

Honoring Brian Whalen

A Note from the Editorial Board: Earlier this year, our long-time Executive Editor and *Frontiers* founder Brian Whalen announced his departure after twenty-four years of leadership. In his honor, our colleague Tim Perkins, who has worked alongside Brian on *Frontiers* since its founding in 1994, has written this tribute, chronicling the journal's history and Brian's important role in it.

We thank Brian and his partner in life and editorial work, Annmarie Marlin Whalen, for their many years of hard work and dedication to publishing the latest research on study abroad and making it accessible to education abroad professionals around the world. We dedicate this issue to them both.

I first met Brian Whalen when he was directing the University of Dallas program in Rome back in the late eighties. Of course, we were all young then, but even with that advantage Brian's uniqueness shone through. His was a wonderful (and quite rare) blend of intellectual interests and business savvy, humor and aesthetics. When we had a turnover in our Boston University program in Padua, I asked Brian if he would be interested. To our and study abroad's great benefit, he was.

Brian, his wife Annmarie, and their two youngsters served a very productive year in Padua, but he felt it was time to get back to the U.S. and start the rest of his life. I have always teased him that he wanted to repatriate because he was worried that his son Gus wouldn't understand or like baseball (ironically, it was his daughter Meghan who became the baseball fanatic). At any rate, there was only one problem with the plan: beyond coming home, there wasn't a plan!

In one of the smartest moves of my career, I suggested he come work for us in Boston. We were growing rapidly and needed good, young, savvy individuals.

It was a wonderfully fertile time in study abroad. The field had been rather limited in its content and approaches; American college students were ready for adventure, and there was pent-up demand. This was an ideal environment for someone as talented as Brian.

With Associate Director Ned Quigley tutoring Brian in the basics on their commute from the North Shore, it didn't take long for Brian to find his footing. Part of that grounding was based on our concern that there was heavy focus on *process* and precious little on *product* in the field. We wanted to reverse that. For someone grounded in the classics and immensely curious intellectually, this was manna!

In 1994, Brian proposed starting a scholarly research journal devoted to uncovering (and thus ultimately supporting) the fundamental bases of what we try to do in our programs abroad. That you are reading this appreciation piece in that very journal almost 25 years later should be proof of product.

Brian saw the need, figured out the fundamentals, and then tenaciously followed through to make *Frontiers* the scholarly journal in the field. Throughout his tenure at Marist and then at Dickinson College, he never lost sight of the journal nor of why it was important. And, of course he never lost sight of Annmarie, who selflessly served as co-editor (meaning she did all the heavy lifting!) until 2015.

Then, in one of the smartest moves of its young history, The Forum on Education Abroad chose Brian to become its leader. He was ready to lead and build, and one need only attend one of The Forum's annual conferences to see what a success he was at this job. Brian's talents are encompassed in these meaningful and very useful gatherings: vision, humor, sincerity, respect, scholarly depth—all evident from start to finish.

At The Forum, Brian steered the field into mainstream relevance. He guided the creation of standards, which gave the field a basis to which to aspire and on which to be judged. Brian ensured that professional development became one of The Forum's standards, ingeniously motivating members of all levels to “kick it up a notch.” Adding an international conference every other year gave many more people in the field voices and a chance to learn and share. The list goes on...

Here's some of what makes Brian special:

- I know of no other organization in which the president has had open meeting hours for individuals at the annual conference. Brian took the time for anyone who wanted his counsel (or ear!) during his busiest event.
- Only Brian would suggest I quote Wittgenstein to distract someone I was worried was going to hike me to death.
- Brian plays guitar like the old blues masters he studies and loves.
- When his eyes take on a twinkle, you know you're in for some teasing or a sophisticated dad joke.
- His ideas for ensuring standards in a chaotic field were visionary and remarkably effective.
- He loves to delve into a subject and discuss it in depth, bringing his voluminous, wide-ranging scholarly background to whatever the subject. At the same time, he is equally happy discussing the Phillies and his latest microbrew discovery. The man has depth and breadth!
- He was never intimidated by political royalty. When it was time to be sure our message was heard, he stepped up and made us proud he was our representative.

Humble, grounded, upbeat—he didn't use his position to ennoble or enrich himself, didn't lose touch with his peers...he just stayed Brian, a man I am proud to know. There are hundreds upon hundreds who, I know, feel the same way.

Thanks, Brian!

Tim Perkins
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