

## Introducing The Thiel Fund

Many of the readers of *The Bell* may have already noticed a change to some of the Thiel mail arriving at their homes or e-mail inboxes. In order to be more responsive to the needs of the College and its students as well as to the wishes of our donors, the Thiel College Annual Fund has had a makeover. We are happy to formally announce the arrival of The Thiel Fund.

Just as the Annual Fund has in the past, The Thiel Fund provides students with an opportunity to engage fully in life at Thiel College, sharing in the rich education that generations of alumni have enjoyed. Gifts to The Thiel Fund ensure that the love of learning, the genuine interest shown by faculty and staff, fun social activities, leadership and teamwork opportunities, and lifelong relationships that you found here at Thiel will be available for generations of students to come. The Thiel Fund provides an overarching umbrella for annual gifts of support to the College—the gifts that make a real, tangible difference in the lives of current students—and allows donors to arrange their gift in a manner most meaningful to them by choosing to direct it toward four important areas:

### ***Annual Operations***

Financial support in this area strengthens the day-to-day activities of the college by improving the students' living and learning space, increasing the availability of modern technology and supporting faculty and staff development.

### ***Annual Scholarships***

Scholarships often make the difference in whether a student is able to attend Thiel College. By contributing to this area, your gift will make a Thiel education a reality to generations of deserving students.

### ***Student/Academic Programs***

Supporting this area will allow you to impact the lives of our students as they engage in their academic pursuits. You can also support pre-professional programs or secondary education certification as students strive for their chosen degree.

### ***Athletics***

Gifts to any of our intercollegiate sports teams are critical to our men and women maintaining that competitive edge no matter their chosen playing field. As much as 50 percent of our student body engages in varsity athletics, and many of the rest find fulfillment in intramural sports.

Your gifts to Thiel College are more important than ever, and you have more flexibility in giving than ever. Please consider making or increasing your gift to The Thiel Fund this year. Questions regarding The Thiel Fund can be directed to Kelly Bailey at 724-589-2027 or [kellybailey@thiel.edu](mailto:kellybailey@thiel.edu).

## Accept the Challenge

All graduating classes of Thiel College are invited to participate in the new President's Challenge. It's simple—the class with the highest giving percentage (among all classes within the last 25) years each fiscal year will win the President's Challenge Cup!

The inaugural challenge began July 1, 2009, so if you haven't already given to the Thiel Fund this year, it's not too late (or too early) to put your class in the lead. At the 2010 Homecoming celebration, representatives from the winning class will be recognized on the football field during half-time of the Homecoming game. The winning class year will be engraved on the cup, which will reside in a place of honor in Roth Hall. In addition, a photo of the winning class will be featured in *The Bell*.

Call the College Advancement Office for more information: 724-589-2025.

# Thiel Partners with Pennsylvania National Guard

Thiel College and the Pennsylvania National Guard have partnered to offer educational benefits and support to the members of the Guard, including several scholarship opportunities.

In early August at Fort Indiantown Gap, the Pennsylvania National Guard Training Site headquarters in Lebanon County, Dr. Troy VanAken, members of the College's administration, Major General Jessica Wright, adjutant general; and State Senator Bob Robbins met and discussed the ongoing partnership between the educational department of the Pennsylvania National Guard and Thiel.

Thiel now offers one renewable full-tuition scholarship annually to a qualified member of the Pennsylvania Guard. Qualifications for the scholarship include community service, leadership potential and a short essay. Applications are available through the Pennsylvania National Guard Education Office (Lt. Israel Miller, [Israel.a.miller@us.army.mil](mailto:Israel.a.miller@us.army.mil)) and the Thiel Admissions Office (800-24-THIEL or [admissions@thiel.edu](mailto:admissions@thiel.edu)).

In addition, Thiel is offering every member of the Pennsylvania National Guard a \$5,000 annual scholarship in recognition of their service to our country.

"Thiel College has a long history of educating men and women of the military and we are proud to serve the educational needs of those who have dedicated themselves to serving our country," said VanAken.



*Pictured from left to right are Senator Bob Robbins, Maj. Gen. Jessica Wright of the Pennsylvania National Guard and President Troy VanAken of Thiel College.*

## Two Join College Faculty

Thiel College welcomed two new full-time faculty members for the 2009-2010 academic year.

The new faculty members are:

**Bart Biroschak**, instructor of political science. Biroschak holds a bachelor's degree from Hiram College and a master's of public administration degree from Northern Kentucky University. He is currently in a doctoral program at the University of Cincinnati.

A native of Youngstown, Ohio, his position at Thiel is Biroschak's first faculty appointment.

**Gayle Jesse**, lecturer of mathematics and computer science. Jesse holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Robert Morris University and a Master of Science in business administration from California University of Pennsylvania, and is currently enrolled in a doctorate program in information science and communications at RMU. Jesse previously served as a business and computer instructor at Pittsburgh



*New faculty members Bart Biroschak and Gayle Jesse*

Technical Institute and Penn Commercial. Jesse is a native of McDonald, Pa.

New adjunct faculty members include Emily N. Altomare, art; Nancy K. Bires, education; Kurt A. Elbin, health and physical education; Rita M. Dorsch, English; Melissa Philson, psychology; and Bruce "Randy" Thompson, Spanish.

# Exploring Literary New England

By Sheila Gross '10 and Emily Zoller '12

What do you get when you put one professor and four students in a Thiel van and send them across New England? Dr. Chris Moinet's Exploring Literary New England class.

Exploring Literary New England is intended for English majors who are interested in furthering their knowledge of American literature. Moinet, Thiel's American literature professor, administered the course and prepared its itinerary—his second trip since introducing the course several years ago. The first step in planning the trip was to find interested students that could commit to the trip.

Both of us and two other students, Rachel Nicholson '10 and Rachel Wrona '10, made that commitment and started getting ready for our trip in mid-spring semester. By early May, the four of us literary explorers were more than excited to start our trek through New England.

Our class began its journey in a parking lot at Thiel College and proceeded to western Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

## Trip Itinerary:

May 5: Valley Forge Military Park, Valley Forge, Pa.

May 6: Edgar Allan Poe's house, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Walt Whitman's house and grave, Camden, N.J.

May 7: Whitman's birthplace, Huntington Station, N.Y.  
Washington Irving's home, Tarrytown, N.Y.  
Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

May 8: Mark Twain's house & Museum, Hartford, Conn.  
Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass.

May 9: Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Mass.  
Old Manse, Concord, Mass.  
Walden Pond and Henry David Thoreau's Cabin, Concord, Mass.  
Louisa May Alcott's house, Orchard House, Concord, Mass.  
Ralph Waldo Emerson's house, Concord, Mass.

May 10: House of the Seven Gables and Nathaniel Hawthorne's Birthplace, Salem, Mass.  
Robert Frost farm, Derry, N.H.

May 11: Emily Dickinson Homestead, Amherst, Mass.  
William Cullen Bryant Homestead, Cummington, Mass.

May 12: Edith Wharton's house, Lenox, Mass.  
Herman Melville's farm, Pittsfield, Mass.

Each traveler had a favorite place, but a universal favorite site was Washington Irving's home (pictured top right).



"I greatly enjoyed the class," said Wrona. "It was a wonderful experience and I was able to see so many amazing places. Something that I found

really great was that in the birthplace of Walt Whitman, there was a banner hanging with a picture and quote from Pablo Neruda, my favorite poet. I have had the privilege of visiting two of his houses in Chile, and in both he had pictures of Walt Whitman. My favorite house, because of its history and architecture, was Washington Irving's home. Not only was the house amazing, but the landscape and the surrounding town was inspirational."

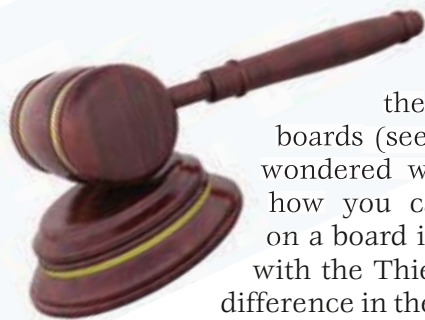
"One of the most interesting houses was The House of the Seven Gables because there was a secret staircase leading from the kitchen to the attic," said Nicholson. "Many of the old houses had similar secrets, which made them very intriguing."

Not only was the goal of the course to expose us to the historical houses and sites of the authors, but also to bring to life their written words. We were graded on a daily journal and a final paper, relating the sites that inspired the work of a certain author. This was a great opportunity for us as scholars to experience coursework outside of the classroom and to show how valuable travel can be for students.

Visiting all of these sites allowed us to gain a better appreciation of the literature. Through this literary course, Thiel provides a unique look at the historical value of the required selections for the American literature section of the English major. The trip also provided a bonding experience between not only faculty and students, but also between we students who participated in the adventure!



# Board Membership at Thiel



Each issue of *The Bell* features a list of the members of all Thiel's boards (see page 31). Have you ever wondered what those boards do and how you can get involved? Service on a board is a great way to re-engage with the Thiel community and make a difference in the lives of Thiel's students—who are also future alumni!

## **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for oversight of the College. It adopts rules, regulations and policies governing Thiel and has authority over curricular development, use of property, development of facilities, and fiscal and human resources management. The Board of Trustees meets formally three times a year on campus. Membership is by invitation. Inquiries about this board may be directed to Barbara Long Cooper, assistant to the president, at 724-589-2155 or [longcoop@thiel.edu](mailto:longcoop@thiel.edu).

## **Board of Associates**

The Board of Associates consists of alumni and friends largely from the western Pennsylvania region who meet two to three times per year on campus. They serve in an advisory capacity to the administration, on topics such as academics, student and religious life, enrollment management, finance, buildings and grounds, and advancement. This board aims to increase involvement in the life of

the College, assess the public perceptions of Thiel's image, identify new friends capable of support, nurture future members of the Board of Trustees and develop College ambassadors. Those interested in membership consideration should contact David Grober, vice president for college advancement, at 724-589-2842 or [dgrober@thiel.edu](mailto:dgrober@thiel.edu).

## **Alumni Board of Directors**

The Alumni Board of Directors is comprised of representatives from the Alumni Association who are elected to serve a three-year term and may be re-elected to a second term. In addition, at-large members may be elected whose geographic location prevents them from attending meetings, but who are interested in promoting the College in their area. Alumni interested in serving on the Alumni Board should contact the Alumni Services Office at 724-589-2042 or [alumni@thiel.edu](mailto:alumni@thiel.edu).

## **Thiel Family Council**

The Thiel Family Council consists of parents and family members who offer insight and experience to the College, serving as a mechanism to positively influence the students' living and learning through their interaction with the administration. Membership offers families a special connection with one another as well as many opportunities to participate in the community. For more about how to join the Thiel Family Council, contact Kelly Bailey, director of annual giving, at 724-589-2027 or [kellybailey@thiel.edu](mailto:kellybailey@thiel.edu).

# New Director of Center for Learning & Advising Chosen

Fredonia, Pa., native Michael A. Williams is the new director of the Center for Learning & Advising at Thiel College.

For the last six years, Williams served as director of the Journey Project, an initiative combining issues of faith, service and vocation in the context of the liberal arts, at St. Bonaventure University in New York.

Williams also served as an adjunct theology faculty member and administrative director of the State Department-funded U.S. Institute for Foreign Leaders program at St. Bonaventure.

As director of the Center for Learning & Advising, Williams oversees development and implementation of CLA programs; provides staff supervision; promotes



curricular innovation, interactive learning and advising; and manages the activities and budget of the CLA on a daily basis, among other duties.

The Center for Learning & Advising at Thiel College is funded by a Title III grant to serve the students, faculty and staff of the college by providing vocational discernment, assisting faculty with teaching pedagogies with an emphasis on using technology, promoting effective advising strategies and promoting learning

outside the classroom.

Williams holds a master's degree in theology from St. Bonaventure and a bachelor's degree in social thought from Allegheny College.

## Faculty Focus

► **Susan Cowan**, biology, was the first faculty “graduate” of Thiel’s new Proficient Online Educator training Program (POET). This new program is a custom-designed, fully online program that assists Thiel College faculty in learning how to plan and create online courses.

► **Dr. Natalie M. Dorfeld**, English, presented “Forget Everything You’ve Been Told: Using ‘I’ in Narrative Research Papers” at the National Council of Teachers of English in Philadelphia, Pa., this fall. She also is currently working with Wadsworth and Pearson/Allyn & Bacon Publishing as a textbook reviewer.

► **Dr. Cory Grewell**, English, submitted an article, “Neomedievalism: An Eleventh Little Middle Ages?” that was accepted for publication in the journal *Studies in Medievalism*. The article will be included in volume 19 of *SiM*, scheduled for publication in 2010. Grewell also will be serving on a roundtable devoted to the subject of neomedievalism at the 45th International Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Mich., in May.



► **Andrew Grover**, mathematics and computer science, was once again selected to participate in the annual reading and scoring of the College Board’s Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations in computer science in July in the subject of computer science. Each year the AP Program, sponsored by the College Board, gives more than one million high school students an opportunity to take rigorous college-level courses and examinations and, based on their exam performance, to receive credit and/or advanced placement. More than 10,000 readers from universities and high schools evaluated approximately 2.7 million examinations from 37 AP Courses.

► **Dr. Mary Theresa Hall**, English, was asked to serve as an external reviewer of the scholarship of Dr. John E. Curran Jr. by the chair of the English department at Marquette University. Curran wrote “Hamlet, Protestantism and the Mourning Contingency: Not to Be,” which Hall reviewed in *The Sixteenth Century Journal of Early Modern Studies* last year. Hall’s review evaluated Curran’s scholarship, including his books, conference presentations and articles as part of Curran’s promotion process from associate to full professor at Marquette.

Hall also was one of 15 faculty members (of 45 applicants) throughout the country who was chosen to attend and participate in the Transylvania Seminar “Twenty-First Century Liberal Education: A Contested Concept,” sponsored by Transylvania University and its Bingham Program for Excellence in Teaching, in Lexington, Ky., in July. Participants were chosen to reflect the diversity within the professorate at that nation’s liberal arts colleges and experience a lively exchange, both formally and informally, based on their different backgrounds and points of view. The aim of this yearly seminar is to explore the variety of alternative perspectives on liberal education and to ground these perspectives both historically and theoretically in terms of the traditions from which they derive. This is the fourth year in which the seminar has contributed to a national conversation about the idea of liberal education and the mission of the liberal arts college in 21st-century America.

► As a mentor of the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Initiative (PLI), **Dr. Doug Hazlett**, education, was singled out in the organization’s summer newsletter by his mentee, Susan M. Uzelac, principal of Linesville Elementary school. Hazlett was recently published in *Pennsylvania Administrator* published by the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals. In his article, “Reflections on the Principal Mentor and Mentee Relationship,” (Sept. 2008) Hazlett summarized his reflections on PLI mentorship. He cites research on effective mentoring, the challenges faced by novice school administrators, his protégés’ professional development activities and the rewards of mentoring.



► **Sean McConnor**, art, exhibited some of his work at the Stonewall Gallery, part of Campbell’s Pottery, in Edinboro, Pa., in June.

► **Dr. Derek Nelson**, religion, has an article available on the Web. “Theological Themes in Criminal Justice,” is in the September issue of the “*Journal of Lutheran Ethics*” online at <http://tinyurl.com/ntvprk>. Nelson also published an article, “Charles Finney and John Nevin on Selfhood and Sin: Reformed Anthropologies in 19th Century American Religion,” in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, Winter 2009.

► In May, **Connie Reinhart**, education, other National Breast Cancer Coalition grassroots field leadership from across the country and NBCC president, Fran Visco, were hosted by Dr. Jill Biden at the vice president’s residence to discuss breast cancer research and legislative priorities. The meeting at the Biden residence followed the conclusion of NBCC’s annual Advocacy Training Conference, which is geared toward continuing education on the scientific, advocacy and public policy aspects of breast cancer.



► **Dr. Arthur White**, philosophy, was interviewed on NewsTalk 790 WPIC, a Mercer County news talk radio, in September about the Community Medical Ethics program, “Beyond the Political Fog: Ethical Issues in Health Care Reform,” that featured him and Dr. Matt Morgan, philosophy, as speakers.

# Staff News

► **Diane Donnelly**, Academic Success Center, was named honorary captain at Thiel's Homecoming football game in recognition of her dedicated service to Tomcat athletics. Donnelly provides academic counseling and advising to new program freshmen and upperclassmen and holds a key role of liaison between the Academic Success Center/ Act 101 Program and the Athletic Department.



University, Thiel College, University of Pittsburgh (Titusville Campus) and Westminster College. The purpose of the Consortium is to create a network to diminish social isolation and to share expertise between minority student leaders from these colleges and universities. This network supports these leaders academically, socially and culturally.



► **Antonio Quarterman**, Office of Multicultural Affairs, hosted a meeting of the Western Pennsylvania Diversity Directors Consortium in October. The meeting included participants from Clarion University, Penn State (Shenango Campus), Lock Haven

# Student News

## Lambda Sigma Honor Society

Thiel's 2008-2009 chapter of Lambda Sigma Honor Society, the national sophomore honorary, has been designated an honor chapter for its leadership, scholarship and outstanding service to the community. This is the highest recognition the organization can give to a chapter. The chapter is lead by advisers Dr. Michael Balas, biology, and John Hauser '71, archives.

## Exler Receives Watt Scholarship

**Katelyn Exler '11**, of Glenshaw, Pa., was awarded the Pat Watt Scholarship of \$500 for the 2009-2010 academic year from the national Lambda Sigma Society. Named for long-time national board member and outstanding chapter adviser, the scholarship recognizes an outstanding member of Lambda Sigma for scholarship, leadership in the chapter and on campus, and service to the campus community.

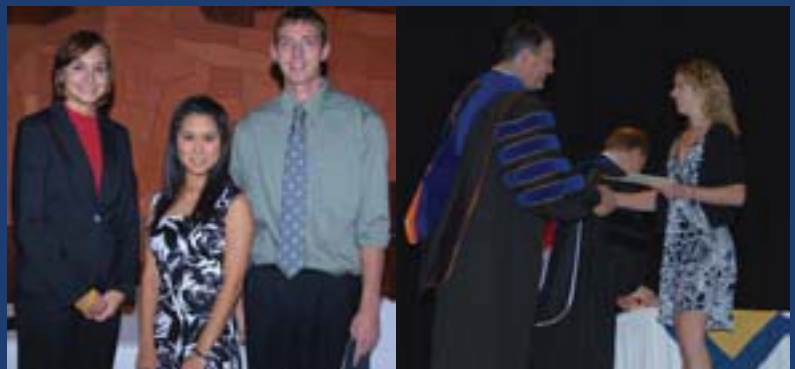
## History Students Present at National Conference

In October, Rachel Doddato, adjunct professor of English and history, accompanied sophomore history majors **Evan Ditty**, **John Tell** and **Julie Novotny** (pictured right) to the Oral Historical Association's Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky. Earlier in the year, the students applied to this national history conference and their presentations were accepted for the OHA meeting. All three students presented the research they had started during Doddato's Spring 2009 course, Introduction to Applied History. Ditty and Tell presented "The Oral History of Thiel College" while Novotny presented her project, "Bringing Oral History to the Elementary Level." Doddato served as one of the panel's commentators. The students' panels were well received by conference participants.



## 2009 Honors Convocation

Thiel College's annual Academic Honors Convocation was held October 23 in the Passavant Center. During the event, 310 students—including scholarship recipients, academic honorary members and Dean's List honorees—were recognized for their academic achievements from the 2008-2009 academic year. First-year student scholarship recipients also were announced. Dr. Chris Moinet, English, was the keynote speaker and talked about the benefits and responsibilities of being "smart people."



Seniors Elizabeth Sitko, Thao Tran and Kevin Woods were recognized as members of Alpha Chi, Thiel's national scholarship society. Dr. Troy VanAken distributes honors to students at his first Honors Convocation.

# Traveling the World with Vira Heinz

Earlier this year, three students were awarded the Vira I. Heinz Scholarship to study abroad during summer 2009. This year's students—Victoria Woodward, Alivia Lapceovich and Lisa Weatherly— traveled to Cyprus, the United Kingdom and Australia. The Vira I. Heinz Scholarship is funded by the Heinz Endowments and is granted to three junior women for summer study and travel abroad. It is intended to enrich each student's academic program, provide opportunity for travel in a foreign country and improve international understanding.

## Exploring Cyprus

This past summer, I studied on the island of Cyprus, a small country right in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, and it was absolutely beautiful and amazing. The program I joined was an intense international marketing course in the capital city of Nicosia offered through Global Learning Semesters. I completed marketing projects, heard guest speakers, completed exercises and exams, and attended a presentation by PricewaterhouseCoopers. I also took a European cultures course and learned more about wedding traditions in Cyprus, the red light district in Amsterdam, gypsies and many other cultural aspects of Europe. The program also incorporated the rich history of Cyprus. Every weekend we traveled to a different city, including Paphos, Limissol, Lanarka, Troodos and Ayia Napa, and UNESCO world heritage sites like the Tombs of the Kings, St. Paul's Pillar, Aphrodite's birthplace and the oldest winery in the world.

My goal in Cyprus was to take advantage of every opportunity I had, such as parasailing, bungee jumping off the beach, attending the small games Olympics and eating many different foods (and way too much of them). Since the country is split in half due to conflicts between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greeks, there is a heavily guarded line between the two areas. I decided to take the risk and cross over to the Turkish side. I was able to see the distinct differences between the two nations and be in an area not yet "Americanized." I learned a little bit of Greek, a little bit of Turkish, and overall learned a lot about Cyprus.

Cyprus is located in the middle of three continents, so I was able to travel with my new friends from the program. My first adventure was to Israel. I saw so many sites I had heard about since I was young sitting in Sunday school—the Wailing Wall, Golgotha, where Christ was crucified and where he was prepared for burial, Mount Carmel and the Mount of Olives. I walked the streets of old Jerusalem and the old city walls as well as visited Bethlehem. I then went backpacking through Eastern Europe. First stop was Athens, Greece—the Acropolis, Socrates' cell, museums and street shopping took over the three days we spent



in the city. Our next two destinations were Sophia, Bulgaria, and Belgrade, Serbia. Both of these cities were some of the most beautiful ones I have ever seen. Finally we reached Romania, where I visited Dracula's castle, dipped my toes in the black sea and shopped my way through the capital city of Bucharest.

My last and favorite destination was Egypt. My four-day stay was not close to enough time to experience the country. I saw the pyramids and the Great Sphinx; perfume, rug, chocolate and papyrus factories; museums; ate dinner and lunches on boats floating in the Nile; belly dancing and music shows; shopping in the craziest bazaar in the middle of the night; and walking in old Cairo. The city was nothing like I had ever seen. I was even given a camel ride around the desert. I would love to go back there someday and see it all again and more.

The Vira Heinz scholarship allowed me to travel the world and see and do things I never could have imagined. I learned, experienced and observed so many different cultures in the world. My perspective on life continues to change and broaden. I feel extremely blessed and I can't wait to plan my next traveling experience.

—Victoria Woodward '11

# Living British Literature

In July, I went to the United Kingdom to study at Kingston University in London. While there, I supplemented my British Culture & Society course and my London & Its Literature course with frequent London exploits to the places about which I was reading.

While reading "Mrs. Dalloway" by Virginia Woolf, my class and I followed the path through London's streets that Clarissa Dalloway took during the entirety of the novel—we even stopped in at Hatchards, London's oldest book store. While studying the importance of theatre and William Shakespeare in London, I attended a performance of "Romeo and Juliet" at the Globe Theatre. A trip to London is nothing without the Queen, so I went to Buckingham Palace to watch the changing of the guards. I visited Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens where I went barefoot in Princess Diana's memorial fountain and saw J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan statue. I took a train up to King's Cross Station to

visit Harry Potter's Platform 9 3/4 after going to Leicester Square to see the world premiere of the film "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince." I visited the Tower of London with its 530-karat diamond and Henry VIII's endowed suits of armor. I visited the Sherlock Holmes Museum on Baker Street, Charles Dickens' house at 48 Doughty Street, Samuel Johnson's place in Gough Square, Henry VIII's Hampton Court, the British Museum, Parliament, the Prime Meridian in Greenwich, Stonehenge in Salisbury, the Roman Baths in Bath, Christ Church in Oxford and much more.

The program allowed me to immerse myself in British culture by socializing with locals on the tube, shopping in the centers and reading the free newspapers that are ever so popular. I attended the Royal Regatta in Henley, which is one of the many social occasions of "the season," and learned about the origins of the ha-ha wall, the

epitome of British humor. Every minute of my spare time was spent in London, visiting or trying something new.

I was also able to take a train to Paris, France, for the weekend. In Paris, I was able to visit all the classic Paris attractions like the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. I went to Versailles and explored the palace and gardens.

The experiences I had this summer have enhanced my perspective of the world. There is something to be said for actually living and experiencing one's schooling, and that is exactly what I got to do this summer.

—Alivia Lapceovich '11



# Adventures in the Land of Oz

I studied abroad in Australia during summer 2009, as part of the Tropical Marine Ecology of Australia's East Coast program offered by AustraLearn. My program began in Brisbane and made its way up the coast to Cairns, stopping at three diverse islands along the way. While on these islands I conducted research experiments unique to each.

After arriving in Brisbane, our first outing was to the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, where all kinds of kangaroos, wallabies, emus and koalas roamed freely. Soon, we headed off to the first island, Stradbroke. Here, my group did a project on invertebrate predators on the mud flats versus the rocky headlands. We also did some net fishing in order to see the diversity in the waters and went dugong (a kind of manatee) watching.

Our second island stop was Heron, a coral cay right outside the Great Barrier Reef. This island was the most beautiful place I have ever seen. The water was crystal clear, which gave us our first snorkeling opportunity. Our first day there, we saw a hammerhead shark feeding on sting rays 15 feet off the coast. We swam with manta rays, white and black tip reef sharks, and green sea turtles. On the last day of our stay, we witnessed two amazing things—humpback whales migrating up the coast and nests of sea turtles hatching.

The last island was Orpheus, which is in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef, and gave us the opportunity to see some of the coral of the reef. Orpheus had the most perfect sunsets you could ever imagine. After Orpheus we headed to Cairns, a little beach town, where we took



a chartered boat trip to the reef, seeing parrot fish, sea turtles, coral and sharks.

Traveling to Australia was the most incredible experience of my life. I have changed in so many ways and learned things about myself I could never have expected. I feel so lucky to have had the chance to travel to such an astounding country. I have learned that if you want to do something, do not let anyone or anything stand in your way.

—Lisa Weatherly '11