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My Name Is Kate and I Am Your Teacher

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Με λένε Kate και είμαι η δασκάλα σας.

“My name is Kate and I am your teacher.”

Much has changed for Kate Peterson '09 in recent months.

She answers to “Kiria,” Greek for female teacher. She sports an olive branch crown on special occasions, most recently her birthday. And she takes in stride goat heads when they're served in the school cafeteria.

Yes, goat heads.

“The kids do eat them,” she says. “Some like them, but some think it's gross.”

Peterson had never been to Greece, didn't speak the language and didn't know a single resident. But that didn't stop her from seeking, and earning, a Fulbright grant to teach English in Thessaloniki, Greece. A tall, fair-skinned red head, she stands out in her new community.

“I definitely threw my life up in the air,” says Peterson, who completed volunteer work with AmeriCorps in Bozeman, Mont., before boarding a plane to Greece last fall.

With an English degree and aspirations of becoming an English professor, Peterson plans to begin her master's degree in English at Boise State University in the fall.

But first, she is living and teaching in Greece. “I decided this would be a great way to find out if I want to teach,” Peterson says.

She spends 20 hours each week

teaching high school students at two schools, The Hellenic College and the American Farm School. Recently, she organized the Farm School's first International Poetry Slam, leading weekly slam poetry workshops, which will culminate in a final performance in the spring.

She is also conducting research, continuing work she began at Linfield with David Sumner, associate professor of English and director of the college writing program, on *Zorba the Greek*, a 1940s novel by Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis.

“I fell in love with that paper my senior year,” she says. “I would eat, sleep and live that paper. The paper was about (Kazantzakis') personal philosophy, and I want to see if that holds true for his other works as well.”

Peterson is reading other books by Kazantzakis and traveling to locations at which he lived and worked including Crete, his birthplace.

Sumner, a former Fulbright winner, says Peterson's exuberance and intelligence make her an ideal ambassador for the program.

“Kate has an optimism and enthusiasm that is contagious,” he says. “She demonstrates intellectual agility, one of the key qualities of a liberal arts education.”

Peterson is traveling and training for a half marathon, which she'll run in Prague in April. But most of all, she is honing her teaching skills and hopes to look back on her classroom experience with pride.

“There's a satisfaction that comes from good teaching,” she says. “That's huge, to teach someone something they will remember for the rest of their lives.”

– Laura Davis

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