

My summer experience with the Gabii Project outside of Rome, Italy was chiefly funded by the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship. Had I not received the generous support provided by this scholarship, my trip to Italy and the growth which I experienced there (both on a personal level and as an archaeologist) would have never transpired.

Archaeology is an expensive career choice; although I can think of few more rewarding and fulfilling occupations, it is quite difficult and exceedingly pricey to arrange an entry-level job for oneself on an overseas dig. Furthermore, as a first year graduate student with no formal archaeological experience, I was initially a bit dismayed at the lack of funding possibilities for non-undergraduates seeking to participate in an excavation. Fortunately, the Waldbaum Scholarship provided the assistance I needed to fund my internship at Gabii and begin the formative stages of what will be a lifelong relationship with archaeology.

So far in my academic career, I have pursued classical studies (philology) and history (classics/history B.A; cultural studies/classics M.A in progress). However, since my senior year as an undergraduate, I have been increasingly drawn to archaeology. A few semesters before, I had begun participating in a project at the University of Arkansas called "Digital Pompeii", which uses game engine technology to examine, recreate, and interpret domestic ruins at the ancient city. My senior honors thesis was an offshoot of this process, and last April I delivered a paper at CAMWS on 3D visualization and room use in one particular Pompeian house. Although each of these endeavors was fulfilling, none could be called "concrete" archaeology. The more I thought about and studied Pompeian life and material culture, the more I realized that archaeology was the correct career choice for me. Clearly, I needed to participate in an excavation as soon as possible.

After talking around with professors and archaeologists who were connected to the University of Arkansas, I eventually arranged an internship at Gabii which, in addition to providing hands-on training with "pick and shovel" archaeology, would allow me to utilize some of the skills I had learned from my experience with 3D modeling and visualization. Gabii, as I learned, prides itself on its technological know-how and sophisticated databasing. All of its stratigraphic units are digitally surveyed and archived in an ArchGIS database, while many of the more notable units are recorded in 3D via photo-modeling. I had found the right dig for me, but needed funding. The Waldbaum Scholarship accepted my application just in time for me to confirm my position with Gabii.

The breadth of learning which I experienced at Gabii was impressive. At a fundamental level, I learned how archaeology is done. Concepts such as stratigraphic units, Harris matrices, and geo-databasing were all unknown to me at the start of my experience. I had never practiced traditional surveying, let alone handled a pickaxe. I can now confidently lay claim to the usage of both. At an intellectual level, I have never been so stimulated. The appeal of discerning one soil layer from the other, the questions raised by complex stratigraphy, the thrill of piecing together daily life in an ancient city based on a small amount of finds and built structures is completely enthralling. Ideas abounded for possible M.A theses while I was on site, and I have now narrowed down a likely research question involving the sewage and water system at Gabii which I will continue to pursue. At a personal level, I learned that archaeology is for me. I love traveling, thinking, learning, and working with antiquity. I had known this

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about myself before, but my experience this summer reinforced it. I already miss the field, and will be back next summer and hopefully each summer after it.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to the Waldbaum committee and to Jane C. Waldbaum herself. Decades from now, when I reflect on my career as an archaeologist, this scholarship and those who make it possible will hold a special place in my thoughts. Because of it, I was able to participate in the trip that solidified my choice for a lifelong career.