History of the Turkey Exchange Program

Beloit College and Yeditepe University established a partnership for the exchange of students in 2009, with initial activity taking place in the 2009/10 academic year. Students in most fields of study can be accommodated at either institution and at both have an opportunity to live on campus and become part of the campus community.

Beloit College’s involvement with Turkish institutions of education, however, has a long history. Thomas Davidson Christie, class of 1871, served as a professor of theology at Marash Theological Seminary, located in the Turkish city of the same name, becoming president of St. Paul's College in Tarsus, Turkey in 1893.

Another Beloit graduate, Caleb Frank Gates (class of 1877), served as president of the Euphrates College at Harput, Turkey before becoming president of Robert College in Constantinople. His presidency lasted through World War I, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, at which time Constantinople was renamed Istanbul. Enrollment increased during his 26 years as the head of Robert College. Caleb Gates set the foundation for a relationship between Robert College and Beloit College, one of the first ties Beloit had with an institution in another country. Many of the experiences of Professor Christie and President Gates were reported in Beloit College's newspaper, The Round Table in the late 1800's and the early decades of the 1900's. Robert College remains one of Turkey’s leading high schools; its prominent alumni include Nobel Laureate for Literature, Orhan Pamuk. Boğaziçi University, one of Turkey’s leading institutions of higher education, shares the Robert College campus.

The first Turkish student to attend and graduate from Beloit College was Gregory Michaelian, class of 1873. He was active in oratory during his studies at the College, giving an oration on "The True Republicanism, the Demand of Our Age" during the commencement ceremonies for his graduating class. Returning to Turkey following his graduation from Beloit College, Michaelian earned a medical degree and later practiced medicine in Turkey and South Africa.

Jerry Gustafson, Beloit College professor of economics and management, taught at Marmara University in Istanbul while on a Fulbright fellowship. His stay led to the creation of a reciprocal exchange relationship between Beloit College and Marmara University in 1991. Beloit students studying at Marmara were able to take courses taught in English in economics, business, and political science. The exchange of students continued through 2008.