Press release: 2013 : 08 : 26 : Student wins third place in national Jane Austen essay contest

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Student wins third place in national Jane Austen essay contest

Ashlie Flannigan (l), who placed third in a national Jane Austen essay writing contest, with her mentor, Amy Robinson, visiting assistant professor of English Literature.

A USF St. Petersburg graduate student has won third prize in a national essay contest sponsored by the Jane Austen Society of North America.

Ashlie Flannigan, who is pursuing a Master of Liberal Studies, will be honored during the society’s annual general meeting in Minneapolis, Minn., in late September. Her essay, “The Empirical Austen: Finding Nature and Nurture in Pride and Prejudice,” was entered in the graduate division and was one of more than 200 submissions. She will receive a $250 scholarship and a membership in the Jane Austen Society.
The essay explores the idea of natured and nurtured traits and characteristics as witnessed among the friends and families in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. It also looks at the language that Austen uses to delineate the two influences on behavior and personality.

Flannigan’s essay grew out of a course taught by Amy Robinson, visiting assistant professor of English Literature, called “Selected British Authors: Jane Austen.” It is the second time one of her students in that course has been honored in the Jane Austen Society essay contest. April Sopczach, who graduated from the English Education graduate program, placed second in the 2011 contest.

“That Ashlie ranked so highly with that much competition is really impressive,” said Robinson.

Flannigan said she has been a fan of Jane Austen’s since she first read *Pride and Prejudice* as a teenager and has enjoyed delving into the more scholarly aspects of her work. “I think it’s what’s underneath the stories, what she was trying to do as a woman,” she said. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. and teach on the college level. She is looking forward to attending the JASNA meeting next month and getting to know other “Janeites.”

“We are all extremely proud of Ashlie’s accomplishment,” said Vivian Fueyo, Ph.D., interim regional vice chancellor for academic affairs. “It reflects the high caliber of students we attract to USF St. Petersburg and the strong mentoring they receive from our excellent faculty.”