



Cultures Meet in Morocco

Faculty

(left to right)
JCCC faculty Bob Perry, Samira Hussein, Stephanie Sabato and Karen Schory are seen here with Dr. Ahmed Zekri (second from right), one of two Moroccan coordinators for this Fulbright Group Project Abroad.

Sociology professor Bob Perry led a group of 13 faculty from area high schools, universities and colleges, including three from

JCCC, on a five-week trip to Morocco this summer as part of the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program. Perry's project, *Unity and Diversity in an Islamic Society: The Example of Morocco*, is the first JCCC Group Projects Abroad proposal to be funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Other JCCC participants were Samira Hussein, associate professor, business administration; Stephanie Sabato, professor, graphic design; and Karen Schory, professor, interactive media.

The goal of the 35-day field study with its series of lectures, workshops and guided tours was to expose faculty to the present-day complexities of this African nation.

"Morocco stands at the crossroads of civilizations," Perry said. "While it is primarily Islamic, culture, religion, politics, art and linguistics are influenced by early 'Berber' and Roman civilizations, European colonization and proximity to the Middle East. The country is one of contrasts – modern and traditional; trade routes and separation; Islamic, Jewish, Catholic religions; and Arabic, French, English and ancient Tamazight languages."

Site visits, which exemplified Morocco's diversity, included The Royal Library in Rabat and Karaiune Library in Fes with their ancient texts, Roman ruins at Volubilis, walled cities with open markets, a modern farm near Agadir, and the Atlas Corporation Film Studios in Ouarzazate, where films like *Babel*, *Charlie*

Wilson's War and *Gladiator* were filmed in part.

On their return, participants are required to do a project relating to the field study. Sabato has completed a photographic visual survey of various sites published at a Web blog, *Morocco al Noor*. Hussein will incorporate modules in *International Business* and *Human Resource Management* classes providing insights into Moroccan culture, language and business models. In *Interactive Communication Form*, Schory plans to expand topics on globalization and the impact of the Internet as a communication form to include more specific comparisons and contrasts between Western society and other world cultures.

Perry, a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya for two-and-a-half years, sees the project as a way for JCCC to further its international studies and relationships, especially in the marginalized area of Africa.

While in Morocco, the JCCC contingency carried a Memorandum of Agreement signed by JCCC and the Ecole Supérieure de Direction et de Gestion, Rabat, to partner faculty and students at both institutions – a result of JCCC's Title VI Grant infusing Islamic studies into JCCC curriculum.

Perry, who also taught English in China for one year and has traveled worldwide, says projects such as the Fulbright-Hays one to Morocco, humanize learning and promote critical respect and understanding between cultures. 🌱