



# CIMBA Undergraduate Newsletter

Fall 2013



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## Paderno del Grappa: Home Away from Home





# Letter from the Editor

*Conor Ducharme, University of Iowa*



As the most memorable semester of my life slowly and sadly draws to a close, the nostalgia of events that took place mere weeks or months ago washes over me in waves of various emotions. The initial feelings of sadness at the thought of leaving this beautiful place are quickly replaced by the joy and awe of the incredible European destinations I have had the privilege of visiting. My amazing journey has taken me from a quiet town nestled at the foot of soaring, snowcapped mountains to a frenetically paced German festival, to the top of the world's most iconic iron tower, and almost everywhere in between. The adventures I have embarked upon will be with me until the end of my days, but right now, they flash through my mind like a carnival ride spun out of control.

Undoubtedly it will take some time after I arrive home in Iowa to process and fully comprehend the monumental experiences undertaken here. Though I will certainly never forget the late autumn breezes gusting across the Venetian lagoon or the most delicious aromas tantalizingly drifting out from the brick oven of our local pizzeria, my fondest memory will forever be the people. My fellow students, professors, office staff, and local residents constitute the CIMBA family, a family to which I now most wholeheartedly belong. They have been with me for just three short months, but when I board that plane to go home, I leave with lifelong friends and companions.

I arrived here with no inclination of the relationships I would forge through life altering personal development seminars and conversations filled with laughter and an undeniable zeal for life. We are a special group here at CIMBA, and there is absolutely no sufficient amount of gratitude that I can express to the people in my life that have made it possible for me to join such a group. I can imagine my memories of museums, churches, castles, and ruins will fade with the sands of time, but there is no possibility the memories of my CIMBA family ever will.



## "I am spending my semester in Italy."

*Jes Rangel, West Virginia University*

I felt like a broken record for the several months prior to arriving in Italy. After I would make this statement, friends and family would begin declaring all of the preconceived notions that they held about the country. Most people pointed out how all of my meals would consist of pizza hand-tossed by an Italian man with a bulging belly and a dark mustache that curls on the end. Everyone would love to mimic the Italian accent with an adorable "Peeeza!" Others would ask if history lessons would be taught at the Coliseum and insisted that I would enjoy a romance in the Tuscan hills.

When I arrived in Paderno del Grappa, I was happy to find a more authentic Italian experience where the day begins with the rooster crows and freshly brewed lattes from the quaint local coffee shop.

Paderno del Grappa enjoys Mount Grappa to the north and the Venetian countryside to the south. Mount Grappa lures a sense of adventure on days where the sky is clear, transmitting a sense of prominence to all on-lookers. When the dewy clouds roll in, only the base of the mountain is exposed, conveying mystery. No lens can describe the enormous change in landscape as flat lands shoots upward to create a wall against the countryside.

The countryside allows one to soak in a life of ease and clarity. The sun compliments the miles and miles of lush green vegetation. The authenticity of the Italian countryside is kept with cobblestone roads and antique colored Italian buildings.

When I arrive back, I will be able to enhance and deepen the conceptions of friends and family through my personal experience, beginning with "I spent my semester in Italy."





# A Leap of Faith

*Janelle Savage, University of Kansas*

When I watched the first paraglider run down straight off the side of the mountain, I thought, "What have I gotten myself into?" I am not into extreme sports, and I am definitely not a fan of heights. However, as a student of the LEAP program, I wanted to force myself outside of my comfort zone so I found myself on top of 5,823 foot Mount Grappa!

My friends and I shared nervous glances as we were being strapped into the harnesses!



My instructor for tandem paragliding, Paolo, has been paragliding for longer than I've been alive so I began to feel reassured! I was the last of our group to go and before I knew it, I was running as fast as I could off of a cliff! The views of Mount Grappa and the neighboring towns were absolutely breathtaking. Every once in a while, while I was enjoying the view, I came to the realization that my feet were the only thing dangling below me. However, there was a surprising calmness that came over me when we were floating among the clouds.

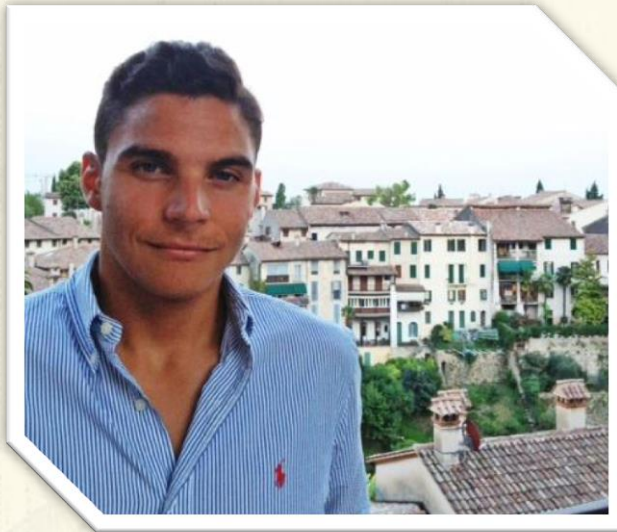
I can now say (with two feet planted firmly on the ground!) that it was worth pushing myself off the cliff...err out of my comfort zone!





## **“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”**

*Manuel Velilla-Ferrer, Campus Life Coordinator*



When I was a student and Resident Assistant in Spring 2012, my main project was assisting the undergraduate leadership development program. I had a strong sense that with my immense passion for this program and the international environment CIMBA, I would be back some day. When I returned to Paderno del Grappa as a Campus Life Coordinator and MBA student, I felt like a part of me never left. Both then and now, I most enjoy the interactions between people of different backgrounds both within the US and Europe. Therefore, I am thrilled to be responsible for organizing events that enabled these interactions! As a MBA student, I have the privilege to engage with even more diverse communities. In addition, I have been able to apply concepts from my MBA classes directly into operations within CIMBA programs.

Although I was here just two years ago, serving as an RA, I can see how the campus renovation has enhanced the CIMBA experience. Most importantly, the synergy between the campus communities (faculty, staff and students) is enhanced by the classrooms and staff being closer together.

In the short time away, my appreciation for my experience at CIMBA only grew as I reflected on its impact in both my personal and professional life. The experience becomes more and more meaningful as I now give back to the RA experience on a supervisory level. I really do not feel like I am working. I wake up in the morning and am excited to engage with colleagues and students because I can visibly see the impact that I am making. When a student comes to the office to tell me how much fun they had at dinner with an Italian family, I feel honored to have been a small part of that process. When a student is missing home, it is very rewarding to be able to comfort them through mutual experience while reminding them of how much they'll miss Paderno when they leave.



## Embracing the Current

*Audra Lundy, University of Oregon*



My arms acted on behalf of my overwhelming excitement when I slung the door of the cab open. Tonight marked my first night to explore an ancient and vibrant city not far from the CIMBA campus, Bassano del Grappa.

The evening air embracing my body and the cobble stone street warmly welcomed each step I took as my feet carried me towards the rumbles of conversation. The sounds of music and laughter drew my body in. The closer I came to the town square, the more I could feel the vibration of noise through my body. My eyes traced over each building and the exquisite architecture they shared. The copper rooftops contrasted the divine taupe walls and each building showcased an arch that beamed light. After finally pulling my eyes away from the beautiful buildings, they were drawn to something even more spectacular, a magnificent wooden bridge gleaming in the moonlight.

The renowned bridge in Bassano is known by the locals as "Ponte degli Alpini." The bridge, in its rich burgundy color, is the center of the Italian evening "aperitivo." As I glanced down the river, I saw two slender fish attempting to swim upstream against the current. I felt the same struggle as I walked across the bridge, shuffling through people. With the somewhat lost look on my face, I ran into an incredibly polite and distinguished looking older gentleman. He asked if it was my first time in Bassano to which I replied that it was. He then began to explain the bridge's rich history with gusto and pride.





The local historians trace the bridge's history all the way back to 1209. Back then it was a simple wooden structure resting on pillars and covered by a roof. After multiple floods and fires over the next couple hundred years destroyed the beloved bridge, a sturdier version was designed and built by Andrea Palladio in 1567. To confirm the technological efficiency of the Palladian structure, the bridge held out for nearly two hundred years, collapsing as a result of the overwhelming flood of the Brenta River on 19 August 1748. The bridge was rebuilt by faithfully following Palladio's design.

The bridge's key importance to the locals today derives from the part it played in the two world wars. The name "Ponte degli Alpini" was coined when valiant Italian alpine troops marched over the bridge and up the steep Mount Grappa to defend the seven territories below, a battle in which they were victorious. In WWII, the bridge was again destroyed by local Partisans (Italian fighters opposing occupation) to cut off the retreat of the Nazis from the advancing allied armies. Rebuilt in the same Palladian style in 1947, it proudly stands as a symbol of Italians who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their homeland. If you listen closely, you can still hear battle cries of freedom on the wisps of wind.



Students Conor Ducharme and Alex Benton.



# Becoming Italian

Aimee Gregg, University of Oregon

*"To awaken alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world."*

*—Freya Stark*



Often, when I awake in my dorm room, my eyes dart across the unfamiliar ceiling as I attempt to remember where I am. All of a sudden it hits me. Oh yeah, I'm in Italy.

Paderno del Grappa is a small town located in the foothills of northeast Italy. In the first few days after I arrived, I became anxious being halfway around the world from everyone I knew. Although I was overwhelmed, I decided to embrace Paderno as my new home.

Some of my regular routines at home can continue here. However, I find that the Italian way is much more fun. I run through quiet towns with the Alps as the backdrop. After dinner, I walk with my classmates to different gelaterie. Instead of heading to the mall to shop, I go to a street market in a nearby town with fresh fish, chocolate and Italian shoes.

There is something so different about the Italian lifestyle. Despite dodging crazy Italian drivers while walking on narrow roads, I find joy in the simplicity of life here. While inconvenient when I need to go to the bank around lunchtime or am in desperate need of a snack on a Wednesday afternoon, I can't help but envy the Italian priority of spending time with family and the better things in life.

I have learned a lot from the Italians, most importantly to top and smell the roses – a metaphor that has new meaning for me now.



# What havoc doth travel wreak?

*Professor Stuart Webster (Il Burlone), University of Wyoming*

It was a dark, damp, foggy Halloween night when I was led down a lonely single lane path. Suddenly, there I was creeping through the dense fog looking for signs of life, or even a place to turn around. Alas, there were none to be found.

On either side of me, there was an abyss fading into the darkness. Slowly I crept along hoping, hoping to find a safe haven.

How had I come to be in this place at this point in time? Was I seen as evil? Had I made someone angry? What had I done to deserve this predicament?

The pattern continued for what seemed to be an eternity. Dark, lonely, foggy, no signs of life, not even a fog-shrouded moon to light my way. I continued aimlessly, my fellow passengers, Professors Kydd and Ferry, becoming increasingly agitated. Consequently, the level of tension rose to heights beyond which I had ever known.

I decided to turn and reverse my course, but on such a narrow, treacherous, foggy ridge? I needed guidance or divine intervention, and didn't care which. Back, forth, back again, and then forward until I was heading back from whence I came. But no, still the same view, incomprehensible in the pea soup fog and mist. Back, back, back I went, when suddenly there were lights ahead.

It was a vehicle backing out of a drive. Could I follow? Would I be able to keep it in sight? Would it lead me out of this mess?

I wanted to blame whoever got me into this. Who did this to me? Was it my driver, or the other occupants? Could it be the infrastructure that placed a detour sign that led nowhere? Where was I after all?

On I went, slowly following the glow of the lights receding into the foggy night. Then, out of the fog, additional lights appeared, then more, until... blessed civilization! Another road to take, a road that led out of the mist. Where am I? Where have I been?

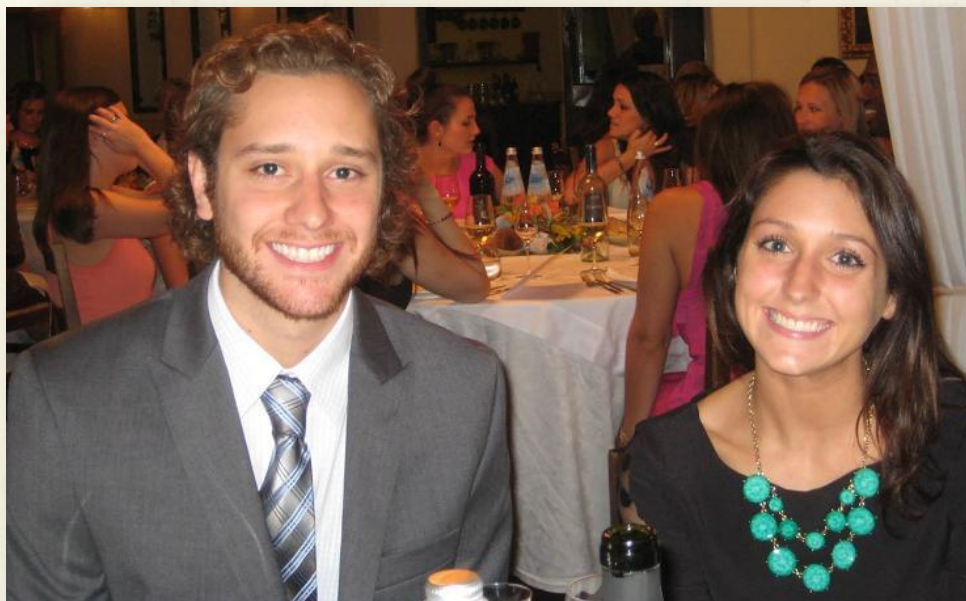
At one point I wondered if I were ever to be found, seemingly lost in some Dickensian moor. To my surprise, it was no moor but something just as terrifying. I had been driven onto a dike near the River Piave, very near to the CIMBA campus. Dr. Al encouraged us to "get yourself lost, and then work your way out of it." He was very right about the power of this experience!

Alas, three professors return to campus triumphant and live to teach another day.



## CIMBA Advisor Conference Student Panel

*Marc Villaire, Western Michigan University*



The CIMBA Student Panel for the Advisors Conference was a very memorable experience, and I truly saw it as a privilege to share my experience with current and potential representatives from CIMBA's sponsoring universities. Advisors from institutions across the country gathered here in Paderno to see firsthand what we are all about here at CIMBA. The Student Panel gave the advisors the rare opportunity to gain insight on the student experience in the midst of their involvement. Six students, including myself, were selected for the panel for a variety of reasons. We each gave a brief background about ourselves, stating where we were from, what school we attend, and why we selected CIMBA as a study abroad program.

After the introductions, the floor was open to questions from our guests. The advisors asked many questions ranging from the academics at CIMBA to the student travel experiences. Each student gave insight to his or her personal experience related to the question asked. I was more than happy to share stories of my journeys across Europe and the wonderful connections and friendships I have made on campus. With the diversity of each of the student backgrounds, the advisors were given the opportunity to see how each student's personal experience was different. This Student Panel also gave the advisors a firsthand look at how the LIFE program and CIMBA has helped each student with public speaking and self-confidence. Each of us on the panel represented CIMBA with great pride in our newly improved public speaking skills; much of this success can be attributed toward the LIFE program. Experiences like these are what make CIMBA a truly special program.



# Paderno Clean Up Day

*Alex Benton, Western Michigan University*

A large group of faculty and students wanted to take the opportunity to give back to the Paderno del Grappa community during a Saturday afternoon. We wanted to show our appreciation for the town and the people who have tolerated our sometimes boisterous behavior along the way. We cleaned up in the streets, parks, and neighborhoods of our scenic village.

We were split into groups and provided fashionable reflective vests and gloves to identify us as volunteers and not mistaken for vagrants digging through trash. Next, we were sent in different directions (via tractor and trailer) to clean the refuse on the streets and in the parks. We walked through beautiful areas of the town and picked up all the litter and waste we could find. After covering a lot of land and filling copious amounts of garbage bags, we all met back up with the original group. Everyone looked like they could use a good rest, a warm meal, and perhaps even a cold beverage.

Most of the residents who cleaned with us are part of a group of families and individuals who serve their community in many ways, dating back to their parents and grandparents who helped protect their precious territory during the World Wars. After the clean-up, they took us to a beautiful building on the mountain side where they join together regularly to eat and converse. There was a big dining hall where we ate and reminisced about the day. The room was filled with historic pictures and stories about their past. The people were all so welcoming and gracious, and it made us feel right at home. After dinner, they all thanked us for helping preserve such a beautiful area and we thanked them for making us feel like one of them. It was an amazing experience and a day that I will always remember.





# A Day to Remember

*Kim Moorman, Mount Mercy College*

One of the places that I was most excited for when traveling around Italy was Rome, as I couldn't wait to see all of the sites – particularly, the Vatican. Being a Catholic for my entire life, the Vatican and the Pope are things I have learned about forever and have always interested me. I always thought someday I would make it to the Vatican and see all of the things I had only read about, I just didn't think it would happen so soon!

Before leaving for our trip I read somewhere that the best chance to see the Pope is on Wednesdays and Sundays. After seeing this I knew I had to go, even if there was only a chance I could see him. So on Wednesday morning we all woke up very early and headed out to the Vatican. After waiting for hours in line and standing by the fence, Pope Francis (or Papa Francesco) finally arrived! There were thousands upon thousands of people in St. Peter's Square and it was amazing to see so many people excited to see the Pope. He rode through the crowds in the "pope mobile," blessing children and waving to the people. It was truly incredible and I was in awe to be less than ten feet away from the Pope.

Pope Francis then made his way to the stage and there were readings that were translated into numerous languages before he gave his blessing which extends to the crowd, their families, and anyone they know who is sick. He also spoke about the importance of religion, and although it was in Italian I could pick up on parts and understand how enthusiastic he was about it. His election last year was unusual and I watched each day as they were deciding who to elect. To read so much about someone like Pope Francis and then be able to hear him speak was truly a once in a lifetime experience and something I will never forget.





# Experiencing Mindfulness

*Paige Watson, University of Kansas*

Every day here at CIMBA, students have the opportunity to gather in the Hawk Room to participate in a Mindfulness Exercise. Mindfulness is being able to keep your mind calm and focused on the task at hand. Its objective is to increase the mind's ability to focus attention without judgment. Now you may be wondering, "Is that the same thing as meditation?" The answer is no, it is similar, but different because the mindfulness we participate in has no religious bearings.

The students were first introduced to the practice of mindfulness during L.I.F.E. Since then the students have had the opportunity to increase their focus skills, increase their resilience and self-awareness.

The main exercise that students participated in was called Mindful Breathing. This exercise consists of concentrating on the air going in and out of your nose or the rising and falling of your chest. To an untrained participant, the task sounds simply, but in reality is difficult to perform correctly. During the first week of mindfulness activities the students would exercise their concentration skills for only three minutes at a time, by the end of the semester the students built up the endurance to practice for 12 minutes. In addition to mindful breathing, the students also participated in a body scan, mindful eating and mindful walking activities.

Mindful eating allows the participant to intensify their eating experiences by becoming more aware of the look, feel and taste of any food given. During this activity, the students were guided through an examination process of a raisin before consuming it. After this activity, students were asked to refrain from impulsively eating and to participate in mindful eating while on their travels across Europe. After gathering student feedback after travel breaks, many students found this activity has helped exemplify their overall travel experiences. Overall, being more mindful while travelling elevated students' appreciation for different cultures.

Mindfulness is an activity that is encouraged throughout the CIMBA environment. The students participate, as well as the professors and faculty. Mindfulness changes the way the students experience their study abroad experience in allowing them to embrace each moment to its fullest.





## Memories and Maps



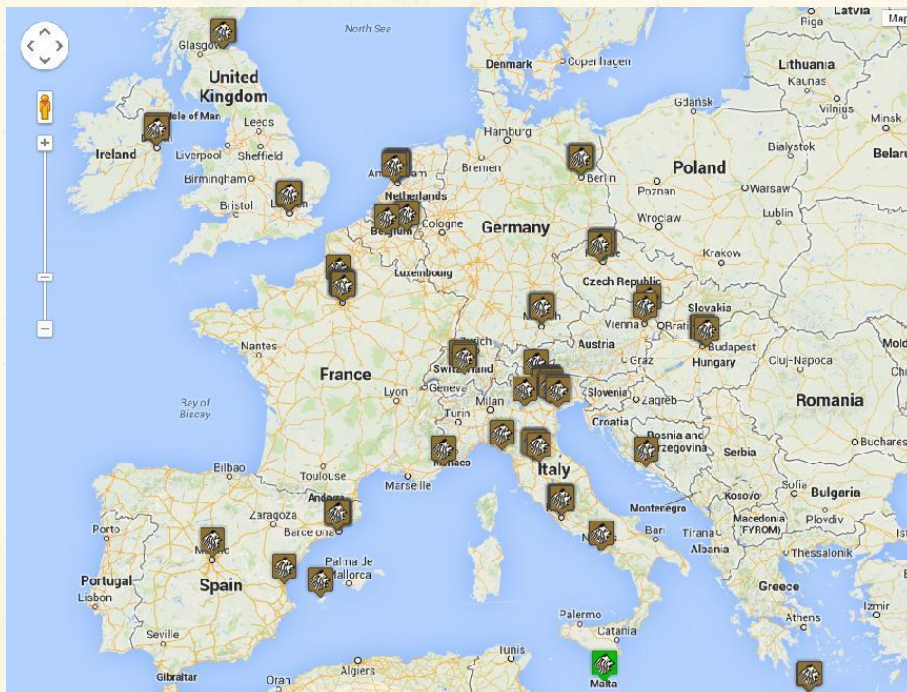
"We will miss three things from Italy the most: Gelato, Gelato, and Gelato."

– Hillary Southwick, Paige Watson, and Courtney Kolpin

"Besides all my new friends and the amazing people I have met, my favorite CIMBA memory is when our campus soccer team crushed the Italians 5-3. Better luck next time boys." – Alex Benton



## Where in the World did CIMBA travel?





## CIMBA Facts and Figures

*Number of Students: 86*

*Age Range of the Students: 17-26*

*LIFE Class Graduation Rate: 100%*

*Number of Universities Represented: 18*

*University with Most Students: University of Oregon*

*Most Common Major: Finance*

*Most Visited City: Florence*

*Average Number of Countries Visited: 8*

