

The Tribune-Democrat

2.18.14



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tom Foley, president of Mount Aloysius College in Cresson, takes his first spin on a camel during a service trip last week to New York University Abu Dhabi.

College chief 'impressed' by Middle East experiment

BY JUSTIN DENNIS
JDENNIS@TRIBDEM.COM

CRESSON - Of all the new experiences Tom Foley had in Abu Dhabi - his first camel ride, a star-lit dinner in the middle of the desert, a fierce-looking falcon named "Sweet-heart" perching on his arm - he said what stuck the most was his time among the hundreds of international students from dozens of countries who spoke dozens of languages.

Foley, the president of Mount Aloysius College in Cresson, returned from the Middle

East on Tuesday on a 24-hour flight. It was the first such service trip for a college representative, although Foley said Mount Aloysius students have been to China, the Dominican Republic and several U.S. states.

He was invited to the recently established Abu Dhabi branch of New York University by its president - and his longtime friend - John Sexton.

"When he found out I was the president of

Please see **COLLEGE, A2**

Continued from A1

Mount Aloysius, he said. "you have to come" and see what he's doing there and give him the Mount Aloysius perspective on how they're approaching his," Foley said.

NYU Abu Dhabi, which draws its culturally diverse academics from across the globe, is graduating its first class this year. The school is part of an international network of NYU branches that rot students around all four corners, providing a worldly perspective on their studies.

Foley said he pulled a 13-hour schedule during his four-day visit, interviewing prospective students from 47 countries, lecturing a philosophy class and observing large group sessions.

Although a large percentage of Mount Aloysius students come from within a 25-mile radius of the campus, Foley said, there are a handful of similarities between the two institutions - high percentage of first-generation college students and students with distressed financial backgrounds. It was those similarities - and the unique perspective an administrator of a mercy-founded college can provide - that prompted the invitation.

"I was incredibly impressed by how thoughtful this experiment is," he said. "When (former Swarthmore College President) Alfred Bloom lectures to them, he tells them that they're going to have three kinds of education.

"First, they're going to learn that the world is very complicated and problems aren't simple and you need to recognize that up front," he said. "Second, they're going to go very in-depth in their field, whatever that is. ... (Lastly,) they make them take literature classes, they make them take art classes - they make sure they have breadth in their education."

And Foley said that above the tour of the Grand Mosque - the center of Islam in Abu Dhabi - and above the tour of the Crown Prince's palace, what he took home was a sense of awe toward the cohort this mosaic of students would form at NYU. Foley, in turn - giving Sexton the perspective he was looking for - recommended the college do more to foster those relationships outside the realm of academia.

"They really need to do something to protect that initial contact and camaraderie, which is the kind of thing that will last a long time"

Justin Dennis covers Mount Aloysius College for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter at [Twitter.com/JustinDennis](https://twitter.com/JustinDennis)