

# Colby



## Colby Magazine

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Volume 99  
Issue 4 *Winter 2011*

Article 5

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January 2011

### Colby News

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#### Recommended Citation

(2011) "Colby News," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 99 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol99/iss4/5>

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## Robert E. L. Strider II, 1917-2010

**R**obert E. L. Strider II, who as Colby's president from 1960 to 1979 moved the College into national prominence, died Nov. 28, in Boston.

Strider, 93, a Harvard-educated scholar, came to Colby in 1957 as dean of faculty. As president he pushed for innovative curricular changes he said were needed to supplement Colby's strengths and address its deficiencies.

Most changes were aimed at providing students with more flexibility in their studies—including the January Program of Independent Study, implemented in 1962, and interdisciplinary majors including East Asian studies, human development, and environmental studies. "There was no need to adhere to the orthodox patterns in some areas," Strider wrote in 1979, "particularly those that lent themselves to combination with others."

He was the force behind securing in 1962 a \$1.8-million Ford Foundation grant that vaulted Colby into the top echelon of liberal arts colleges in the country. "Bob's most important contribution was an incredibly powerful focus on increasing and enhancing the academic stature of Colby," said President William D. Adams at Strider's memorial service in Boston.

Strider also insisted on academic rigor, pushing faculty toward scholarship and insisting that the College retain requirements including proficiency in a foreign language. Trustee James Crawford '64 recalled listening as a freshman to Strider's address to the class. "He said, 'I want you to look to your right and look to your left and just know that at the end of four years only two of you will probably be graduating,'" Crawford said. "The message was pretty clear—that academics was really important."

Strider was a popular if imposing

figure on campus in the early years of his presidency. But as the country swept into the turbulent late 1960s and early 1970s, Colby, like other colleges and universities, was the scene of angry protests against the Vietnam War and for more equitable treatment of African Americans. The relationship with college presidents soured as students took over college buildings (including Lorimer Chapel at Colby) and went on strike. "There was a sea change in the attitudes," said College Historian Earl Smith, who was dean of students during Strider's tenure.

Strider was not one to engage in heated debate with students or to negotiate with them. In his baccalaureate address in 1971 he said he hoped Colby students who had protested and marched would someday "see that, for all the suffering, it was during these years that real progress was made ... ." To illustrate his point he quoted Shakespeare and Virgil.

"The tonality of the times and Bob's personality were not well matched," Adams said.



raised four children and where Helen Bell Strider oversaw the planting of trees and flower beds that remain today. "It was in his company that I learned ... about how to deeply appreciate the time that I have before me," Adams said.

After Colby, the Striders relocated to Brookline, Mass., where Helen Strider

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**"Bob's most important contribution was an incredibly powerful focus on increasing and enhancing the academic stature of Colby."**

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President William D. Adams

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After the tumult of the years of protest, Strider was more reserved in his public role on campus, Smith said. But in recent years he attended trustees' meetings and visited Adams at the president's house.

Adams said Strider spoke of his memories of Mayflower Hill, and he once asked if he could sit alone in the backyard of the home where he and his wife

died in 1995. Robert Strider then moved to a retirement home where he ran popular discussion groups on current events and literature, Smith said.

Up to the end Strider insisted on academic rigor. "The last time we had lunch with him he was getting ready to give a seminar on *Hamlet*," Smith said. "He was so frustrated because some of them hadn't read the book." —Gerry Boyle '78

## Career Advice from the Top

For students anxious about entering the job market without having received professional training in college, the message delivered by a high-level diplomat might assuage some concern.

The morning after delivering the 2010 George J. Mitchell Lecture to a standing-room-only audience at Colby Oct. 21, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg sat down for breakfast with about 20 students to talk about careers.

Steinberg's message to the group, made up primarily of government majors? Colby students are getting the best form of job training right now, right here. "I feel very strongly that the undergraduate years are not professional education years," he said. "They're years to develop habits of mind and tools of thought that you can use no matter what you end up doing."

Young people feel a lot of pressure to start doing professional work, he said. "You'll have plenty of time for that. You'll never have the chance again to read Plato and Aristotle, to study the history of Africa.

"I think when you look back you'll find that those were things that were most useful to you, and then you can develop the more technical skills as you discover and find that they're relevant to your careers."

Students, so appreciative of the opportunity for an informal breakfast with Steinberg that they made it to Dana dining hall by 8



Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg

a.m. on a Friday, asked questions ranging from what his job entailed to how they might proceed with their educational and career goals.

There's no set path into public policy work, Steinberg said. "The wonderful thing about the world in which we live and the way in which it's changed is that there are lots of ways ... to public service and working on international issues." He encouraged students to get out and try something, which he said would help them determine the type of work they enjoy, from working in the field to being on the "idea side."

For Steinberg, years of domestic policy work preceded his somewhat accidental entry into foreign policy. "In one of these sort of small twists of fate," he told students, "I happened to be in the office on Sunday morning, November fourth, nineteen seventy-nine, which is something you won't all remember but was the day that the Americans were taken hostage in Iran. It's about seven-thirty in the morning and, like a good young public servant, I was in the office. ... My boss was not."

The attorney general of the United States called and, before he knew it, Steinberg was at the White House working on negotiating the release of the hostages. "I thought it was pretty good stuff, and it opened a whole new window to me," he said.

Perhaps that served as more reassurance that getting up early for the breakfast was, indeed, a wise choice. —*Ruth Jacobs*

## Biomass: A Big Step Toward Carbon Neutrality

Construction is underway for a biomass heating plant that will use wood chips and forest waste to replace 90 percent of the 1.1 million gallons of heating oil used by Colby each year. Site work began in December for the \$11.25-million project that will install twin 400-horsepower biomass-fueled boilers to produce steam used for heat, hot water, cooking, and electrical cogeneration.

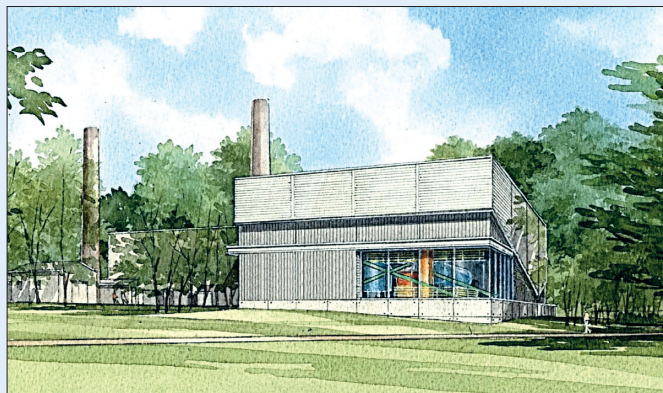
The plant will burn low-grade forest waste and debris including bark and treetops. Plans are for biomass to come from sustainable forest operations within a 50-mile radius. The conversion will replace up to a million gallons of oil per year, and estimates of oil and biomass prices suggest the project should pay for itself in six to 10 years, according to Director of Physical Plant Patricia Murphy.

Since biomass is considered carbon lean

if not neutral, carbon emissions from Colby's steam plant will decrease about 90 percent, Murphy said. The project will put the College well down the path toward carbon neutrality, which it intends to achieve by 2015.

The steam plant, which will keep the oil-fired boilers on line for peak heating periods and backup, will continue to employ a cogeneration turbine that supplies 10 percent of Colby's electricity needs.

Murphy and project manager Assistant Director of Physical Plant Paul "Gus" Libby, both engineers, did extensive research into the experience of early biomass adopters.



They worked with a firm that designed a system using a gasification combustion process. The result will be emissions that meet or exceed established regulations and ash that should be suitable for composting or agricultural use. —*Stephen Collins '74*



## Jews in Maine Colleges Between World Wars

With one notable exception, the history of quotas on the admission of Jewish students to Ivy League and what are now the NESCAC colleges during the first half of the 20th century is not a proud chapter for institutions now dedicated to diversity, meritocracy, and inclusivity.

The exception? Colby, according to Desiree Shayer '12 and Pulver Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies David Freidenreich.

Their student-faculty collaboration titled "A Tale of Two Colleges: Jews and Baptist Institutions in Maine During the Interwar Years" was presented at the national Association for Jewish Studies conference and in an on-campus preview, both in December.

Their research found that Colby's lack of restrictions on the number or percentage of Jews admitted was unique among similar colleges they looked at, that Colby had a significantly higher percentage of Jewish students, and that the Jewish community in Waterville saw dramatic advantages in socioeconomic status as a result of the College's admissions policy.

Which is not to say anti-Semitism didn't exist. Though the president, trustees, and faculty supported chartering a Jewish fraternity beginning in 1919, student government was not persuaded to approve Tau Delta Phi for 14 years, and other frats didn't admit Jews for years afterward. —S.C.



Members of Colby's Tau Delta Phi fraternity, ca. 1950.

## Nyhus Attends Putin's Tiger Summit

Associate Professor of Environmental Studies Philip Nyhus has been working for years to help China save its tigers. An authority on tiger conservation, Nyhus was invited to join heads of state and leading conservationists at a summit convened by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in November. The goal:

to get the leaders of the 13 tiger-range countries to sign a declaration that they will work to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. The summit was covered by major media outlets worldwide. "This was the first time in history leaders of major countries came together and declared that they were not going to let a species go extinct," said Nyhus. "As far as I know it is unprecedented."

Since 2005 Nyhus and his student researchers have worked to determine areas of China where tigers could potentially be reintroduced into the wild. Never was there



a guarantee that the government would move forward once a plan was devised—but Nyhus and his colleagues were optimistic. "I think the Chinese have already decided they want their tigers back," Nyhus said in 2008. "I think it will happen."

It appears he was right. At the summit, "China did declare

that they were going to not only conserve wild tiger populations on the border of Russia and Indochina, but they were going to return or restore wild populations of South China tigers."

It's a victory that Nyhus is careful not to claim credit for. But he and his student researchers know that they contributed data that helped to advise the Chinese government as it pondered action on a conservation issue that caught the attention of the world.

To read the 2008 Colby magazine story and see associated multimedia, go to [www.colby.edu/mag](http://www.colby.edu/mag), keyword tigers. —R.J.

## Advice for Internationals

Voytek Wieckowski and Sambit Pattanayak, both 2000 graduates, have a lot in common—with each other and with Colby's current crop of international students who want to work in the United States but need an H1B visa to do so.

Both Wieckowski, from Poland, and Pattanayak, from India, needed the non-immigrant work visa that allows employers to hire foreign workers in specialized occupations after their student visas and occupational practical training extensions expire. Both succeeded and have experience recruiting and hiring on their now impressive résumés.

With students using the Colby Alumni Network, "We were fielding numerous calls from Colby asking us about the job search," Wieckowski said. So, after going over the same ground repeatedly in one-on-one conversations with eager students, the pair decided to present their advice more formally—for a broad audience online and by visiting Colby for two days this fall to work with interested students.

A lot of their advice is available on their website [www.F1toH1.com](http://www.F1toH1.com). In addition, a couple of dozen students—American and international—listened to their presentation Nov. 11, and many of them signed up for counseling and conversations with Pattanayak and Wieckowski in the Career Center the following day.

They encouraged students interested in business to work in the United States at least for a time. "Here you learn the basics of business better than anywhere in the world," Pattanayak said. "And that U.S. experience is valued anywhere in the world," Wieckowski chimed in.

They told students the transition from the supportive, collaborative atmosphere on Mayflower Hill to the tough and competitive "real world" can be uncomfortable. But they assured students that the education they're receiving is world class, and the skills they'll take away make them competitive with applicants from anywhere else.

"The Career Center is doing a great job," Pattanayak said afterward. "Man. I wish I'd had that ten years ago." —S.C.

## Guyland Confronts Contemporary Masculinity

Reactions ranged from laughter to awkward silence when sociologist Michael Kimmell spoke to a crowded Page Commons audience about marriage, masturbation—and the culture in which young men are socialized and how it affects their values, pursuits, and relationships.

Kimmell, a leading researcher on masculinity, discussed his most recent book, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. “Guyland” refers to the period between adolescence and adulthood—ages 16 to 26.

It’s a relatively new phenomenon, he says, emerging since the 1950s, when people were expected to be married with children (i.e. adults) around age 20.

Despite the societal changes in the past half century, including advances in women’s equality, “One thing that remains relatively constant for men of college age now,” he said, “is that ... most men in this age group ... subscribe to the same ideology of masculinity—what they think it means to be a man—that I did, that my dad did.”

The problem with that, Kimmell said, is that young men now lack similar mentoring as they navigate manhood, especially in college. “In every single other culture in the world, it is the grownup men who ... validate the boys’ masculinity,” he said. “What happens on college campuses is that you have eighteen-year-olds proving [their masculinity] to nineteen-year-olds, and that simply cannot work.”

This affects women in profound ways, Kimmell argues. “The big irony for me in writ-

ing *Guyland* was, despite the dramatic increase in women’s equality ... Guyland remains a relatively gender-unequal world,” he said.

So what are we to do? “I think the question is how do we navigate our way through Guyland more consciously and more ethically,” he said. “Naming it, understanding it, understanding what’s being asked of us in its name, is the first step.”

Explaining it to a room full of people in Guyland works too. —R.J.

## Looking Back at the Lorimer Takeover

Forty years after 18 African-American students occupied Lorimer Chapel with a list of demands, about 75 current students turned out to hear a visiting historian say, “They left a legacy that can never be erased from Colby College.”



In the Pugh Center Nov. 17, Ibram H. Rogers, assistant professor of African-American history at SUNY-Oneonta, gave a lecture titled *Activism at Colby: Colby College and the Black Campus Movement, 1965-1972*.

Rogers talked about the week-long chapel takeover during March 1970 in the context of a national black campus movement that swept

American colleges and universities as activists occupied buildings to demand changes.

He described Charles Terrell ’70, a leader of the chapel group (and today a Colby trustee), warning “with his fiery rhetoric” a demonstration by supportive students on a snowy day. He quoted a letter from occupying students to the administration saying, “The matter of illegal trespass in the chapel is pitifully irrelevant when compared to the matter of man’s illegal trespass against human dignity.”

As the days wore on, it became clear that, as at other protests around the country, so at Colby: “Administrators and black students were not speaking the same language,” Rogers said. A week into the protest, a sheriff’s deputy delivered a restraining order and students left the chapel vowing the fight was not over.

While the occupying students did not get satisfaction, Rogers said, “We all are a legacy of the black campus movement and those seventeen brave, determined, and fearless black students who put their college experience on the line.”

Responding to a student’s question, he said: “Activism is usually initiated by a student. A student deciding, like a Charles Terrell, deciding ‘I’m not going to let the status quo persist,’ and then beginning to encourage his peers, his friends, that they shouldn’t allow this to happen. And then one becomes three and three becomes five.”

“They made a mark,” he concluded, “and I’m hoping that you make whatever mark you’re supposed to make.” —S.C.

## New Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid

Teresa E. Cowdrey, vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid at St. Lawrence University, has been named vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid. At Colby Cowdrey will provide leadership in enrollment planning, student recruitment, admissions, and financial



Teresa E. Cowdrey.

aid. She will oversee a staff of 23 and will serve on the College’s senior staff when she joins Colby’s administration following the 2010-11 academic year.

Having begun her career in admissions just after graduating from Wesleyan, Cowdrey brings almost three decades of experience. Under her leadership, St. Lawrence has seen improvement in inquiry and application numbers, admissions rate, yield, early decision, class rank, diversity, and standardized test scores. “I know Colby will benefit enormously from her experience and vision,” said President William D. Adams.



## TwitterFEED

A selection of tweets from @colbycollege.  
To see links, catch up on tweets, or sign up,  
click the Twitter icon on the Colby homepage.

**Warner Nickerson '05 scores in World Cup GS (ahead of Bode)**

Dec. 6

**A student anthropology project on the experience of immigrants in Maine evolved into an award-winning museum project.**

Dec. 3

**Excellent "Mainebiz" profile of Thomas Cox '66. He shut down foreclosures nationwide; is hailed as a literal life saver.**

Nov. 29

**Dan Vassallo '07 - WINS - Philadelphia Marathon, with 23,000 full- and half-marathon runners behind him.**

[See page 35]

Nov. 23

**LensPic: Molly Muller '11 saw this cow moose by Johnson Pond. Can any other college boast about a resident moose?**

Nov. 18

**Professor Lisa Arellano lectures on the relationship between narrative and violence -- in Showtime's "Dexter."**

Nov. 12

**Doris Kearns Goodwin '64 on The Colbert Report on the 2010 midterm election.**

Nov. 4

**Impressive! Six Colby students presented research at the Geological Society of America national mtg and expo in Denver.**

Nov. 3

**The Student Lens highlights Family Homecoming Weekend and the Harry Potter dinner. Check out this week's post.**

Oct. 29

## Medical Sponge Clean-up

It may not be an everyday occurrence, but when a surgical sponge gets left in a patient's body, it can cause pain, infection, additional surgery—and great expense. The problem costs the U.S. healthcare system about \$1.4 billion a year in lawsuits and surgeries to remove the sponges, said Devon Anderson '09.

Anderson, Jonathan Guerrette '09, and Nathan Niparko, a classmate from the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth, developed a solution that won second prize in the Collegiate Inventors Competition in November.

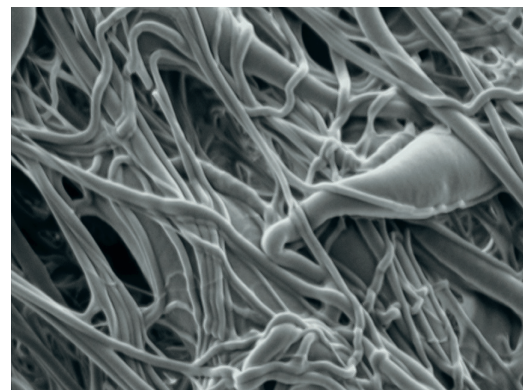
In recent years hospitals have used inventory devices to keep track of sponges. But that doesn't prevent the need for additional surgery. So the Colby-Dartmouth trio, in a one-year capstone course at Thayer, created a sponge that breaks down in the human body, causing no harm to the patient. "We decided that we needed to alter the sponge as opposed to altering our counting methods," said Anderson, who is now working full time on the project as he plans to begin medical school.

Anderson is careful not to give away any secrets. But he can say that the sponge is composed of cellulose, typical for sponges, and alginate, a similar natural polymer. But these particular polymers aren't inherently biodegradable. "We chemically modified the polymers, but that's only after we put them through a fabrication process that creates nanofibers," he said. "It's a pretty new field that a lot of people around the country right now are working aggressively on for different biomedical applications, mostly for drug delivery."

"The applications are pretty wide," for their sponge, he said, including "integrating drugs into the sponge itself so that as it's degrading the drugs are released." For now, the 23-year-old is focused on the original goal. Obtaining a patent will take 15 to 24 months. Then the team expects to decide to manufacture the sponges or sell the rights.

Either way, besides potentially solving a dangerous and expensive medical problem, there may be substantial money for the inventors.

"Really big money, I think," Anderson said. —R.J.



A close look at the fibers of the bioresorbable sponge.

## More Alfond Support for Athletics

In November President William D. Adams announced a \$2-million gift from the Harold Alfond Foundation to endow the director of athletics position at the College and provide additional support for a variety of varsity athletic programs.

"Harold Alfond's generous support over the years, particularly his support of Colby's student-athletes, has made it possible for our students to train and compete in some of the finest facilities available at any liberal arts college in the country," said Adams. "This most recent gift will provide even greater opportunities for Colby's student-athletes to compete

at the highest levels of the NESCAC."

In addition to this gift, the Harold Alfond Foundation and former trustee Bill Alfond '72 have made significant recent gifts to the College in support of its athletics programs, including Bill Alfond Field, Colby's first synthetic turf facility, built in 2004, and the Harold Alfond Stadium, built in 2008.

Colby's current athletic director, Marcella Zalot, will become the first Harold Alfond Director of Athletics. The endowment of the athletic director position frees up already budgeted funds within the Athletics Department to augment other programs.