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Boren Scholar

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As a Boren Scholarship winner, senior Zac Sideras will receive $10,000 from the Institute of International Education to study Arabic at American University in Cairo during the fall 2009 semester. In addition to language education, Sideras will also take courses in Middle Eastern history and culture.

This will be the third study-abroad experience for Sideras, who is majoring in history and international studies. He recently returned from a semester at Birzeit University near Ramallah in the West Bank where he studied Arabic language, society, political science and history. During the summer of 2007, he studied at Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco.

This summer, he will work as an intern at the Palestine Center in Washington, D.C., an extension of the Jerusalem Fund that communicates information about the Palestinian political experience to American policy-makers, journalists, students and the general public.

"Until the United States has the capacity to understand the other cultures of the world — particularly in the Middle East — we will never have a successful foreign policy and national security policy," Sideras said. "There's only so much you can learn about the region before you have to actually go and experience it first hand."

After graduation, Sideras plans to attend a top graduate program in international studies and is considering a career in the U.S. State Department. As a Boren Scholar, he must work at least one year after graduation for the federal government in a position with national security responsibilities.

The Boren Scholarship is highly competitive. Students must be nominated by their home institution, and only 130 scholarships were awarded nationally out of 896 applications. Sideras is the first University of Dayton student to receive a Boren Scholarship.

"Traditionally, schools with strong foreign service programs such as Georgetown and George Washington have dominated these awards, so it's a great thing for the University of Dayton to get in the game," said John McCombe, associate director of the University Honors Program and the campus representative for the Boren Scholarship.

Boren Scholarships are funded by the National Security Education Program, which focuses on geographic areas, languages and fields of study deemed critical to U.S. national security. The NSEP’s scope has expanded to include not only the traditional concerns of protecting and promoting American well-being, but also the challenges of global society, including sustainable development, environmental degradation, global disease, hunger, population growth, migration and economic competitiveness.

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