

INTRODUCTION BY PRESIDENT THOMAS GALLIGAN



Education is about opening your eyes and mind to new ideas, new knowledge, new people, and new places. My education continues everyday—sometimes I learn in baby steps; sometimes I backslide. However, every once in a while, I take an enormous leap forward. My biggest learning leaps in life have probably been learning to read, law school, the birth of my children, and my recent trip to Nepal.

In January of this year I was lucky enough to join eight Colby-Sawyer students, my daughter, Aisling, and my friend and colleague, Jon Keenan, on a two week trip to Nepal. Six of the eight students were recipients of grants from the Wesson Honors Program, which made their travel and their learning possible. In this issue of the *Wesson Honors Newsletter*, you will read about that trip and the transformative impact it had on all of us.

Like many in the group, traveling to Nepal was my first trip to Asia. For one of us, it was the first time outside North America. For all of us it was an explosion of culture, tastes, colors, religion, history, and lifestyles. We were saddened by the tragedy we saw in the wake of the earthquake. We were frustrated by the hardship the Nepalese people face today in trying to get fuel from India. And we were heartened and uplifted by the wonderful students at Maya International Academy where we spent three days leading workshops, volunteering, and seeing the combined power of both learning and love.

So, enjoy this issue. It is about a very special trip.

Namaste!

ENCOUNTERING GORKHA, NEPAL: BEFORE AND AFTER

by Professor Jon Keenan
Department of Fine and Performing Arts

In January of 2015, Colby-Sawyer College's Wesson-Nepal Project team visited Mr. and Mrs. Bishnu and Roshani Shrestha, in the historic mountain town of Gorkha, en route from Kathmandu to the Maya Universe School in the Tanahun district. We wished to thank them for their generous donation of the Bhaktapur clay intended for use in the classes to be given at Maya in the coming days. No members of our group had ever been to Gorkha, so it seemed like a perfect opportunity to meet and explore the area for a few hours, including a possible hike to the palace of King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723–1775), the monarch credited for unifying the nation of Nepal. We were warmly welcomed by Bishnu and Roshani and enjoyed a delicious Nepali 'thali' lunch at the Hotel Bisauni garden terrace overlooking surrounding mountains and hills. On this day Gorkha felt like a paradise, a mystical Shangri-La, deep in the mountains of remote Nepal.

As we prepared to bid farewell and hike to the red brick palace perched at the very top of the mountain, Bishnu took me aside and pointed out a village school way off in the hazy distance outside of town. He explained that this was a school for children of the Dalit community. The word "Dalit" translates to "oppressed" or "broken" and generally refers to those once known as "untouchables", people belonging to a caste outside the fourfold Hindu Varna system. Because of the deep prejudice

that is faced by the Dalit, Bishnu described the Nawajyoti Secondary School as facing extreme difficulties and challenges in providing the most basic of educational services to the children. The school had few precious resources to support or empower the children of this marginalized and often persecuted community.

Little did we imagine that three months later, a powerful, magnitude 7.8 earthquake would devastate the Gorkha District and surrounding areas in Nepal, turning the country upside down. Two major quakes, and multiple aftershocks, in April and May would ravage this country, killing and injuring tens of thousands, and leaving some two million homeless. The Nawajyoti Secondary School was severely damaged. Mrs. Shrestha, who was in Kathmandu at the time the earthquake struck, was injured from falling debris.

News of the April 25th earthquake reached campus almost immediately as students began receiving text messages and calls early Saturday morning from loved ones. The tragedy rallied and unified the CSC community; the outpouring of support that followed was tangible and inspirational. Plans for a return trip to earthquake-affected areas were soon developed to include relief efforts in Gorkha and the Maya Universe School.

We arrived in Kathmandu in early January 2016 to witness the rebuilding of a city and the resilience of its people. Damage in the Kathmandu Valley was 'localized' but significant. According to UNESCO, more than 30 monuments in the Kathmandu Valley collapsed in the quakes, and another 120 suffered partial damage. Further, it was estimated that over 1,000 monasteries, temples, historic houses, and shrines across the country were damaged or destroyed.

We departed Kathmandu for Gorkha soon after arriving, loaded with relief supplies such as computers, books, fuel, and positive energy. On the road to Gorkha, we passed numerous towns and villages, always teeming with people congregating outside houses and shops. Ubiquitous piles of bricks and rubble, evidence of the powerful earthquake, seemed to be everywhere. The challenges of the trip were to be compounded less by the 'Gorkha earthquake', but by the fuel and supply blockade along the southern border with India. Long lines for fuel (both for cooking and transportation) were to be seen throughout the country as people waited patiently for their turn to fill-up.

In Gorkha, Bishnu Shrestha led us by van and motorcycle to the Dalit community, which he had

pointed out last year. High in the hills outside of Gorkha, it was eerily quiet as we hiked into the small village of Paslang. We soon began to see broken and fallen houses, more piles of rubble, goats, along with men, women and children going about the business of daily life, farming and rebuilding. The villagers with whom we met seemed deflated, and expressed deep frustration that government relief aid, although promised, had still not arrived. They asked if we had come to rebuild their houses. This was a desperate moment for the team. As we were unprepared for rebuilding their homes, all we could do was offer food supplies and words of support and encouragement. We knew we must be respectful of the fact that we were visitors in their village during a very challenging time.

Later, we visited and toured the Nawajyoti Secondary School. Tents had been set up for classes to take place after the earthquake. A simple ceremony organized by the school took place in a small clearing with speeches and expressions of gratitude for the books, computers and basic supplies for teaching and learning, which we had given. We were deeply humbled by the show of appreciation for our modest gifts. We met teachers, administrators, and students at Nawajyoti, along with Mr. Kamal Raj Devkota, a PhD candidate

at Tribhuvan University. Later, Kamal wrote me: *"I assure you that the school will bring the things (you have given) into proper use for empowering its faculties and students technologically. As a PhD Scholar working with these young Dalit children closely for the last two years I know the austerity they are facing at home and its effects in their education. Nonetheless, they have a lot of difficulties, I appreciate the Dalit parents and their kids for having dream, hope, and doing effort for getting at least school level education. However, I see the challenges they are facing at home and school as the threats for their dreams and hopes for the future. Thank you so much for your great support for encouraging these young children. It was my grand opportunity to share with you about Nepali education, recent trends and the hopes and challenges we have. I hope your bilateral communication in the days to come will guide us, young lecturers at TU, to share our ideas, learn from you and walk ahead for enhancing the education of this small nation which is on its way in the phase of transition between tradition and modern."*

On the other hand, Maya, which translates to "love", was spared serious damage from the earthquake. Our group spent the days there offering clay, dance, writing, and soccer workshops to the

enthusiastic and motivated students. We provided a small scholarship for Gorkha students, donated school and food supplies, and painted a school building. We enjoyed hiking, wood fired cooking, and meeting with all the students and volunteer faculty. Deepesh and I were amazed at Maya Universe's growth in just one year's time. New buildings for classes, dining and dorms are being built. Clean water is in abundance but hygiene remains a concern. This summer, the Maya School has plans to welcome approximately 100 young orphans from Gorkha who were displaced by the earthquake.

In Kathmandu we took time to visit cultural treasures, including the great Buddhist stupas of Bouda and Swayambhu, the Durbar squares of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, and the Hindu temples of Pashupati. At Bouda, Tibetan Buddhist monks at the main temple offered our group special blessings in a ceremony of prayers and chanting. All of these sites suffered damage and are being rebuilt today. Finally, in Kathmandu we were very happy to connect with Nishchal Banskota '15 on the opening day of "BG Tea Bar," his family's new café serving Nepal's first certified organic tea. This was a memorable and meaningful way to wrap up our trip, as Nishchal was an important force in establishing the Wesson-Nepal Project.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to Bill and Jan Wesson for their generous and enduring support of the Honors program at CSC.

Also, my sincere thanks to Professor Ann Page Stecker for her encouragement and support of our work in Nepal. And, many thanks to this year's Nepal Project volunteers, especially the co-leaders of the trip, Deepesh Duwadi and Prithul Karki, along with President Tom Galligan and his daughter, Aisling, Bibek Thapa, Ayla Cordell, Chris Gagne, Abhineet Kumar, and studio art intern, Lauren Morrocco, for all their excellent work. Last but not least, many thanks to my student of ceramics, Anishma, and her sister Ashma, for introducing us to Bishnu and Roshani, who then invited us to the magical Gorkha.

Jon Keenan

STUDENT ESSAYS

There is an unspoken hope in Nepal that runs as an undercurrent throughout the country. Even amidst the rubble, destroyed homes, temples, and historic entities that breathed the air of hundreds of years of culture and faith and transformation, this undercurrent exists; a sense of hope in rebuilding that is as pervasive as the Kathmandu dust.

The earthquake is not something that can be exploited. It can only be felt—a deep ache in the heart, a mouth that cannot form any words of consolation or solace because it is a tragedy that struck too deep. We saw some of the worst devastation in Paslang, a village in Gorkha. The damage was all too visible in the piles of brick and rubble. The pain seeped into my mind and was felt on an internal level by all of us. Despite this pain, I witnessed some of the brightest smiles, and was met with a graciousness that overwhelmed every other sense. Even amongst all this rubble, there was a compassion that proved the spirit of the Nepali people was not destroyed, and that their culture would continue to thrive.

Although I spent our first night at Maya with a fever, cocooned in my sleeping bag, I'll remember our three days there as some of the fondest. Mornings began with school-wide circles, held hands and close hugs. Days were spent teaching dance with one of my best friends, Bibek, and although I don't think any of the kids knew my name, I gladly accepted the bestowed title of "Dancing Miss." We taught two dances, and I can say without any doubt that we worked with some of the brightest children I've ever met. They were kind, eager, fun, intensely

intelligent, and made me feel truly lucky to be with them. Nights were spent around a bonfire, where guitars and ukuleles harmonized with our conversation with the volunteers at the school. We all became accustomed to each other's snores in the big communal room where we slept, but it was the late night chats and laughter we shared before sleep that truly brought us closer. On our last day in Maya, the children performed their dances as Bibek and I looked on like proud parents. After that, the same two songs played on repeat as a bit of a dance party ensued. You would think this would become annoying, but the only thing that grew tired were my arms from having too many children jump into them to dance with me. It was pure happiness.

What I saw at Maya was unbelievable resourcefulness. The natural taps for water, the gardens growing food, and the raising of animals were all used as an additional teaching opportunity. The people make incredible use of the land, and nothing goes to waste. For me, Maya was a sort of microcosm of Nepal. Maya encapsulated all that I saw in Nepal—the resilience, resourcefulness, and the joy. I remember writing in my Wesson Honors grant application that I didn't think I would be the same person after going to Nepal, and I'm not. I feel different, enriched by culture in a way I never have before. I look at our world through a new lens—one comprised of a thriving culture, a devoted yet free faith, colorful dance and music, enduring hope, and endless compassion.

The situation of the country looked bleak. The fear of aftershocks following the massive Earthquake in April became a daily routine for the people of Nepal; stepping over the rubble deposited by the Earthquake seemed to be normal practice. The country, which was just starting to rise from the throws of devastation, faced the additional challenge of political upset as people in the southern region of Nepal protested for a separate federal state and inclusion of more rights in a newly promulgated constitution. Consequently, the supply of petroleum product from India was halted and the basic lives of people were severely impacted. The country was going through an extremely difficult period of time in its history.

Tensions were also high on the other side of the world. Seeing no sign of improvement in Nepal, a group of 11 students and teachers from Colby-Sawyer College called for a final meeting in the Wesson Honors Suite to determine whether the group should reconsider their decision to travel to Nepal, due to the unfavorable travel conditions. During the meeting, fellow student Prithul and I presented to the group the current challenges and uncertainties and asked for the group's opinions and a final decision. Luckily, President Galligan said, "We still have few weeks left before we leave. I will watch the news and wait until the week before the flight to see if the situation improves." The whole group agreed on President Galligan's words and decided to wait it out.

Before I knew it, I was with Prithul at Nepal's one and only international airport, Tribhuvan airport, eagerly waiting to welcome the president and the rest of the Wesson group to Nepal. Excited, I saw President Galligan and his daughter stepping out of the plane with smiles on their faces. This moment reassured me of the fact that the trip was happening despite the uncertainties that may exist. On our way to the hotel from the airport, the group experienced an adventurous ride in a van as the driver stomped the accelerator in a road jammed with traffic, and deftly maneuvered the van to avoid a narrow escape from a collision with an oncoming vehicle. Out of the blue, the driver made a U-turn in the middle of the two-way road and took a road less familiar to us. Prithul and I were completely speechless. This silence marked the beginning of a journey full of unpredictable moments.

The unpredictable nature of our journey to the hotel continued when an earthquake of 4.5 magnitude hit central India around 4am, and the aftershock of the earthquake was felt across India and its neighboring countries, including Nepal.

On the day of the earthquake we visited earthquake-ravaged locations, mainly ancient historical sites in Kathmandu. Jon, Prithul and I, who had made a previous visit to these sites, were transported back to memories of our first trip in January of 2015.

We were amazed by how much of a metamorphosis the country had made, and how much the situation had changed after the earthquake and the political chaos. We had praised the country's relentless efforts to protect ancient buildings and properties in the midst of the development of concrete buildings. Only a year had passed, and there we were, complaining about the government's inability to remove the rubble in the walking areas of those historical sites. The differences in our experiences were striking. It pained us as we tried to recollect our experience of the previous visit to those places—it was completely unfathomable! We found that both the people and the government were struggling to figure out recover from the traumatic events and move on.

We left Kathmandu valley and moved on to the epicenter of the Earthquake, Gorkha—the very place that the parents of Ashma and Anishma introduced to us in our last visit. As our group marched on to see the earthquake affected communities located a couple of miles away from our stay, villagers surrounded us with a rising expectation that we were there to help rebuild their homes and piece together their shattered dreams. We felt completely powerless. We donated goods and foods worth a few hundred dollars to the communities, but our contribution was insignificant compared to the level of destruction that the place and people endured. In our effort to encourage students of the area to get quality education in times of difficulty, we donated six comput-

ers, a sack of books, and stationary materials to the Nawajyoti Secondary School. The school provides education to children of the lower caste and upholds the motto of “education for all.” Spirits low from the morning visit to the other community, the members of Wesson group became animated to some extent by the school's commitment to benefit the community with education in the midst of chaos.

After two days of stay at Gorkha, our group headed to Maya—the school that Colby-Sawyer College students have visited since 2013. For Jon and myself, the trip marked our second visit to the school in two successive years. We were pleasantly surprised by the progress the school had made, as it continually thrives in a local environment, benefitting hundreds of students coming from various parts of the country. Maya Universe Academy is the first free private school in Nepal, and will set a new legacy in becoming a model for sustainable and liberal arts education system in Nepal.

We were back in Kathmandu after the purposeful and reflective visits, and started preparing ourselves for our trip back to U.S.A. The Nepal trip as I recall now was successful, reflective and more than that, the opportunity to enrich my life experience and broaden my perspective. I am forever grateful to the Wesson Honors Program for an amazing opportunity to lead the Nepal project for two years.

THE FUTURE OF NEPAL

Since returning home to New Hampshire, I've struggled to come up with a satisfactory way of describing Nepal to those who have inquired. I certainly did a copious amount of writing during the trip, and while everything that I put down in my journal still makes sense to me, I am at a loss of how to go about describing this trip to my friends, family and teachers. Everyone seems to ask the same question: “How was Nepal?” How do I describe the feeling that comes from watching the sun rise twice in 24 hours from a plane at 38,000 feet? The experience of looking into the distance and seeing snow-capped peaks rising over the city, as if out of thin air, the shortest of them putting Mt. Washington to shame? The feeling that came with driving past gas stations with stagnant lines of vehicles stretching back for miles, some of their operators asleep in their seats, the result of an ongoing fuel blockade at the Indian border? Or from looking up at the moon at night and being reminded that it's still the same one I saw in Boston on the other side of the planet a week ago. The simple truth is that, frankly, I can't. Nepal is a country where the laws of time and distance matter very little to its residents, an alien concept to Americans. My two weeks spent in Nepal felt like a passing apparition, for which only my photographs and the stamp on my passport prove I was there at all. I cannot nor will I ever be able to fully answer “How was Nepal?”

It is too brief a question with too long an answer. I can and will, however, do my best to do it justice.

CITY OF MAZES

We began our trip in Kathmandu, a labyrinthine city navigated through the beeping of horns and the benevolence of strangers. Things had changed quite drastically since Colby-Sawyer's last trip only one year ago. Gone were the traffic-choking political protests as the legislature debated the terms of its new constitution. Instead we had to navigate our way through the remnants of the April 2015 earthquake. Those of us who had memories of the capital as it was before that day were particularly affected by the sights that met our eyes, of ancient temples and statues reduced to rubble, or otherwise masked by wooden scaffolding. As a student majoring in History and Political Studies, these images affected me as well on two levels – first from seeing countless historical artifacts, some centuries old, damaged or destroyed in minutes, then from witnessing the inefficiency of political bureaucracy when it comes to rebuilding its own culture almost a full year after the tragedy. We then drove out to the town of Gorkha in the mountains to the west, where we saw further examples of how government corruption and stagnancy can harm those whom the system is meant to serve. Gorkha was stunning, but its beauty existed in ways completely distinct from the tangled web of Kathmandu. Set atop a mountain so high we could not see its bottom, Gorkha overlooks an ocean of peaks,

CHRIS GAGNE

a sea whose waves swell and crash over the course of eons. Its residents have dug out their lives upon the mountainside, growing crops upon inclines that farmers in the Midwest can scarcely imagine.

Gorkha's beauty is also seen in its hospitality. During our three-day stay we received great care and friendship from none other than the family of my classmates, Anishma and Ashma Shrestha, whose father guided us into the more rural parts of the town and served as translator for us. There we distributed what we could by way of foodstuffs to the villagers, whose government relief was not reaching them. (This sadly, was also not an unfamiliar sight, when one considers our own government's response to disasters like Katrina.) Here too we saw citizens living still without suitable dwellings, their homes having been lost almost a year ago. This leg of the trip was hardest for all of us, as we had neither the time nor the resources to give these villagers what they really needed, something so many of us take for granted every day: walls. From Gorkha it was on to Pokhara, second largest city in the nation, where once again a sense of adventure enlivened us all. A few days of boating, hiking and even paragliding for a couple of us and we were finally ready for the real reason we were there: Maya Universe Academy.

GLIMPING THE FUTURE

In Nepali, 'maya' means love, and it became immediately obvious why it was the namesake for the school we had spent so much time planning to visit. It took all of sixty seconds for the students, ranging in age from about 4 to 16, to embrace us like family. The school itself literally functions on loyalty and trust; in exchange for their children's education, parents pledge two days out of the month towards aiding the volunteers, who come from countries all across the globe as we did. In this way it also became evident why 'universe' formed the second part of the school's name. Cultures and knowledge converge at Maya, a focal point of learning set in the solitude of the forest. Every hour we spent there had a new surprise in store, a fresh example of how its students are absorbing the cultures of multiple nations; on our first night I had a long discussion at dinner with a boy who was engrossed in one of my favorite novels, George Orwell's *1984*. The only thing at Maya more exciting than this convergence of culture was the students' drive and enthusiasm. Not a lesson I watched went by in which any questions asked by the teacher failed to get a raised hand from almost every child. Each student's intelligence, moreover, was matched by their desire to prove it. During our stay I had the opportunity to conduct a writing class with the students. I gave them a choice of six prompts by which they could easily write about themselves: What is the happiest or saddest memory you have? What are

your favorite things to do and why? What is something in your life that you are extremely proud of? Without conferring with one other, almost all of the 23 students I worked with chose the last prompt: What do you want to be when you grow up? They wrote their responses with diligence, occasionally asking me for help with spelling. Then they handed me their papers, their wishes and their goals, with the modesty that is exclusive to children, making me promise I would first read them by myself and only when I got home. Their answers speak for themselves: doctor, engineer, teacher, pro-football player, scientist, and more. Our stay at Maya reaffirmed for me the impermanence of all the hardship we had witnessed leading up to it.

Nepal is a country whose resilience is unrivaled. Currently its people wait days for petrol; they make their work commutes up the sides of mountains; weather routine power outages, bureaucratic corruption, and even the unlikely but real threat of civil war. But the future of Nepal, a nation fighting every day to make its way from in-between two economic superpowers, is not defined by its challenges, but by its future. And its future is not defined by constitutions or fuel blockades, but by its youth. Its youth will be doctors. They will be engineers. They will be teachers, pro-football players and scientists. I know; I have it down in writing.



“Are you here to build our houses?” This question comes to my mind every time I think about Nepal. I still remember the tear-filled eyes of people when they tried to recall the earthquake as we asked them different questions; the uplifted eyes of people who were hoping we would provide them some support; and of course the frustrated eyes of people too frequently visited only to be interviewed and have their pictures taken. They complained about how people only provided them more and more false hope and broke their expectations all the time. These are some of the glimpses that have been the highlight of the trip for me. These scenes bother me all the time and force me to think, “Am I doing the right thing by staying in the States at this point of time, or should I be back in Nepal and try to do something for these people?”

On our fifth day of the trip and second day in Gorkha, immediately after breakfast, we were scheduled to visit a couple of communities in a village named Paslang in the District of Gorkha. Gorkha was the epicenter of the earthquake, and there was a mass destruction of life and property throughout the region. Paslang was a small village with a beautiful view of the Annapurna mountain range. The devastation was easily recognizable as we could see several demolished stone houses in the area. There was a small space full of temporary

settlements dotted with small tents. People approached us expecting help and support. It was a heartbreaking scene and was deeply emotional.

After some time, we visited another community in the same village. As we were passing through each house, we could see people looking at us with hope. We stopped at a point and started talking to a woman. She mentioned to us her frustration about how people have been coming to them just to show hope and kind words but ultimately do nothing for them. We were surprised to hear that they had not even received the NRs. 15,000 that the Government of Nepal had promised to all the victims of the Earthquake. We went to these places just to see the condition of the country. After seeing their faces and the condition of their lifestyles, all of us were touched emotionally and it was a tough moment. We decided to provide some basic necessity to both these communities. Something that really struck me on that day was the generosity of a woman who had lost everything because of the earthquake, yet was still offering lunch to President Galligan and his daughter.

On our return back that day, I was constantly thinking of all the historical monuments that were affected by the earthquake that I had visited now and before, all the people throughout that village, and all of the people throughout the country affected by the highly inflated price of goods due to

an economic blockade along the Indian border. A thought was constantly striking my mind: should I take a semester break and stay back to do something? The situation and this thought only made me feel more helpless. I remember the night when I found out about the earthquake. It was about 2 a.m. on a Saturday. I tried calling my parents to figure out how they were. I tried every phone number I had through different sources. I could not contact them all night long. Finally, I contacted them at 7 in the morning. You can imagine how helpless I had been feeling at that time. However, the helplessness I was feeling in Gorkha was even greater than on the night of 25th April 2015.

We continued the trip and went to one of the schools in Gorkha which was the main reason we were in that place. The school had been badly affected by the earthquake. Its academic building was damaged and they were holding classes in temporary tents and small cottages made of bamboo. Our initial plan was to donate some money to help the school rebuild its academic buildings; however, we dropped the idea because of fear of corruption. The principal of the school instead asked us to buy a few computers with the money, as they were planning to hold computer classes the next academic year. We donated six computers and 150 books to the school. After the official ceremony, the school authorities took us on a tour of the school. We saw more devastation from the earthquake there. All the time I was thinking of how I wished I could do more. I wished we all could do more. The same thought kept coming to my mind

and disturbing me time and again until we reached Maya Universe Academy, the school Wesson Honors has been sending students to for the last three years. All the people who have been to Maya used to tell me the kids are the best thing about the school and my answer is no different from theirs. The moment I saw the kids and started talking to them, I forgot all the negative feelings that I had in my mind. I had never seen such smart and curious kids in my life before. They re-energized me quickly and filled me with positivity. I was amazed to see the future generation of Nepal so passionate about learning and doing so well. I couldn't find anything that they didn't have knowledge about, and I was highly impressed with some of their leadership qualities. I have no doubt that they have bright futures ahead of them, and that Nepal's brighter future lies on their shoulders. These kids made me curious of where would they end up in the future. Sometimes I wonder, if I were this smart, where would I be by now? What would I be doing?

We stayed at the school for three days and three nights. We were always surrounded, hugged and kissed by these kids. Some of us conducted different workshops for these brilliant and enthusiastic students. We painted the walls of a new hostel that was built recently to accommodate 25 kids who were brought from Gorkha, many of whom lost both their parents in the earthquake. We worked in the gardens to grow vegetable for the kids. We also donated \$1,000 sponsoring those 25 kids towards their studies.

A night before our departure the kids had written a wonderful note to President Galligan thanking Colby-Sawyer College for their continuous support. What an enlightening experience it was. The Maya experience has made me eager to go back to the school and spend more time with the kids there.

I would like to thank President Galligan, his daughter Aisling, Professor Jon Keenan, my friend Deepesh Duwadi, and the rest of the group for being part of such an incredible experience, and for their support through this tough and emotional journey. I would also like to thank Professor Ann Page Stecker for her continuous support for the Nepal trip these last three years. I am grateful to the Wessons for sponsoring the trip and being part of such a life-changing experience. I hope the trip and the relation continues for a long time so that different students from Colby-Sawyer College can benefit from similar learning experiences, and that Colby-Sawyer's commitment to global diversity experience becomes ever stronger. Lastly, I would like to thank all the people who have supported our trip and mission directly and indirectly.

Jay Nepal!

By now, I've come to accept the fact that I'm not the best at letting things go. After having watched six seasons of *Lost* within a span of two weeks, I found myself walking around my apartment aimlessly, weeping like a child, unable to get the image of Jack, and the airplane above him, out of my mind. When I first watched *The 400 Blows*, I was in a new country where I knew no one. I didn't want the movie to end. I wanted to share the feeling of isolation with Antoine for a little while longer before I had to go back to feeling it alone. But then there's real people and real places. That's definitely harder. When I left Nepal behind, I couldn't help myself from writing a little something about it. Nepal and all of its ever-winding roads, sprawling mountains of green and white; all of its unfathomably resilient people, fighting to survive in the face of utter tragedy; all of its children, brimming with optimism and kindness, all of that has been one of the hardest things to let go for me. And the feeling of wanting to stay there to continue helping those in need and experiencing the country's raw majesty is a tough one to fight. What a wonderful country and what a wonderful trip. There's no way I won't try to come back to carry on what was started three years ago.

The trip to Nepal was a much anticipated one for me. I came to the United States to escape home. I needed to follow my dreams, learn to be on my own, and for that reason I needed to be away from what was familiar to me. I remember my freshmen year when people talked about home-sickness as if it was a real thing. I always scoffed at them. I had friends who would cry thinking about home and I would brush them off, perceiving them as weak. Then the earthquake happened. When everything back home was in chaos, I learned how much I needed it and loved it. Despite knowing that my family was safe and sound, the weight that sat on my heart from the moment I heard the news was sometimes too much to bear.

I finally had the opportunity to go back home through the Wesson Honors program, and I jumped at the chance to see my family again. My return trip turned out to be so much more than I could have hoped for. Besides the opportunity to see my family and friends for the first time in two and half years, the journey to the remote areas of Nepal and to Maya Universe Academy was eye opening and heart-warming. Seeing the devastation of the earthquake and the lack of aid from the government broke my heart. When we went to visit the earthquake-affected areas in Gurkha, people there expected more from us than we could deliver. Our arrival gave them hope, but sadly we didn't have the power, nor the funds, to meet all their needs. Hopefully the little we could do provided them with some relief. Maya was a different world. It was filled with so much hope, so much innocence and much power.

When we finally arrived there, we were greeted with happy and excited faces of the children who lived there. Teaching these kids dance and spending time with them late into the night were one of the most rewarding parts of the trip for me. Despite the country's situation— an earthquake and the blockade in the Terai borders— these young individuals gave me hope for the future of my home country.

My wish moving forward is that we may continue this relationship that we've developed with Maya because these kids need us and we need them as well. All the hours we spent coming up with plans for fund-raising were worth every smile we witnessed on the faces of these kids that make me want to look ahead for a better and a brighter future.



THE CLASS OF 2016



JESSICA BAKER



I am a Media Studies major and an English minor. In my four years at Colby-Sawyer. I have taken a number of Wesson Honors courses which have all given me advantages in different ways. For some, the classes were somewhat connected to my area of study and gave me another look at my major and minor (Film and Society, “On the Road” [an English literature course], and Writing and Publishing Seminar for a couple of examples.) But others gave me the opportunity to look outside what I had chosen to study and see what other disciplines had to offer beyond what I took for Liberal Education. “The West and the World” (a history class) and “The Exonerated” (a law/sociology/psychology hybrid) let me come in contact with people from other disciplines who were trying something new just as I was, which was an incredible experience.

ERIN BENNETT



Erin Bennett is a member of the graduating class of 2016, and a senior Wesson Honors’ student. She was welcomed into the program at the beginning of her sophomore year at Colby-Sawyer, and it has been an irreplaceable part of her undergraduate experience. The Wesson Honors program offers a holistic view of the liberal arts, where all disciplines contribute for the common purpose of understanding one another. Erin is a creative writing major with a studio art minor; and the people, stories, and knowledge she was introduced to because of the honors program became a well of inspiration.

MEGHAN BOSLEY



The Wesson Honors program has been integral to my experience at Colby-Sawyer. It has allowed me to have a truly integrated education by expanding the courses I took and exposing me to different perspectives and opinions. The students and the professors in these courses all have something different to offer and create a unique community that I have always felt a part of. The Wesson Idea Fund allowed me to complete a service trip my sophomore year to work with Rebuilding Together in a struggling district in Miami, and the Wesson Honors Tutoring program enhanced my ability to connect with students of all types.

SARAH FIELDS



The Wesson Honors Program enhanced my scholarship by offering courses that allowed me to traverse the schisms between disciplines in academia and showed me that there is a place for interdisciplinary thinkers. Art in Chemistry opened my mind to a new universe of opportunities in the liminal spaces between fields and encouraged me to pursue career opportunities in those spaces. The Wesson Honors Program showed me that I don’t have to choose between my love of science and art but incorporate both into a marketable degree. I was also able to travel to Ottawa Canada with the help of the Wesson Honors program to explore the differences between the US and out neighbor to the north.

JACLYN GODDETTE



As someone who joined the honors program after entering college, I can say with certainty that being a Wesson Scholar has been a defining feature of my time at Colby-Sawyer. Taking classes with some of my favorite professors centered around their passions really allowed me to delve into the material and make connections across disciplines. My favorite honors courses were Revolution! with Professor Boyer and Holmes! with Professor Jauchen, where I got to explore my intersecting interests in politics, history, and literature. Furthermore, the Wesson Idea Fund gave me the life-changing opportunity to travel to Nepal, where I learned how much of life is culturally constructed and taught the students as Maya Universe Academy about narrative structure. I am inspired by the resiliency of that small country everyday, and I hope to spread what I've learned through the honors program wherever I go.

JULIAN GRAEFE



Colby-Sawyer College features a liberal arts requirement that requires all students to dip their feet into multiple “arts” across several academic disciplines. The Wesson Honors Program has provided me with the unique opportunity to expand upon this sampling experience even further. Over the course of my four years of study in the program, I have enrolled in honors courses pertaining to film, literature and history. These courses have diversified my understanding of the liberal arts curriculum, and have greatly influenced my realm of thinking. I am happy to admit that I am able to connect more ideas and thoughts now that I can relate them to several fields of study

JILLIAN JACOBS



Over my four years at Colby-Sawyer College, the Wesson Honors program has helped me become a more holistic, inquisitive, and interdisciplinary learner. My honors courses have helped me think critically about the connections between my major (Business Management) and other disciplines, and in some instances even apply my learning to lived experiences. During “Multimodal Composition and Visual Rhetoric,” I had the opportunity to understand how to use online tools to formulate arguments with real-world applications. More broadly, my very first honors class (Storytelling) established a foundation for higher-level collegiate thinking and writing that has helped me succeed throughout my CSC career. The program has also helped me launch my professional career: my Honors capstone project gave me the opportunity to become a local leader for LGBTQ+ youth, a role I hope to continue into the future.

XIAOXIAO LU



I have benefited from all the great offerings of the Wesson Honors Program. The unconventional classes have been amazingly interdisciplinary and fabulously stimulating. The breadth and depth of my learning in honors classes has been unparalleled: from discoveries of social values in ancient civilizations through myths to debates about the social conditions of the modern era through film; from scientific analysis of terrorism and its origins to aesthetic evaluation and making of ceramics...every one of these classes have been an unconventional journey in search of knowledge. Not only have the honors courses greatly enhanced my education, but the Wesson Idea Fund has given me the opportunity to be a member of the first Wesson Honors Nepal Trip. All of these wonderful opportunities have inspired me and instilled a passion for discovering the world and its beauty.

NICOLE MACHADO



Being a part of the Wesson Honors Program for the last four years has given me the opportunity to explore topics outside of my major that were very pertinent and beneficial to my goal of becoming an elementary school teacher. For example, my honors pathway class freshmen year called “Torrents of Talent” introduced me to the growth mindset. Incorporating growth mindset in the classroom became the topic for my Child Development Capstone and an important aspect I added to my student teaching experience. The honors courses have also given me the opportunity to challenge and push myself further than I thought I could go. My honors pathway course helped me realize my talent and passion for dance. Because of this class I pushed myself to become a better dancer, and using my growth mindset, I achieved my goal of joining the Colby-Sawyer Dance Company. Classes and experiences I have had through the Wesson Honors Program have helped shape the individual I have become and the type of teacher I want to be.

JENNIFER MARTZ



My time here at Colby-Sawyer College has truly shaped who I am today. The standards set by the Wesson Honors program have pushed me to do more than I could have imagined. The classes I have taken within the program have encouraged me to engage in a multidisciplinary method of thinking. Each course I took added something new to my understanding about the world we live in. The first honors class I took, taught by Russ Medbery, clearly outlined the meaning of an honors class. It was to think differently and open our minds to new perspectives. I feared during this first class, like many of my classmates, that the honors program would prove to be too much for me. However, I have found that this program has taught me, not to do more work, but to work and think differently.

JOVANA STOJANOVA



The Wesson Honors Program was a chance for me to prove myself academically, but as years were going by it became a lot more than just grades. The Program supported my trip back to Macedonia which enabled me to do my capstone research, and pushed me to take classes I would not normally take, challenging myself by disciplines beyond my major and usual areas of interest. I feel honored and privileged to have been part of such amazing group of scholars and I would encourage prospective and current student to seriously consider becoming part of the Wesson Honors Program here at Colby-Sawyer.

ELLA TEKLE



The Wesson Honors Program allows students to grow intellectually and encourage scholars to take academic and co-curricular leadership in Colby-Sawyer College. As a member, I have been presented with multiple opportunities. In the winter break of 2015, I was able to travel to Ethiopia for my Idea Fund grant research to create a non-profit organization, WeForShe, which works on women empowerment in high school campuses. The research was based in the capital, Addis Ababa, and consisted of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. WeForShe works to promote young females active participation in social, economic, and political aspects starting from high school through various mentorship opportunities. This research was successful due to the support of Professor Ann Page who has always encouraged me to reach my potential

MAGGIE TUCKER



The Wesson Honors program has enriched my experience at Colby-Sawyer College in many ways. It has allowed me to take interesting courses in subjects that related to my major, History and Political Studies, as well as courses which had, at least on the surface, nothing to do with it. Despite the fact that many of my Honors courses were rooted in subjects such as psychology (The Exonerated) or sociology (Film & Society), many of the themes within the course related back to those in the courses I was taking for my major—usually the themes of inequality, and the power of government within our society. Other courses such as Revolution and Modern Civil Rights, have related directly to my

major and worked to enrich my education as a HPS major at a higher level. Each semester I have taken Honors course, they have invariably been my favorite course of the semester. Even with the added component of the Honors Program, in addition to my major requirements, I was able to complete my degree in 3 years (I will officially graduate October 2016), and was always excited to take Honors courses. Without the Wesson Honors program, my college experience would have been radically different and honestly bereft of many of the experiences that have made Colby-Sawyer such an exciting and vibrant learning environment for me these past 3 years.

HANNAH WILCUTT



The honors courses through the Wesson Honors program have enhanced my liberal arts degree by providing me with opportunities to take classes outside of my major that are unique and provide me with a different perspective on learning. The Wesson Honors pathway I took freshmen year helped me the most with establishing myself as a college student. It was the perfect transition class from high school to college to understand what to expect in college and was a great introduction to being a part of a liberal arts education. It taught me to think outside of the box as well as push me to try something new. I would have never gotten up onto a diving board without this class and I thank the Honors program for this and for allowing me the opportunity to get the most out of my Colby-Sawyer education.



CHANGING TIMES: **LOOKING BACK & LOOKING AHEAD**

2015 – 2016 has been a rich year for the Wesson Honors Program. Our courses have been challenging and mind-bending; our IDEA Fund grants have provided students with the opportunity to explore new avenues of research and engagement. Our third trip to Nepal to work at the Maya Universe and in Pokhara after the devastating earthquake has drawn our community together. This year's members of the trip included President Galligan and his daughter, and Professor Keenan, as well as six honors students. And last but not least our seniors presented intelligent and creative honors capstones, won numerous awards at Commencement, and described their experience vividly. Wesson's courses and programs hope to prepare our students to be agents of change and invention in the world and in this newsletter you will read how clearly they have begun.

Honorificabilitudinitatibusly yours,

Ann Page Stecker

FEATURES & CONTRIBUTORS

WRITERS

President Thomas Galligan

Professor Jon Keenan

Ayla Cordell

Deepesh Duwadi

Chris Gagne

Prithul Karki

Abhineet Kumar

Bibek Thapa

Wesson Honors Class of 2016

Ann Page Stecker

PHOTOGRAPHER FOR NEPAL TRIP

Professor Jon Keenan

PHOTOGRAPHER OF WESSON GROUP

Ann Page Stecker

DESIGNER & EDITOR

Laura M. Collins, '16
