Jessica Wellman – Minton Award

VFTH

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WKU will confer degrees and certificates to more than 26-hundred spring and summer graduates during its [181st Commencement](http://www.wku.edu/commencement) this weekend.

Amy Bingham introduces us to the John D. Minton award winner in this week’s View from the Hill.

The graduate school’s top award is going to the person who received the top undergraduate honor last year. Jessica Canada Wellman is also a Fulbright recipient who is sailing toward a career in academics.

Jessica Canada Wellman is extremely humbled by the attention she’s getting.

 “I didn’t set out necessarily to get these types of awards. I didn’t even know they existed.”

But a lot of hard work has led to back to back honors as WKU’s top scholar.

 “Had anyone told me coming in that this would happen I never would have believed them.”

The Whitley County native originally was planning to go to another university.

 “I had never considered Western until I got to the Governor’s Scholars Program and my roommate was dead set on coming to Western. We got to be good friends and she convinced me to look at it.”

A visit to campus and more importantly a session about studying abroad sealed the deal.

 “I was really into the idea of study abroad. I had never been on a plane before, had never been out of the country. “

Her voyage on Semester at Sea with stops in 17 countries changed everything.

 “I think that’s really what sparked it for me and when I really started caring about things outside my immediate proximity.”

 “Still I’ve been to more countries now than I have states because of WKU and all the opportunities they offer to study abroad.”

Going on a faculty led trip to South Africa last year was also life changing for this Fulbright recipient.

”I had 6 hours of economics related to south Africa and what I learned helped shape grant proposal.”

Jessica and her husband will return to South Africa on her Fulbright grant before getting her PhD at the University of Virginia.

Then it will be time for her dream job.

 “I want to teach on Semester at Sea one day.”

 “I think its gonna put me in places where I’m gonna keep learning about the rest of the world and help students learn their place and where they want to be in the world. That’s gonna be really rewarding for me.”

Wellman will receive the Minton award at graduate ceremonies tomorrow at five pm.

Three undergraduate ceremonies will take place Saturday at 9:30, 2 and 6 pm at Diddle Arena. These will be President Ransdall’s final commencement ceremonies before he retires.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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