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Thankful for Mentorship

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Thankful for mentorship

I have had more incredible opportunities than I could have imagined since coming to Linfield. I get to study two different disciplines, I studied abroad for a semester in Ireland and took a class in Italy and Greece during January Term.

Professor Hillary Crane has had a major impact on my education and growth as a student and world citizen. She is my advisor and was my supervisor for a research project last summer.

I met Hillary my first week of college in a Cultural Anthropology class. I didn't really know what anthropology was and I took the class because I knew that it entailed studying other cultures. Just one class with Hillary led to my decision to add anthropology as a second major. Since then, Hillary has been a backbone in my Linfield education. (I also owe my awareness of my use of metaphors to Hillary's Language and Culture class, which I took last fall.) Her enthusiasm and incredible intellect constantly inspire me to ask more questions, think more deeply, and foster a hunger for experiences beyond my everyday existence.

This past summer I was honored to join Hillary in her research on celiac, an autoimmune disease triggered by gluten. Working with her was challenging, exciting and at times terrifying. In theory I knew how to do research from experience in previous classes. But this was the real world and I was intimidated by the thought of doing research for someone whom I hold in such high esteem. Hillary is one of the best. She is a formidable teacher and holds her students to the highest standard. I distinctly remember a conversation in which she explained her method of teaching. "I send you students out into the field with no idea of what you're looking for or how you're supposed to gather the information. It isn't until you come back from that experience that we break down the proper way to do fieldwork."

This might sound like a difficult way to learn (and it is), but I have learned more from this method of teaching than any other. Hillary pushes you out of the boat, whether you can swim or not, and watches you flounder for a while (occasionally shouting out encouragement) then pulls you back on board and asks you to explain what you learned. Then she pushes you right back into the water to implement those lessons.

The confidence and independence that I have gained from having Hillary as a professor and advisor is invaluable. And, at the end of the day, I always know that I can go to Hillary and ask for advice. She gives it candidly and without bias (well, perhaps with bias, but she always tells me when she is trying to sway me in a certain direction).

It's not just technical things that I have learned from Hillary. The discipline, focus and consideration that I have been taught by her will serve me in any project I take on. I have an unfathomable amount of gratitude for her because she has had a tremendous impact on my education and my life. 🌿

- Gabi Leif '14

Gabi Leif '14 and Hillary Crane, associate professor of anthropology

