

Environmental Issues

Environmental Studies Program

Denison University

Volume 4, Issue 1

Fall 2003

Mellon Foundation Supports Summer of Student Internships

Thanks to ongoing support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, seven students had the opportunity to complete a paid internship this past summer. Interns gained experience working with various non-profits; some students worked within their home communities, some continued internships from past summers. Every student came back to report a worthwhile experience. Here's what they did:

Elizabeth Jackson ('04): interned with the Blue Ocean Society, a non-profit marine conservation education program in New Hampshire. Liz had the opportunity to put her education to work, by educating both kids and adults about marine biology and conservation on and off shore.



Catching a glimpse of a Humpback off the New Hampshire coast

Mihkel Allpere ('04): put his environmental studies major and education concentration to use, completing an internship at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. Mihkel was a teacher-naturalist, putting together and implementing lesson plans for kids of all ages as well as adults. He hopes to continue on this path of environmental education after Denison.

Melanie Houston ('04): Melanie spent her third summer working with Helping Hands: Garden of Hope, in Newark, Ohio. She and a co-director were responsible for carrying out all of the necessary tasks of the program, which had been designed to provide court-involved young women with an alternative service option. The program is a success; this fall the small organic plot has yielded over half of a ton of fresh produce, which is donated to a local community food bank. Melanie learned about the struggles of maintaining a business, and more

importantly, she became a mentor in the lives of young women.

Milica Dzelatovic ('05): Milica returned to Yugoslavia to learn about the current state of the environment there, and what is being done about it. Her experience was unique in the context of traditional internships, but very crucial to her individual academic and career interests. She spent her time shadowing managers of four different environmentally-related governmental organizations. She learned about their daily work and also about the longer term plans for conservation and energy efficiency in the country.

Adam Klein ('04): Adam worked with the Delta Institute for the second summer, and continued the watershed management project in his home community in Cleveland, Ohio. A grassroots effort to protect an urban watershed appealed to Adam, as he participated in every aspect of facilitating this process. Adam also assisted with the creation of a report on the state of the environment in Columbus, Ohio. He had the opportunity to not only polish his interpersonal skills in the context of city hall meetings and interviews, but also practice research in a real-world application, and learn about the state of the environment.

Lindsay Michael ('05): Lindsay pursued an internship in her home town of Pittsburgh, with the Department of City Planning. She spent the summer working in the field of Parks and Open Space Planning. Though her internship was focused on the inception of four specific projects, Lindsay learned about a wide range of planning and political issues on the city level. She enjoyed learning and working in an environment of great people and friends.

Kathryn Bush ('04): Kate spent her summer working with the B-W Greenway Community Land Trust. The purpose of this small organization is to create a greenway between two local wetlands in a community in Dayton, Ohio. Kate was responsible for applying for grants for this project, organizing and facilitating community involvement activities, such as a photo contest and a festival.

--by S.C.

Water Conference Successful

The two-day conference, hosted by Denison's Environmental Studies Program this past May, entitled "Local Water, Global Water: A Conference on Resources, Conservation & Advocacy," turned out to be a success, with a range of interesting speakers and activities to promote inspired and informed discussion. The 95+ registrants came from diverse backgrounds, including 36 Denison faculty and students; the remaining coming from organizations and communities around Ohio.

Among participants who are educating people about water in interesting ways was Stacy Levy, a Philadelphia artist, whose work aims to make scientific concepts more memorable and real to the average person. As an example, for a school building in Florida, she constructed a 60-ft. tall blue plastic tube that rises and falls in sync with the tide of the Atlantic Ocean—an occurrence too often overlooked by people spending their days inside. Go to www.stacylevy.com to check out more of her projects that "create an instant of wonder and understanding for the viewer."

Another speaker, Robert Glennon, of the University of Arizona School of Law helped people understand groundwater pumping by comparing the aquifer to a giant milkshake glass with each well being a straw in the glass. He brought the issue close to home by asserting that the danger of depending on aquifers for our water is an issue that concerns not just the western states, but Ohio as well.

The presentations were interspersed with topical discussion sessions and informal meeting opportunities that inspired productive conversations about people's own experiences with water resources. Participants that were in attendance all had a chance to share their stories, wisdom and passion during the structured sessions, and more personally during the reception, held at the Works: "a center of discovery that strives to stimulate analytical thinking and enhance the quality of life in Licking County and beyond" (www.attheworks.org).

More details about the conference are available at www.waterconference-du.org. The Program is grateful to the Mellon Foundation and all the people who made this conference a success. The Program is looking forward to bringing others to campus to explore an environmental issue for the Mellon-sponsored workshop next spring.

--by Sarah Beazley

Capstone Students Educate 5th Graders About Environment through Compost

Last Spring's Capstone class focused on "Growing in the Garden." Under the direction of Dr. Carol Goland, the eight senior majors worked with the Granville Intermediate School to establish a composting program and teach 5th grade science students about the environment.

After researching composting systems and compost programs at other schools, the Capstone students made recommendations to the school about how to set up their compost facility.

Students established a large outdoor tumbler as well as a classroom worm bin. The bigger part of the 'stoners efforts, though, went to creating a science curriculum around compost. They developed detailed lesson plans on the food web, worm biology, nutrient cycles, waste cycles, the 3 Rs, soil and land use, and environmental ethics. In pairs or solo, they met weekly with each of the six science classes, building rapport with the 5th grade students and engaging them in a variety of compost-related activities.

The Capstone students, with the help of the 5th graders, also initiated a collection of food scraps from the lunchroom, providing literal and figurative fodder for the compost and its related lessons. The project culminated with an Earth Day celebration at the School and the official opening of the Compost Facility. The compost will be used in the school's organic garden, which is being established this year. --by Dr. Carol Goland



ENVS Class of 2003, project participants

Sarah Bids Farewell, Sasha Says Hello

As my yearlong position as Program Manager comes to a close, I feel lucky to have had the chance to work with so many great people.

Though I don't have specific plans besides some traveling, I am excited to take the lessons learned here, in Barney-Davis, to help work toward environmental solutions wherever I may settle.

It is difficult to leave a Program that is full of such bright and inspiring people doing good work, and helping take steps toward a more sustainable future. I know that the Program's year ahead holds good things, with new PM Sasha, and a great group of students and faculty. --S.B.

The Environmental Studies Program here at Denison has flourished in the last few years. The program manager has played an essential role in creating an outstanding program by bringing in speakers, organizing workshops and conferences, maintaining a network between students, alumni and interested community members.

Having graduated with Religion and International Studies majors, as a student I only had a small glimpse at the ENVS program. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in all the wonderful achievements of this program, and of this campus. Please feel free to contact me with any suggestions or ideas, chetyrkinaa@denison.edu. --S.C.

New Recycling Facility to Serve Students, Community

The Denison University Recycling Program (DURP) has had a rocky history. Studies completed by past Environmental Studies capstone seminars and various other classes have shown that the amount of waste actually recycled was minimal on campus, and arguably insignificant (<http://www.denison.edu/enviro/waste/index.html>). As much effort and energy as 'Durpers' of past years put into the program, the results were clearly insufficient.

In response, two years ago the students running DURP decided to stop recycling, but to work on institutionalizing the program in order to make it more effective. Thanks to their hard work, a grant from the county, as well as funds from Denison will cover most of the costs of the program this year, and in years to come. A new facility (in place of the old Red Barn) will be erected this fall; it will provide student workers space for 'sorting parties'; and soon it will

provide a place for Granville residents to drop off recyclables. On campus, dorm rooms will be furnished with 'wet' and 'dry' recycling bins, every department and office on campus will be provided with bins as well. Paper, plastic, and metals are the primary waste products.

This new program is expected to handle at least 25 per cent of all campus waste, which can only happen if everyone participates. Thus, the next step to ensure the program's success is education. Students, faculty, staff, and Granville residents need to be made aware of the importance of individual participation, which can add to bundles and piles and tons of recycled material!

Students have worked to introduce an effective recycling program to campus--and they continue working to encourage and ensure community participation and active support. This group is an inspiration; Go DURP!

--by S.C.

Sorting party; students cleaning out red barn

New Course on Wetland Ecology Offered Jointly with Biology

This fall Doug Spieles, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, is teaching a course on Wetland Ecology for both ENVS and Biology majors. The course is designed to provide a comprehensive review of wetlands science, policy, and management. An upper level ecosystem-based course can be very useful for environmental biologists and managers.

In many ways, this course is a kind of culminating experience. Studying ecosystems forces students to remember and apply what they have learned about chemistry, physics, microbiology, and ecology. Students must also go outside the classroom to consider the regulatory and political

aspects of wetlands, which is an ongoing debate in this country.

Wetland Ecology features a field-based lab component, in which students learn the basics of wetland characterization and delineation. The class will visit several natural wetlands in central Ohio and also two wetlands that have been constructed as legal replacements for others that were drained or filled, giving students a first-hand look at the difficulties of ecosystem construction. And you experimentalists out there need not worry—the lab also includes a student-designed study of the Hill Wetland Reserve, an 11-acre wetland in Granville.

--by Dr. Doug Spieles

Program Retreat Addresses Curricular Revisions

The Environmental Studies Program underwent its first external review in Fall 2002. The program received high marks for its educational successes, the quality and motivation of its students, and the commitment of its faculty. The reviewers' concerns centered on the complexity of the program, its focus on "policy" issues, and a lack of institutional structure to promote and reward faculty participation in the program. In late August, 14 faculty and students held two half-day meetings to work through several curricular proposals put forth by faculty in response to the review.

There was general consensus to continue with a *concentration model*. For *disciplinary concentrations*, students could follow a reduced departmental slate of courses or simply get a minor or major in an allied department. *Interdisciplinary concentrations* would be similar to, but smaller than the current structure. The most significant changes would come in the *core* component of the major. The *core* would be expanded to include two introductory courses (one social science/humanities and one science) and prescribed intermediate courses in the humanities and social sciences, thus enlarging the body of common courses and knowledge among students. The *capstone* seminar would be moved to the junior year so that

students might better be able to build on their experiences, and pursue a community-based project or research endeavor that would be required of all seniors.

An overarching concern for curricular revisions is to provide increased opportunities for majors to work together, to share their experiences, and to develop a sense of camaraderie. By all accounts the retreat was a productive step in revising the curriculum in ways that serve the best interests of students and remain true to the core concerns of the ENVS Program.

--by Dr. Tod Frolking

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Newsletter of the McPhail Center for Environmental Studies
Denison University, Granville, Ohio.

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Alumni Spotlight: Sarah Lechner ('02)

Like so many other Environmental Studies alumni, Sarah Lechner is doing inspiring things in her professional and home life. She is putting her education to use and is living out her passions.

After graduation, Sarah spent a few months traveling West, to finally settle in Portland, Oregon, where she began working with an Americorp program, St. Johns Woods Garden Project in the Fall of 2002. This organization works toward food security for low income urban communities. Sarah's first year there was spent working with local youth in the Apple Garden Club. She taught them how to garden, how to cook; she taught them about nutrition and community solidarity. Though the job presented tremendous challenges, Sarah courageously took on the kids, and has helped to ensure a successful community project and adequate food for its members.

Having formed many close relationships, Sarah is planning to stay in Portland for another year, this time working with the adults in the community. She will be working on leadership development and community organization, in order to drive this garden project even further, to ensure adequate food for the community and education for its members.

Sarah has put her Denison ENVS degree to work; her focus on community-supported agriculture in her senior research has helped her understand the complexities of what she is



Sarah Lechner as a senior researcher.

working on today. Her extracurricular activities at Denison, such as Homesteading and DURPing, have built her character today. Besides being a hard worker and leader, she has also incorporated into her domestic life compost and gardening, cooking, raising chickens, bicycling, reducing, reusing and recycling, and having fun through it all.

--by S.C.

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