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Dickinson Digs Draw Attention to the Ancients and Archaeology

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In its January/February 2008 issue, *Archaeology Magazine* featured an article about the excavations and archeological survey being done in Mycenae, Greece that are part of the Dickinson archeological program. The 7-page article describes the effort underway to unearth a unique piece of history from the Greek soil.

While English students are reading the ancient works of Homer, some archaeology students actually get to walk the grounds of one of the three cities the great poet sang about. From here it is said that Helen left for Troy, and was pursued by a thousand ships. Mycenae is in Greece and between 1600 and 1100 B.C. it was the heart of a vast culture that stretched across the Aegean. Mycenae, in large part due to its role in the works of Homer, has long been a focus in the field of archeology. In 1876, German archeologist Heinrich Schliemann began digging at a site that would eventually yield an imposing citadel from which it is believed the vast Mycenaean empire was ruled. However, it is not the citadel that is the focal point of the Dickinson expeditions.

Evidence exists of a large town at the foot of the citadel. Maggidis called the site "a large town" but was hesitant to use the word city. If the work uncovers the right variety of buildings and artifacts, than it will provide an accurate cross-section of the life of everyday Mycenaean.

Still, no one expects wonders rights away, in the 130 years since Schliemann began digging, 30 percent of the citadel has yet to be excavated.

The program is led by Christofilis Maggidis, who is currently an associate Professor of Classical Studies and holds the Christopher Roberts Chair in Archeology at Dickinson. The entire operation consists of Maggidis, 10 to 15 undergraduates, 15 grad students, 10 workmen and 10 specialists who each have an area of relevant expertise. Aside from the digging tools that might be associated with archeology, Maggidis and others have been utilizing news pieces of technology to give them advantages that past generations could not have dreamed of. Most exciting is probably the use of Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR). With the help of Antonia Stamos of the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, GPR allows them to see into the ground and plan which sites can be and would be the best to excavate.

Students who wish to travel to the land of Achilles and Odysseus cannot do so without first honing their skills in the dig simulator. Located in the archeological lab, the 400 square foot simulator consists of 3 to 4 feet of different types of soil similar to those the students will find in Greece. In fact, the entire pit is designed to replicate what the environment is like, right down to the broken vases, bones and other artifacts interred in the earth for the sole purpose of educating. "They use the same system [of excavating] when they go to Greece, so they really know what they are doing" says Maggidis. All this will pay off" he says assuredly.

The magazine article states that reaching the level of the Mycenaean period is still 5 years away. However, Maggidis has reason to believe that it will be "much sooner than five years." he optimistically predicts. "It's very exciting, it's not everyday you get to go to Greece" says Matt Morowitz '11. Morowitz hopes to be one of those students who will excavate the Mycenaean town in a future summer. In reference to Dickinson's program he believes "it's great to have one as large as it is taking the field into consideration."

