

UCF Newsroom

TURKISH, ARMENIAN STUDENTS ADMIRE 'BEAUTIFUL' UCF CAMPUS

By Erika Finnimore

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Turkish and Armenian students marveled at the Recreation and Wellness Center's many amenities, took photos around the Reflecting Pond and attended the UCF-Memphis basketball game during a campus visit Wednesday.

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The students are part of a U.S. Department of State initiative that brings together high school basketball players from countries that have tense relations or are engaged in conflict. The students team up and travel to different countries to look at sports in schools and learn about how team spirit and teamwork are keys to success in sports and in life.

Coaches and students toured the UCF campus and enjoyed the free promotional T-shirts and bags they collected at the Student Union as souvenirs of American college culture. One of their favorite tour stops was the running track overlooking the basketball courts at the Recreation and Wellness Center.

"Five gyms all together -- I could never dream of it," said Albert Harutyunyan, a 13-year-old Armenian student.

Visiting UCF allowed the student-athletes to see higher educational opportunities and student life in the U.S. as they build friendships with each other. They also attended a Sports Business Management class.

"The campus is very impressive," said Turkish Coach Firat Ozdalyan. "It looks like the UCF students can get a good education while having fun. I would love to study here. Hopefully, one day I can come here for my Ph.D."

The students acknowledged many differences between the universities in their countries and UCF.

"In the university in Turkey, they don't have shopping plazas on the campus," said Berfin Yildiz, a 15-year-old student from Izmir, Turkey. "It looks like there are a lot of activities and festivals here. I think everything [at UCF] is beautiful and I want to go here."

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