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From the Hill

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From the Hill

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Fishing for Clues

Lynn Hannum and her students find rivers still troubled

STEWER COLLINS '74 STORY FRED FIELD PHOTO

Lynn Hannum spent her childhood in Monmouth, Maine, halfway between the Androscoggin and the Kennebec rivers. More than anything else about those two historic waterways, she remembers the stench. “Water Street in Augusta was terrible,” she said. “You could barely stand to breathe.”

As an undergraduate at Bates she spent four years by the Androscoggin in Lewiston in the 1980s. As a Clare Booth Luce Assistant Professor of Biology at Colby since 2001, her office overlooks the Kennebec valley. Now she’s immersed, figuratively, in both waterways.

Hannum earned a Ph.D. in immunobiology from Yale and, in addition to her work on circadian rhythms in immune systems, she has supervised studies of the immune systems of fish from both rivers since returning to Maine.

She and her student research assistants wait at a boat landing as anglers bring in bass and white suckers. They slice open the fish, not to clean them for eating but to collect their anterior kidneys for analysis.

While the fish seem generally healthy, Hannum says the results of research show differences in one measure of immune-system function between fish taken above and below mill discharge.

Why? Scientists don’t know, nor is there any hard evidence that the change is caused by chemical pollution, Hannum said. But the testing method could prove a useful tool in studying fish populations.

The Androscoggin and Kennebec have a special place in the history of river restoration. Edmund Muskie, the author of the federal Clean Water Act when he was in the U.S. Senate, grew up on the Androscoggin in Rumford and Lewiston (as a student at Bates), and later worked along the Kennebec as a lawyer in Waterville and as Maine’s governor in Augusta.

Yet despite decades of efforts to clean up the Androscoggin, which arguably inspired the Clean Water Act, parts of it still have not achieved Class C status, the lowest classification for rivers in Maine.

Barry Mower, a fisheries biologist who works for the Bureau of Land and Water Management for the State of Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, discovered fish from above and below pulp mill discharges to see how the discharges may affect their health, but he was interested in “looking at more subtle effects than just survival,” he said.

“We had a need that we couldn’t fill,” he said, indicating that studying immune systems, growth rates, reproduction, and blood steroids are more specific ways of evaluating the effects of pollutants on fish. So he approached Hannum about immunology studies and offered a research grant from the Surface Water Ambient Toxics monitoring program.

After collecting the kidneys of fish from above and below paper mills, Hannum’s students return to the lab to examine phagocytes, basic immune cells in animals. More specifically, they evaluate these cells’ capacity for respiratory burst, a measure of their ability to bind with, engulf, and destroy harmful bacteria or toxins.

Comparing cells from smallmouth bass caught below and above mills, “there’s a detectable difference in their immune systems.” Downstream fish have greater numbers of phagocytic white cells, but they are not as effective at fighting pathogens as cells from fish above the mills’ water.

Assistant Professor Lynn Hannum at work in her lab at Colby. Some of her studies focus on the immune systems of fish in Maine rivers.

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Last year Patrick Slipp ’05 published a biology honors thesis, “A Study of Innate Immune Function in Fish of the Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers,” characterizing work that Hannum supervised. Beyond the finding that immune systems below mill discharges are compromised, he concluded that not all species are equal as bioindicators of pollution stress, since the bass showed more dramatic differences than white suckers.

To further test the effect of mill-discharged water on immune response in fish, Slipp set up an experiment with a favorite laboratory specimen, the zebrafish or zebra danio, familiar in pet shops and home aquaria. Back in the lab he tried raising separate populations of zebrafish in water collected above and below mill discharges, conducting similar phagocyte assays on those fish. Given other difficulties in maintaining laboratory populations of the fish, results were inconclusive, he said.

Mower called the research conducted at Colby “very valuable” and “very well done.” Most often, Mower’s research grants pay for graduate students and DEP staff to run experiments, he said, but he has found that students from Colby, Bowdoin, and Bates, supervised by professors with Ph.D.s, are an excellent resource.

On his end, Slipp says the skills he learned in Hannum’s lab have served him well. He works as a research technician at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital’s Division of Sleep Medicine in Cambridge, Mass., and hopes to attend medical school next year, he said.

The process he learned at Colby—familiarizing himself with literature on the topic, organizing experiments, and working in a research group—carried over to his work at Brigham and Women’s. Hannum was a great mentor, he said, in part because of the responsibilities she gave him.

“She gave me the freedom to do the research, decide on my own assay, and let me go out and collect most of the fish myself,” he said.

While it’s tempting to say that everyone wins except the fish, in the long run even bass and white suckers should benefit.
Back for the Future

With eyes on their own curriculum, Waterville High School social studies teachers attend Colby

JULIA HANAUER-MILNE STORY  FRED FIELD PHOTO

Alan Haley loves strolling into Lovejoy 102 each Wednesday afternoon to soak up the wealth of ideas and information presented in Race and Ethnicity, a class taught by Professor David Nugent (anthropology).

For two hours, all that Haley has to do is sit back and listen—and offer a comment when appropriate.

A luxury? You bet, because Haley is no typical college student, but rather the 55-year-old chair of the Waterville High School (WHS) social studies department. He and his colleagues are participating in an innovative program that allows them to enroll in Colby classes. The intent: to add to and make current the teachers’ knowledge of their subjects and then revamp the high school social studies curriculum.

“It makes us far more effective teachers, because it gives you time to think about what you’re doing and what’s important,” Haley said. “Being freed to take these courses means I get to think deeply.”

And by concentrating that way, Haley hopes to create courses that will lead his students to understand not only historical events, but also the forces that shape them.

Funded by a three-year, $150,000 grant awarded to Colby by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, the program allows two social studies teachers per year to take up to four courses at Colby. This year Haley and colleague Ken Lindlof went back to school. Next year two other teachers—Andy Dumont ’80 and Don Ashton (husband of Cate Talbot Ashton ’80, associate director of career services)—will come to Colby, followed by the remaining teacher, Nancy Lamontagne, in the third year.

The grant also allows the teachers enrolled at Colby to hand off half of their high school responsibilities to a relief teacher. That way they can concentrate on their Colby coursework and build a new curriculum. And they’re not just auditing these courses. Like their younger classmates, the high school teachers receive grades and are responsible for papers, exams, and classwork.

Sitting in class with students more than 30 years younger isn’t easy for Haley, though he’s grateful for the opportunity. “I know how to talk to kids as a teacher and a counselor,” he said, “but not as co-equals. I have a lot of advantages though. I have a lot of study skills.”

Professor James Webb (history), the grant’s project director, says the grant is great for everyone: the teachers get to brush up their knowledge, while Colby strengthens its ties to the community. That’s just what happened when Webb’s Historical Epidemiology students participated in Disease Day at the high school by presenting their research last fall.

“IT makes us far more effective teachers, because it gives you time to think about what you’re doing and what’s important.”

Alan Haley, Waterville High School

How did Haley and his colleagues decide on these topics? “Teaching and studying history is always an issue of picking and choosing,” he said. “That choice is usually formed up in the needs of the day. The need right now is not studying the pyramids in Egypt—it’s globalization.”

Haley and his fellow teachers aren’t wasting any time putting their new knowledge to work. Students are test driving the new world history curriculum this spring, much of it online. At the class Web site, students find interactive graphs and charts, links for further reading, lecture notes, and assignments. Haley, who has taught at WHS since 1988, hopes that creating online course components will allow the school eventually to eliminate social studies textbooks, which are expensive and quickly outdated.

Though the frame and delivery methods may be different, that doesn’t mean students won’t learn about the pyramids—or U.S. history for that matter. Instead they will learn how events in history were shaped by larger worldwide economic, political, and social forces, just as they are today. “We are studying globalization as it happens,” Haley said. “We will be picking up things such as the interaction of cultures, war, and peace. This will change our focus from a western experience to history as a worldwide experience.”

The grant also requires the Waterville High teachers to share their learning with others. Haley and three fellow teachers—Dumont, Ashton, and Lindlof—presented their new world history curriculum at the Northeast Regional Conference on the Social Studies in Boston in March. Other conferences in Maine are expected to follow too, Webb said. “What we’re hoping is [the grant] will have an impact statewide.”

Haley began his year at Colby last fall by taking Principles of Microeconomics and World History: Patterns and Processes, both of which were enormously helpful in reworking the high school’s world history course, he said. As a result, WHS students are learning about the beginnings of capitalism in medieval Europe and tracing the system through time to the present day. The course includes studies of the 16th-century Brazilian sugar trade, the rise of the coffee trade in the Indian Ocean, and the 16th-century Italian salt monopoly. Students will conclude the course with a study of global technology in the 21st century. This spring Haley is taking Principles of Macroeconomics in addition to Race and Ethnicity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives.

Alan Haley (second from left), chair of the history department at Waterville High School, in David Nugent’s anthropology class at Colby. Haley and his colleagues are enrolling in Colby courses as part of an innovative partnership aimed at improving public school curricula.
Lincoln Redux

Doris Kearns Goodwin plays new light on the most scrutinized president

SALLY BAKER REVIEW  BETTMANN/ CORBIS PHOTO

If the examined life is the only one worth living, Abraham Lincoln’s life was worth a lot. He is by far the most written-about of United States presidents, and it seems impossible that anyone could bring a fresh perspective—much less new material—to Lincoln scholarship. Yet Doris Kearns Goodwin ’64 has done both with Team of Rivals (Simon & Schuster, 2005) the winner of the prestigious Lincoln Prize in 2006.

The book looks at Lincoln through a unique prism: the biographies of his various political foils. These include the three chief competitors for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860—William Henry Seward of New York, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, and Edward Bates of Missouri—as well as, most prominently, Edwin Stanton, a nationally renowned litigator who scorned Lincoln at their first meeting and went on to virtually give his life for the president. With the exception of Chase, whose ambition to be president caused him to betray Lincoln time and again, the men became Lincoln’s closest advisors, fiercest defenders, and most treasured friends.

The Republican Party was almost brand new in 1860, when its leaders gathered in Chicago to nominate a presidential candidate. Seward’s strength seemed unassailable. He was the most prominent politician in New York, then the most populous state in the Union. His positions on the hottest issues, including whether slavery ought to be extended into new states and territories, were moderate enough not to alienate the majority of voters.

Bates and Chase, too, had national reputations far outstripping Lincoln’s. He was a circuit lawyer, former one-term congressman, and failed senatorial candidate from Illinois, a “western” state that seemed as rawboned to easterners as Lincoln himself. But as Goodwin shows, the manifestly ambitious Lincoln defied expectations. Respectful and admiring of his opponents, Lincoln refused to overestimate them at his own expense. While the others disdained campaigning, Lincoln accepted invitations to speak in a number of states where he was unknown, and his knack for plain and simple communication—his anecdotes ran more toward farming and railroading than quotations from ancient Greek statesmen—made him a favorite with voters. He quietly worked to see to it that the convention would take place in Chicago, in his home state. He managed his own campaign. And, most importantly of all, Goodwin says, he made no enemies, where Seward, Bates, and especially Chase left their campaign trails strewn with those they had offended (in two presidential campaigns, Chase twice failed to carry Ohio, his home state).

So it was that, after losing the nomination and considering it the bitterest moment of his life, Seward could go on to campaign wholeheartedly for Lincoln in 1860 and again in 1864, as well as to be Lincoln’s secretary of state. Lincoln named Bates attorney general, Chase secretary of the treasury, and Stanton secretary of war. According to Goodwin, each came into the administration believing that Lincoln was a hayseed who could be easily manipulated, and each soon developed intense appreciation for Lincoln’s astuteness. He listened to advice, took blame when it was due him (and sometimes when it was not), apologized when he was wrong, capitalized on and reveled in the talents of others, and settled petty acrimonies among cabinet members with tact, but he made it clear that he and he alone was president. Bates described him as “very near being a perfect man.”

Goodwin illuminates Lincoln’s genius for leadership by showing that men like Stanton and Bates continued to work for him despite its effect on their health. Stanton, who suffered horribly from asthma and died in his 50s, told friends that his life was not as important as the work he did to bring the Civil War to an end and serve the president’s cause. Seward was marked for assassination by a confederate of John Wilkes Booth, and both he and his son Frederick nearly died the night Lincoln was killed at Ford’s Theater.

Unfortunately Goodwin never addresses the fact that Lincoln, to this day, remains elusive on the matter of race. But perhaps that too is part of his political genius. Publicly, he dealt with the issue of slavery only insofar as it threatened the Union. He once said that if he could preserve the Union without freeing a single slave, he would do it; and he sold the Emancipation Proclamation to doubters not as the right thing to do but as the right thing to do to defeat the Confederacy (by relieving southern soldiers of slave labor both in their camps and at their homes, Lincoln said, he could reduce the manpower strength of the entire Confederate cause). Goodwin writes that Lincoln knew “the North would not fight to end slavery, but it would and did fight to preserve the Union. … [He] realized that any assault on slavery would have to await a change in public attitudes.”

But Goodwin makes a good, if not explicit, case for the idea that Lincoln was such a fundamentally moral man that he would have found the right time and the right way to declare slavery reprehensible without reference to the Union. His premature death leaves this an open question.
**Of Good Men and Great Places**

*High Country* is a compelling journey—by mule—through the true American West

*High Country*

*Willard Wyman '56*

University of Oklahoma Press (2005)

Willard Wyman’s novel, *High Country*, adds a pair of memorable characters to the literature of the American West. Legendary packer Fenton Pardee takes on the struggling Hardin family’s 15-year-old son, Ty—it’s the Depression summer of 1937—to work with Pardee’s mules carrying supplies for the Forest Service and fire crews and guiding hunters into Montana’s Swan Range.

Grounded in the history and culture of the packers, *High Country* is a paean to the mountains of Montana and California and the story of Ty Hardin’s apprenticeship to those mountains, the horses and mules, and the men who work the packers’ trade: gentling and shoeing mules, threading up canyon walls, finding campsites and water and sweet grass, building a corral with lashes to leave the land as they found it.

Hardin connects with the country, learning all that the peaks and valleys, the rain and snowfields and rivers, the horses and mules and grizzlies will teach—“keep a tight rope,” “a mule’s only human,” “Wait. Good things can happen.” High country plants in Hardin’s character exactly what high country demands from him: strength, endurance, patience, and deep respect for the hauntingly magnificent terrain and the animals that have made it their home for ages.

The loose ladies at The Bar of Justice in Missoula further Hardin’s coming of age. These men are not solitaries; they’re aware of the Depression and, as the story moves through more than 50 years, the war, the Bomb. Other women of great heart, in particular Pardee’s wife, Cody Jo, fill the packers’ hollow places with music and dancing, love and marriage.

Their lives loop around a core intuition or recognition: the country finds its way into mind and body. Hardin appears to his former schoolteacher to be “a natural part of a landscape more imposing than any god mankind could invent.” After crippling personal losses prompt Hardin to make a self-renewing move westward to the higher country of the California Sierras, an elderly Basque sheepherder helps “bring the country into his bones.”

“I think your ‘West’ is these people,” says the schoolteacher’s husband. “I think it’s something inside them—that’s the West.”

*High Country* dramatizes the proposition that the great spaces of the American West determine personal fate and philosophy—and national character. Even though mules cede their role to jeeps and trucks in World War II, Hardin’s commanding officer believes we won that war because of men like Hardin. When Pardee dies, according to Jasper the cook, “he’ll take a lot of what opened up this country with him.”

Pardee and Hardin, Jasper, Special Hands the Nez Perce, Buck, who’ll go where he’s pointed “and hope it don’t rain,” are nature’s noblemen—it’s as if they’d intuited Emerson’s seminal injunction to connect with nature—and Wyman’s prose represents their uncluttered focus with authority. Like a string of mules picking their way up switchbacks, the writing takes in rocky ridges, the fragrance of rain on rocks and the smell of leather and sweat, the snow in high peaks that have looked down on clouds through eons.

The packers’ characteristic speech—folksy, self-deprecating humor—disarms discomfort and danger. Jasper nearly plugs Hardin, sure he’s a grizzly about to tear into the tent where Jasper is hiding. No, he wouldn’t shoot wild, the cook says. “Fenton’d raise hell if I put a hole in his tent.”

Nostalgia slips into the tone as increased government regulations come in after the war, and backpackers, guest ranches, and bed-and-breakfast establishments creep into the Sierras by the 1980s.

The Swan Range of *High Country* is the mountain range of A.B. Guthrie Jr.’s 1947 novel, *The Big Sky*, but Wyman’s mountains are grander, and the packing enterprise is new in the literature. Everybody ought to pack home this quintessentially American story about people who work hard, love well, and simply have their being in a great, good place. —Robert Gillespie
RECENT RELEASES

**The World Peace Diet: Eating for Spiritual Health and Social Harmony**
William Tuttle ’75
Lantern Books (2005)
A pianist, composer, and teacher who trained as a Buddhist monk, Tuttle shows us that the choices we make about food have implications for our lives, our planet, our place in the natural order. Advocating vegetarianism as a step toward spiritual health, he argues that our fast-food-chomping culture has been duped by the “high-tech medical complex,” and in the process we have become its accomplices.

**Searching for the Spring: Poetic Reflections of Maine**
Ken Nye ’64
TJMF Publishing (2006)
An educator by profession, Nye has for years turned a poetic eye and ear to life in Maine, from climbing Mt. Katahdin to childhood memories of his family’s lakeside camp to dawn on Monhegan. This collection of poems is remarkable for its simplicity and sincerity and for Nye’s unwillingness to overlook the true stuff of our lives.

**The Politics of Decline: A Chronicle of New York’s Descent and What You Can Do to Save Your State**
Jay Gallagher ’69
Whitston (2005)
Not everyone loves New York—the state, that is. Once truly the Empire State, New York has become a laggard in terms of economic development and job growth. The Albany bureau chief for the Gannett News Service, Gallagher points a finger at state legislators who, he says, have lost sight of their responsibility to their constituents. And he warns that there are lessons here for New Yorkers and the rest of us.

**Spirits of Defiance: National Prohibition and Jazz Age Literature, 1920-1933**
Kathleen “Katie” Drowne ’92
Ohio State University Press (2005)
The 18th Amendment was only in effect for 13 years, but it had a profound influence on American culture and the literature it produced. An assistant professor in English at the University of Missouri, Rolla, Drowne explores the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner, Dorothy Parker and Zora Neale Hurston, Sinclair Lewis and Langston Hughes, among others, to gauge how Americans reacted to this ultimately unsuccessful government effort to legislate morality. It’s a fascinating look at the world of bootleggers and revenuers, flappers and rent parties.

**Gleam of Bone and Other Stories**
Richard Cass ’73
North Coast Press, 2005
Responsible for the death of an emergency room patient, Laura idles through 18 months, “marinating,” surfing alone on the Oregon coast. Others in Cass’s 10-story collection marinate in loyalty to their dead spouses after long, intimate marriages. Some stew in confusion. A young married woman struggles against a culture of abusive husbands and the example of her mother’s truancy and sanctimonious religiosity.

The stories—ranging from a school dropout in the title story set in Waterville, Maine, to a recovering alcoholic ex-cop, a lesbian, an elderly widow in Alaska, and a commercial fisherman in Oregon—are gems of the short story form. Expressionistic detail as slight as a glance tells all we need to know about an entire life. Metaphors grow naturally from physical settings: Laura floating in the Pacific on her surfboard is the very image of the castaway. Cass’s prose is rhythmical, every word inevitable.

The characters bear deeply wounding dilemmas with spirit. The school dropout, accidentally slashing his thumb to the bone, contends with his recognition of chaos and death by making love, accepting the woman into his life.

The monkey wrench tossed into a life sometimes becomes a life preserver. Story collections this excellent are rare.

—Robert Gillespie
Every spring Colby families get a letter from me announcing the comprehensive fee for the next academic year. I’ve come to understand that this isn’t the most welcome news a family can receive. In letters and e-mails, and when I meet with parents and alumni/ae at Colby events, I often am asked why Colby costs as much as it does. The answer is complex, but the bottom line is not: Colby costs what it does because we are committed to offering the best residential liberal arts education available anywhere in the world. We also operate in an intensely competitive marketplace where the expectation is that we will provide outstanding facilities and services.

Start with the faculty, the heart of the College. Colby’s budget for 2006-07 includes $15.7 million for faculty salaries, not including benefits. This represents an increase of about 4 percent over 2005-06. Benefits costs (health insurance, retirement plans, tuition assistance, etc.) rise 7.8 percent in next year’s budget, to $13.2 million. Maine is a highly challenging place in which to provide health benefits to employees, and this figure includes health insurance increases of 12 percent for current employees and 19 percent for retirees.

Colby’s faculty salaries rank about in the middle of the New England Small College Athletic Association (NESCAC) and among peer schools in other parts of the country, and it is vital that we pay close attention to this area. Colby students expect to study and conduct research with outstanding scholars, and scholars of the caliber found at Colby are always in demand. The College’s location sometimes makes recruitment of faculty challenging—although Maine and Waterville are marvelous places in which to live and work, faculty face challenges that aren’t as prevalent in urban or suburban locations. Many discover, for example, that spouses and partners, often highly accomplished in their own fields, cannot find meaningful employment nearby. But beyond these kinds of details, we are mindful of the need to compensate our talented faculty appropriately in this competitive marketplace, which consists of peer liberal arts colleges as well as major research universities. This, we believe, is of primary import for our students.

If the faculty is the heart of the College, students are surely its lifeblood. And just as we want to attract and retain the best faculty, so do we want the best students, on several measures. Many of the students who enhance our community deeply could not attend Colby without financial aid. Next year’s aid budget is $20.54 million, an increase of $2.4 million over this year. As I said in my essay for the 2004-2005 Annual Report of the President, it matters that low-income students have access to higher education. In my experience as a college and university faculty member and administrator and through the work I do with higher education associations, I have seen the continuing force of higher education as a vehicle for advancement in our nation. Investing as we do in opportunity and aspiring to offer need-blind admission, Colby plays a critical role in this national movement.

We’ve budgeted $21.5 million for non-faculty salaries next year, for a workforce of about 500. It is a large number, but Colby’s administrative and support staffs are among the very leanest in NESCAC, and we hope that those who support our work with their comprehensive fee payments understand that we use those funds wisely and put the needs of our students and faculty first. While Colby’s non-teaching staff has grown significantly in the past decades, so has its mission expanded, as have the expectations of students and their families.

To provide the education we do, Colby must offer a huge array of services, some of which barely existed at other times in our history. In essence, we are running a small town here on Mayflower Hill, with full-service restaurants, a police force, a medical center including mental health and physical therapy offerings, health and recreation facilities that cater to the needs of varsity athletes and more casual participants, three libraries, media outlets, housing facilities, on-call availability of professionals in the building and other trades—all to support our educational mission.

These services are labor-intensive but essential. For example, we not only provide the facilities that students and faculty need in order to take advantage of modern information technology, we also employ people to support those facilities and to provide training in their use. As we add faculty members and enhance academic programs, new space requirements and the need for a variety of teaching environments call for projects such as the Diamond Building. Although the bulk of that project and many other capital projects are covered through fund raising, now ongoing in the Reaching the World campaign, additional staff to clean and maintain the buildings is accounted for in the operational budget. And as students help us understand their needs in a residential environment, we devote considerable funds to support co-curricular and extracurricular initiatives in athletics, residence and dining halls, and other areas of student life.

As I sat down to write my comprehensive-fee letter this year, I thought about salaries and health benefits, energy prices (we’re figuring on a 66.2-percent increase in the cost of oil and a 46-percent increase in the cost of electricity, for a total of $3.8 million), food ($2 million), office materials ($360,000), computers ($1 million), and library acquisitions ($1.8 million). Mostly, though, I thought about the investment all of us—alumni/ae donors, families, faculty, staff, and friends—are making in the future of our College and of its students. It seems to me among the wisest that could ever be made.
Nilanjana “Nel” Dutt ’05 admits that, when she came to Colby from New Delhi, in 2001, she had no idea how cold Maine winters would be. Through the Colby-Dartmouth dual-degree engineering program, she spent her junior year in Hanover, N.H., and last May she graduated from Colby Phi Beta Kappa. Though she still hasn’t exactly embraced New England winters, Dutt is now back in Hanover completing a Dartmouth B.S. in engineering during a fifth undergraduate year. Appropriately, part of her focus is on engineering buildings that are better at maintaining heat. She spoke with Colby writer Brendan Sullivan ’06.

What is it like to graduate from college only to be an undergrad for another year?
Well, actually I still have about a year and a half left, since I’m getting my master’s in engineering management, too, so I should be done in spring 2007. But it is really more like grad school. As an undergrad my lifestyle was more inefficient. Now I have an office in the engineering building, I grade papers for professors, I’m a research assistant, and there isn’t as much class time. It’s more like work now.

What area of engineering do you want to go into?
I was thinking about majoring in electrical engineering, but I’ve decided I’m not such a fan of that technology and I’m looking to major in environmental engineering. So the focus of my studies is to study environmental systems and then applications of sustainable design.

What would that entail?
Well, for example, instead of building a regular building with brick, you would use some insulation like polystyrene, plastic, or foam. And when you are actually constructing the building you have to change the design, use a different type of cement—like cinderblocks stuffed with foam that increases their ability to hold on to heat. That would use a lot less energy to keep that building heated.

Is it a technique that’s widely used?
It’s basically a way of life in Europe and is gaining popularity in the U.S. With the rising cost of oil and fuel, it’s going to become a much higher priority than it is now. But it’s disappointing that people are interested in it only to save money, not so much for the long-term effects of preserving and not using nonrenewable fuels. Even though it would save lots of money in the long run, it’s not a priority for many American builders because it costs more up front.

Do you plan to stay in New England?
A lot will depend on where I get a job. I’d like to stay around here—except I don’t like the weather—but I’ll probably stay for five years or so and then go back to India.

How would environmental engineering differ in India?
In India, because it’s such a warm country, the terms would be very different than in New England. Because it’s a developing country it would be different as well. I wouldn’t focus as much on green buildings as I would on sustainable development, like providing clean water systems and low-income housing. The society has to progress to a certain point before people are going to worry about green architecture. The technology is way different there, and people need to save money there, not primarily out of a love of the environment, but because they can’t afford any other way.

Are there other engineers in your family?
My dad is an engineer who spent the majority of his career in the Indian Navy working in electronics and weapon systems. I didn’t know much about what my father did, but visiting him on deck was really fun, and my family moved every few years because of his job. I’m guessing some of the things he did were confidential.

That world of secretive military engineering didn’t attract you?
No, I wasn’t very influenced by that, and the exposure to the Indian Navy didn’t teach me anything about engineering really. The environmental side is much more appealing. I just like doing math and science and working with my hands—that’s really what it comes down to.

Does that come from an interest in the outdoors?
Well, I like hiking, and I love to mountain-climb. I’m quite involved with the Dartmouth Mountaineering Club. I went climbing with them at the mountains in Rumney, New Hampshire, a number of times this fall, and I’m going on the spring break trip with them to Red Rocks in Nevada. I like to think I’m more than just your regular engineering nerd.

What advice would you give to liberal arts students thinking of careers in engineering?
For me the Dartmouth program was a great opportunity because Colby has no engineering program. But really it’s not for everyone. Being an engineer isn’t about being really intelligent, it’s about being able to handle work and not getting stressed out about it. I wasn’t good at that in the beginning, but I got better at it. Being a grad student is way less stressful than an undergrad student, though. Your life is a bit more set, and you are used to it. I’m pretty happy where I am.
Same alma mater. Same All-America pedigrees. Same goal but different tracks, as two former Colby skiers work to make their dreams come true.

For Jenny Lathrop, who left Colby in December 2004, halfway through her junior year, and Warner Nickerson ’05, the dream is to compete successfully for the U.S. Ski Team. Success on lesser circuits earned Lathrop several starts on the World Cup circuit this season—competing with the likes of American Olympians Lindsey Kildow and Julia Mancuso. Nickerson raced in Europe and the U.S. as well, shunting back and forth across the Atlantic on the FIS (International Ski Federation) circuit. He got his first taste of “life at the top” when he was selected for the final open slot at the World Cup race in Beaver Creek, Colorado, in April 2005.

“It was wild to race against the best in the world,” Nickerson said.

Lathrop, who earned All-America honors in her first year at Colby, in 2002, spent the fall semester of her junior year skiing and studying in New Zealand. When she returned from New Zealand, she went to Colorado and skied well enough to be invited to travel with the U.S. Ski Team for the 2004-2005 season in Europe, Lathrop said. “I was afforded the same opportunities as full-fledged members of the team, so I took Jan Plan off and traveled with the team to get more experience.”

Knowing that if she wanted to realize her dream she needed to ski with the U.S. Team, Lathrop made the difficult decision to leave school before the spring semester of 2005. That decision, uncommon among Colby student-athletes, came only after a series of impressive races that caught the eye of the U.S. Ski Team coaches.

The administration, according to Lathrop, “has been really supportive and understanding of my efforts.”

The toughest part of the transition? Missing the Colby experience, which she shared with her twin sister, Abbi ’06, who is also a member of
Abbi Lathrop gets Colby’s “first first”

Abbi Lathrop ‘06

At the NCAA national skiing championships in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, senior Abbi Lathrop won Colby’s first-ever Division I championship and first-ever national skiing title, in the giant slalom. That was March 8. Two days later she took seventh in the slalom, giving her All-America honors in both events this year.

Lathrop had the best times in both runs of the GS and the best time in the second run of the slalom. In the GS, her combined time of 2:16.85 edged Denver University’s Florence Roujas by a full tenth of a second. Jamie Kingsbury of the University of Vermont, last year’s GS champion, came in third.

It was Lathrop’s fourth All-American performance in GS and her second in slalom. Her twin sister, Jenny, skied for Colby for two seasons before joining the World Cup circuit. The sisters are daughters of Jeffrey Lathrop ’68 of North Conway, N.H., a former Colby skier and Mules ski coach.

Lathrop was the first skier and the fourth athlete in Colby history to win an individual national championship. Others were Todd Coffin ’83 (1983 steeplechase), Jamie Brewster ’00 (1997, 1998, 2000 hammer throw), and Cindy Pomerleau ’97 (1997 heptathlon). Coffin is now men’s track coach and Brewster is associate director of admissions. The women’s crew won Colby’s first team championship, in 2003.

In his second season as WOMEN’S ICE HOCKEY head coach, DAVID VENDITTI was honored as NESCAC Coach of the Year after leading the team to a record number of wins in a single season and a trip to the conference semifinals. Colby finished with a 15-8-1 record after losing to NESCAC champion Middlebury. Forward LAURA ANNING ’09 earned conference first-team honors after leading Colby in scoring with 20 goals and 16 assists. Goalie GENEVIEVE TRIGANNE ’08 made the NESCAC second team after finishing second in the conference in save percentage (.918). . . . MEN’S ICE HOCKEY finished 15-9-1, and head coach JIM TORORELLA was honored as Co-NESCAC Coach of the Year for his work with a young squad. . . . In WOMEN’S SWIMMING KELLY NORSWORTHY ’08 earned three individual All-America honors, in the 100 breaststroke, 200 breaststroke, and 200 individual medley, at the NCAA Division III Championships in Minneapolis. Norsworthy was second in the 100 breaststroke and 200 breaststroke. . . . For more go online to www.colby.edu/mag/sports_shorts.

the Colby ski team and the first national Division I NCAA champion in the history of the College (see story above). “The most trying part is being away from home for so long and not having my sister there with me,” Jenny Lathrop said.

Since making the jump to the professional ranks, Lathrop has been climbing the U.S. Ski Team ladder slowly but steadily. She has been touring Europe and North America, racing in every World Cup event that fits into her schedule, with the goal of securing a World Cup spot for next year in slalom. Her first taste of World Cup competition came in Aspen, Colo., on December 11. There she showed enough promise to earn a place traveling with the U.S. “B” team this spring.

Her success comes as little surprise to Colby Alpine Ski Coach Mark Godomsky. “She is naturally a very, very talented skier and was one of the top ten kids in the country when she came here,” Godomsky said.

Nickerson’s downhill odyssey is more of an uphill climb. Upon graduation last spring, with a double-major in economics and government, the two-time All-American wasn’t ready to cease competitive skiing, so he banded together with a group of college graduates and formed the Ski Racing International Academy.

Unlike Lathrop, with her U.S. Ski Team sponsorship, Nickerson needed to find a way to pay for his travel, equipment, and competition. He did what any savvy Colby economics graduate might do—put together a business plan, set up a Web site, and searched for investors. His site, www.warnernickerson.com, has become a meeting point for those who contribute to his efforts and provides a detailed outline of Nickerson’s approach to becoming a member of the U.S. Ski Team.

As a post-college racer, Nickerson’s biggest racing opponent at this point may be time, but the 24-year-old New Hampshire native is undaunted. “My plan is to take the next two years to make the U.S. Ski Team,” he said. “Once on the team, all you have to worry about is competing, because there is a staff that takes care of the rest.”

Having spent time with ski-racing star and iconoclast Bode Miller last summer in France, N.H., (they work with the same trainer), Nickerson feels that his goal is within reach. “Warner is a non-stop competitor and has been that way since he arrived at Colby,” Godomsky said. “Every bit of what he has accomplished has been earned; no one has really given him anything in this process. He’s not the biggest kid or the strongest kid, but his determination and ability to game plan is unmatched.”

Their game plans point both skiers toward what would be a dream reunion: the 2010 Winter Olympics.

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Abbi Lathrop gets Colby’s “first first”
“No Business Like e-Business”

Keyen Farrell is among young entrepreneurs using the Web to build early business success

When most economics majors go to sleep at night, they dream of running a successful business. Keyen Farrell ’07 goes to bed every night having already done that—and, boy, does he sleep well. “It’s the greatest feeling to know that you’ll wake up richer in the morning than when you fall asleep every night,” he said.

Farrell, 20, begins his day by checking into his online business that has put him “in the top one percent in income in the U.S.” he said. He started the company, Topaz Financial, as a senior in high school for a little over $200 (he’s invested more since) in software design costs, and since then he has enjoyed exponential returns.

In essence, Farrell operates a Web site that funnels customers to companies that sell products like insurance and credit cards online. Every month his advertisers pay him for his services. He, in turn, pays people who have signed up through his site, sending them money through PayPal, the online payment service.

Simple enough? Well, yes and no. Farrell bids on popular Google search words, like “loan quote.” Every time someone searches for one of Farrell’s bid words, a link to his Web site appears, either on the Google page or on partner sites that post Google ads. Each time someone clicks his link, Farrell pays Google his bid amount, usually about 25 cents. With millions of searches flooding Google every day, he gets more than 1,000 visits to his Web site daily.

Once someone clicks on the link to his Web site, a new screen loads. It asks for the person’s name and e-mail address and then directs the inquirer to a list of free offers from Farrell’s contracted advertisers, from credit card offers to loan quotes.

And here’s how Farrell distanced himself from similar businesses: when he started the company, he figured that users needed an incentive to sign up for the cards and quotes, so he literally pays customers to fill out applications.

Farrell offers users of his site anywhere from $1 to $5 to sign up for the offers. On average Farrell receives about $14 for each offer completed. The $14 is deposited in his bank account, and he forwards the promised $1-$5 to the user’s account.

While he typically makes no more than $15 per transaction, Farrell’s pioneering cash incentive model lands him about 3,000 transactions per month, he said. While reluctant to reveal the Web site’s actual earnings, Farrell explained that he “has enough to buy some time after college and a few things on the side.” Not bad for a 20-year-old who admittedly only works on his business eight hours per week.

But is this all too good to be true? Not at all, said one industry expert. “It’s definitely legit, and it’s a huge part of Internet advertising with high profit margins,” said Barry Parr, media analyst for Jupiter Research in New York. “The Internet levels the playing field for everybody, and you can get [a business] moving pretty quickly because the market is so huge.”

With that global market, the income adds up. It’s allowed him to start to save for retirement and to make a few acquisitions. “It was nice telling BMW’s financing department that I would not be using their services when I bought a new X5,” he admitted.

But in a time of extreme competition on the Internet, Farrell has had to save more than money.

During a recent visit to a popular software design Web site, he came across a startling request: someone had offered to purchase an exact copy of his Web site from an unscrupulous Web-designer. “They say imitation is the greatest form of flattery, but I was far from flattered,” Farrell said.

One of the first principles he learned in microeconomics at Colby centered on barriers to entry to a market. Farrell later realized there were few barriers to enter his market. Very little start-up capital is needed and people were catching on to his tried-and-tested idea. So instead of fighting the competition, he’s decided to adapt to it.

He plans to sell template copies of his Web site to other entrepreneurs for about $1,000. If buzz on message boards and Web sites is any indication, there will be a healthy initial demand. Parr, the consultant, warns that Farrell’s template alone does not guarantee success. “It’s like all businesses. The people who succeed are extremely driven,” he said.

But Farrell also plans to offer consulting services to his franchisees, ultimately phasing out his Web site completely and consulting full-time. “I can’t do the same thing forever. I have to keep changing to keep up,” he said.

While no one can say definitively whether Farrell’s business-savvy ideas will translate to bigger and better things down the road, Parr has seen his kind before. “His business is not just a get-rich-quick scheme that anyone could do,” he said. “He’s the type of person, I would assume, that would excel at any type of business endeavor.”

Farrell, meanwhile, is eyeing new markets. “[Economics] Professor Phil Brown’s Jan Plan trip to China exposed me to opportunities outside of the U.S.,” he said, before leaving to spend the spring semester in New Zealand.

That is not to say that Farrell is all business. In fact, he has used some of the fruit of his labors to help him relax. He recently bought a second sailboat for cruising on Long Island Sound near his Connecticut home, “something I never could’ve done before,” he said.

Back on land, Farrell will continue to sleep well. “There’s no business like e-business,” he said.