

Summer Program Cadets Explore European Union

By Mary Price

With Brexit fallout in the news daily, a summer trip to Europe gave 12 cadets a chance to study and experience daily life in the countries that make up the European Union.

“The Economics and Politics of the European Union” took place June 1-22, with cadets and faculty visiting Slovenia, Germany, and Belgium. Leading the trip were Col. Tinni Sen, professor of economics and business; Lt. Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl, associate professor of economics and busi-

ness; and Col. Howard Sanborn, professor of international studies. Each professor taught a three-credit course on the trip, and cadets were required to take at least two courses, thus earning six academic credits.

“Learning and being immersed in the history of Slovenia was the biggest highlight for me during the trip,” wrote Katie McCommons ’21 in an email. McCommons, who plans to commission into the Army as a military intelligence officer, said she hadn’t known much about that country, which was once behind the Iron Curtain, before this summer’s trip.

A guest lecture by a former Slovenian finance minister helped her understand how the nation had transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. She



Cadets pose for a photo near Garmisch, Germany, during a study abroad trip that took them through Slovenia, Germany, and Belgium.—Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.

also noted that Slovenia’s economic priorities might seem askew to some: the country had electricity in its caves at Postojna Jama before electricity came to the capital city of Ljubljana.

“The decision was made to provide electricity to these caves before the capital because these caves were the major

terms of academics and culture, there was another benefit to the three-week excursion: a deepening of friendships and strengthening of bonds among cadets of different classes and majors.

“There was a lot of community building,” she noted. “[Cadets] took care of each other and watched out for each other, in the VMI way. It was a very good trip—so much fun and so much learning.”

Agreeing with this statement was Willson Tuck ’21, an economics and business major who plans to attend law school after VMI.

“Everyone who has been to VMI shares common bonds of brotherhood; however, this can become separated because of what class you are in,” Tuck wrote in an email. “Each of us was so invested in soaking up as much of the culture as possible and learning what was



Cadets visited Slovenia’s Predjama Castle during a three-week trip that took them not only to Slovenia, but also Germany and Belgium.—Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.

being taught that class segregation could not have been an option ... We needed each other.”

Tuck found that group unity was especially critical when navigating unfamiliar areas. “Streets can be winding, the language to navigate is different, normal cell reception can be unreliable,” he wrote. “You’re just not in the same conditions as when you are in the States. Each time this could have been a stressor, however, everyone in our group was collected and ultimately we would make it back safely.”

The three faculty members who led the trip would all like to plan another European excursion, but the timing of that is uncertain. Other opportunities for summer study abroad, though, are already in the works.

Dr. Dekuwmini Mornah, associate professor of economics and business, is planning to take cadets to Ghana in the summer of 2020 as part of a partnership that VMI is developing with that nation’s Ashesi University.

Meanwhile, Sanborn, the international studies professor, has another goal in mind.

The recipient of a Fulbright award, Sanborn is spending the fall 2019 semester in Hong Kong, where he will study the Legislative Council, which is Hong Kong’s governing body, and also strengthen connections he’s made at the Hong Kong America Center, which promotes educational and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the United States.

“I want to look at how to bring cadets to Hong Kong,” said Sanborn. “It would be great to build a sustainable program to Asia.” 🌿

Press Box Renovations Allow Instant Replay

By Mary Price

This spring and summer, the press box overlooking Foster Stadium underwent its first major renovation and expansion since it was built in 1988.

The \$1.7 million project allows the Keydets to have instant replay capability, a Southern Conference requirement for the 2019 season and beyond. With this goal in mind, much of the work focused on the roof, as that’s a prime spot for mounting video cameras. The roof of the renovated press box contains built-in camera platforms accessible by a back stairwell.

“Previously, they set up the cameras on a combination of cinder blocks, tripods, and other things, but now we’re going to have a dedicated platform that sets the cameras above the parapets,” explained Lt. Col. Daren Payne ’90, construction project manager.

The stairwell, he added, allows camera crews to access the roof in a much safer manner—previously, they had to climb up a set of narrow drop-down stairs and through a trap door.

The addition of two goal-line cameras trained on the end zones supports instant replay capabilities as well. One of the cameras is mounted on the concession stand in the east end zone, while the other is mounted on a pole near the end zone closer to Cameron Hall.

Radio announcers, meanwhile, who once braved the elements to report from the roof now have their own space inside the press box. The addition of 950 square feet allows more space for coaches, who oversee the game and make calls from the high vantage point.



Scaffolding encases the press box above Foster Stadium this summer.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

“The number of coaches they put in there today is probably double what they put in there in 1995,” said Payne. The space was built for four people, he explained, but a typical game day will see six or seven individuals vying for a spot.

Visitors to the Ferebee Lounge, located the floor below the press box, will likely notice new paint, carpet, and furniture in that area—and workers preparing food for the VIP area now have a dedicated place to do that.

“Previously, [workers] were doing the food prep in the hallways, and had their equipment out in the hall,” said Payne.

But even those who simply drive by on Main Street will notice changes to the press box.

“It’s going to have the same kind of crenellations and stucco material and finish and color as the buildings directly across the street

from it,” Payne commented in mid-July. “It’s going to make a whole different look as you drive in.” 🌿



A worker from Harrisonburg Construction uses a lift to work on the addition to the press box.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.