

THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

February 5, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Brian Whalen, President and CEO
whalenb@dickinson.edu
717-245-1031

The Forum on Education Abroad: www.forumea.org

The Forum on Education Abroad announces the winners of its Undergraduate Research Awards:

Student: Mary Jane Dempsey

Program: Spring Hill College Italy Center, Bologna, Italy

Home Institution: The College of New Jersey

Discipline: International Relations

Project Title: "Blood and Borders: Immigrant Children and Jus Sanguinis"

Student: Ellen Broen

Program: MICEFA—Universities of Paris, Université Vincennes-Saint-Denis (Paris VIII).

Home Institution: University of Richmond

Discipline: Music

Project Title: "The UNrelationship of Giacomo Meyerbeer and Richard Wagner, and Its Resounding Discord: An Analysis of the Artist and His Art"

The Forum is proud to announce the two winners of this year's Undergraduate Research Awards: Mary Jane Dempsey of The College of New Jersey and Ellen Broen of the University of Richmond.

The Forum's Undergraduate Research Award recognizes excellence in academic work completed by students as part of an education abroad program. The students will present their work in Chicago on April 5, 2013 at a plenary session at the Forum's ninth annual conference. The students' projects were judged by faculty from Forum-member institutions, who found them to be the best examples of the highest quality academic achievements of undergraduates studying abroad.

Nominated projects encompass a wide variety of fields, demonstrating that international learning informs many academic disciplines. According to Forum President and CEO Brian Whalen, "The quality of the nominated research is a testimony to students' understanding of other cultures and societies, and the Forum believes that completing serious, high-quality research requires critical thinking, analysis, and creativity, and represents one of the highest achievements of undergraduate student learning." Whalen added that "The student presentations of these competitive undergraduate research projects underscores for faculty, education abroad administrators, and their institutions the significant ways that education abroad contributes to students' academic growth."

Mary Jane Dempsey, a senior at The College of New Jersey, is a double-major in History and International Studies with a minor in Italian, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. While studying abroad in Bologna, Italy at the Spring Hill College Italy Center she conducted research in order to understand what laws have been constructed by the Italian government to regulate immigration and to study how they affect the lives of immigrants and their means of gaining citizenship. A particular focus of her research was to examine lives of the children of immigrants by conducting interviews with them.

A faculty judge for her project wrote the following: "This is a terrific project that is much needed, and that represents very advanced, and very independent, thinking on the student's part. From what I can tell here, the execution rivals what we would receive from an excellent doctoral student – a very, very impressive accomplishment from a junior in college. I would add, too, that there are few published studies in English on this topic in the Italian context, but Dempsey seems to have done significant reading on issues of citizenship and migration internationally in order to strengthen her analysis of Italy's recent history. This is a really, really wonderful project undertaken by a student who made tremendous use of her time abroad."

Upon being notified of winning the award, Mary Jane wrote: "It is an honor to be recognized for this award. By immersing myself in a new culture and a new language, I was granted the tools to delve more deeply into and to better understand the current issue of citizenship for the children of immigrants to Italy. I hope that my work inspires my peers to look for ways to make their time abroad a profound and intellectual experience."

Ellen Broen, a triple major in French, Music and International Studies at the University of Richmond, spent a semester in Paris at Université Vincennes-Saint-Denis (Paris VIII), through the *Mission interuniversitaire de coordination des échanges franco-américains Paris-Ile de France* (MICEFA), a consortium of most of the Universities of Paris. Her research focused on Giacomo Meyerbeer, a mid-19th century composer who was a mentor to famed German composer Richard Wagner, who Broen discovers through her archival research was the source of prejudice against Meyerbeer.

One of the faculty who judged her project commented on its exceptional nature: "Ms. Broen has found a rich, significant, and culturally multi-valent subject. ...Her work in the Paris archives appears to be original, even path breaking, and is very distinguished for an undergraduate. If her work had just stopped with its implications for music history she would be poised to make a significant contribution, but this clearly spills over into the history of race relations, colonialism, and other cultural issues in 19th century France. I would have gauged this work noteworthy from a graduate student, but from an undergraduate it is exceptional."

When told of winning the award, Ellen wrote, "'I am tremendously grateful for not only the freedom I had in my undergraduate studies to pursue my merging areas of interest to this depth, but also this extraordinary opportunity to share my findings as an emerging scholar. It is my hope that this paper will pique the curiosity or interest of musicologists so that one day, as an opera singer, I can perform Meyerbeer on a national stage. Let Wagner roll in his grave!"