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Student Spotlights

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School of Education and Health Sciences

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Student Spotlight

Riley Weber

DC FLYERS PROGRAM IS LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR EDUCATION MAJOR.

It was a perfect fit for Riley Weber ‘16.

Although she was many miles away from the Indiana farm where she grew up, Weber felt right at home in the bustling nation's capital. The senior intervention specialist major was one of 16 University of Dayton students who participated in the 2015 DC Flyers program.

The University Honors Program and Political Science Department partnered to establish the DC Flyers, a program that enables UD students to explore summer internships and experiential learning opportunities in Washington, D.C.

“But it’s not just for people in political science or those interested in government life,” Weber said. “This program has so much to offer everyone, in any major. You come out learning so much about yourself and the world around you.”

Weber worked for the National Catholic Education Association. As the only intern in a 30-person organization, she had the opportunity for hands-on experiences in a wide variety of areas – from event planning to publications and public policy to professional development.
“I went to policy meetings and I was able to meet and talk with so many people who work in education policy,” Weber said. “It really showed me how much passion I have for the topic. I also saw how I could flourish in that environment.”

The experience also reinforced Weber’s enthusiasm for the classroom.

“It showed me that I do want to be a teacher, first and foremost,” she said. “I know then that I will truly understand what issues are most important, what works and what doesn’t and I will gain credibility.”

While education is a family affair – as she has two aunts and an uncle who are teachers – it wasn’t until late in high school that Weber considered a career in education.

“I was really unsure about what field to go into,” she said. “I took an aptitude test and the results indicated I was best suited to be a writer, a lawyer or a teacher. I think, at some point, I will be all three of these.”

For now, however, Weber is focused on the latter and is enjoying every minute of her student teaching experience at Frank Nicholas Elementary.

“Being a teacher is a vocation for me, a passion,” she said.

The DC Flyers program strengthened that passion.

“It inspired me even more about teaching and education policy,” Weber said. “and I learned more about myself, personally and professionally, than I ever could have imagined.”

Debbie Juniewicz

Michele McDonald and Jordan Seitz

FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS ‘OPEN DOORS’ FOR STUDENTS ABROAD

Two recent School of Education and Health Sciences graduates who were awarded prestigious Fulbright scholarships to teach in Southeast Asia are enjoying the adventures of their lives.

Michele McDonald ’15 has spent much of the past five months in a southern province of Thailand teaching English as a second language to grade 5-9 students as part of Fulbright’s English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program. She received her undergraduate degree in adolescent to young adult education.

Beyond teaching and serving as a cultural ambassador, McDonald had lunch with the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Glyn Davies; finished her first international half marathon; and has trained in Thailand’s national sport, Muay Thai kickboxing.

Jordan Seitz ’15 is teaching English as a second language in Malaysia on a Fulbright ETA grant. He also earned his undergraduate degree in adolescent to young adult education.

Since arriving in January, Seitz has visited the Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur, which feature a giant golden statue of Hindu deity Lord Murugan. He also celebrated Chinese New Year in George Town, Penang, where he experienced Malaysia’s
largest Chinese temple, lion dances and lantern festivals.

"Beyond these, however, have been my experiences with students, neighbors and friends, which show me both how similar and different Malaysia is from the U.S.," Seitz said via email. "Attending a Malaysian wedding, eating various Malaysian foods, and simply talking with new people are some of the top experiences so far."

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries.

"Fulbright is very competitive," said Laura Cotten, University of Dayton associate director for fellowships and graduate school. Only about 17 percent of students who apply win an award, Cotten said.

UD has produced 19 Fulbright scholars, including Seitz and McDonald. The School of Education and Health Sciences (SEHS) has been awarded Fulbright scholarships in each of the last four years.

"Our School of Education is just phenomenal in providing students with the experiential opportunities of teaching in the classroom," Cotten said.

That helped set Seitz and McDonald apart from other applicants, she said.

The Fulbright ETA program fits with UD’s Catholic and Marianist mission by serving rural communities that otherwise would not have English teachers in the classroom.

"Students are traveling great distances to have an education, and having English as part of that education really opens up doors," Cotten said. "Being able to communicate in the most dominant language is certainly going to enable these students to think beyond the rice fields or beyond their fishing communities."

For SEHS students and alumni, the experience opens their minds to life in other parts of the world and enables them to be better teachers when they return to the U.S.

Seitz said, "Understanding other cultures will allow me to develop my social studies and social science knowledge in a way which I can hopefully extend to my future studies and career."

For more information on the Fulbright program or other scholarships, contact Laura Cotten at lcotten1@udayton.edu or by phone at (937) 229-5415.

*Dave Larsen*
Awards and Scholarships

We are proud of our students' continuous dedication to their education and their communities. Below are several scholarships awarded to our outstanding students.

- Jenna N. Baechle, Junior, Middle Childhood Education, Mathematics and Science - Ohio Space Grant Consortium Education Scholarship
- Taylor Jones, Health and Sport Science, Pre-Physical Therapy - AMBUCS Scholarship
- Renee Brown, Allison Cleaver, Anna Combs, Kelly Drayton, Leslie Porter, Margaret Quinn, Virginia Saurine, & Lydia Scott, Teacher Education - Delta Kappa Gamma Scholarships

RELATED LINKS

DC Flyers Program

Fulbright Scholarship Website

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