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Two New Study Abroad Scholarships Awarded

Sept. 17, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— The Betty Ritchie-Birrer Endowed Study Abroad Fund has provided the money for two new IWU Study Abroad Scholarships. Jessica Beringer, Class of 2015, and Taylor Sharp, Class of 2015, were chosen to be the new scholarship recipients by the Study Abroad Advisory Committee. The Study Abroad Fund is one of three endowed gifts that Ritchie-Birrer has established for IWU students this year.

Ritchie-Birrer was a member of Illinois Wesleyan University's Class of 1947. More than 70 years later she is still thankful for the impact the University has had on her life.

This fund will allow more students the opportunity to travel and study in other countries, an experience valued by both Ritchie-Birrer and her husband Ivan. Beringer, from Frankfort, Ill., is a Spanish and secondary education double major, who will spend the fall 2013 semester in Seville, Spain, with the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) Teacher Development Program. Beringer selected the CIEE program for her study abroad experience because it promises to incorporate both of her majors.

While in Spain, she will take courses in Professional Teacher Development, Psychology of Learning a Second Language, The Cultural History of Spain, Contemporary Spanish Film, and Spanish Culture and Cuisine, all taught in Spanish. In her scholarship application Beringer wrote, "I hope to be able to take full advantage of everything this program has to offer. I will be in charge of a small group of students, and I will be responsible for tutoring them in English over the course of the semester."

Sharp, from Apple Valley, Minn., is a political science and international studies double major with a concentration in Asian studies. She will spend the entire 2013-14 academic school year at Keio University in Tokyo, Japan.

In her application for the scholarship, Sharp expressed her goal is to have a career interacting with Japanese companies and individuals. She wrote, "Studying abroad for one semester would have been easier and less stressful, but with a culture so complex I would not gain the insight I need in such a short period of time."

While in Keio, Sharp will study the Japanese language and take courses in Japanese Perception of the Atomic



Jessica Beringer



Taylor Sharp

Bombing, Japanese Politics in Comparative Perspective, Japan-America Shared Histories, Deep Cultural Difference: Understanding Japan Through Cross-Cultural Comparison, and Japanese Cinema.

As a condition of the IWU Study Abroad Scholarship the students have committed to documenting and sharing their experiences. Both Beringer and Sharp plan to blog while abroad about their new friends, classes, sight seeing and the challenges of life in a new culture.

You can follow Beringer through Spain at <http://jessicaleeberinger.blogspot.com/>, and experience Sharp's Japanese adventure at <http://tmjsharp.blogspot.com/>.

The deadline for the spring semester study abroad awards is set for October 1. For more information see <http://www.iwu.edu/studyabroad/applying/Scholarships.html#IWUSA>

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