



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

A special message to our graduates,

As you approach the culmination of your academic journey, we extend our heartfelt congratulations. Graduation is not only a celebration of your hard work and perseverance, but also a gateway to the future for which you have been preparing.

Whether you are continuing your studies, entering the workforce, starting your own venture, or exploring new paths, know that you carry with you the skills, knowledge, and resilience that will serve you wherever life takes you. We are proud of all you have accomplished and excited to see the impact you will make.

Remember, you are a Lion for life and will always be a valued member of our university community. Stay connected, keep growing, and never stop striving for excellence.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

May 2025

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Piedmont Students Share Their Travel Study Experiences



by Grace Wills

From Costa Rica to England to Italy and more, Piedmont University students have a variety of travel study opportunities each year. We asked some of our students who have completed a travel study program about their experiences; here's what they had to say!



Cateia Jones

The travel study trip to Costa Rica in May 2024 focused on international business and project management, providing credit for the Business Internship and Accounting Internship courses I completed this fall. My favorite memories include meeting Rudolpho, the owner of Finca Sura Farm, and his wife. Exploring their farm, tasting fresh fruit, and experiencing their warm hospitality was unforgettable. Other favorites included visiting Baldi Hot Springs and staying at La Princesa de la Luna Ecolodge, nestled in the rainforest mountains, which embodied unique values and natural beauty. Spending time abroad with my favorite instructor was a bonus!

For students considering study abroad, seize the chance to earn credits while exploring new cultures. It's the perfect way to wrap up the academic year, apply classroom knowledge, and expand your worldview. Study abroad helps you discover new perspectives, connect with classmates beyond the virtual space, and grow by embracing challenges and opportunities.



Our study abroad trip was in Spain from May 15-27, 2024. We visited many cities in Spain like Madrid, Seville, and my favorite, Granada. My studies included Spanish 1101, and World History since the mid 17th Century.

On the trip there wasn't tons of pressure to do lots of homework there. Instead, we were encouraged to take notes and really enjoy the moment. After we returned from the trip there was homework to catch up on and finish within a few weeks of being back. But it wasn't so much that I couldn't handle it.

Traveling is always fun, but it's not often I get to do it with so many other people my age. Getting to know each and every one of the awesome people on this trip made it that much more enjoyable. I also feel like I made great connections with my professors too. My most favorite memory will be the day off I spent in the mountains of Granada near a town called Vélez de Benaudalla, and some neighboring towns like Lanjarón.

If I could do one of these [trips] every year, I WOULD. The price just made sense. I only spent a couple hundred more dollars on the class credits than I would've to take the classes on campus. It's not every day that you can take a 12-day trip to Spain AND knock out class credits.



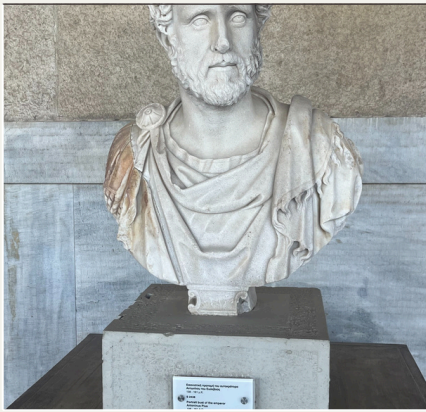
Ben Kolbie



Piedmont Students Share Their Travel Study Experiences, cont.



by Grace Wills



Camryn Oddo

I traveled to Greece last summer from May 13 to 25, 2024. I studied PHRG-3325 (Environmental Ethics) and NASC-4800 (Public Health and Human Behaviors). The trip was very informative and gave students a lot of hands-on experience. My favorite memories are when we visited the Ruins of the Temple of Apollo and the Archaeological Site of Delphi. There are many intricate details on the stones, and the museums preserved the artifacts very well. The stonework and metalwork of the Greeks are brought to a different level in your mind when you see them in person. Another memory I enjoy is going shopping around Greece since there are many shops close together. The shops can range from clothing shops, jewelry, food, and more. Any advice I would give students considering travel study is to always have an open mind about the culture and do some research before the trip. Also, make sure to keep up with your assignments on the trip so you can have fun, too.



I had the amazing opportunity to go to Greece on the 2024 Maymester. We flew into Athens and then took a connecting flight to Crete. We spent a couple of nights there before flying to Thessaloniki for a couple more nights. Afterward, we took a bus to Delphi to see the ruins before heading to our last stop, Athens.

In Greece, I studied Environmental Psychology and Art 1100: Introduction to Art. The psychology class opened our eyes to see Greece in new ways and allowed us to think critically and take in what we were experiencing. One of the big projects we did was a journal of each day spent in Greece, which honestly was really fun because I would not have had the discipline to journal on my own. Meanwhile, the art class focused on the medium of watercolors. We would be given prompts to find and connect art to whatever we were seeing that day, and it was a way to capture the beauty of Greece through our eyes.

I would say that if you are looking to travel but want to have the comfort of familiar faces and a stricter schedule, the Maymester is right for you. However, if you are adventurous and want to be able to explore on your own and take a further step outside of your comfort zone, the semester abroad is the way to go. You are only young once, traveling has given me such a different approach to life and appreciation for the world around me, I recommend it to any and everyone who is able.



Sarah Row



Piedmont Baseball Partners with Team IMPACT to Sign Newest Team Member James



by Danielle Percival



Piedmont baseball's newest member might stand out in the crowd compared to his counterparts, but thanks to Team IMPACT, Habersham local James Charles Gipson, age 6, is a Piedmont Lion.

James was paired with Piedmont through Team IMPACT, an organization that matches children facing serious illness with college sports teams, creating a long-term, life-changing experience for everyone involved.

James was born with congenital heart defects and had his first heart surgery at 13 days old. At age 2, he was diagnosed with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.

James has been involved throughout the academic year with the Lions, attending practices and even making a stop at media day.

On February 6, 2025, Piedmont held a signing day ceremony for James to make him an official member of the team.

"It's a special day for us when we are thinking about adding new players to our team," Head Coach Justin Scali said. "We do a lot of homework and research. Having James here, certainly a special member of our team and we're excited to welcome him."

While James may be undersized for what you expect out of a Division III baseball team member, it's the amount of heart and passion he exudes that makes him a perfect fit for Piedmont.



Watch James' signing day video [here](#).

Piedmont University's longest-serving professor teaches about hidden histories and reveals his own

by Grace Wills



Dr. Pleysier and Dr. Vinogradov in St. Petersburg

There is no denying when Dr. Albert Pleysier is teaching. His voice echoes out of the classroom and through the halls as he educates his students in a variety of history courses ranging from ancient to modern day, rapping the whiteboard for emphasis. His passion is undeniable as he weaves the stories of our history in a way that has stopped passersby in their tracks and engaged students for over 40 years. It is no surprise, then, that he tells his own story with the humility and meticulousness of a scholar.

Dr. Pleysier immigrated to the United States from the Netherlands with his family at an early age. His parents placed a high value on education, in turn instilling a dream to be a professor in him when he was only ten years old. It is clear now that Dr. Pleysier achieved that dream, but the road was rarely clear. In addition to the countless hours of hard work invested, Dr. Pleysier credits one major factor in his success: his faith.

"I prayed a lot," says Dr. Pleysier. The years of his education were filled with moments of difficulty, but also with serendipity that he describes as "certainly divine." He recounts the process of becoming a doctoral student as a particular example of this. He was overworked and became burned out at the teaching job he took after obtaining his master's degree.

"I remember saying, 'God, get me out of here,'" he says. After a conversation with his wife, Jane (another of his sources of strength), the two went to the local library. Dr. Pleysier asked the librarian if there was a book about universities in America that might help him find a doctoral program. The librarian said yes and handed him a book — one that had arrived just days before, as if its delivery was timed just for him. The information within led him to a program at West Virginia University.

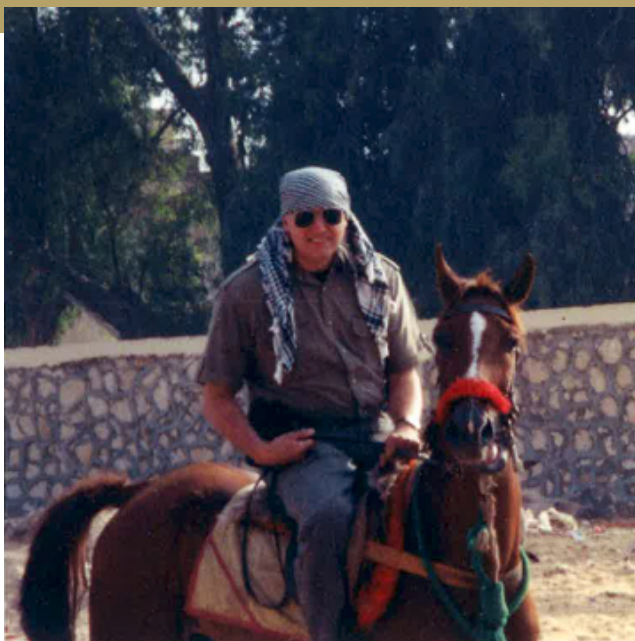
Then, once he earned his PhD and needed a new role, he happened across a tiny newspaper advertisement for an institution that was then known as Piedmont College. It might have been strange for a small school several states away to be advertising professor openings, if not for another connection: Piedmont's then-President was a graduate of WVU.

For as much as his journey to Piedmont relied upon small, seemingly fated moments, his long tenure here is no accident. He cites academic freedom as his primary reason for choosing to teach here over any other institution. He most enjoys teaching courses about the hidden parts of history, the kind of stories most students would not have heard in high school. Classes like Egyptology, Constantinople and the Roman Empire, and Hitler's Germany allow Dr. Pleysier to explore, dissect, and understand parts of our past that so many people do not know.



Dr. Pleysier in Egypt

Piedmont University's longest-serving professor teaches about hidden histories and reveals his own, cont.



Dr. Pleysier in Egypt

Being a professor at a private university, he says, is the only way he has achieved that for the last 48 years.

"There are so many people in history outside what most learn about," he says, "and I believe they deserve to be remembered too."

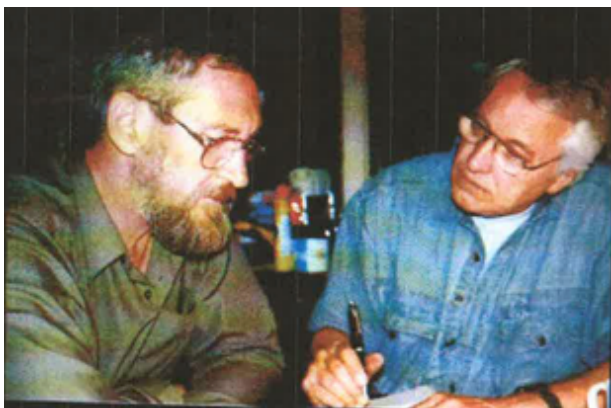
Certainly memorable are some of Dr. Pleysier's other adventures as a Piedmont professor. Past students have traveled with him abroad to Egypt, Ukraine, Siberia, and more. While his trips included moments of fun (like scaling a pyramid — yes, really!), they also included foundational learning moments for his students. In one instance, his students spent weeks with students from St. Petersburg, getting to know them and their backgrounds while completing archeological work together.

The unique artifacts they encountered were exciting, but perhaps more exciting and long-lasting was the empathy formed for their fellow students, a trait Dr. Pleysier hopes his students take from his classes.

Forming empathy and understanding is a core tenet of Dr. Pleysier's scholarly publications, too. In collaboration with Dr. Alexey Vinogradov, another researcher from Russia, he has published several books like *The Women of Izmaelovka* and *Enemies of the People Under Stalinism*, which give voices to individuals whose stories were previously unheard. Through in-depth interviews, the participants were allowed to voice — often for the very first time — their experiences. Dr. Pleysier notes these interactions as particularly impactful to him, and his publications (which include several more books, some written independently) as important to his scholarship and work as a professor.



Dr. Pleysier with friend and frequent collaborator Dr. Alexey Vinogradov



Dr. Pleysier and Dr. Vinogradov's author photo from their book *The Blockade and the Battle of Leningrad*

As the interview with him winds down, Dr. Pleysier reflects on how Piedmont has changed over the course of his time here.

"Physically, the look has changed significantly," he says, "but the institution has stayed the same." The same could be said for Dr. Pleysier's experience: over the years, students cycle in and out, different courses are offered, and colleagues come and go. All the while, one thing remains constant — Dr. Pleysier's voice, drifting out of the classroom, educating, and empathizing generations of students.

Wise Words From a Labor & Delivery Nurse: Why I Chose Piedmont, One of Georgia's Top Nursing Schools

by Terrie Ellerbee



At Piedmont University, students are prepared not only to pass the NCLEX—but to lead with confidence. Just ask Aneeka Wise, a 2023 graduate of Piedmont's School of Nursing & Health Sciences. A mother of four, she brought life into the world both at home and now, professionally, as a labor and delivery nurse. Wise graduated in May 2023 with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and just three months later, she was working at the unit known for delivering the most babies in the United States.

"The experience was invaluable," she said. "But I wanted more." Today, she's part of the Labor and Delivery Unit at Piedmont Atlanta Hospital—one of Georgia's premier healthcare institutions—and is already considering leadership roles like precepting or Charge Nurse.

From Student Nurse to Confident Leader

"When I started nursing, my goal was to work as a bedside labor and delivery nurse for two years before pursuing my master's in midwifery or becoming a Nurse Practitioner in Women's Health," Wise said. "Those options are still appealing, but right now, I'm focused on honing my skills and stepping into leadership on the unit. In another year, I may decide on the next step."

She credits Piedmont University with giving her the confidence to think beyond survival and aim for leadership. "Though I struggled with my self-esteem in nursing school, the unwavering support from teachers and administration built me up every day I walked on that campus," she said. "And it shows every day I step onto the unit."

What Makes Piedmont Different?

For Wise, it wasn't just about the curriculum. It was the culture of support, the depth of clinical experience, and the dedication of her professors that set Piedmont apart.

"Many of my peers from other schools didn't get nearly as many hands-on hours or visit as many clinical sites as we did," she said. "And our professors weren't just instructors—they were mentors. They invested in our personal and professional growth, even outside the classroom."

That investment mattered, especially on the hardest days. As a nontraditional student raising four children, Wise said there were times she felt overwhelmed. But she never felt alone.

"There was support at Piedmont no matter what door I stopped into—financial aid, every classroom, every hallway," she said. "That community kept me going."

Advice for Aspiring Nurses? Choose Support and Substance

Would she recommend Piedmont to high school or college students considering nursing?

"Absolutely," she said. "The unwavering support, excellent education, and the sense of community make Piedmont University an exceptional choice for aspiring nurses."

Faculty Promotions

Congratulations to these talented faculty on their well-deserved promotions!

From Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Business

James Long ('20) B.B.A., University of North Georgia
M.Acc., University of Georgia

Morgan Sales ('18) B.S.B.A., M.B.A., Appalachian State
University

From Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Art

Rebecca Brantley ('19) B.A., B.F.A., M.A., University of Georgia

From Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Natural Sciences

Rebecca Godwin ('20) B.S., M.S., Auburn University
Ph.D., University of California

Areatha Ketch ('18) B.S., North Georgia College
Ph.D., University of Georgia

From Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Nursing

Christine Kaiser ('20) B.S.N., South Dakota State University
M.S.N., University of West Georgia
D.N.P., Arkansas State University

From Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Education

Katrina Short ('12) B.A., M.Ed., University of North Florida
Ed.S., Ed.D, University of Florida



Calendar of Events

MAY

5/9 Spring Commencement
5/19 Summer Classes Begin
5/26 Memorial Day Holiday

JUNE

6/13 Summer Orientation
6/16 Triple Threat Musical
Theater Intensive

JULY

7/4 Independence Day
7/18 Summer Commencement

AUGUST

8/12 Opening Convocation
8/13 Fall Classes Begin

For event details, or to view the full calendar, please visit [here](#).