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Photo Contest Celebrates 'Emotional Power' of Study Abroad

May 4, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Illinois Wesleyan University's semiannual [study abroad](#) photo contest celebrates students and the art form they used to capture the "emotional power" of study abroad.

"Each photo contest is a wonderful opportunity to see the wider world through the eyes of our students — to share in the fun, touristy stuff, to hunger for the tasty new foods they are trying, and to enjoy the magic of seeing some place so different and meeting new people," said Stacey Shimizu, director of the International Office. Just as important, however, are the descriptions of the location and the student's reflections that accompany each photo. "In these short narratives, students tell us about the emotional power of study abroad," Shimizu said.

Study abroad is a period of enormous personal growth, she said. "Students challenge themselves in new ways, discover unknown competencies and stretch their imaginations," said Shimizu. "They come back with a new sense of who they are, what they value, and what they are able to do."



Sean O'Carroll's stunning photo of a Saharan camel trek won the Judge's Choice award.



"Snowdon Whiteout" by Zoe Bouras '18 won the award in both the "People's Choice" and "Road Less Traveled" categories.

to spend a considerable amount of time abroad. "Being abroad has definitely changed who I am," said Bouras, who also spent two months in Seoul, South Korea, last summer as an IWU Freeman Asia intern. "You go to a place where you understand very little and have to work things out, from small cultural differences like *siesta* and table manners, to structural issues like race relations. The discussions politicians have about international relations, refugees, immigrants, and development really mean something to you. Living abroad, whether it's the first time out the country or the 10th, offers a huge scope of opportunities to change the way you see the world and the way you see yourself."

Shimizu noted research shows that students who study abroad perform better academically than their peers in the semesters after they return, graduate on time and at higher rates, find employment sooner and on average have higher starting salaries. Study abroad is an educational investment that pays off, she said. Illinois Wesleyan offers more than 300 programs in over 70 countries spanning six continents. Traditionally about half of Illinois Wesleyan students participate in an international education experience.

Contest winners included: Sean O'Carroll '18 (Arlington Heights, Ill.), an international business major who was selected as the "Judges' Choice" winner for his photo of a young boy leading a camel trek in the Sahara Desert, and Zoe Bouras '18 (Aurora, Ill.), an international studies and political science double major, whose photo taken in Snowdonia National Park in Wales won both the "People's Choice" and "Road Less Traveled" categories. O'Carroll's photo of the John Lennon Wall in Prague, Czech Republic, won the "Urban Art" category; Bouras won the "Sense of Place" category for her photo of Mandilara Street in Rhodes Town, Greece; and Katherine Henebry '19 (Springfield, Ill.), an environmental studies and international business double major, won the "Humans of the World" category for her panoramic view of Paris from behind the face of the Musée d'Orsay's iconic clock.

Bouras is currently studying in England as part of Oxford University's Pembroke College Visiting Student Programme.

Bouras noted that as an immigrant to the United States, she has been lucky



"cog-nizant" by Katherine Henebry '19 won honors in the "Humans of the World" category.