

WKU senior from Hendersonville encourages others to consider Arabic language program

Madi Crawford had never considered studying Arabic before arriving at Western Kentucky University in the fall of 2016.

But now the senior from Hendersonville, Tennessee, hopes to use the language as part of a career in law enforcement after she graduates later this year.

“For anybody even considering Arabic as a major, or those who need a class and aren’t sure what to take, I would say try Arabic,” said Crawford, who majoring in Criminology and Arabic with a minor in Sociology. “It is so satisfying and moving to be able to speak to someone in their native language. Arabic is also a critical language, so the world needs more people to study it. I think we all just want to be heard in this world and the fact that you have the chance to understand others who speak a different language is a once in a lifetime opportunity.”

Crawford is one of four students in WKU’s Arabic language program who will be traveling to Qatar in March to compete in the fifth International Universities Debating Championship. The competition, hosted by QatarDebate, brings together Arabic and non-Arabic speaking students from around the world to Doha, Qatar, for six days in mid-March.

Since being selected for the team in late November, Crawford and seniors **Keightley Dudgeon** and **Kassidy Orrender**, both of Crestwood, Kentucky, and **Noah A. Stevens** of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, have been preparing for the competition and are enrolled this spring in an Arabic debate course taught by Lhousseine Guerwane.

“The students have been preparing since they were selected, even during the winter break they were submitting two assignments a week that I corrected and gave feedback on as they learn how to debate and improve their Arabic language skills,” Guerwane said. “The students also attend the Arabic Debate Club two hours a week and submit online assignments weekly. In addition to learning about debate and practicing debate skills, students also are working on exercises to improve their listening skills, pronunciation, body language, confidence and vocabulary.”

WKU launched its Arabic language major in 2014 and the program has grown to more than 50 students. This will be the third year Guerwane has taken students to debate competition in Qatar.

Crawford is looking forward to the trip to Qatar. She spent two months last summer at the University of Jordan for an intensive language program.

“I am looking forward to being in the Middle East again,” she said. “I can’t wait to eat the food in Qatar because I know it will be different than the food in Amman. When I returned to America from Jordan I felt -- and still feel -- very separated. American culture is very independent and you rely on yourself, but when I was in Jordan I felt a sense of ‘togetherness.’ The culture in the Middle East is truly amazing and it’s something that I can hardly put into words, you just have to go there for yourself.”

Crawford also encourages other students to consider WKU’s Arabic language program.

“Take it. Challenge yourself. Learn. Love. I fell in love with the language and the culture, and you can, too.”

-WKU-