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CHAPTER SEVEN

Balancing International Aspirations with Honors Expectations: Expanding Honors to a Branch Campus in Florence, Italy

JAMES G. SNYDER AND VANESSA NICHOL-PETERS
MARIST COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Education abroad has the potential to leave a deep and transformative impact on the lives of honors students. That education abroad and a broader focus on the larger world beyond the boundaries of campuses comprises a core value of many honors programs and colleges comes as no surprise. In addition to providing a rigorous education and undergraduate research opportunities, many honors programs aspire to making their students more cosmopolitan in their worldview. The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah explains that cosmopolitanism blends two important values: it

stretches us “beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, and even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship,” and helps us recognize that “[p]eople are different . . . and there is much to learn from our differences” (xv). Cosmopolitanism has intrinsic and extrinsic value for honors students and indeed for all students studying abroad. Studying abroad exposes students to art, languages, philosophies, and cultures that can enrich their understanding of the range of human expression and ideas, and they learn important lessons about their own humanity and the world around them. On its own terms, this engagement with an increasingly complex world, opens their eyes to relevant and living alternatives to many of the beliefs and practices they embrace, often only through the force of custom, habit, or convenience. Education abroad also has an instrumental purpose in building and sharpening essential intellectual and interpersonal skills that play a critical role in students’ academic, personal, and professional development (Dwyer; Dwyer and Peters). While abroad, students may develop important critical reasoning skills and intellectual virtues (Nguyen), as well as greater confidence, maturity, empathy, and creativity (Gray et al.; Maddux and Galinsky). International experiences are also linked to the honors thesis project in unexpected but significant ways, and they sometimes alter career paths and graduate degrees pursued after graduation (Markus et al.). Finally, education abroad uniquely prepares students to compete for selective international post-graduate opportunities, including the Fulbright Student Program and the Marshall and Rhodes scholarships. These benefits appear to impact students positively long after graduation (Mulvaney, “Long-Term Impact”—also reprinted in this volume).

Honors programs and colleges place high expectations on their students. Students are encouraged to make the most of all academic experiences, including international ones. This ideal places a burden on students traveling internationally and on honors programs to deliver an enriched academic experience far from home campuses. The problem can be stated simply: as honors internationalizes, how can honors programs better deliver an enhanced

academic experience and access to research opportunities for high-achieving undergraduates? While the opportunities for academic and cultural enrichment abound abroad, students, including honors students, need specific facilitative structures to take advantage of them, just as they do the general resources—such as seminars and undergraduate research opportunities—available on their home campuses. The added element of study abroad is important in helping students develop the drive and initiative necessary to seek out and take full advantage of opportunities regardless of the country and situation. Honors programs must balance a wide range of important academic challenges, however, when they encourage students to pursue an honors education abroad. Challenges abroad include maintaining academic rigor, ensuring the integrity of honors curricula, and supporting students' adaptation to the culture of the study abroad site. Openness and creative problem solving by honors program and education abroad administrators and faculty can effectively bridge the gap and maintain the standards at the heart of honors education while students are immersed in their international experiences.

One internationalization strategy is creating dedicated experiences abroad for honors students. According to Karsan et al. and Arens et al., short-term abroad courses generally take the form of on-campus honors seminars that culminate in a faculty-led study abroad trip to a relevant destination after the conclusion of the traditional semester. Another strategy, however, is to create stand-alone honors courses abroad. Our program has pursued the second strategy.

Until 2017, the Marist College Honors Program did not offer any unique international academic opportunities. Instead, honors requirements could be completed only on Marist's domestic campus, and the honors program did not take an active role in advising or promoting study abroad opportunities to its students. Despite the lack of promotion or advertisement, the number of Marist honors students spending at least one semester abroad during their academic careers was high. The solid majority of honors students—more than fifty percent in most years—who study abroad choose

the most popular international education site, Marist's branch campus in Florence, Italy, known as Marist Italy. The honors approach to education abroad has changed dramatically in recent years. This chapter is a case study detailing how Marist's Honors Program leveraged a high volume of students studying abroad, as well as a significant institutional footprint and resources in the city of Florence, to develop an international presence without compromising the integrity of our honors curriculum. The challenge was ensuring that the honors program in Florence provided the structure and opportunity for honors students to make the most of their time abroad, both academically and culturally. We have directed the core of our efforts toward developing honors seminars in Florence that are structured to create an honors-enriched classroom experience that engages students with the city, the surrounding area, and important social and political problems facing Italians today. In addition to seminars, Marist Honors and Marist Italy have created undergraduate research opportunities for our students in Florence. Not all of our initiatives in Florence, however, have been strictly academic in nature. We have built a growing but stable honors community in Florence by developing special honors events and leadership opportunities. In the end, these initiatives have strengthened Marist's Honors Program and improved its academic offerings, undergraduate research opportunities, program flexibility, and even our program enrollment and retention.

HONORS AT MARIST COLLEGE: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL

Located in New York's historic Hudson Valley, Marist College is a private comprehensive institution with a liberal arts tradition. Marist enrolls approximately five thousand undergraduate and one thousand graduate and professional students. The Marist College Honors Program was founded nearly thirty years ago, and its core mission is to enrich the general education requirements through smaller, seminar-style classes and encourage undergraduate research by sponsoring credit-bearing projects with faculty

mentors. In addition, the program places a strong focus on ethics and international education. Marist Italy, thus, plays a critical role in the education of honors students who choose to study at our branch campus.

In recent years, the Marist Honors Program has gone through significant changes in its scope and nature. Since 2013, it has seen dramatic increases in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Enrollment has more than doubled from 225 students to approximately 525 students. Twenty-four students graduated from the program in 2013, and 110 students will graduate in spring 2019. The program's recent growth is likely the result of several related variables, including a new curriculum, an infusion of resources, a change in leadership, and the creation of honors living-learning communities. In 2012–2013, the honors program curriculum went through a large-scale revision. In 2016 the program started to take a more direct role in advising students about international education, and in 2017 honors offered its first seminar abroad. The new, eighteen-credit curriculum requires that students take Honors First-Year Seminar (four credits) and Writing for College (three credits) in the first year and at least two other seminars (six credits) toward their general education requirements. One seminar is thematic, focusing directly on ideas, problems, and research in a wide range of academic fields. The second seminar focuses on civic engagement and service learning, and in this seminar students learn about civic engagement from the perspective of different academic fields. In addition to seminar requirements, students complete two credit-bearing research projects, including an Honors by Contract (one credit) and an Honors Thesis Project (three credits). Finally, students take a Senior Seminar (one credit) that asks and answers important normative questions about happiness, purpose, and meaning in life after graduation. Every semester the program offers approximately twenty-five seminars, sixty to seventy-five Honors by Contract, and fifty Honors Thesis Projects.

Honors enrichment at Marist is not limited to academics. Like many programs, honors at Marist operates first-year, sophomore, and upperclassmen housing units. In any given year, approximately

two hundred students live in honors housing. The honors housing units host a wide range of academic and social events that celebrate and promote undergraduate research, campus-wide lectures, scholarships and grants, diversity, and education abroad opportunities. In addition to a director, the Marist Honors Program employs an assistant director, an administrative assistant, and three resident assistants. The program is advised by a council of faculty members who represent the college's six academic schools. All stakeholders have played a role in expanding and supporting the program's work in Florence.

The Institute of International Education's (IIE) "Open Doors 2018" reported that approximately ten percent of American students study abroad during their undergraduate careers. Marist College has a particularly robust education abroad program; nearly half of our students study abroad at least once during their undergraduate years. Marist earns consistently high rankings in the IIE's reports for student participation in study abroad, and this is a result of wide-ranging support from faculty, staff, and administration, together with a dedicated team of education abroad professionals who have built a diverse portfolio of international programs. Working together, these colleges have developed and nurtured a strong appreciation on campus for the importance of international experiences as an integral part of students' academic and personal journeys. The branch campus in Florence has played a critical role in building a tradition of study abroad at Marist. As Kinser and Lane note, branch campuses exist "where universities create physical presences in multiple countries" (3). They have evolved from small organic extensions of the home campus in areas where personal connections might already exist to large centralized endeavors often at the invitation of a particular government, such as the United Arab Emirates and China (Altbach and Knight 293–94). The Marist branch campus falls into the former category, and its partnership with an Italian educational institution, Istituto Lorenzo de' Medici, provides students with a robust catalog of over three hundred course offerings each semester as well as access to academic and cultural networks throughout the city of Florence.

That the Marist branch campus in Florence is the most popular study abroad site for students from the home campus is not surprising. Marist students have several options in terms of the length of time that they study at the branch campus, ranging from a summer or semester to their entire undergraduate career. The college offers a Freshman Florence Experience (FFE), a program that allows students in most majors to spend their entire freshman year at the Florence campus. A handful of FFE students are in the honors program. For uniquely motivated students, the option also exists to complete their undergraduate degree in Florence in one of eight majors: Art History, Studio Art, Digital Media, Conservation Studies, Interior Design, Fashion Design, Italian, and Global Marketing Communication. Finally, the branch campus is also home to a Master of Arts in Museum Studies program. Approximately a quarter of all Marist students choose to study in Florence sometime during their undergraduate years, and more than half of the honors students who go abroad study in Florence.

The scope and popularity of education abroad at Marist has put pressure on honors in several ways. Unfortunately, honors students at Marist, as well as other institutions, suffer from the misperception that they must choose between satisfying their honors requirements and pursuing other academic priorities, like double majors, pre-med programs, and education abroad. Some undergraduates believe that the requirements of their majors, especially in the natural sciences, prevent them from studying abroad (Krummrich and Burton 173). When it comes to education abroad, students also report being fearful of learning a new language and being intimidated by the cost. Krummrich and Burton, however, have shown that in most cases “these deterrents have more to do with perceptions and misconceptions than with reality” (179). Some students operate under the false assumption that they cannot satisfy their honors requirements if they study abroad. Further, many enter college with a narrow sense of what undergraduate research means, typically informed by research in the humanities and sciences, and they do not consider the possible overlap between their education abroad experiences and their Honors by Contract options and

Honors Thesis Projects. These general perceptions persist among some students despite the fact that the Marist Honors Program has a relatively small credit footprint, and honors requirements overlap with or replace common general education requirements.

These problems and their solutions are primarily rooted in advising. Students at Marist receive abundant advising, but not all of it is sound. Students are frequently advised to satisfy a significant part of their general education requirements while studying abroad. This strategy presents a problem for honors students because postponing general education requirements can potentially erode the impact of an honors-enriched curriculum or at least the range of possible courses students can take toward their honors requirements. This challenge is compounded by the increasing number of A.P. and I.B. credits that students are earning in high school. Many A.P. and I.B. classes replace general education requirements, putting additional pressure on students to make tough decisions between taking honors seminars or going abroad (Guzy). The solution to these problems is also rooted in advising: the flow of information from the program to students about education abroad needs to be increased. The Marist Honors Program has adopted an aggressive advising strategy in order to combat the perception that honors curricular requirements are incompatible with education abroad.

For many years the honors program and Marist's office of international education worked in relative isolation from one another. Many honors students studied abroad, but the honors program took no active role in promoting international educational opportunities or advising students about completing honors requirements while abroad. There are many reasons, not all of them good of course, for not engaging directly with study abroad; for example, maintaining the honors operation on the main campus is challenging enough without international expansion. The honors director and council were concerned about maintaining strong enrollment in the domestic honors seminars because offering honors requirements abroad was perceived as a challenge for enrollments and the vitality of our program on the main campus. Today the honors program actively advises honors students who are preparing to study

abroad. All incoming honors students must complete an advising document that asks them, among other things, to elaborate on their intentions to study abroad. The honors program follows up in the first year with students who have indicated an interest in studying abroad, and they receive additional advising, both individually and in group settings. Students who intend to study abroad and who enter Marist with over twenty-one credits are flagged in their first semester, and they are required to meet with the honors director to discuss their honors program requirements. In short, we try to learn early and often who plans to study abroad, particularly in Florence, so we can apprise them of honors seminar and research opportunities at Marist Italy. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of education abroad through social events in our housing units and at our student-run Honors Research Forum. This aggressive advising strategy has created a cultural change in the honors program. Without doubt, students who go abroad receive special attention. Advocating and embracing education abroad have resulted in an increased number of students integrating international experiences into their honors research projects, completing their projects abroad, and, ultimately, finishing their honors program requirements.

INTERNATIONAL HONORS SEMINARS

Since the adoption of the current honors curriculum in 2013, the program has emerged as a place for Marist faculty to engage motivated and high-achieving students by experimenting with new courses, employing innovative pedagogy, and developing research topics. The honors program has invested significant resources in developing a wide range of seminar topics, and in the past five years, honors has offered over sixty distinct seminars that are taught by a wide cross-section of faculty from all academic schools at the college. This focus on seminars has been instrumental in stabilizing enrollment and building strong retention in the program. Students are generally enthusiastic about taking honors seminars and often take more seminars than their general education requirements demand, providing evidence that they are making the most of their

general education requirements and living up to the program's mission to encourage breadth and depth in academics.

Honors seminars at Marist are designed to align with the spirit of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) "Definition of Honors Education." They are structured to create unique learning environments that encourage creative research, provide forums for discussing enduring intellectual and social problems, and offer opportunities for civic engagement and service learning. Two honors seminars in particular—Ethics of Food and Environmental Explorations of the Hudson—are representative of the innovative approach faculty have taken, and these two seminars have shaped, to some extent, the goals for honors education in Florence. Ethics of Food and Environmental Explorations leverage Marist's unique regional and institutional resources to augment the learning environment for students. Ethics of Food studies the production, consumption, and distribution of food. In many ways, the Hudson Valley is an ideal location for this seminar because students visit farms and restaurants and learn firsthand about migrant labor. Furthermore, Marist is situated on the edge of the city of Poughkeepsie, and two adjacent neighborhoods qualify as food deserts according to USDA standards (Nevarez et al. 4–5). This seminar, therefore, encourages students to consider important questions related to food justice. Ethics of Food was the first seminar we adapted to offer in Florence, and it will be discussed at greater length below. Environmental Explorations of the Hudson makes use of Marist's location on the banks of the Hudson River. Students spend the first two months of the fall semester, weather permitting, on Marist's research vessel, learning about the natural and political processes that have shaped the Hudson Valley, and they are encouraged to become stewards of the environment. Both Ethics of Food and Environmental Explorations lend themselves to interdisciplinary exploration. In this way, the seminars encourage students to consider how their chosen field of study intersects with the course content, and this approach indirectly impacts how students conceive of the scope of undergraduate research projects, like the Honors by Contract and Honors Thesis Projects.

In many respects, the Florence honors seminars closely resemble honors seminars at Marist's main campus, especially in terms of their focus and structure. The Florence seminars satisfy honors and general education requirements. They are designed to leverage the city's artistic and cultural resources to encourage unique learning experiences for students and interdisciplinary exploration. But we had to consider several additional factors when developing our seminars in Florence. In any given semester, approximately twenty-five to forty honors students study abroad in Florence. The Florence honors community is comprised of three distinct groups of students: FFE students, traditional semester study abroad students, and four-year undergraduate students. The honors seminar offerings need to satisfy the differing general education requirements of these three groups. FFE students are at the beginning of their undergraduate careers, so they can take nearly any honors seminar offered in Florence. Yet because FFE students often satisfy many of their general education requirements while they are in Florence, it is imperative that they do take honors seminars while in Florence if they are to graduate with a degree in honors. In contrast, four-year students who are completing their undergraduate degrees in Florence have little freedom when it comes to selecting honors seminars; they can enroll in only the seminars we offer in Florence in any given semester. Meanwhile, semester students generally have the fewest remaining general education requirements; although they are not required to take honors seminars while studying abroad in Florence, many do, so their curricular needs must also be accommodated. A further factor we had to consider when developing seminars is that the seminars would include students at different points in their undergraduate careers, ranging from first-year to fourth-year students. Despite the challenges of developing seminars that meet the needs of all students, the seminars are enriched by this student diversity in several ways. The four-year and FFE students augment the understanding of the semester students with a depth of knowledge and a curiosity for the city they have made their home. The semester and four-year students often become mentors to their younger classmates.

Finally, when developing the Florence seminars, we must work with full-time Marist faculty who have been selected to spend the semester teaching there because they will be staffing the honors seminars as part of their responsibilities. Some faculty who teach in Florence may not have any honors teaching experience while others may teach regularly in the honors program at the home campus and be quite familiar with the honors program's mission and values. That said, we work closely with all faculty to either adapt a preexisting honors seminar for Florence or to consider assigning Florence-specific readings and projects, and we advise faculty who want to teach an entirely new course that is relevant to Florence in an interesting way. Marist Italy and honors program administrators collaborate closely with faculty to ensure that they are prepared to teach an honors seminar in an international setting; we place a special emphasis on encouraging faculty to take students outside of the traditional classroom while in Florence.

Since 2017, the Marist Honors Program and Marist Italy have offered three seminars in Florence: Ethics of Food (fall 2017), Ethics and Migration (spring 2018), and Florence between Art and Life: Travel in and around Florence (fall 2018). We offer at least one honors seminar at Marist Italy every semester. Ethics of Food and Ethics of Migration satisfy the Ethics/Applied Ethics general education requirement; Florence between Art and Life satisfies either the Fine Arts or Literature requirements.

The Marist Honors Program has offered Ethics of Food for nearly a decade, and the course has emerged as one of the most popular seminar offerings. The seminar was originally developed and continues to be primarily taught by Dr. Joseph Campisi, professor of philosophy, whose research interest is in food ethics. Each year honors offers on average four sections of Ethics of Food at Marist's main campus; approximately sixty to seventy students enroll in the course each year. Campisi adapted Ethics of Food and taught it in Florence in fall 2017. The Florence seminar shared many features with the seminar at Marist's main campus. Students were still required to engage with philosophers from the three main ethical traditions of deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue

ethics. Students also read many of the classic articles and books, and they considered many of the central problems of the course, including meat consumption, GMOs, the organic and slow food movements, and injustices in the global food distribution system. Yet, the course took on a decidedly Italian dimension when taught in Florence. With its thriving slow food, organic, anti-GMO, and vegan cultures, Florence offered fertile ground for a seminar on the ethics of food in an international context. *The Italian Way: Food and Social Life* by the anthropologists Douglas Harper and Patrizia Faccioli was a focal point of seminar reading. Students compared American and Italian foodways by visiting markets, restaurants, and supermarkets. The course resonated differently with students in Florence than in the Hudson Valley; it is one thing to read about Italian foodways, and it is another to live them. Students recognized the value of this distinction. Peggy Chiang, for example, reflected on the special connections she made between the seminar topic and location: “There was something magical about learning about the slow food movement a stone’s throw away from where it began. Food is important for all cultures, of course, but for Italians food is often their greatest love.” Matthew Ganguzza noted how the course helped him make deeper connections with Italian culture and draw comparisons with home. He explained that “as we integrated ourselves into the Italian culture, we were able to compare the factors of the Italian food industry to that of our home country. This all contributed to our perception of the ethics of food, while expanding our knowledge of the topic on a global scale.”

The second seminar that we offered in Florence, Ethics and Migration, focused on philosophical and ethical problems that arise from the movement of people across borders. Dr. Sasha Biro, professor of philosophy, developed and taught Ethics and Migration in spring 2018. The migration crisis in Italy and the European Union and the election of a far-right, anti-immigration coalition government in Italy made this seminar a particularly timely one. Furthermore, students had firsthand experience of the massive protests that occurred in the wake of the murder of a Senegalese migrant by an Italian in Florence in March 2018. As they did in

Ethics of Food, students in Ethics and Migration learned about the three main traditions of ethical theories, and they applied these theories to ethical problems related to migration. The seminar focused primarily on questions of identity. Seminar topics included citizenship and democracy, forced migration, labor migration, and open and closed borders. Students engaged with the ideas of Kwame Appiah, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, Lucre Irigary, Julia Kristeva, and Emmanuel Levinas in order to address questions related to the ethics of crossing borders. Honors student Raphael Beretta reflected on how ethical issues in migration were clarified by the tragedy in Florence:

An innocent man was shot on the very bridge I used to cross the Arno daily because of his origin, which sparked demonstrations across the city. Protests on either side of the voting line occurred frequently in the Piazza Santa Maria del Fiore, (Piazza del Duomo) a short walk from the classroom. Our final meeting for the course was in a café called La Citta, a self-proclaimed haven for refugees in the city. Street merchants from the countries we studied in class came into the quiet café to rest momentarily, chat with the owner, and listen to the eclectic music that continuously played.

Another student, Jenna Vanadia, discussed how Ethics and Migration brought to light another side of Florence: “As beautiful and breathtaking as Florence is, Ethics and Migration opened my eyes to the less beautiful yet equally important takeaway of studying abroad: new cultures, identity and adjustment.”

In fall 2018, we offered a third honors seminar in Florence, *Florence between Art and Life: Travel in and around Florence*, which was developed and taught by Dr. Joseph Zeppetello, professor of English. The seminar took students to less frequented points of interest around the city such as Museo della Pietra Dura, Chiesa di San Salvatore di Ognissanti, San Miniato al Monte, and the Florence Synagogue; it also included trips to Parco Pratolino and Fiesole. Students read books and articles that were either set in Florence or about Florence, such as *A Room with a View* by E. M.

Forster, *The Stones of Florence* by Mary McCarthy, and *The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings* by R. W. B. Lewis. This course was designed to use Florence as a classroom, foster interdisciplinary work, and encourage a cosmopolitan worldview. Thus, the course aligned with our program's fundamental mission to create scholars and global citizens.

INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to our honors seminar offerings, Marist Italy and the Marist Honors Program have also developed research opportunities for honors students in Florence, and our branch campus has become a hub for student research. Since 2017, students have completed Honors by Contract research projects and Honors Thesis Projects while studying abroad.

Engaging in undergraduate research holds the potential for students to build mentoring relationships with faculty members that are critical for academic and professional success in college and after graduation. Unfortunately, too few undergraduates benefit from mentoring relationships with faculty members during their time in college (Gallup-Purdue Index). Obviously, significant barriers to the development of successful faculty-student mentoring relationships exist (Johnson 138), and studying abroad can create further challenges because building long-term mentoring relationships with study abroad faculty may be difficult for students. Further, going abroad for a semester can put on hold critical mentoring relationships with faculty mentors at the home institution.

Honors programs with credit-bearing research requirements have an advantage when it comes to building faculty-student mentorships. These requirements provide a formal framework for students and faculty to build mentoring relationships (Anderson et al. 9–10). The new relationship between the Marist Honors Program and the Marist Italy staff means that honors students in Florence can be continuously supported by staff and faculty during their time abroad. This support includes working on research projects with faculty mentors. To date, about a dozen students—both semester students and BA students—have completed Honors

by Contract research projects in Florence. At Marist, Honors by Contract is a one-credit research project typically completed in the sophomore or junior year. Contracts expose students to undergraduate research in honors, and they are typically developmental projects related to the senior thesis project. Students completing Honors by Contract projects have either selected a visiting Florence faculty member as the Honors by Contract mentor, or they have recruited a mentor from the Marist faculty the semester before going abroad. If they are working with a faculty mentor on Marist's home campus, students communicate with their mentor through a course website. Students who want to register for an Honors by Contract abroad must submit all required forms and signatures to the honors director before leaving, which is a departure from how contracts are generally processed at Marist. All Florence contract students are encouraged to relate the project in some way to their education abroad experience. This element deepens the student's exposure to Florence and helps them see how their majors or interdisciplinary areas of interest intersect with Italian life, culture, and science.

Students from a wide range of majors have completed Honors by Contract projects in Florence. For example, Steven Jacobs, who is majoring in Italian and French, created a language learning video series, *Language Lens*, for his contract and thesis projects while abroad for semesters in Italy and France. English major Meghan Jones composed a children's book while studying abroad in Australia. Communications majors Brianna Paganini and Tara Kinsella redesigned the brand and created a marketing campaign for a sandwich shop in Florence. Anna Velasquez, an education major, studied educational resources for refugee children in Florence. Contract students are required to present their research to the academic community of Marist Italy. These presentations have helped to establish an honors academic community in Florence, and they have also assisted FFE students' understanding of the nature and scope of undergraduate research projects. When they return to Marist's main campus, some contract students also present their projects at the Honors Research Forum, which occurs twice monthly.

The first four-year BA student in Florence completed her honors thesis project during the 2018–2019 academic year. Cassandra Miller, a fashion design major, wrote a thesis related to honors international education. Miller’s thesis focused on best practices for honors enrichment on our branch campus in Florence. She is also developing a proposal for a Florence-based curriculum that would expand the current efforts to internationalize the program. The new curriculum would include a one-credit seminar for first-year honors students, which would focus on creating a community of honors students from FFE and four-year students through discussions of important questions related to meaning, purpose, and value. The seminar would also encourage students to participate in the cultural and academic life of the city through honors enrichment activities. Miller’s work is the first thesis project presented at the branch campus.

CO-CURRICULAR INITIATIVES

The Marist Italy campus has become an international home for honors students. In addition to academics, we have created cultural and social events for honors students when abroad; these honors-enrichment events are, in many ways, just as critical as academics for engaging students in the honors program. Just as honors students on the home campus are required to attend a certain number of academic lectures each semester, honors students in Florence also must attend a similar number of talks or participate in other experiences each semester that offer students an insider’s view of the city and Florentine culture. An added dimension to the enrichment activities in Florence is that they bring honors students together with other students, faculty, and guests whom they might not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet, thus expanding the depth of their engagement with the city. Co-curricular activities have included guest speakers on political trends in Florence and attendance at local festivals such as the Florence LGBTI film festival. In the spring semester students are fortunate to participate in a growing Black History Month Florence movement, a celebration of the African diaspora in Italy, and visit museum exhibitions curated by

students in Marist's MA in Museum Studies program at museums such as the Stibbert Museum and Casa Buonarrotti. Finally, honors and Marist Italy have created leadership opportunities for four-year and semester honors students. These students have the opportunity to mentor FFE students, assisting them with the adjustment to the academic and cultural life of the college. These relationships are instrumental to FFE students adapting to campus life when they ultimately relocate to Marist's Poughkeepsie campus.

CONCLUSION

Cosmopolitanism is one of the core values of the Marist Honors Program, and international education is instrumental to the intellectual and cultural development of the honors students. Thus, the program has worked diligently to increase curricular and co-curricular opportunities at our domestic campus and the branch campus in Florence. Although internationalizing the honors program certainly poses significant challenges, especially because many of the critical resources available at the home campus must be duplicated abroad, these challenges are insignificant in light of the impact education abroad can have on students' lives.

Marist's Florence campus offers honors students diverse opportunities that are not always apparent or available to traditional education abroad students. In a short time, Marist's Honors Program and Marist Italy have built an honors community in Florence and offered honors seminars that strengthen academic opportunities for the students and enrich their experience in Florence. Students in Florence have also completed rigorous undergraduate research projects and built mentoring relationships with faculty members while abroad. These initiatives have assisted with honors retention by creating diverse paths to degree completion. The first cohort of honors students who took seminars in Florence will graduate in 2019. Approximately 25 of our 120 graduates enrolled in honors seminars in Florence. All current seniors who took Ethics of Food in Fall 2017 and Ethics and Migration in 2018 are expected to graduate from honors in 2019. Moreover, the first cohort of honors FFEs, approximately 8 students, are all on track to complete their honors

requirements and graduate in 2020. Perhaps most importantly, we have started to create an academic culture in Florence that embraces cosmopolitan values and encourages students to make the most of their time in Italy. While expanding honors to embrace education abroad has certainly been challenging, the Florence initiatives have not compromised the academic integrity or autonomy of the honors program, and seminar enrollments and student engagement remain strong on Marist's home campus. Despite the impediments to internationalizing honors, Marist Italy and the Marist Honors Program have benefited greatly from these education abroad initiatives.

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