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Robert j Griffin, Associate Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Earth Sciences Travels to Sweden

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Sciences Travels to Sweden

International Perspectives

Center for International Education

ROBERT J. GRIFFIN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ATMOSPHERIC CHEMISTRY AND EARTH SCIENCES AND EARTH, OCEANS AND SPACE

Professor Robert Griffin traveled to Göteborg, Sweden, in May to visit the University of Göteborg and to serve on a dissertation committee.



During May 2008, I had the pleasure of traveling to Göteborg, Sweden, with partial support from the CIE. I visited the Department of Chemistry/Atmospheric Science at the University of Göteborg and had the honor of acting as the 'opponent' during a doctoral degree disputation.

I arrived in Göteborg on the afternoon of May 7, after an overnight flight to Frankfurt, Germany, and a connecting flight to Sweden. After transferring to my hotel and getting settled, I took a walk around the university and surrounding area, as this was my first trip to Scandinavia and I was very excited to wander the town. My faculty hosts joined me for a light dinner.

The next day (May 8), I toured the Department of Chemistry, including the laboratories focusing specifically on atmospheric science. I also met individually with each of the faculty members in that research area and had the opportunity to discuss potential future collaborations (including on a proposal due in June) and the placement of one of my current doctoral students in Göteborg as a post-doctoral scholar next year. Later that afternoon, I gave a research seminar, again highlighting potential avenues for collaboration. That evening, my faculty hosts and I had dinner at a traditional Swedish restaurant with other members of the doctoral examination committee.

The disputation occurred on the following morning (May 9). One aspect of my duties for the occasion was to give an introductory presentation placing the work of the doctoral candidate into context. The candidate then gave an overview of her specific results. My role as opponent then took center stage; over the next hour, it was my responsibility to examine the candidate's background knowledge of atmospheric chemistry, detailed understanding of the theory behind her work (which investigated organic particle formation in the atmosphere), research approach, data analyses, and interpretation. The remaining committee members and audience were then allowed to ask questions. The candidate performed admirably. During a brief, closed-door discussion, the committee (with input from me as the opponent) passed the candidate unanimously. A department-wide reception was held with light refreshments; a luncheon for the candidate, her advisors, the thesis examination committee, and me followed.

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Additional Articles
Faculty Travel Reports

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The 'disputationsfest' hosted by the candidate's family was held that evening; the candidate, her advisors, and I were the guests of honor. Food and drink were plentiful, as were toasts praising the personal and professional accomplishments of the candidate and the singing of traditional (and not-so traditional) Swedish songs. Dancing and general merriment followed. Swedes certainly know how to celebrate a new member of the doctoral community!

The following day (May 10), my last in Sweden, was spent touring Göteborg, including a walking tour of churches, government buildings, and the shopping district, the Göteborg Art Museum, and the Göteborg botanical garden. All in all, the trip was a success and will likely lead to future collaboration; the trip would not have been possible without the support of CIE. Thank you!

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