

By Frank Bruno '17

Assumption College offers a variety of opportunities for students to enhance their undergraduate experience by traveling to different cities and countries throughout the course of the year. Studying abroad, or embarking on service immersion SEND trips during winter or spring break, are just a few of the options students are encouraged to take advantage of to obtain new experiences outside of the classroom.

For students in Assumption's SOPHIA program (SOPHomore Initiative at Assumption College), a two-week trip to the College's Rome Campus, serves as an optional capstone experience in their vocational journey. SOPHIA is a College program for Assumption sophomores, and is specially designed to help students discover a deeper connection between their spiritual, personal and professional lives. This year, from May 22 through June 2, a group of sophomores, accompanied by College President Francesco C. Cesareo, Ph.D., traveled to Rome and explored various parts of the city, visiting and learning about historic landmarks, which included the Coliseum, Roman Forum, Spanish Steps and Saint Peter's Basilica. On site, Fr. John Franck, AA, former Vice-President for Student Affairs at Assumption and chairman of the Board of Trustees, currently assistant general of the Assumptionists, served as the group's chaplain.

Assumption established its campus in Rome in 2013, located on the property of the Augustinians of Assumption in "The Eternal City." The Rome Campus provides students with an enriching academic and cultural experience, as well as a greater historical understanding of the world in which they live and its ancient and modern origins. Students are encouraged to take advantage of traveling to Rome during their tenure at Assumption, as the campus has been named one of the 10 "best study abroad programs in America" by the independent college rankings journal, *Best College Reviews*.

Chris Leonetti ’18, a marketing major from Taunton, took part in the Rome SOPHIA trip and noted that this unique experience was both informative and beneficial, and one that he would never forget. “From this trip, I’ve learned to take advantage of opportunities at Assumption,” he said. “The trip showed me that Assumption can give you those once in a lifetime experiences. Going to Rome, staying at the campus there, and exploring the city, Assumption gives us these opportunities that once put into perspective really just adds to my appreciation of the college.”

While Leonetti has a hard time picking a favorite part of this “phenomenal experience,” he shared that visiting St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican City was indeed memorable. “Just being inside was an experience words can’t even describe,” he said. “We also climbed the dome of the Basilica and the view from the dome was truly unbelievable.”

The lure of the Rome trip was one of the reasons Leonetti decided to get involved in the SOPHIA program. By combining residential, academic and travel opportunities under the guidance of four dedicated faculty mentors from a variety of different disciplines, SOPHIA strives to foster a culture of vocational exploration at Assumption College that will help students pursue productive lives of meaning.

“Taking advantage of the opportunities the SOPHIA program gave me allowed me to have an amazing experience in Rome,” said Leonetti. “Taking that same attitude and putting it toward opportunities at school can help me move forward in my education.”

Since returning, Leonetti is already looking forward to his next adventure. “After this trip I just want to travel more and see all that I can,” he said.