

Study abroad becomes a career abroad

BY KELLY VINGELIS ('14)

There are many “languages” one can claim fluency in, but how many people can say they are fluent in European Studies? JMU alumna Aimee Bateas can. A Double Duke, Bateas ('10, '11M) completed her undergraduate studies in 2010 with a degree in communication studies and then moved to Florence, Italy, to begin work on her M.A. in political science with a concentration in European Union Policy Studies.

As a rigorous one-year graduate program based entirely in Europe, JMU's EUPS program is unique among graduate programs specializing in political science and European Studies. It develops students' policy analysis skills and provides them with a comprehensive understanding of Europe's role in global affairs.

Bateas graduated from the program in 2011 and was recruited for a position as a senior consultant at Hanover Communications, a public relations firm based in London.

“One of my main clients — and the reason I was hired — is the European Commission.

She [the recruiter] was specifically searching for someone with PR experience, but also knowledge of the European Union, as well as the ability to speak some European languages,” says Bateas. The European Commission is the executive body of the European Union.

JMU's EUPS program requires students to attend lectures, network with European and American policy professionals, take Italian language classes, and complete an internship or a research project.

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semester you can have one class with an Italian, another with a Turk, a third with a Brit. You're getting a really well-rounded international education,” explains John Scherpereel, JMU professor of political science and director of EUPS.

Bateas learned Italian through her classes, but perfected it while completing an internship at *The Florentine*, Florence's largest English-speaking newspaper. “It was a great internship because I got to see how a newspaper works, which is really important for me to understand as a PR professional, as we pitch stories to the media on a daily basis. I also got to write news and feature stories, which I really enjoyed, some of which were based off of translations I had done from the Italian news into English.”

Bateas frequently travels to the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, and has found her JMU degree to be extremely useful. “My colleagues have been hugely grateful for my knowledge of the EU for their clients,” she explains. “They don't always have time to explain to their clients how the EU works.”

Scherpereel adds, “The EU is the world's largest economy. The United States and the EU continue to be each other's biggest trade and investment partners; there is a big demand from both American and European organizations for people with deep knowledge of complex European regulatory and decision-making environments.”

The need for professionals with extensive EU knowledge flows both ways across “the pond.” Scherpereel believes it is essential for American students, like Bateas, to understand the EU. “European companies are active in the American market, so our students who have the deep familiarity with the American context and politics can complement that with knowledge of the EU politics and economics. That's a really unique set of skills that our students can bring to companies and public organizations.” ■

Aimee Bateas, ('10, '11M), front row, center, takes a photo opportunity with fellow students in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

