The Santa Chiara Study Center, located in Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy, facilitates Texas A&M’s efforts to produce graduates who are not only academically prepared, but who have the capacity to understand other cultures and to live and work outside their own cultural framework.

Dr. J. Martyn Gunn, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Ben Crouch, Executive Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts, visited the Santa Chiara Study Center for the first time in late April and early March, 2010. For Dr. Gunn, to whom the Center began reporting in Fall 2010, this was primarily an orientation visit to facilitate development of new academic programs and better understand the current programs.

Said Dr. Gunn, “I engaged with the staff, faculty, and students at the Center to understand their needs as well as identify opportunities for future programs. This is a well-established center, and we can learn from their experience as we develop our newer centers abroad. In addition, new ideas for the Santa Chiara Study Center are important for future development.”

As a marketing major in the Mays School of Business, I could have selected other programs that would have directly counted toward degree requirements. However, I wanted to broaden my understanding of the humanities and Italy was calling my name.

I remember the first day of music class walking into the room, and Dr. Wilborn was playing Vivaldi. I could not help but smile and think how fortunate I was to be studying MUSIC in Italy! While I was familiar with Italian opera, I soon realized my understanding was limited and my appreciation was quite superficial. Not until I experienced Aida in Verona did I really understand the importance of music to the Italians.

As our trip came to an end, I became extremely sad that my time in Italy was coming to an end. I had made lifelong friends from my Texas A & M group and in Italy; saw some of the most magnificent sites in the world, immersed myself in Italian art and music, and perhaps most importantly, learned many new and exciting things about myself. Unbeknownst to me, I realized that I was leaving my new home and it hurt very deeply.

It was at that VERY moment that my life goal and dream became clear to me. I wanted to work in Italy! I have always enjoyed traveling and learning about other cultures. These traits, coupled with my degree in marketing with an international business certificate, would position me for such an opportunity. It was just a matter of putting two and two together to realize I could have a plan for my future and I needed to put it into action.

“DON’T CRY BECAUSE IT’S OVER, BUT SMILE BECAUSE IT HAPPENED.”  DR. SEUSS
This scholarship is made possible through the generous gift of Susanne M. and Melbern G. Glasscock '59. The Glasscock Scholars Abroad Award gives selected students the opportunity to bring a truly international dimension to their studies by providing $5,000 toward a summer abroad at the Texas A&M University Santa Chiara Study Center in Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy. The Glasscock Center encourages students in all disciplines to develop a keen understanding of their own and other world cultures. Through humanities courses, students engage in disciplined and responsible studies of intellectual and material culture that deepen their knowledge, broaden their perspectives, and challenge their assumptions.

2009-2010 Academic Year Recipients
Rachel Bonedoin, Business Honors and Supply Chain Management major
Katie Cruzsinger, Marketing pre-major, certificate in International Business
Lauren Floyd, Finance major, International Business minor, certificate in Trading and Risk Management
Jillian Van Zandt, Middle School Math and Science Education major, Spanish minor

Faculty Spotlight, Continued

Steven M. Oberhelman

Steven M. Oberhelman is professor of classics and Cornerstone Faculty Fellow of Liberal Arts who often teaches at the Santa Chiara Study Center. He was one of the first coordinators of the Santa Chiara Center when it opened in May of 1989, where he taught World Literature. Over the years, he has developed a course that introduces students to the art, architecture, and archaeological artifacts of ancient Rome and of Italy through a lecture and field trip combination. He calls the location of the Study Center “ideal” due to its close proximity to Florence and Rome, two of the most culturally rich cities in the world, filled with hundreds of ancient toms, villas, Christian catacombs, and the Colosseum, among other things. He, like many other professors at Texas A&M, stresses the benefits of studying abroad, remarking that “nearly every student will confide to me that they considered the experience to be life-changing.” He also comments that companies want to hire globally-minded, multicultural, and multilingual students who have studied abroad.

When asked about his favorite memory of the Santa Chiara Study Center, Dr. Oberhelman replied that, on his first trip in 1989, they “arrived in the town in an old bus (which had broken down on the autobruda near Orvieto), we were tired, hungry, jet-lagged, apprehensive. But the townspeople and mayor were waiting for the bus at the Piazza Garibaldi; as it happened, they were celebrating the festival that concludes the hunting of wild boar (the boar population causes severe problems in the countryside because they inflict massive loss of farm animals and crops unless controlled). Tables and chairs had been set up inside a tent for their group, and they were welcomed not only with plates of wonderfully cooked boar meat piled high, but also with Italian generosity and hospitality shown by the men, women, and children there that evening. Most of these people doubtlessly had never seen an American before except in movies, but he could sense a genuine friendliness and an unreserved kindness in the tent that evening. That feeling of the local community openly embracing the group who, after all, were invading their small Tuscan town never disappeared that summer; it was at the gelateria, at the COOP supermarket, at the Sandy Bar down the hill where he drank his cappuccino and devoured his cream-filled pastry each morning. By the end of the summer, it just seemed that Castiglion Fiorentino was home, and it has remained that way ever since.

Below - Dr. George Vengas, Dean of Architecture, presents a certificate of appreciation to Sharon Jones.

Central Texas Aggie beat Iowa State, 5-0.

Faculty Spotlight, Continued

20th Anniversary Festivities

Paolo Barucchieri, and Sharon Jones, assistant to the director, traveled from Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy to Texas A&M University to join the festivities. On October 30, the College of Architecture held a reception honoring of Barucchieri and Jones for their outstanding service to the College and Texas A&M University over the past two decades. Later that evening, the International Programs Office, the College of Architecture, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Office of the Provost hosted a reunion dinner for former students and faculty who have studied or taught at the Center. Over 200 guests attended and entertainment was provided by the Texas A&M Century Singers, the Aggie Wranglers, and Brazos Country Grass, bluegrass band. A silent auction, was held during dinner to help raise money for the Santa Chiara Study Center Scholarship fund, raised over $5,000 in total. On Saturday, Barucchieri and Jones joined Aggies at a tailgate celebration and then watched the fighting Texas Aggies beat Iowa State.