

Western Sydney University Short-Term Program at Tamkang: Experiencing Taiwan's Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development

The Office of International and Cross-Strait Affairs, the Center for Sustainable Development and Social Innovation, and the College of Engineering jointly organized the "2024 Tamkang Short-Term Study Program" for sister school Western Sydney University (WSU). Themed "Leading the Way to the Sustainable Environment," the program ran from November 23 to December 6, with academic advisor Dr. Robert Salama leading 7 students to participate in the two-week course at Tamkang University.

The opening ceremony took place on November 25 at 10:30 AM on the Tamsui campus. Prof. Hsiao-Chuan Chen, Vice President for International Affairs, welcomed the faculty and students from WSU to Taiwan and encouraged them to seize the opportunity for learning and exchange. Associate Professor Po-Ching Lee from the Department of Water Resources and Environmental Engineering provided an overview of the program, which covered topics such as water resource management, hydraulic and wind energy, the causes of natural disasters like typhoons, earthquakes, floods, and droughts, as well as preventive measures. These were complemented by visits to related facilities, helping students understand sustainability issues and the importance of adapting to a changing environment.

The program featured 4 lectures and 6 field visits. Topics included the impact of strong winds on civil structures, collaboration between USR teams and local schools in Namasia, and discussions on sustainable future development. Students visited Feitsui Reservoir and Chihtan Water Purification Plant, participated in the USR project "Farm Foodies Workshop" by harvesting sweet potatoes and sowing radishes, and experienced the farm-to-table process at an agricultural dining hall. Additional visits included a tour of alumni enterprise InnoDisk International and trips to local cultural landmarks such as Tamsui and Jiufen, offering participants insights into the Tamsui area, Tamkang alumni enterprises, and Taiwan's unique cultural heritage.

The closing ceremony was held on December 4 at 9:10 AM in E680 at Engineering Building. Prof. Chen reflected on the program, noting that the two-week experience not only allowed students to explore Taiwan's rich culture and Tamkang's vibrant learning environment but also created wonderful memories. "Tamkang University will always be your home in Taiwan. We look forward to welcoming you again—whether for further academic pursuits or visiting friends," she said, encouraging students to continue their spirit of learning and collaboration in future international endeavors. Certificates of completion were presented to the students, along with a video documenting their participation in the program. Both sides exchanged small gifts to commemorate the occasion. On December 5 at 10:00 AM, the Office of International Affairs hosted a student presentation session and farewell party on the 10th floor of the Ching Sheng Building, marking a perfect conclusion to their journey at Tamkang.

Dr. Salama praised the program's integration of local culture and global perspectives. He highlighted the inclusion of business models and social responsibility practices, which not only deepened the students' professional skills and leadership abilities but also demonstrated the value of cross-cultural education. This approach bridged the gap between academia and society, offering students opportunities to address real-world challenges and expand their horizons.

The participating students expressed that the program helped them step out of their comfort zones, improve their Chinese language and communication skills, and gain valuable knowledge. Through various visits and experiential activities, they adapted to different cultures and environments. One of the students, Judy Nguyen, shared, "This program not only increased my interest in Chinese and Taiwan's history but also allowed me to truly experience the friendliness and warmth of Taiwanese people, who treated us like friends." Hui Mauno Zhang added, "This kind of program, offering diverse knowledge in language, natural disasters, architecture, and culture, is unfamiliar to most people and has greatly benefited me."



8 faculty and students from Western Sydney University, Tamkang University's sister school in Australia, arrived on campus for a 2-week short-term study program.



Vice President for International Affairs, Dr. Hsiao-Chuan Chen, presented a gift to Dr. Robert Salama.

Associate Professor Po-Ching Lee from the Department of Water Resources and Environmental Engineering briefed the faculty and students of Western Sydney University on the course overview.



Vice President for International Affairs, Prof. Hsiao-Chuan Chen, presented a certificate of completion to Western Sydney University student Mya Miller.



During the closing ceremony, students from Western Sydney University shared their reflections on the short-term study program.

The students participating in the study program experienced the USR project "Farm Foodies Workshop" and happily posed for photos with the dishes they cooked themselves.



The study program students took a boat tour along the Tamsui River, enjoying the scenery while listening to an introduction about the Tamsui area.