

DICKINSON COLLEGE

Professor expands archaeology course

By Aaron Stern
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Two years ago, students at Dickinson College did not have the option to receive a major degree in archaeology.

The arrival of Professor Christofilis Maggidis has changed that.

There are now 20 students majoring in archaeology, an exclusive dig site in Greece, and the school is poised to become a key figure in the academic world of archaeology.

Maggidis, who moved to Carlisle with his wife and two young children, is quickly building an academic program that he hopes will rival those of any other school in the nation, undergraduate and graduate school programs included.

"The aim of the program is not only educational, but political," he explains. "We hope to establish an unofficial network with (the University of Pennsylvania) and Johns Hopkins. We want to make this one of the leading programs in the U.S."

Students who choose to major in archaeology enter into an interdisciplinary program that includes courses in classical studies (which includes learning the Greek language), anthropology, art history, and geology.

"We are one of a very few schools that has both modern and ancient Greek in the same classics studies program," Maggidis notes. "I can count on two hands the ones that do this, and they are all Ivy League schools."

Maggidis' wife, also a professor, heads the modern Greek program at Dickinson.

Students go on dig

This past summer Maggidis led a group of students to Mycenae, Greece, for a five-week excavation project.

"What is good about getting field experience," Maggidis says, "is that you don't just hear, you see and hypothesize, then



A view of an archaeological dig in Greece taken from the Dickinson College website.

you find out if you are doing what archaeologists do."

"There's nothing like the real thing," says senior Owen Thomson. "I don't think anybody was ready for the physical labor we did, but it was great to be there and get the experience."

The college has exclusive access to the site at Mycenae, an ancient city dating back to 3000 B.C., according to Maggidis.

"Greece has very strict excavation laws," explains Maggidis. "The work can be done either by the Archaeological Service (whose work is limited to salvage excavation), the Athens Archaeological Society (AAS), or by international archaeological schools," such as Dickinson. However, Maggidis continues, "every school that wants to dig must have two members of either the Archaeological Service or the AAS to oversee the work."

Dickinson falls under the third category, but were it not for Maggidis, the school would never have gone to Mycenae. His status as a Greek citizen, combined with his AAS membership — he is the youngest member of the organization — gives him,

and Dickinson, a back door into the exclusive dig site. Also, the overseer of the Mycenae site is Sp. Iakovidis, who was Maggidis' professor at Penn, as well as his mentor.

Practice sites used

The students were adequately prepared for the dig, according to Maggidis, thanks to a creation of his called the simulated excavation field (SEF). It is an open-topped plexiglass with measurements of roughly eight feet long by eight feet wide, and three feet deep. Inside are layers of different types of soil with mock-artifacts imbedded in it. The students use this as their practice dig-site.

"I haven't seen anything else like it," Maggidis says. "There are some outdoor ones in Europe, but with the (exposure to) weather, there is no control."

As a result of the practice within the SEF, the students were more than prepared to take on Mycenae.

"The preparation we had for the dig in the SEF gave us all a pretty good idea of the job we had to do," says Thomson.

"I didn't have to watch them

too much," claims Maggidis. "They knew pretty well what they were doing."

Return trips over the next two summers are scheduled, with more work planned for Mycenae, as well as exploration of an entire new city that the group discovered.

Maggidis came to Dickinson after receiving his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania and completing research fellowships at Harvard and Brown Universities. After all of that moving around, Maggidis and his family are making long-term plans to stay: they currently are building a home in Carlisle.

"Dickinson has a high reputation and the abroad study focus necessary for an archaeology program," says Maggidis, explaining his decision to settle down here. "When I interviewed here," he explains, "it seemed almost too ideal, but after a year and a half it is very real. The collaboration between the administration and the faculty, and within the faculty itself, is real. In other places it is not like this; the administration, the faculty, no one helps each other."

Maggidis' enthusiasm seems to be contagious: in just a year and a half twenty students have declared archaeology as a major, and five students are working towards a minor in it.

"He was the reason I pursued archaeology," says Thomson. "His personal interest in the subject spills over to his teaching and has really fueled my desire to learn more."

"With his demeanor and open door to students," explains senior Lauren Eldred, "he has created a relationship with students that is a respectful friendship."

Maggidis has similar praise for his students.

"What made this work," he says, "was the enthusiasm of the students. Their reaction and their work has been beyond what anyone expected."