

Hanna Caiola '18

Growing up Italian was always something I was proud of. The only thing missing was the ability to speak the language. Unfortunately, the middle schools I attended did not offer Italian, so I could not take it until my freshman year of high school. After my first year I actually hated it! There were so many vocabulary words to learn and so many conjugations that even after a year of studying I could barely speak in full sentences. It was actually a blessing in disguise, because I was required to take a second year due of the school's requirements. After that year I finally saw the beauty in the language. I was able to actually speak with other students and my teacher: it finally clicked, and it was one of the best feelings in the world. I continued my Italian language education and became proficient by the time I graduated.

When I arrived at Muhlenberg I was very happy to find that Italian Studies was growing. In fact, it became a minor program in time for me to take advantage of it, and I'm so glad that I did. My knowledge of the language and culture and my love for Italy grew more and more in class after class. I was lucky to be able to study abroad in Siena, Italy, which I have to say (without *complete* bias) is one of the most beautiful and interesting cities in the country. Having the opportunity to study abroad in Europe has opened my eyes to many different cultures that I have for the most part ignored during my adolescence in America. I am thrilled to continue learning not only about Italy, but about other countries and the cultures of their people, as well.

As I now set out on my career path in neurobiology, I still do my best to continue my Italian education by trying to meet new people in my area that share my passion for Italian, and of course by continuing communication with the wonderful professors at Muhlenberg, Prof. Leisawitz and Prof. Viale. I would not be where I am today if it were not for the support and knowledge that they shared with me and with the other Italian students at Muhlenberg.

I would also like to thank the anonymous donor whose generosity made this award possible. Thank you for helping to promote Italian language and culture at the college level and beyond!