

Colby



Colby Magazine

Volume 88
Issue 4 *Fall 1999*

Article 13

October 1999

Gifts & Grants

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Recommended Citation

Collins, Stephen (1999) "Gifts & Grants," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 88 : Iss. 4 , Article 13.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol88/iss4/13>

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Enhancing Green

Grants help environmental studies program

By Stephen Collins '74

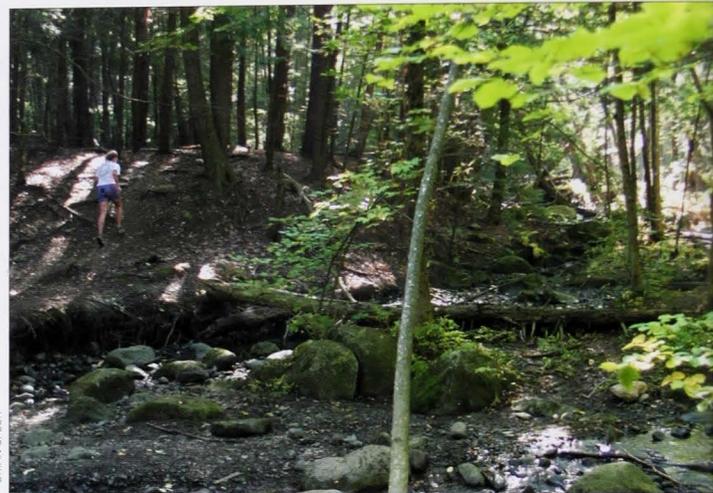
Environmental issues are an increasingly important and popular field of study, and evidence suggests that among the proliferating academic programs available, Colby's is getting noticed. Top students are coming to Mayflower Hill to enroll in the program, and foundations and individuals have shown a willingness—and even an eagerness—to support the program.

A foundation that gave scholarships to 10 Massachusetts high school seniors who were planning to study environmental science took notice this spring when three of their scholars chose Colby. The foundation, Northeast Educational Services, Inc., contacted Colby to find out more—and to invite the College to apply for a grant. This summer the foundation approved a proposal titled "Enhancing Environmental Education through Field-Based Learning," which will improve the usefulness of the

Perkins Arboretum as an outdoor laboratory and will fund environmental curriculum development.

In September the College learned that the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation approved a proposal for several hundred-thousand dollars "to strengthen the environmental studies program at Colby." That proposal incorporates student research assistantships, new off-campus research partnerships for students, a lecture series to bring outside experts to Colby and a coordinator to help arrange and manage student internships in environmental studies.

Earlier this year, The Hollis Foundation, Robert Rudnick '69 and Vicky Kleinman P '83 all established endowed fellowships for summer research assistants. Colby's emphasis on teaching through research, which was simultaneously recognized and supercharged with a \$500,000 National Science Foundation



BRIAN SPEER

Improvements in the 128-acre Perkins Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary on the campus will enhance its usefulness as an outdoor laboratory for environmental sciences and other disciplines.

Award for Integration of Research and Education in 1998, gets reinforced any time a student can spend the summer working as a research assistant with a professor. Now, the Hollis Foundation Student Research Fund, the Jana C. Rudnick Student Research Fellowship in Environmental Sciences and the Ralph and Jack Kleinman Student Research Fellowship (named in honor of Mrs. Kleinman's deceased son, Jack '83, and late husband, Ralph) give Colby students those opportunities in perpetuity as the earnings of those

endowments pay for student stipends each year.

Many students need the income of a summer job to earn money for school and expenses, explains Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Peyton R. Helm. These endowed positions combine the best elements of a paying summer job and a valuable academic opportunity as students work side by side with a professor. "There's a great need for these positions in the sciences as well as in social sciences and the humanities," Helm said.

More than the Sum

"We did it!" crowed Peyton R. Helm, vice president for development, upon learning that, for the first time, more than half of Colby's alumni—51 percent—participated in the Alumni Fund drive.

Not that there has been a dearth of reasons for the development staff to crow, given the unprecedented success of The Campaign for Colby that wraps up this year, but the 50-percent alumni participation goal has been a tough nut to crack.

Participation rates are used by college ranking surveys and charitable foundations to gauge an institution's strength. They perceive participation as a measure of "customer satisfaction."

But as the number of non profit organizations has exploded and their fund-raising techniques have become more sophisticated and in some cases aggressive, Americans' receptivity to such appeals has been harder to engage. With information and appeals proliferating and potential donors' attention spans shrinking, it is increasingly difficult for Colby to get its message through to alumni, Helm explains. "It's not that Colby alums don't feel supportive," he said.

The College does not buy or sell mailing lists and guards the privacy of its graduates rather zealously. Colby also wants to make giving as convenient as possible, so it has established a new secure annual-giving Web site (<http://www.colby.edu/afgift/>) and the toll-free, 24-hour number (800-311-3678) for individuals who want the ease of making the transaction on the Web or by phone at any hour.

Once someone contributes, he or she will not be solicited again for the Annual Fund that year, Helm said, so responding to the first appeal is the best solution for those who plan to give but feel overwhelmed by the volume of mail.

If willing alumni keep track of whether they have contributed in any given year it will help maintain or even improve the participation rate, which is important for the College's successes to keep begetting successes. "This is a better participation rate than half of the schools that outranked Colby in the U.S. *News & World Report* list this year," Helm said. "It bodes well for the future."