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Student Life

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Jake Conklin: A Vision Without Borders

Colby senior seeks cure for public health ills

by Alicia Nemiccolo MacLeay '97

Jake Conklin '00 originally envisioned it as an "innocent project"—to build a hospital in the Ancash mountain region of Peru. That might sound like well-meaning naivete, but Conklin already has signed corporation papers to create The One Organization, named the five trustees and obtained advice from sources that include the deputy director of the Pan American Health Organization.

Conklin, a chemistry major from Marion, Ohio, spent the summer of 1998 as a volunteer in the Ancash mountains. He visited homes to study the potentially fatal bacterium *bartonellosis* as part of a public health research program run by the Pan American Health Organization, the U.S. Navy and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

The previous summer Conklin was a night-shift emergency room intern at the Chicago Children's Memorial Hospital and a volunteer in the hospital's outreach program to housing projects. Conklin said that "a need to shed the comfort zone around me" draws him to working in difficult conditions.

Conklin discovered the project in Peru by searching on-line for public health opportunities in underdeveloped countries. He sent inquiries to researchers he found interesting. Capt. Larry Laughlin, an epidemiologist in the Navy and head of Project Bartonellosis, responded but said if Conklin wanted to work in Peru with him, he'd have to cover his own expenses.

A year and a half later



Jake Conklin '00

Conklin still is in debt from his work in Peru, but he says the experience was worth the cost. He realized "more people would volunteer if financial obstacles were lessened," so, as the Student Government Association cultural chair, he has created "Colby Abroad" to fund learning experiences for students during the summer or Jan Plan. Conklin said he wants to offer other students chances to "make a lasting impression and form their own answers."

Seeing the limited medical care in Peru deepened Conklin's commitment to public service. He created The One Organization, which is dedicated to eliminating divisions between third- and first-world nations, and through the organization he intends to build the hospital. Retaining the local

Peruvian culture and identity is important, he says. "It's hard to draw the line in helping but not changing a community," Conklin said.

Alex Chin '96, assistant director of student activities, is one of the organization's five trustees. Chin said he got involved in Conklin's mission "because Jake is a visionary, and unlike most visionaries he combines that with passion and a strong sense of motivation. People like that are rare."

Ultimately Conklin wants to work on nationwide approaches to health care, involving secondary education as well as medical services. He is spending spring break in Paraguay to evaluate possibilities for such a strategy there.

Eventually Conklin wants The One Organization to be

more than an avocation, but he is headed for medical school after graduation. He reasons that the "sooner I'm done, the sooner I can focus on these things." Last fall, he already had been accepted into the Navy's medical school but was waiting to hear from other schools.

Conklin is also busy working on his chemistry honors research with Associate Professor Julie Millard, with whom he has worked since his freshman year. Their research involves isolating a drug from an edible mushroom and cross-linking for cancer studies. "Jake is loaded with enthusiasm, initiative and humor," said Millard. "He will be a fantastic tropical health practitioner, is sure to discover loads of nasty new diseases and will have a great time doing it."

One might think Conklin would have little time for other pursuits, but he recently completed what he said "can be considered a novel," about a student who finishes medical school and works in a third-world country to pay off his debts. "It's a very political and a very hopeful novel," said Conklin. He hasn't contacted a publisher yet. "I'm prepared to work on it for three to five years, until I'm satisfied," he said.

Though he loves to write, Conklin says he has no desire to be a writer. "My true passion is to perform visible change and help people live in healthier conditions," he said. "I like just about everything and I think that's my biggest problem. I get pulled in so many different directions." ♦

Colby Bookstore Girds for On-Line Challenges

Ads tell textbook-buying students to "Get on-line, not in line." Varsity-books.com bills itself as "your online college bookstore." Is the traditional campus bookstore on its way to extinction?

Last summer the Colby Bookstore tested the on-line competition. A student picked six Colby classes and shopped for books at eight of the most popular college textbook Web sites. She got so frustrated that she asked to be let out of the project, says Barbara Shutt, book division manager, who oversaw the project. Only one company was able to ship all the books requested. Others had waits of up to six weeks for out-of-stock books. Still others didn't have the books needed or the correct edition, according to the bookstore's research.

"No one else will sell all the books you need at Colby," said Bruce Barnard, manager of the Colby Bookstore. He admits on-line sellers can offer books cheaper, even with shipping costs, but says students should consider the total experience. "The typical student at a private liberal arts college in New England is demanding of convenience," he said. "We tend to cater here."

However, Randy Stewart '00 had to log onto Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com when the Colby Bookstore was out of three required English books this fall. "It would have taken weeks" for Colby

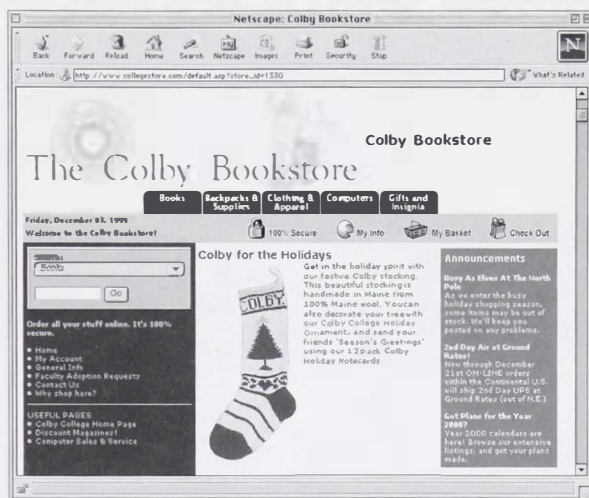
to deliver the books, he said. Instead, shopping on line, Stewart had the books in days. He compared prices at Barnes and Noble with his Colby Bookstore purchases and found them the same. "I should have checked them all at Amazon, though," he said.

Occasional out-of-stock titles notwithstanding, Barnard is working hard to keep students shopping on campus. The Bookstore offers used books and custom publishing of professor requests. The store also makes immediate exchanges when students add or drop classes and buys back new and used books.

Though bookstore sales were up this fall, Barnard says the store isn't about to dismiss the competition. While few Colby students have turned to the Web for textbooks, the on-line companies are "in it for the long haul," said Barnard. "Web stores like varsitybooks.com expect to lose money for some time." Eventually, though, they intend to make a profit.

So far, on-line textbook sellers are best at targeting public institutions, where booklists must be made available if requested in writing—a rule that doesn't apply to Colby. Some on-line sellers have begun partnering with schools and, in some cases, have completely taken over student textbook sales.

Looking ahead, Barnard said, "We know there's a battle, a long drawn-out war." ♦



Maria Gonzalez '01

Maria Gonzalez Is Helping Build the Global Economy

for the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce in her hometown. As an intern, she was assigned to redo a brochure that attempted to explain how Venezuelan companies can do business in Florida. "It was four pages long and all the information was messed up," Gonzalez said.

So she rolled up her sleeves and went to work.

Gonzalez, who already had three internships in human resources and corporate financial consulting under her belt, says she spent a month finding information on business regulations, the application process, what products could be exported or imported, "what each tax is about, what you should know."

She then spent two months compiling the brochure pertaining to business in Florida. Her superiors liked it so much, they asked her to expand it to New York, Texas and California. "I'm glad that I managed to know everything I needed to know before I got [to the job]," Gonzalez said.

She said much of her training for the task came from Associate Professor of Economics Debra Barbezat's course on labor markets, which acquainted students with ways to find the kind of information the brochure needed to convey. That training apparently paid off; Gonzalez learned Florida officials may award a grant that would pay for her to

do similar brochures to be used to encourage trade between their state and Latin America.

She plans to return to Caracas to do an independent study in Jan Plan with the Chamber of Commerce, and after graduation she may go back to Venezuela to begin her business career. "I would like to do some kind of finance," Gonzalez said. "Financial consulting would be nice."

Speaking in the Spa, Gonzalez said her business model and inspiration is her grandfather, a self-made Caracas businessman who was successful in banking and other areas. "If it weren't for him, we wouldn't be standing here right now," she said. ♦

From Aroostook County to the Final (Irish) Four

Even when Eric Saucier '00 was in his basketball prime, playing in the Eastern Maine tournament for Presque Isle High School, he never dreamed he'd go to the Final Four. As a player.

But that's exactly what Saucier did last spring, leading his team to the finals of the national championship by sinking two three-pointers and making a key steal in the last three minutes of the semi-final game.

"I had the green light to shoot whenever I wanted to, from wherever I wanted to," Saucier said.

Saucier had given up basketball after his final high school game. When he arrived at University College Cork, Ireland, for second semester last year, Saucier, a starting halfback on the Colby soccer team, decided to join the university basketball club as a way to meet more Irish students.

Tryouts were in a middle school gym, a dimly lit hall with a dirty floor and ripped nets. But if the facility was lacking, the reception from his new teammates was not. "They were like, 'Wow, an American,'" Saucier recalled.

No matter that he is only five-eleven and hadn't played in three years. Saucier was embraced—literally—by his teammates and given a key shooting guard role by his coach, who was German-born but felt a special affinity for Americans because he had lived in Canada.

"We had this bond," Saucier said.

Indeed, camaraderie was what the club was all about. "We'd have practice, then we'd go to a pub, just to celebrate the practice," Saucier said. "Good practice, guys. Let's go have a pint."

In late March, the team was culled from about 18 club players to a dozen who went to the tournament in Dublin. The entire season was three days long. The skill level was comparable to that of a team from a very small American college.



Eric Saucier '00, lower left, with teammates from University College Cork. The team played for the national championship but lost in the finals.

"You're in the final four if you win three games," Saucier said.

Cork beat the University of Limerick in the first round and topped the University of Ulster Jordanstown in the second. In the semi-final's Cork knocked off the University of Ulster Monmouth, in part because of Saucier's late-game heroics.

With about 100 fans in attendance, Cork finally succumbed to Dublin College University—partly because that team had two skilled American players from Detroit. Saucier scored 23 points.

Any hard feelings?

Not in Irish hoops, Saucier said. Opposing players socialized in pubs, got together for a dinner

dance after the finals. "Everybody's hugging, arms around each other," Saucier recalled. "And singing. Singing is a big part of it."

The basketball team returned to Cork by train. The trip was highlighted by girls singing Irish folk songs. The singing spread, not only through the car but up and down the train.

It was athletics without hype, competition without the commercialism that is the trademark of American college sports at the national level. Not that Irish college sports all lack celebrity appeal.

Saucier said the prestige sport is hurling, an Irish game that is similar to lacrosse but played with sticks with blades instead of nets. The UC Cork hurling team was sponsored by Guinness; basketball players wore the logo of a spring-water company. The Irish hoopsters may have gone to the finals, but the hurlers were the top jocks on campus.

"They have their hurling jackets on and a couple of girls on each shoulder," Saucier said.

This wasn't lost on Colby students in Cork, several of whom have brought sticks back to the States. They hope to start a hurling club on campus. It would be a club sport, of course. Reserve your Final Four tickets now.

What's in a Name?

WMHB-FM (89.7 FM) prides itself on delivering a diverse blend of music by student and community disc jockeys. Some program titles are self-explanatory, such as "Tuesday Blues," "Odd Rock" or "The Greatest Songs." But others? Here's a sample. The music genre is included, in the event that some readers might find the names just a bit cryptic.

Some of us may even need explanations of the explanations.

Nudity & The Tulsa Bus System (jazz & fusion)
Grizzly Bob's Vaudeville Hour (rock)
Tiger Cub BSA (new rock)
The Apathetic Tom Show (indie rock)
A Dodge Program (trip-hop & indie)
The Happiness Hour (punk, indie rock, melodic hardcore)

Musical Mayonnaise (rock)
Red Wine & Crackers (jazz & blues)
Jigs, Hoedowns & Songs O'Tragedy (folk, bluegrass and Celtic)
Nocturnal Emissions (talk)
Euro-Trashed Hangover (euro dance and club music)
Trapped in an Oven (new rock)