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Morris Alumni Gain Recognition, Share Wisdom

Summary: Joshua Johnson '10 and Eric Wardell '08, recipients of West Virginia University's Rebecca Mason Perry Award, attribute their post-undergraduate success to a Morris education.

(October 31, 2012)-For two consecutive years the English Department at West Virginia University (WVU) has awarded a University of Minnesota, Morris alumnus the Rebecca Mason Perry Award, which it presents to the outstanding first-year graduate student of the academic year. Joshua Johnson '10 was the recipient of the 2011 honor, and Eric Wardell '08 received it in 2012. Both men believe that their Morris educations contributed to their post-undergraduate success.

Wardell graduated from Morris in 2008 with a bachelor of arts in English and history. He then spent three years working in the writing center and instructing writing classes at Dakota County Technical College. He is currently pursuing a master of arts in professional writing and editing at WVU. In May 2012, Wardell was awarded the Rebecca Mason Perry Award.

Wardell credits his success to his time at Morris, noting “[at Morris] you learn to apply yourself. You direct what you learn.” He adds that rigorous coursework and a wide knowledge base as well as personal attention from professors like Michael Lackey, associate professor of English, contributed to his post-undergraduate success. “It was in Professor Lackey’s African American literature class that both [Johnson] and I were first encouraged to think about applying to graduate school,” says Wardell. “This was important to shaping our future decisions.” It was also in this class that Wardell and Johnson first met and became friends.

Johnson graduated from Morris in 2010 after completing a bachelor of arts in English. He then joined the program at WVU. In the spring of his first year, Johnson was accepted to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, where he studied with students from around the country. Between academic years he taught classes, took a directed study, worked in the writing center, and assisted his department as an administrative assistant. In 2011, Johnson was presented with the Rebecca Mason Perry Award. He recently completed a master of arts in English.

Johnson shares Wardell’s appreciation of his Morris education, noting that the atmosphere of his undergraduate experience as well as Morris classes and responsibilities prepared him for graduate work and his future. He plans to continue to present research at conferences, to publish work, and to prepare for a doctoral program in media studies.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.