

A passion to help others learn

BY TYLER MCAVOY ('13)

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An oft-repeated and sage piece of advice given to many undergraduates is to find something you're interested in and wholeheartedly delve into it. For Deserae Barney ('14), an adjective like "wholehearted" only scratches the surface of her passion for education.

Barney will graduate next May with a double major in interdisciplinary liberal studies and modern foreign languages (with a concentration in Spanish). She also will complete three minor programs — elementary education, teaching English as a second language, and Spanish-English translation and interpretation.

With two majors and three minors most students would find time for little else but academics, but Barney also volunteers with Childhood Educators and works as a student assistant at the JMU Educational Technology and Media Center. She also volunteers as a tutor for English Language Learners students in math and science programs in her home county of Culpeper, Va., and in the Harrisonburg area.

Volunteering is essential to Barney. "I love learning, I love education, and I love children. I volunteer because I feel that we all have something that we can contribute to our community," she says.

Barney says she balances the strenuous academic course load with good time-management skills, and she says her JMU professors are very accommodating. "Scheduling is definitely a difficult aspect in taking so many classes, and my professors are more than helpful," she explains.

In 2012 Barney also participated in a Study Abroad program in Ghana at the University of Ghana at Legon. Studying for a month under Ghanaian professors and volunteering as a tutor at a local site, Barney considers her month in Ghana as one of the defining moments of her undergrad career.

'My Study Abroad trip to Ghana *changed the way I think* about many things in life.'

"I learned and experienced more in that month in Ghana than I had ever dreamed possible," she says. "My trip to Ghana changed the way I think about many things in life. You can study a country as much as you'd like, but you cannot fully understand the culture until you have experienced it yourself."

Barney has high hopes for the future and would love to work as an educator with students in English Language Learners programs. She credits much of her passion for education to her JMU experience. "I had no idea I would end up studying so many different subjects and methods that will be helpful in any education career I decide to pursue," she says. "No matter where I end up, I will always remember my amazing experience at JMU. I truly believe it is a lifestyle that will remain with me, forever." **ME**

