

5-5-2017

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Recommended Citation

Weinstein, Mark D., "2017 Graduates Prepared to Lead Kosovo Internship Program" (2017). *News Releases*. 465.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/news_releases/465

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2017

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2017 Graduates Prepared to Lead Kosovo Internship Program

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – After graduation, some Cedarville University students take what they have learned to different parts of the country. Three 2017 graduates, Liss Fanizzi, Cassy Padilla and Mikaila Conforti, will take their education to Kosovo to serve as interns at the Kosovo Leadership Academy (KLA) in Mitrovica, Kosovo.

All three will earn a bachelor's degree in industrial and innovative design. They will use their education to work with the science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) program at the KLA to develop and teach a design curriculum.

Cedarville University's Industrial and Innovative Design program is housed at the International Center for Creativity (ICC) in Columbus, Ohio. As a result of a partnership between KLA and the ICC, graduating students from the program are given the opportunity to serve a one-year internship with KLA.

"We sent a group of five students in 2016 on a short-term trip, and four of them ended up staying almost the entire summer, paving the way for future ICC groups by taking on projects and building relationships," said Jim Stevenson, president of the ICC and a newly appointed member of the KLA's school board. "This year's group is raising the bar by committing to an entire year of service to the school. It's one step closer to our vision of having an 'ICC Kosovo.'"

This growing relationship between the ICC and the KLA was a key factor in Fanizzi's decision to spend a year in Kosovo. While she dismissed the opportunity at first, hearing stories of graduates who previously served at the KLA changed her mind.

"Honestly, this is never something I thought I'd choose," Fanizzi admitted. "But I just couldn't get it out of my head."

Padilla and Conforti had similar experiences after hearing 1987 Cedarville University alumnus Nadine Hennessey tell her story about the work that is taking place in Kosovo. All three graduates knew they wanted to participate in an internship with KLA.

"This is a really good way to use the mindset we've learned at the ICC, while also doing something that caters more to my skill set and lets me work with people," Conforti said.

Fanizzi, Padilla and Conforti will continue to prepare for their internships over the coming months before they leave, including a focus on fundraising.

They considered waiting until January 2018 and only staying for a semester due to the large financial commitment, Conforti explained. After receiving a generous donation to help pay for their housing in Kosovo, the three decided to continue with their original plan of committing to a full year and trust God to provide the rest.

Anyone interested in providing financial support can contact afanizzi@cedarville.edu.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in

1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.