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Colby News

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THE FRONT LINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

When Oak Fellow Afsan Chowdhury first arrived on the Colby campus, he was struck by the manicured lawns, immaculate brick buildings, the gentle summer breezes.

“And the lack of difficulties in all aspects,” he said.

For Chowdhury, a journalist and activist from Bangladesh, it was a moment of culture shock. “Because there is nothing wrong in this place,” he said. “And I come from a world where almost everything is wrong.”

For Chowdhury, who is on campus for a semester to alert the Colby community, and the West, to the very dangerous, very present effects of climate change, the contrast was illuminating. “There are people who find it very difficult to relate to the world where the difficulties are so enormous,” he said. “For the West, climate change is a matter of lifestyle: reduce consumption, recycle. But for the East, it is about life, literally, physical life. Climate change is not waiting to happen,” he said. “In the south, in the countries like Bangladesh, climate change has already happened.”

Chowdhury first reported on the then-loomng crisis 20 years ago in his home country. In the years since he has seen Bangladesh ravaged by rising waters, flooding of the Ganges Delta, disrupted growing seasons, resulting food shortages, displacement of more than 30 million people.

In low-lying countries like his, where poverty has long been endemic and people have lived under the threat of cyclones and monsoons, the changing climate has made a difficult situation worse.

“Everything is in a state of flux in those economically and environmentally challenged worlds,” Chowdhury said, “where the rivers are taking away homes, where drought has taken away crops, and floods have destroyed harvests, and all of this has depressed people economically, medically, socially, and in every other way.

“How does one bring these two worlds closer? Because it’s not like the West doesn’t know. But the West needs to relate. That is different from just knowing. I think that is the biggest challenge today.” —Gerry Boyle ’78

To read more about how climate change is affecting people in Bangladesh go to www.colby.edu/mag, keyword bangladesh.

Multimedia Mules

Multimedia is the new coin of the online realm, and Colby now has a central repository for audio and video Web content. The Colby Multimedia Directory provides various ways to sort and search video and audio content on www.colby.edu and www.insideColby.com. Check out everything from Goldfarb Center lectures to a video of President William D. Adams’s State of the College talk.

Go to www.colby.edu/news_events/multimedia

Apuzzo On Top

On Oct. 10 on his Web site, The Page, Time magazine political analyst Mark Halperin listed the five most important people not running for president. Number two was President Bush. Number one? The Associated Press’s Matt Apuzzo ’00, former editor of the Colby Echo, now an AP national legal affairs correspondent. Apuzzo was in Alaska in October covering the Sarah Palin “Troopergate” story.
Anne Hull Wins Lovejoy Award

Anne Hull, a national reporter for The Washington Post, has won awards for her closely observed narratives of people living on the margins of society in America. When she won the 2008 Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award, Sept. 28, she treated her audience to an intimate look at her own craft—how she blended in with soldiers’ families to research the Pulitzer Prize-winning “Walter Reed and Beyond” series, how important it was to ride buses from the Mexican highlands to North Carolina to understand the immigrant experience of 22 Mexican women on H2B guest-worker visas, how pleased she was when one of her subjects answered a suspicious “Who’s that?” challenge by saying, “That’s nobody. That’s Anne.”

Hull invoked Eudora Welty to describe her approach to journalism: “It is not my job to judge, but merely to pull the curtain back to reveal this hidden world behind it.” She cited James Agee and Walker Evans in the Great Depression as inspirations. She quoted an editorial by 1994 Lovejoy winner Eugene Patterson that she kept on her desk for many years that inspired her “to shine a light into the eyes of someone who wishes to look away.”

Besides talking about the challenges of having to leave the comforts of home and city to report on the real America, Hull spoke about current and immediate challenges faced by newspapers that have diminishing resources to pour into reporting like the investigation that revealed the Walter Reed scandal.

“There is no replacement for that sort of reporting,” she said. “There’s a lot of James Agees still around doing this, but they’re becoming fewer and fewer, replaced by this caffeinated society of bloggers and Twitterers who are filing dispatches from a T-Mobile spot at Starbucks.”

—Stephen Collins ’74

International Dust-up

Two Colby alumni were tangled up in the expulsion of ambassadors by Latin American governments in September. When Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez ordered U.S. Ambassador Patrick Duddy ’72 out of the country, U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack ’86 stated, “Our officials, including Ambassador Duddy, are going to continue to speak out on the state of U.S.-Venezuelan relations.” For profiles of Duddy and McCormack, from 2008 and 2005 respectively, search for their names at to www.colby.edu/mag.

Savings in 2007 after Colby switched to publishing this magazine on 100-percent-recycled paper produced using alternative fuels, as cited in a Chronicle of Higher Education article about alumni magazines going green.
Greg Mortenson to Speak at 2009 Commencement

Greg Mortenson, subject and coauthor of the New York Times bestseller Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time, will deliver the commencement address and receive an honorary degree at Colby’s 188th Commencement ceremonies, Sunday, May 24, 2009.

The cofounder and executive director of the nonprofit Central Asia Institute and founder of Pennies for Peace, Mortenson has dedicated his life to promoting community-based education and literacy programs, especially for girls, in remote mountainous regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In 1993 Mortenson climbed Pakistan’s K2, the world’s second-highest mountain. After getting lost on the descent, Mortenson met a group of children in a local village writing with sticks in the sand. He vowed to help them build a school.

From that grew a humanitarian campaign. Mortenson has established more than 60 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan that provide education to more than 25,000 children, including 14,000 girls, for whom few education opportunities existed before.

Colby Is Strong Despite Market Instability

After 10 days of market freefall in October, President William D. Adams sent an e-mail to faculty and staff outlining how the financial situation had affected Colby and what employees could reasonably expect, recognizing the volatility and unpredictability of the markets.

“The bottom line is this: the financial condition of the College is stable, and we expect to have the resources we need to meet our most important commitments,” he wrote. Adams credited Colby’s conservative financial practices. “In recent economic downturns, this cautious approach has served us well. We have not had to resort to layoffs to balance our budgets, nor lowered the quality of our core programs, nor made reductions in financial aid. As things stand today, I see none of this changing in the near future.”

Still, Colby is concerned about the possibility of a severe recession and the potential effect on Colby’s financial aid budget and on the charitable giving that Colby relies on for its endowment and operating expenses.

For an update from President Adams on the topic, visit www.colby.edu/president

For Diamond, Crisis Presents Golden Opportunity

Where some saw only a financial meltdown, Robert E. Diamond ’73, P’12 saw opportunity.

The president of Barclays and a member of Colby’s Board of Trustees, Diamond bought the core U.S. investment banking business of bankrupt Lehman Brothers, making London-based Barclays one of Wall Street’s biggest players.

News reports predicted the $1.75-billion deal would save about 8,500 jobs, with Diamond telling staffers at Lehman’s New York headquarters, “You have a new partner.”

Lehman had been Wall Street’s fourth-largest investment bank. Its collapse followed close on the heels of the sale of Merrill Lynch to Bank of America in what quickly became a mushrooming global financial crisis.

Diamond, 56, is credited for turning around Barclays’ once-moribund investment arm, Barclays Capital, which in recent years has driven Barclays’ profits and become one of the most successful investment banks in the world.

Last year Barclays’ bid to buy Dutch rival ABN AMRO came up short as a consortium headed by the Royal Bank of Scotland prevailed. The Lehman deal is similar in that it moves Barclays into the top tier of global investment banks, analysts say.

Diamond was among possible buyers talking to Lehman Brothers just days before the bankruptcy filing. Barclays walked away from that round of talks after U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson declined to insure some of the risk, according to news reports.

But Barclays, and Diamond, returned to consummate the eventual deal.

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for Barclays,” Diamond said in a statement. “We will now have the best team and most productive culture across the world’s major financial markets, backed by the resources of an integrated universal bank. We welcome the opportunity to add Lehman’s people and capabilities to the Barclays team.” —G.B.
Donihue Leads Curriculum Review

When administrators in Eustis went looking for an associate vice president for academic affairs to lead the first comprehensive review of Colby’s curriculum in two decades, they found the best candidate right across the street, in the Diamond Building. A member of the economics faculty for 19 years, Michael Donihue ’79 started the new job July 1 and is focused on “all things curricular,” he said.

Working primarily with the Academic Affairs Committee and three curricular planning working groups established for the review, Donihue maintains that the faculty must be at the center of efforts to define a Colby liberal arts education for the 21st century. He is eager to manage the role of the faculty in articulating “a vision of where Colby is headed,” he said.

Donihue assumed his new titles—as associate vice president for academic affairs and associate dean of the faculty—after disparate studies and forces aligned to prompt a review of how Colby teaches:

- A 2007 New England Association of Schools & Colleges reaccreditation praised the College but urged more attention to “articulating and measuring student outcomes.”
- A faculty Ad Hoc Curricular Planning Committee, established in 2007 in response to reaccreditation self-studies, proposed the three working groups, which are focused on curricular oversight, teaching communication skills, and academic engagement with an emphasis on project-based learning.
- On the federal level, the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education and a Senate inquiry got colleges’ attention with calls for various new types of accountability.
- Demographic forecasts show a steep drop-off in the number of high school graduates who traditionally populate Colby’s applicant pool. “This is the one that put chills down my spine when we started,” said Donihue, whose academic specialties are economic forecasting and macroeconomic policy.

Donihue is clearly energized by the opportunity to help steer the College’s mission, but he’s wistful about his hiatus from the classroom, particularly given historic turmoil in the world economy. As governments scrambled and markets continued to plummet in early October, he said, “This would be a great time to be teaching macroeconomics.” —S.C.

Organic Garden Gives Back

Students interested in sustainability have brought the concept to Colby’s dining halls. From mid-June through October, students in Colby’s new Organic Gardening Club have been contributing produce to Colby’s dining halls—everything from lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers to carrots, beets, and garlic.

Two students, Ben Hummel ’11 and Andy Smith ’11, took the lead on tending the garden this summer. The primary crop provided to the dining halls was lettuce, and, according to Associate Director of Dining Services Joe Klaus, people reacted favorably to the local organic produce. “What it seemed to do was generate good conversation about Colby’s sustainable practices,” he said.

The club now has dozens of members, and students are exploring ways to increase production in upcoming years. While quantities have allowed only for sporadic use of student-produced veggies, Dining Services has found ways to maximize the impact. They designated Oct. 15 “Garlic Fest,” and dining halls held to the theme. On the menu: Shrimp scampi, garlic, spinach and cheese stuffed roast pork, garlic mashed potatoes, and more.

And for dessert: garlic ice cream. Created especially for Colby by Shain’s of Maine using garlic from the garden, this unusual item was paired with roasted mandarin orange crepes and ginger sauce. Seventy-five pounds of garlic put to good use. —Ruth Jacobs

To see a student-produced video about the garden, go to insideColby.com and click on “video.”
New programs at Colby provide rental cars and loaner bikes for students to get off the hill and on with their adventures.

Last year’s Student Government Association treasurer, Timothy Williams ’08, and current SGA President Patrick Boland ’09 pushed for the Zipcar program, which provides two vehicles on campus that students can share if they become members and pay rental fees. Boland thought Zipcars would fill a void. “There are so many students on campus who don’t have cars. We needed an affordable solution to that problem,” he said. Including gas, insurance, and up to 180 miles per day, rentals cost $7 per hour or $60 per day.

“The Zipcar program is really liberating,” said Jessica Lueders-Dumont ’09. “I’ve never had a car on campus before, so it’s nice to be able to get off campus when I need to.”

For those looking to put a little muscle into their transportation or to remain carbon neutral, the iBike program allows Colby community members to borrow a bicycle, helmet, and lock for 24 hours at no charge. Environmental studies major Patrick Roche ’09 developed the program, which aims to decrease environmental impact and integrate students and the Waterville community.

“It’s healthy and it saves time, energy, and gas,” said Escar Kusema ’09. “It’s really helpful for students who live off campus and don’t want to use a car.”

The student-run Environmental Coalition implemented the program. The 15 bikes were purchased locally and are maintained by student workers.

“people before politics.”

Rice’s campaign platform includes implementing common-sense economic principles, making healthcare affordable and accessible, and withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq and redeploying them to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

—Lauren Pongan ’09
Trustees Terminate ‘Steps’

A comprehensive effort to address excessive, high-risk drinking at Colby is underway following a Board of Trustees resolution that put an end to the seniors’ last-day-of-classes champagne steps celebration.

President William D. Adams notified the community in July of the resolution, which established two working groups—the first to recommend measures to manage the elimination of the champagne steps event, the second to propose ways for the College to address the systemic abuse of alcohol in student social life that is a problem on campuses across the country.

Students, faculty, and administrators are represented on both panels; the second group also includes trustees, alumni, and parents of current students. Both groups began deliberations in September, and the annual State of the College address Sept. 10 included discussion of the initiatives by Adams, Board of Trustees Chair Joseph F. Boulos ’68, and Student Government Association leaders.

The termination of the champagne steps event came after last year’s edition saw many students hospitalized and damage to property on campus. At the September address, James Terhune, vice president of student affairs and dean of students, urged students to join in the process of developing an alternative to the risky and destructive behavior of the past.

“We’re not coming at this with a pre-set idea of where this is going to go,” Terhune told students. “We want you to be a part of this. It’s the only way this is going to work.” —S.C.

Alumni Connections

Colby students looking for more information about life after graduation had an opportunity to hear from alumni firsthand the weekend of Sept. 26, as the College held its second annual Alumni Networking Weekend.

Two days of events offered students the chance to connect with alumni and learn about various careers. Mock interviews, speed-networking sessions, and career panels run by alumni in fields such as medicine, retail, law, and finance were attended by more than 120 alumni.

The weekend also gave more than 200 students in attendance chances to interact with alumni working in jobs that may interest them—an aspect of the weekend that Amy Lu ’09 considered a highlight. “The panel discussion that I went to had just a small group of students, so I feel like I really got some good advice and got to ask the panelists lots of questions,” she said.

Amanda Mello ’09 also found the weekend helpful. “I feel like career services did a good job of matching us up with professionals in fields that we think we might want to go into,” she said of her experience in a mock interview. “The feedback I received was directly applicable to the types of interviews that I will go on later.” —Meghan Moynihan ’09

Blazing a Nordic Trail

Property across Messalonskee Stream that operated as the Colby College Ski Area from the 1940s into the 1970s will see skiers again this winter—the Nordic variety. John Koons ’72, a Waterville dentist, is spearheading a proposal to build trails there for four-season use, including cross-country skiing complete with snowmaking.

Colby sold the 100-plus acre property to the City of Waterville this year, and the City Council approved an initial expenditure to support development of the area on Waterville’s Quarry Road.

Phase one of the project includes design and construction of an initial three- to five-kilometer loop trail on the former Colby property and east toward Interstate 95. That trail will be cleared and groomed for skiing this winter. But, said Koons, “For it to be successful in this climate, in this area, you have to have snowmaking.” That will allow school teams and other skiers to reliably schedule practices, competitions, and other events.

Start-up funds are in hand to rough out the trail and buy grooming equipment, but broad-based fundraising will be necessary to collect the three-quarters of a million dollars needed to reach what he called “critical mass,” to pay for snowmaking, lighting, and grooming. A second phase would include a competition loop that would also use adjacent land.

According to Koons, the professional trail planner engaged with the project said the terrain has the potential for a better competition course than Dartmouth’s or Middlebury’s, since it has the right formula of sequential climbs, descents, and flats.

Nordic Ski Coach Tracey Cote is psyched. “It’s really community based, which is awesome,” she said. She’s trying to manage her expectations, but said, “If it’s done to completion, it would literally put us on the best facility in the nation.”

Michael Roy ’74, Waterville’s city administrator, is enthusiastic. “The recreational piece is just a continuation of improvements happening in the city,” he said, listing the Hathaway mill redevelopment by Paul Boghosian ’76, efforts downtown by the Waterville Main Street organization, and plans for revitalizing Head of Falls along the Kennebec River. —S.C.
InsideColby is a magazine and Web site produced by Colby students. Below is a glimpse into the latest issue. To read the stories in their entirety (and see lots more, including videos and photo essays), go to www.insideColby.com.

WASTE NOT

Colby’s highly ranked food may be a draw for some, but now getting it to the table may require more than one trip.

One of the newest sustainability initiatives to hit Colby’s campus is trayless dining. It all started with the student-run Environmental Coalition, which studied water and food waste on days with trays and days without. On a single day without trays, food waste dropped 575 pounds. Ongoing research showed that on trayless days food waste dropped 66 percent. The college expects to save 79,000 gallons of water a year and 50 tons of food waste.

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Leap of Faith

Fullback Roger Bel ’10, right, and tailback Dan Prunier ’10 celebrate after a Colby score in the Mules’ 24-19 win over defending New England Small College Athletic Conference champion Middlebury, Sept. 27. The game was the first at the new Harold Alfond Stadium. At left is linebacker John Murphy ’09.

Photo by Rob Kievit’09
Debatable

Students listen intently to the give and take during the first presidential debate, in September. The presidential debates were shown in the Pugh Center in Cotter Union.

Photo by Ling Zhu ’09
Forty years ago, as a sophomore at Colby, I took my first economics course. (In those days economics was thought too complicated for freshmen.) I still have the copy of Campbell McConnell’s text from that class and, since I have made my living mostly as an economist over the past three decades, there is distressingly little in it that I have forgotten, though much has changed from the economic world it described.

Five years after that class came America’s first really hard lesson in supply and demand since the Depression: the Arab oil embargo of 1973. Oil prices doubled overnight. About six years later came the Iranian revolution. Oil prices tripled. This summer oil prices spiked again, reaching the once undreamed of level of nearly $150 a barrel. In each period the usual suspects were rounded up: oil company executives trooped to Capitol Hill to listen to accusations of profiteering, and unnamed speculators were condemned as everybody looked for someone to blame.

But less than 90 days after this summer’s peak, oil prices have dropped by more than 40 percent and everyone is saying how lucky we are. The rise and fall have been breathtaking, from minor problem to epic calamity to no problem in six months. In the midst of a crisis in the financial system that will force a rewrite to every economics textbook published, what do we make of an oil crisis that has receded into memory like the mosquito bites from summer days at the beach?

Actually, the “energy problem” is still here in important ways. Prices may have fallen 40 percent, but they are still 300 percent higher than just a few years ago. While a collapse in demand has temporarily better balanced oil supply and demand in the world, output has not been growing, while demand from countries like India and China has been—rapidly.

Absent the current business cycle, the imbalance between supply and demand means that oil should be priced higher than it has been most of this decade, probably $80 to $90 per barrel, which still translates into much higher priced gasoline and fuel oil in the United States than we are used to.

Another issue is the dollar. Oil is priced in dollars throughout the world. While the dollar has recovered some of its value as oil prices have fallen, it will remain weak for years to come because of the massive U.S. trade deficit, and this will contribute to higher oil prices.

Another enduring problem is the “risk premium.” This is the additional price people are willing to pay to hold oil for fear of more problems in the Middle East. The risk premium has shot up repeatedly during the Iraq war, and while it is currently low, it is only one violent event in a violent region from coming back in full force.

What is new is extreme volatility. In the 1970s energy crisis it took about six years to reach the peak and another six years for oil prices to begin to fall. Now the swings happen at hyper speed: six months from bottom to top and back again.

Given that none of the fundamentals for higher oil prices have gone away, and new reasons such as carbon taxes to mitigate global climate change are in the offing, should we all just breathe a sigh of relief and say, “Wow! Glad that’s over”? If we do, the only certain thing is that we will experience all of this once again in a few years—or a few months—or maybe even weeks.

But are we not going to solve the problem with alternate energy? Congress did extend critical tax breaks for wind and other alternate energy as part of the financial bailout bill, but this was after a year of dithering over how to pay for the cuts. The result is that these tax breaks come just as the price of oil has fallen, and with it the incentive to use the tax breaks at all. This is the downside of falling oil prices: they set us up to recycle the whole “energy crisis” time and time again.

Economists have known the answer to problems with oil price volatility—and the answer to oil’s contribution to environmental problems such as climate change. It is the word that cannot be spoken in America: taxes.

A tax on oil consumption (all oil, domestic and imported) would continue the signal that oil is something to be used sparingly. The
revenues could be used to fund help for people with low incomes to adopt conservation measures (the people least likely to do so). Revenues could be used to encourage new conservation and production technologies.

And a portion of the revenues could be set aside to even out oil price spikes. Oil taxes could be lowered during spikes while funding for highway and other projects could continue.

Such an approach would also directly address the need to price our use of carbon—or more accurately the sources of carbon dioxide—in order to begin to address the critical problem of climate change.

But the idea of imposing taxes when oil prices are high is a political nonstarter. And when prices fall, it is a political nonstarter. We are far more comfortable paying exorbitant oil prices to the producers than using the same prices for our own benefit.

So, one cheer, or maybe two, for high oil prices. They remind us that this critical resource is scarce and that we should work very hard not to waste it. It is a lesson we cannot afford to forget this time.

Charles Colgan is professor of public policy and management and chair of the graduate program in community planning and development at the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. He is associate director of the USM Center for Business and Economic Research.