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An interview with student author Samantha Schmeer

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An interview with student author Samantha Schmeer

Nicole Callahan

What did your involvement with GREAT Day mean to you?

Personally, I have just always liked doing research-oriented work, especially because my paper concerns the arts, and I think we forget about that a lot when we're talking about academia and research. We tend to think about the STEM fields when it comes to research, and the arts are kind of ignored, but I think they are super important. So I think that was something important to me about GREAT Day. I also think giving students the opportunity to create research oriented work and have it published is super important, just to give them that experience and credibility that I think they don't get in a lot of college atmospheres. It's an important opportunity for students to have their research put out there and valued in a meaningful way.

What do you think GREAT Day adds to the Geneseo community?

Along the same lines as what I was saying before, I think there are so many students here who have such a wide range of specialities, so I think giving those students a voice and letting them get out their unique perspectives is an important factor in any liberal arts college. I think that's the main thing that GREAT Day does really well, you're able to get this really diverse picture of all the viewpoints at Geneseo.

What inspired you to write this paper?

It actually came out of my dance history class. We watched a video of the dance I wrote about, and at the time I was also taking a class in Native American literature, so I put the two together and started thinking critically about how indigenous groups are represented in the arts. It's very common for dances to be inspired by tribal or indigenous groups, because a lot of dance itself came out of those groups. But now that so much time has passed and they've been so marginalized by society, it kind of creates this problem where they really need to be represented in the arts, but how do you do that without taking advantage of your status as a non-minority, because most of dance is white? All of my different fields of study kind of came together and sparked that interest in me.

What were the goals in creating this?

I wanted to spark a meaningful conversation about diversity and representation in dance studies. It's already something that's talked about a lot, but I don't know if anyone has enough in depth conversations about representing minorities groups within dance. On one hand, dance is a very diverse field because there is a higher LGBTQ+ population, and there are fields of dance, like African dance, that are very popular and have huge African American representation. But at the same time most of the administrative and choreographic positions in dance are white men, most dance companies are run by white women, so I think a what sparked my interest in that paper was just trying to start a conversation about how we can diversify the arts.

Are you currently writing/researching topics related to your piece?

I am doing more work with dance studies, talking about diversity and funding in dance for GREAT Day this year, but nothing about indigenous communities.

Are you planning to continue to present for the next GREAT day?

Yes, I am writing a paper on funding for the arts and dance, specifically, focusing on the New Deal.

How did you feel when you presented your work?

Nervous, just because I think my topic is something that can spark push back. Any conversation about cultural appropriation is a bit controversial sometimes. I don't think people like to be told they're doing something wrong or a field is doing something wrong, or not even that they're doing something wrong but that things can be improved. So I guess I was pretty nervous about that, just because I was presenting in front of dance faculty who have their doctorates, so that was a bit scary. Once I got into it, though, I was pretty proud that I was able to say something meaningful, and I think I got my point across.