Becoming Aware of Your Reality

Niamh

I fully intended to sit down and write you a September-worthy motivational composition. It was going to be inspiring and upbeat, alongside the start of a new year. There was going to be pearly clean-slates, zinging like a cartoon character’s teeth, next to open doors in an oyster-world for the taking. Back to school, the beginning of a term, a year, a sport, a club, a college career…makes us all start over. Super-seniors and first-years alike must re-root themselves to some degree. Easier said than done. What do you do when, barely into a fresh start, you find yourself feeling stuck in a rut? Clearly, this situation is very confusing; you should have had at least until mid-terms before things started feeling all too familiar, and these things, these feelings, are certainly unwelcome, especially this early in the year. What happened to the days when homework seemed to do itself, and there were moments saved just for breathing? Those days were nice. This isn’t high school anymore. Blank slate? How do you paint it perfectly when you feel like you don’t have the time or the utensils necessary for the task at hand? The start of a new year brings fresh opportunities. You just need to search them out. It may be difficult to find the thresholds, because all of the possibilities being thrust upon you can be quite suffocating, and you might be worried about your destination(s). Even traveling around in a circle can be a thrilling ride, but at this level, at college, it feels like everything should really be beginning to make sense. Adulthood. Self. Goals. Meaning. Purpose. If you feel like you should have made these discoveries the moment you moved in to Colby-Sawyer College, you are sorely mistaken. The soul-searching is not over. In fact, there is much more work to be done. If you’re having trouble locating that new beginning, if you’re having trouble finding the stars to reach for, ask yourself the most important question known to mankind. What do I want? Focus on what society tells you you’re here for (academics), but also pay attention to your heart. That beating, brilliant life form inside your chest can hold a wealth of knowledge if you choose to lend an ear. Find your niche, push through the rough patches, and let your heart lead you when you feel like you’ve lost vital guidance on your path. Be open. Be willing. Fail. Succeed. They can both lead you to beautiful places.
What’s in Store

Honors Retreat Recap

Caitlin Thornton, Class of 2011

The Honors Retreat, an event to welcome the new class and stir up participation in our Honors program, was a great success. There were the expected ice breaking games, complimentary snacks, and free ‘Go Green’ travel mugs. But most importantly, there was a group of enthusiastic students ready to make this school year as fun and rewarding as possible.

Our first-year Honors students worked closely with some of our Honors Ambassadors, Kayleigh Flynn, Megan Ruggiero, Alicia Foss, Meghan Hardiman, and Amanda Gibbons, to come up with some educational, social, and community service-based events for the upcoming year. In addition, four new students volunteered to become Ambassadors for the Freshmen class: we welcome Ashley Gillan, Ashley Reynolds, Kendra Hotchkiss, and Sarah Maloney. Our new and returning Ambassadors will act as liaisons between the Wesson Honors Advisory Council (composed of faculty and staff) and students of the program. The Advisory Council discusses topics that include, Honors courses, Honors contracts, Wesson Weekends, and goals of the Honors Program.

The events tentatively planned on the Honors Program’s agenda for the fall are a Board Game Night at the Lodge on Thursday, November 12th at 8:00pm, a community service project based at a local soup kitchen on Sunday, November 22nd, and “Green Festivus,” scheduled for Saturday, December 5th, where we will learn how to help our environment and spend time with friends eating delicious eco-friendly foods.

The spring semester will begin with a Karaoke Night on Thursday, January 21st in the Lodge at 8:00pm. On Valentine’s Day, a group of Honors students will be traveling to the Woodcrest Retirement home. Join us in making cards, playing games, and baking goodies with the seniors of New London. Later that day, a poetry contest will take place in the Honors Suite. Categories will include “Most Romantic,” “Most Corny,” “Most Poetic,” etc. Some other events in the works are a “Dances of the Centuries” event in mid-March and a Teddy Bear Picnic with the children at Windy Hill School in late-April.

Please get in contact with your Honors Ambassadors if you are interested in getting involved or serving as a leader for any of these events. Start your Wesson Honors experience off on the right foot by giving back to our campus community and the town of New London.

Awakening the Best

Invoking the Citizen Leader

Robin Burroughs Davis, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Citizenship Education

Randy Hanson and I are three weeks into our Pathway “Awakening the Best: Invoking the Citizen Leader.” Our double Pathway has great energy. Each of us has our own idea of what a leader is, so our class spent some time discussing the differences (if any!) between leaders, heroes, and role models. This conversation had us moving from kings and conquerors to community organizers and anarchists. Moving from reality to theory, we next explored Robert Greenleaf’s idea of “servant leadership” and how Greg Mortenson and Nelson Mandela may or may not fit Greenleaf’s ideal; indeed we wonder if anyone could.

As you may know, our Pathway is bringing several panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, conceived of by Cleve Jones, a community activist and a leader in the gay rights movement to campus. Our students are currently planning ways to advertise the event, organize volunteers to help set up and take down the panels, read the names of those who are represented on the Quilt, and facilitate programs and activities related to AIDS education and prevention. The Wesson Honors Program is co-sponsoring this event with our class, and Randy and I are grateful for any help you can provide.

The Quilt will be arriving on or around October 10th – Family Weekend. The following week will be filled with opportunities for you to get involved. If you have never seen any of the Quilt panels, please believe me when I tell you they are amazing. The love that people put into the making of the panels and the way these panels represent the individuals they commemorate – through poetry and imagery – make the AIDS Memorial Quilt a true masterpiece of visual art. If you are interested in learning more about the AIDS Memorial Quilt and Colby-Sawyer College’s display, please contact Randy Hanson (rahanson@colby-sawyer.edu) or me (rdavis@colby-sawyer.edu).
The notion of a “slacker” or an “idler” is a cultural construction. Who are idlers and what are they up to? Why do we react to them in the ways we do? What do idlers represent and tell us about our culture and society? What do work, leisure, and idleness mean for human subjectivity? How has the very idea of being idle changed according to historical context?

In the first semester of this class we follow idlers through cultural history, tracking institutional and conceptual changes in labor and leisure. We learn about the rise of industrial capitalism and its effect on work and leisure, and investigate relationships between consumer culture and cultural production. We theorize relationships among politics, culture, and idleness, interrogating assumptions about virtue and work. We explore the paradox of productive idleness, and ultimately learn to think more critically about our own cultural environments.

One of my primary goals for the course is that students emerge as stronger thinkers, readers and writers. Students will learn techniques of critical thinking, close-readings of texts, and essay writing. In the second semester we will apply our theoretical framework to contemporary culture: who are today’s idlers and what are they up to? What are some political and cultural implications of being idle in a context of global capitalism, post-industrialism, or post-modernism? We will focus on case studies of such movements as global “slow food” movements, neo-luddite reactions to technology, anarchic educational practices, environmentalism, culture jamming and cultural resistance.

Amanda and her co-workers at Benny’s 2007 Teddy Bear Picnic
Travel Log: Volume 1

London Calling and I Don’t Wanna Shout

Megan Ruggiero, Class of 2010

During September of last year, my trip to London was a mere idea, a seed beneath the ground in the garden of dreams. The idea needed nurturing. It needed convincing, and it needed hope. My best friend, Suzanna Brown, had just learned that her parents had been moved to London due to their work with the State Department, meaning that when Suzanna left Colby-Sawyer during Christmas Break, she would then call London “home.” I was beyond envious. Being the generous and outstanding friend that Suzanna is, she told her roommate, Amanda Rossi, and I that we were more than welcome to visit her during the summer. We both nodded our heads in agreement and smiled with glee, knowing full well that our promises could very well be empty ones.

When I spoke with my parents about the possibility of the trip, I expected them to blot out the miniscule, sparkle of hope I had left that the trip would actually become a reality. In fact, I had played out the entire conversation in my head multiple times, and I had expected them to cite the excuse of “money” more than they really needed to. I also thought that my intense fear of flying would be mentioned. Instead, my parents proposed that I use some of the miles they had accumulated on their Mileage Plus credit cards, and my mom gave me a bottle of Excedrin PM on the spot, and told me it would knock me out for most of the trip. I had just been presented with my graduation gift a year early!

Amanda had similar luck with her parents, and before we knew it, we were sitting in Logan International Airport waiting for our plane to blast us across the Atlantic. More than seven hours later we were yawning and exhausted, crawling our way through Heathrow’s border control zone with passports in hand and hearts aflutter with excitement. After a quick nap at the Brown flat in Hampstead, a borough of London, we began our journey at Regent’s Park, a locale straight out of the pages of one of my favorite novels, Mrs. Dalloway, by Virginia Woolf. I know this is going to read as completely cliché, but I just couldn’t believe I was sitting on a bench across the sea in a country that I had wanted to visit for at least half of my life, the half that actually recognized that there are other places that exist beyond the United States.

I admit that Amanda and I were the epitome of tourists on this trip. Amanda snapped over 1,000 pictures on her high-tech camera, and I often stopped to just take in my surroundings, breathing in the London air that had such a unique flavor and scent, and watching the Londoners go about their days. I marveled at the architecture of Westminster Abbey and Big Ben, and I could feel the history of this place circulate through my body, giving me goosebumps and making me feel as if my skin was on fire. This unpredictable sensation took me by surprise at first, and then I realized that London was making me feel alive, alive in ways I had never imagined.

(Volume 2 of “London Calling and I Don’t Wanna Shout” will appear in our October issue)

From the Editors

The Wesson Honors Newsletter Staff would like to extend a warm welcome to all new and returning Honors students! Please let us know what you think of our little publication. We are looking for new writers, and new opinions. Feel free to write to us in the form of editorials, or just send us an email and let us know what we can do to improve our work. We would love to answer questions you may have about the Wesson Honors Program through the newsletter. Chances are if you’re feeling confused about something, there are other individuals feeling the same way. The Newsletter Staff thrives off of you and your minds, so let us know what you think. Our email address is: whonorsnewsletter@gmail.com. Our next edition is due to be published before Halloween. Happy thinking!

Coordinator’s Nanosecond

by Professor Ann Page Stecker

I confess that I believe, and with my mind fully engaged, that the seen and the unseen collide and collect in creative processes to create meaning and motion. It’s a conviction the 19th century poet John Keats proposed in a letter to a friend, writing: “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of the Imagination.” (John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, November 22, 1817) Where? When? How? Maybe these are my favorite “impertinent questions,” which like all questions are ideas in motion. Welcome back returning Wesson Honors Scholars and welcome new members of the Wesson Honors Program to our community bristling with questions about the seen and unseen.