step you take there, you can feel the steps of millions of people taken there before you."

Elizabeth Madaus, a 2002 Dickinson graduate whose parents live in Lower Paxton Twp., dug at Mycenae last summer.

"For me, it was terribly important. It made me decide I want to continue on in archaeology," said Madaus, now living in Seattle and planning to seek a master's degree in museum studies.

Students got ready for Mycenae by digging in the "simulated excavation field" in the lower level of Denny Hall.

Actually a walled-in container of mock ruins and artifacts buried in dirt, the so-called SEF was a big success.

"It was very helpful for knowing what to do," Madaus said.

Maggidis' teaching left a lasting impression.

"He is extremely knowledgeable about everything he teaches. To combine that with passion for what he teaches, it is a great combination in a professor," she said.

Much of Maggidis' work at Dickinson has been made possible by a \$1 million-plus donation made by the family of a 1975 graduate. Maggidis is the first person to hold the position named for that graduate, the Christopher L. Roberts Chair in Archaeology.

Fitts said he knew the money was coming when he met Maggidis that day at the Acropolis two summers ago.

"It was a confluence of the stars," he said. ". . . Christofilis just sort of fit like a hand in a glove."

FORD TURNER: 255-8486 or
ftturner@pnco.com