



PRESS RELEASE: Ferris Student Byington to Attend Phi Alpha Theta National Conference to Present Paper

Sandy C Gholston to: Archive

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Included below is a press release regarding an honor that has been earned by Ferris State University student Richard Byington, who will be presenting his paper at a national conference in Orlando, Fla. This press release was written by student writer Angie Walukonis. Any questions about this press release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services.

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Ferris Student Byington to Attend Phi Alpha Theta National Conference to Present Paper

BIG RAPIDS – Each word was carefully constructed for a Humanities research paper as Ferris State University student Richard Byington investigated the 1920s era of Russian history. What Byington did not know, however, was that his hard work would pay off with national recognition from the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society Biennial Convention – something that had not previously been achieved by a Ferris student.

Byington, a junior History major from Byron Center, will present his in-depth analysis of the Bolshevik organization's religious suppression to a panel of judges during Phi Alpha Theta's 2012 Biennial Convention in Orlando, Fla., Jan. 3 through 7. Applicants were selected to present based on grade point average, Phi Alpha Theta membership and having the abstract approved prior to submission of the paper. After Byington reads his paper, the panel will ask him a series of questions, critique his paper and offer verbal responses.

"I really just wanted to have more practice presenting my papers and getting ideas from people in high scholarly positions. I want to be able to stand up to the pressure of other people critiquing my work," he said. "Presenting papers shows that you are active in the scholarly world. It gives you an extra boost compared to someone who doesn't do those things."

Byington said that this experience should mean a "great deal" for him in the eyes of graduate schools as he ultimately hopes to earn a Ph.D.

Ferris assistant professor of History Tracy Busch said that Byington's paper was well researched as he discussed anti-religious campaigns during the 1920s where the Soviet Union was "trying to kill religion." Busch said that Byington captured the material well for an undergraduate student.

"When you're a professor, you are a mentor to your students. It's almost like being a parent. You

like to watch them grow and succeed. You see a student make leaps and bounds in their scholarship and, yes, it makes you proud,” Busch said.

For the first time, Ferris students presented at the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference in Rochester at Oakland University last spring. Byington presented his paper with Adam Quigley, Tyler Price and Jeff Pollock.

Byington now looks forward to the national conference next semester.

“I like being able to present my papers. It’s really fun to answer questions and gives you a real sense of pride and lets your professors know the good job they are doing. It means a great deal to me, and it shows my future schools and future employers that I’m willing to do extra,” he said.

Gary Huey, a Ferris History professor, noted that the national conference accepts the best papers from students, nationally, where “the crème of the crop” can attend. Huey believes that students who attend conferences help the Ferris History department’s reputation.

“We are attracting really good students and these students are succeeding in graduate school,” Huey said. “I think for Richard it will open some doors to go to a good graduate school, which will clearly help him find employment once he is done.”

Byington believes students should investigate Ferris’ History program as a “viable option for their history studies,” as well as gain experience in presenting papers.

He said, “Students can’t be afraid to go to these conferences and present their papers. You feel a lot better if you can answer questions asked and if you can answer them well. I’m really looking forward to it.”

To learn more about the national conference visit:

<http://phialphatheta.org/convention>

To learn more about the Ferris History Department visit:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/colleges/artsands/Humanities/History/index.htm>

To learn more about the Club History and Phi Alpha Theta student group visit:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/colleges/artsands/Humanities/History/Club-Phi-Alpha-Theta.htm>

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