
This fall, Smith welcomed another cohort of Global STRIDE Fellows. First-year students Claire Tepesch, Kendra Bonda, Maia Tooley, and Carrie Lee Lancaster came to Smith with a passion for studying foreign languages and cultures and an interest in global issues and transformations. Global STRIDE (Student Research in Departments) Fellows meet regularly with faculty mentors to discuss articles on second-language learning, cross-border travel, and the challenges of intercultural exchanges, in preparation for studying abroad this coming summer. An intensive language program during the summer between their first and second year will enable them to accelerate their mastery of the foreign language they are studying and to enhance their future studies in linguistics, international relations, regional economics, Latin American studies, or international educational policy, to name some of their fields of interest.

In preparation for their experiences abroad this summer, the Fellows began the year by interviewing the foreign exchange students in the American Studies Diploma Program, asking them for advice on how to adapt to living in another language and culture. In the second semester, they do research in the College Archives on Smith’s longstanding commitments to and involvement in international education.

2015-17 Global STRIDE Fellows:

Claire Tepesch is motivated to improve her language study by her love of travel and desire to be culturally aware. She studied French throughout high school and began to study Spanish during her first year at Smith in order to prepare to travel to South America. Claire hopes to improve her beginner Spanish during the summer to prepare her to spend her junior year abroad in Spain. Although she is currently undecided about her major, she is sure that her international awareness and language acquisition, as well as the experiences she has abroad, will benefit her tremendously wherever she may go.
Maia Tooley’s passion for languages and their corresponding cultures is rooted in her attendance at a French Immersion School until she entered high school, where after French she studied Latin. The fusion of teachers and peers from the vast Francophone world (one exception was the Russian language teacher) created a truly global environment, one that planted in Maia a zeal to explore each of the Francophone countries from which her teachers hailed. That enthusiasm has now extended past just the Francophone world, to an interest in the phenomenon of languages and their role in defining every culture in the world. Coming to Smith, she decided to satisfy her craving to learn a new language, and started studying Arabic.

In the future, she hopes to combine her engineering degree with her interests in environmental science and languages doing work abroad. This coming summer, she is planning to study Arabic in the Middle East. Maia hopes that as she becomes more proficient in the language, she can focus on examining environmental issues in the Middle East, and how those issues affect and interact with the social system in the Middle East.

Carrie Lee Lancaster had the opportunity to experience the Spanish language and Guatemalan culture last summer, which has influenced her studies at Smith. Her passion for linguistic study drives her interest in travel. Through the Global STRIDE program, Carrie Lee hopes to improve her Spanish in formal and everyday situations in an immersion program in Spain this summer. “Learning a language creates more connections with people at every level of life,” she said when describing her motivation to learn Spanish. She is excited to test her knowledge and connect with people.
Kendra Bonde is originally from Atlanta, Georgia and is in the Smith class of 2019. She has always had a passion for traveling abroad and experiencing other cultures as well as other languages. After studying Spanish for the majority of her grade school education, she has continued her Spanish studies at Smith with the aims of declaring a Spanish minor. This summer she will be departing on a 6-8 week language immersion program in Cuzco, Perú through the auspices of Global Stride to experience and advance in her Spanish language skills, as well as learning more about Peruvian culture and heritage. There she hopes to feed her growing interest in ancient cultures.