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## Graduating Honors Student Kelsey Keane wins Fulbright Student Grant to Kosovo

April 29, 2014



*Kelsey Keane on the Honors Study Abroad Trip to Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro in 2012*

Kelsey Keane has won a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) and will work in Kosovo during the 2014-2015 school year. This will be her third trip to the Balkans, but Fulbright funding will allow the Political Science and English major the opportunity to live in the region for a full year.

The Ruffin Scholar and University Honors Program student first traveled to the region when she was in high school, and the experience left an impact on her—particularly the war-torn landscape and the children growing up in that environment. Her second visit was with the University Honors Program study abroad trip to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Corfu (Greece), where she and several other students discussed ethnic conflict, narrative memory, and trauma led by Dr. Krista Wiegand (Political Science) and Dr. Lori Amy (Writing and Linguistics). Dr. Amy was a Fulbright Scholar in Albania during the 2009-2010 school year.

“Kelsey was an exemplary cultural ambassador on the summer 2012 study abroad to Albania, Corfu, Kosovo, and Montenegro,” Dr. Amy said. “Her natural openness and empathy earned her the friendship of the many of the people she met

on the trip.”

Kosovo seeks to become an independent state, but it has not been fully recognized. “Our evening Skype calls during that study abroad trip revealed Kosovo to be a Serbian territory,” Keane said. “We saw concepts of nationalism, conflict, and self-determination jump off the pages of our reading and into everyday life and take on new meanings.”

That trip instilled in her a determination to return, and she continued to think about and research the area. Keane also had the fortunate chance to meet with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on campus and gain the diplomat’s insight on the Kosovar War and the Balkans.

“Our conversation about the region’s continuing struggles further fueled my desire to return to Kosovo, to study the conflict and to work towards a brighter Albanian future,” Keane said.

Dr. Amy was impressed with Keane's sensitivity to the region and the people who live there. "Kelsey combines deep, critical thinking with a genuine desire to understand what motivates people, how they think and feel and why they behave as they do," Dr. Amy said. "She also uses what she learns to reflect on herself and her life, and through that reflection to strengthen her relationships with others and her commitment to school, work, and her professional communities."

That return will now be as a Fulbright ETA. In the upcoming weeks Keane will learn the specific location of her station in Kosovo, and is excited about working in area schools: "Regardless of where I'm stationed, I cannot wait to work with students. My time will be spent rotating between different middle schools or high schools as a supplemental English instructor. My job will be to provide fun and innovative methods for students to learn English as a second language."

Keane continues, "By serving as an English Teaching Assistant in Kosovo, I hope to invest in the future of Kosovo, working with students who will one day lead their communities. As a double major in English and Political Science, I believe that words are our most powerful tool. Given the predominance of the English language in global media, my work will help Kosovar youth tell their stories and take control of their narratives."

The graduating senior will also have the opportunity to pursue a research or outreach project of her own choosing while living in the Balkans. She hopes to work with one of many agencies focusing on development in the area, and Dr. Amy knows that those agencies will be very happy to have Kelsey return.

"While in Albania and Kosovo, several of the people we worked with — from the American Embassy and the United Nations, as well as many local nongovernmental organizations — encouraged Kelsey to return to the region," Dr. Amy said. "They will be thrilled to learn that she will be working in Kosovo on a Fulbright Student Grant."

Keane's interest in Balkan and international relations has heightened her interest in research concerning the therapeutic role of writing in trauma theory. Her Honors Thesis, mentored by Dr. Hemchand Gossai (Literature and Philosophy), focused on the evaluation of Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a work exploring the powerful role of writing to process traumatic memories in a healthy and productive manner.

After spending additional time in Albania and Kosovo she plans to pursue graduate work in international development practices and ultimately aims to pursue a Ph.D.

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University Honors Program • PO Box 8130 Statesboro, GA 30460 • (912) 478-7926



#### GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

1332 Southern Drive  
Statesboro, Georgia 30458  
Phone: (912) 478-4636

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