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[Media Arts and Design]

Hello Hollywood

20 students intern at top agencies through L.A. Study Program

BY KELLEY FREUND ('07)



Rebecca Dowdy ('12) had an awesome view from her office this past summer: the iconic Hollywood sign. Dowdy and 19 other JMU students spent eight weeks in Los Angeles amongst palm trees and movie stars. They saw Clint Eastwood driving his Gran Torino (yes, the one from the movie), and one day four students opened the door of their apartment to find Jay Leno standing there, asking them to be on his show.

Sounds like a dream summer. But this was no vacation.

These students were part of the first-ever JMU in L.A. Study Program. School of Media Arts and Design professor Tom O'Connor and his colleagues created the program to build a strong JMU presence in L.A., allow students to establish connections and explore career options in the entertainment industry.

O'Connor says the joke among industry bigwigs is "to live in L.A. or not to live in L.A.?" but he believes you have to be there, at least at the start, to make those connections. Students could write or video edit anywhere, but it is important to form relationships in the place considered the heart of the entertainment industry.

O'Connor selected 20 resourceful students with a positive attitude and willingness to work. Students were required to complete two courses — an overview of the entertainment industry taught by O'Connor and a television production course taught by JMU alum and E! Entertainment producer Seth Kingsley ('98) — and an internship of at least 120 hours, which students were responsible for securing themselves.

Rebecca Dowdy landed an internship with Helios Productions, where she did everything from answering phones to calling the agents of scriptwriters. Andrew Henchen ('13) worked for Threshold Entertainment's development department "researching anything we could turn into a movie," he says. "It was interesting to see how a production company finds and develops stories. They're constantly looking for new ideas."

One student interned for Chris Morgan Productions, reading screenplays for the *Fast and Furious* franchise. Other students had jobs at Prefect Films Studio and Bedford Falls Productions.

Henchen says, "Most people [in L.A.] started from nothing, but they have a great work ethic. They work harder than anyone, and I learned from that."

The JMU in L.A. program is open to rising juniors and seniors in all majors, and participating students leave the program with real-world connections and the confidence to make their career dreams a reality.



Twenty JMU students chased their Hollywood dreams this past summer in the inaugural School of Media Arts and Design's L.A. Study Program.

"This is the most important thing I've ever done," Dowdy says. "Before I came to L.A., thinking of living here was overwhelming — I didn't think I could do it. But being here helped me realize I can."

* Learn more at smad.jmu.edu

[Fellowships]

Microbiology society taps JMU senior

The American Society for Microbiology selected Jonathan Barrett ('12) as a 2011 ASM Undergraduate Research Fellow. "This prestigious award is aimed at highly competitive students who wish to pursue graduate careers in microbiology and infectious diseases," says Louise Temple, JMU biology professor and Barrett's mentor. "Jonathan's interest in bacterial virus work began when he was one of the first JMU students to participate in a freshman research course, originally sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute." ASM Fellows conduct full-time summer research at their institutions and present their research results at the 112th ASM General Meeting, if their abstract is accepted. Each fellow receives up to a \$4,000 stipend, a two-year ASM student membership and funding for travel expenses to the ASM Presentation Institute. Temple is mentoring Barrett in his research project, "The Genomic Analysis of a Novel Group of *Bacillus pumilus* Bacteriophages."

* Learn more at www.asm.org/students