Letter from the Director

It is with great eagerness and excitement that I step into the role of Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies at the College of William & Mary. During the twenty-two years of its existence, the Reves Center has emerged as one of the premier institutions in the U.S. focusing the internationalization of higher education. It is a huge honor to be selected as its next leader.

The excellence of the Reves Center is due to the vision and hard work of many faculty, staff, and friends of William & Mary over the years. Emery Reves’s lifelong commitment to international peace and understanding and Wendy Reves’s remarkable dedication and generosity in endowing and supporting the Reves Center continue to shape the center’s mission and ethos today. The Reves Center’s previous directors—among them Professor Jim Bill, Ambassador Mitchell Reiss, Professor Ann Marie Stock, Professor Laurie Koloski, and Professor Ron St. Onge—have been far ahead of the curve in anticipating the growing importance of global interconnectedness for the future of W&M. The amazing staff team at Reves has given its all in building first-rate programs for study abroad, international students, and global research that impact every part of campus. All these contributions, combined with the strong support of the senior administration of the university, have combined to create a very special institution that is poised to achieve even greater national and international prominence in the years and decades ahead.

Above all, the Reves Center’s success reflects the extraordinary intellectual environment of the College of William & Mary—a liberal arts university that remains true to its centuries-old traditions of respect for and engagement of students by scholars on the cutting edge of critical inquiry and scientific discovery. Indeed, W&M’s fierce loyalty to the ideal of liberal arts education is in my view the single most important asset that will ensure its continuing success in the globalized world of higher education in the twenty-first century. As politicians, business leaders, and civic activists in countries around the world strive to educate ever greater percentages of their populations, and at ever-higher levels, the core values of the liberal arts—untrammelled freedom of inquiry, respect and tolerance for diverse cultures and ways of understanding, transmission of classical knowledge combined with the continuous promotion of innovation—are more relevant than ever before.

As I begin my new job, internationalization is already flourishing everywhere at William & Mary. The new joint degree program with St. Andrews is now a reality, with the first freshman class entering this fall. The India Initiative has linked scholars, students, and alumni across W&M to South Asian partners who are eager to deepen our intellectual interchange. The new Confucius Institute of William & Mary (WMCI), established in partnership with Beijing Normal University, is about to be launched this year. The Mellon Grant to Global Studies promises to catalyze exciting new W&M programs in the humanities and social sciences highlighting interconnections among diverse regions of the world. Many new international partnerships are being developed in Education, Law, Business, and Marine Science as well. I can’t wait to learn more about these and many other facets of W&M’s global engagement in the years ahead!

Despite the short time I have been in Williamsburg, I can already tell that I will feel entirely at home here. My own scholarship has focused on broad questions of change in the countries of the former Soviet bloc—a region that encompasses radically diverse polities, economies, and cultures, ranging from impoverished and fragile countries in Central Asia to the new member states of the European Union—and my published work in political science builds on theoretical insights developed in many other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. So to come to an institution such as William & Mary, which prizes interdisciplinary research and promotes teaching rooted in an in-depth knowledge of diverse cultural and global perspectives, is a very natural next step for me.

I look forward to meeting all of you who are connected in some way to the work of the Reves Center, and to hearing your views about Reves’s priorities and programs. If you have feedback or concerns, please don’t hesitate to write to me directly at sehanson@wm.edu.
Kangaroo Island was magical. I feel like my entire study abroad experience was justified by this one utterly unreal week. The trip was sponsored by Conservation Volunteers Australia, and there were seven of us: a big guy named Tiny who has been volunteering there for years, two Korean boys, a German woman, a woman from Australia who works in Scotland, a Chinese girl, and me. There was Peggy, a goanna, echidna, and tiger snake researcher. All we know about these animals is from her research. And, there was Mike, who had worked in 40 different countries, spent a lot of time living in the wild by himself (well, with the animals, he corrects us), and started the Pelican Lagoon Research Center, which he built by hand. Peggy and Mike were both incredibly kind and generous with both their hospitality and their vast pools of knowledge. I learned so much from them about plants, animals, sustainable housing, and life.

The seven of us lived at the Research Center with them, in houses that were hand-built to be energy efficient and completely sustainable and self-reliant. And we learned to build, and helped build stone houses. Their home is incredibly beautiful. A group of kangaroos lives with them. The alpha-female, Rooby, was adopted by Peggy because Rooby was orphaned when her mom was killed 18 years ago. Now Rooby is a great-grandmother, and the whole pack lives right outside the house.

I helped an Aboriginal man named Carno plant trees, and he taught me that the best way to plant them is to have my back facing the sun, which gives the plant the most energy. He taught me lots about his culture, told me stories about giant kangaroos and emus and showed me their tracks. He showed me colorful rocks and told stories about how they represent different tribes. Carno is an amazing person.

I saw possums, black yellow-tailed cockatoos, many wedge-tailed eagles, a mushroom that looked like a boulder, feral cats, and rainbows every single day, everywhere. A peacock flew in front of our windshield while we were in the van. It just hovered there for a while, and we had to slow down so we didn’t run into it. I’ve never seen a wild peacock in flight before. I imagine this is what seeing a phoenix feels like!

I was really sad to leave Peggy and Mike. They are such incredible people, and if I could stay with them forever, I would. But I still had more adventures. The German girl and the Scottish girl and I went on an exploration of the western part of Kangaroo Island during the weekend. We went on lots of hikes, slept in a comfortable barn that had a fireplace, visited the remarkable rocks before breakfast, saw lots of koalas, went to Hanson Bay which is a gorgeous beach, saw an echidna in its natural habitat, visited a bee farm, climbed Prospect Hill during sundown and saw the entire island from the top, and then took the ferry home.

The trip made me think a lot about what kind of lifestyle I’d like to live, and it also made me realize that my life has hardly begun, and I don’t need to figure these things out now because throughout the course of my life, I’ll be exploring different careers and making new places my home. I just have to take it all in stride and find beauty in everything, and love generously, and the combination of all things I will experience, I’m sure, will be tremendous.

Bernice Chu studied abroad in Adelaide, Australia in spring 2011. She created her own major around the subjects of science, sociology, and the environment in relation to food and health, and will graduate from William & Mary in 2012.
Callum Forster is an International Relations major at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. He attended William & Mary from 2010-11 as an exchange student. Prior to returning to St Andrews he spent the summer volunteering with the Bosnia Project.

Standing in a classroom of 20 Bosnian ten year olds, I was about to start teaching when I reflected that my summer schedule was almost unimaginable a year ago. I was about to begin my studies at William & Mary then, and though such global opportunities were part of what had attracted me to studying abroad in the United States I had never thought a year later I would be in a third country carrying out volunteer work during my summer break.

When I began thinking about study abroad opportunities a few years ago, I knew I wanted to find a program that would allow me to experience the American view of the issues facing the world, and to deepen my understanding of the United States both politically and culturally. I knew such insights would be invaluable to understanding how the US develops its foreign policy towards Britain and the rest of the world. With William & Mary I was able to take courses relating to issues crucial to United States security, such as the politics of Russia and China. In addition, a class on Southern Politics allowed me to bolster my understanding of the American South by studying its politics historically and to the present day.

During my time at William & Mary I was fortunate to be selected to participate in the College’s Bosnia Project. The Project has worked in Bosnia since 1998 and each summer a small group of students teaches English and non-violent communication skills to young people. I have always had a strong academic interest in the Balkans, particularly in state-building after conflict. I also enjoyed previous experiences teaching and working with children. When I heard of the Project it seemed the perfect opportunity to combine my interests.

As the Project’s Secretary I had an important role in writing various grant applications in order to raise the necessary money needed to travel and fund our stay. During the summer of 2011 five of us taught English for a month in partnership with a local NGO, Creativus. The focus of the teaching was on using games, songs and activities to allow the children to have fun whilst learning, rather than simply reciting facts as Bosnian children do traditionally. Each William & Mary student was partnered with a Bosnian student from the University of Sarajevo to teach together. At the conclusion of the teaching period the children wrote and acted in short films which allowed them to demonstrate their creativity in a way that is not possible within the Bosnian education system.

The five weeks I spent in Bosnia were fantastic. I was able to travel to some of Bosnia’s culturally important sites such as Mostar and Banja Luka, which helped me understand the challenges facing Bosnia as it seeks to move beyond the conflict it experienced in the 1990’s.

After my time abroad I now return to the United Kingdom to complete my final year of study at St. Andrews. I will continue my studies of Bosnia and post-conflict reconstruction after many rich experiences in both the United States and Bosnia. I thank the College and the Reves Center for making my time in Williamsburg so memorable.
Anca Cretu was born and raised in Bacau, Romania. She graduated from William & Mary in 2011 with a B.A. in History and European Studies. She now studies International History and Politics at The Graduate Institute of International Studies and Development, Geneva, Switzerland.

I was raised with the idea that the most important aspect of life is education. I knew from an early age I would want to attend higher education in the United States, after all I believe that the US has the best education system not to mention my own father received a Master’s degree from New York University. I must confess, however, that I had never heard of William & Mary until I was a teenager and met an American professor working in Romania. He told me I should strongly consider W&M, and once I did some research I became attracted to the idea of a smaller environment focused on academics. That was really all I knew about the College when I applied, so I would say I definitely was flying blind at the beginning of this adventure but it worked out perfectly!

I loved life at William & Mary, the sense of community was a unique experience for me. I really enjoyed how people were enthusiastic to see you on campus, and that professors and students were able to create strong bonds. I definitely call some of my former professors friends now. I used to get a cup of coffee and just sit on a terrace or on a bench and watch all the different people hanging out together and having a laugh.

Of course I had some difficulties with deciding to study in a foreign country. I had to take science classes with labs, for example, not something I would have necessarily encountered in Romania – and I found out that even the calculators are different in the United States! I also had to get used to learning in a different language. That was a general struggle. I always received my papers back with “wordy” or “awkward” written on them in my first year. I also had to become used to multiple choice exams, which required a whole new way to study. These were difficulties I had to work through for myself, and by the end of my time at W&M I just told myself that everything I achieved would be the best I could do at that particular moment. I never put myself down for anything I did in college, and looking back on it I wouldn’t trade my time at William & Mary for the world.

The Graduate Institute of International Studies and Development in Geneva

Anca Cretu
Kevin Tabatabai was born and raised in Germany. He graduated from William & Mary in 2005 with degrees in Computer Science and Mathematics. Recently Kevin co-founded SocialVents, a location-based, visual events search engine, with fellow ’05 alum Alex Santos.

I had just turned 16 when I came to the United States in 1999 as an exchange student. I was only supposed to stay for my junior year of high school but ended up enjoying it so much that, with my parents’ approval, I decided to stay for my senior year as well. My exchange program actually placed me in Gloucester, Virginia, a small town right across the river from Williamsburg, so I ended up attending Gloucester High School. Through my close proximity, I quickly realized that William & Mary was not only one of the most prestigious and historical colleges in the country, but also one of the best liberal arts schools nationwide. It was basically a no-brainer for me to apply to W&M, knowing that I would be receiving a quality education along with many bright individuals, including my best friend from high school.

William & Mary was the only college to which I applied. I was fortunate to receive my early decision letter of admission December 1, 2000, a day I still remember fondly. During my time at the College I formed many valuable friendships that have only grown stronger, and, even though my friends from those days are dispersed all over the world, I am still close to many of them. Being a student at W&M came with a lot of studying and hard work, but I still found plenty of time to enjoy a plethora of ultimate Frisbee games in the Sunken Garden, countless rounds of Frisbee golf, any number of intramural soccer games, and endless Mario Kart and Super Smash Brothers competitions that would take us through entire nights.

During my time in Williamsburg I learned a lot during lectures, but I also gained many insights and received countless valuable lessons at my job with campus IT. My boss Jeff Jolly, Scott Fenstermacher, and Clark Morledge were instrumental in aiding my well-rounded education. Plus I got to ride around in a golf cart on campus for four years, which was pretty sweet! All in all, I have to say that I am very fortunate to be a W&M alumnus and I always feel a sense of pride when telling people where I went to school.
“Many years ago, when I came to America as an international student, I had only two giant suitcases with me...” This has become my routine lecture to my students every year when school starts in September. I cherish the priceless expressions on those young faces and the curiosity in those eyes. They ask endless and sometimes silly questions about China, about my childhood, and of course, whether I liked Williamsburg and William & Mary. I always smile at those questions, and answer with details of fond memories.

How could I not love William & Mary? It not only gave me wonderful academic opportunities, but, more importantly, it gave me a solid foundation to pursue a career I love and enjoy. I was lucky to have professors who were caring, supportive, and generous.

About eight years ago, a 23-year-old young girl came to William & Mary by destiny. Back in China I had never heard of the College. I took both the TOEFL (English language exam) and the GRE in my second summer of attending the Beijing Language University knowing I would like to attend graduate school in the United States. Just when I was preparing to apply, 9/11 happened. It was my birthday and it was the darkest moment in my whole life. The university I was attending was an international university with students from over 160 different countries. American students were devastated and scared, as were most of us. Life seemed to be frozen. After 9/11, many U.S. schools limited the numbers of international students they would accept. It became extremely difficult to get an F-1 visa. Except for me, everyone else who had thought of applying to American schools decided to switch to applying to British schools. One of my classmates gave me all of the application materials she no longer needed, and included in the group was Williams & Mary. Once I read the information and did some research I fell in love with the intimate campus feel. Of course the fact that the College is the second oldest in the United States also attracted my attention.

If I told my students that my life at W&M was easy it would be a lie. I was in an intense 14 month Master’s degree program. Both the course work and the student teaching were extremely challenging. I only had time to have one meal a day, a big lunch at Matthew Whaley Elementary School. The cafeteria ladies loved me and always piled my plate with everything they had. I didn’t realize until I became a teacher later that you were only supposed to have three out of all the dishes in a school cafeteria! The winter break was hard. On one hand, it was wonderful to finally have some free time to sleep in, eat, and relax. On the other, not being able to spend time with my family and old friends was depressing. Then the most magical thing happened that winter: I read the Harry Potter books because all my students were reading them. It was wonderful getting lost in Hogwarts with Harry, Ron, and Hermione. I was not lonely any more. Thank you, J.K. Rowling!

I survived my year at William & Mary, and have since decided to return to the School of Education to pursue a PhD in the EPPL Curriculum and Educational Technology (CET) program. My current research focuses on English as a Second Language (ESL) students and Intercultural Competency (ICC). I represent the School of Education on the Reves Center’s International Student Advisory Board where I use my voice to serve my fellow international students.
My junior year abroad in Kiev, Ukraine, then the Soviet Union, was not my first experience in that part of the world. In high school I participated in an unforgettable trip to the Soviet Union with my junior Russian class, and after my freshman year at William & Mary I traveled to Kiev with a group from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. By that point I was hooked and completely in love with the Russian language and its culture. That the Soviet Union was still behind the “Iron Curtain” made the country even more fascinating.

During my year in Kiev I made many close friends, and because of the slower pace of life there, I had a lot of time to spend with them. One of my favorite weekly activities was walking around the city for hours on Sunday afternoons, just talking with new friends. Many of the students I befriended were Russian or Ukrainian, but I also had a unique opportunity to meet people from Iran, Afghanistan, China, Japan, and all over Africa.

I experienced history in the making during the 1991-92 school year. Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union, and I witnessed some of the first Ukrainian elections, a change in currency, and the dismantling of Lenin’s statue on Independence Square. There were challenges, too, living in this historic time in Kiev. I lived in a poor quality dormitory and didn’t always have enough to eat. The lines for food, which had already been long, grew longer, and the store shelves became even emptier. I was issued ration coupons and often struggled to find something I could buy to eat.

I had little contact with home due to slow mail and a telephone system which required a trip to the main post office and waiting for a line to become available. I learned to overcome these challenges through trial and error, and by leaning on my new Soviet friends for support. I also gained confidence as my Russian language skills improved. Some of my learning came from the classroom, but most of it came from just living in a foreign country and being surrounded by a language I needed to learn to survive. When I returned to William & Mary for my senior year, I could see a radical difference between my abilities to read, write and speak Russian, and the abilities of my classmates who had not spent the year overseas.

I have been back to Kiev – one of the most beautiful cities in the world – and I have also been on many short-term trips with InterVarsity and church groups to various parts of Ukraine and Russia. After my husband and I got married, we ultimately decided to work in Russia (in western Siberia) for two years, and then I returned to Boston College to get my Master’s degree in Russian. My year abroad had a huge impact on my life, and it was definitely one of the best things I have ever decided to do. There is no substitute for the experience of being immersed in another country’s culture and language in order to gain a broader, bigger picture of the global community of which we are just a small part.
Farida Yacine Sawadogo, MBA ’10, was born and raised in Burkina Faso, West Africa. She currently serves as the Chief of Institutional Relations and Chief of Programmes Monitoring and Evaluation at the Peace Operations Training Institute, a Williamsburg, VA-based public charity dedicated to providing training for United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

I grew up knowing that I did not want to limit my career opportunities, so therefore I should study in a field that would be general enough to provide me with some flexibility in my professional life. Also, as a native French speaker, I knew that becoming fluent in English too would open a lot of doors for me. To satisfy these ideas, I decided to get a Master’s of Business Administration (MBA) in an English speaking country.

I obtained my Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) from a French-American business school in Paris, France and I then wanted to get an MBA from a top school in the USA. My brother was studying at that time in Boston and he suggested William & Mary to me. I did some research and liked the MBA program offered by the Mason School of Business. The Field Consultancy program and its experienced Executive Partners (EPs) were the two main aspects of this program that attracted me. Moreover, after having lived in Paris for four years, Williamsburg was a small, quiet and very beautiful city with which I fell in love.

Like any international student, one of the main obstacles I faced when I arrived at W&M was the language barrier. It was my first time living in an English speaking country. Even if I had the academic vocabulary, I had never had friends who only spoke English or had to find items in the grocery store in a foreign language. After few months I started getting used to speaking English every day, everywhere, and that was when I really started enjoying myself.

I realized that W&M is THE world but in a smaller setting. At the College students from different nationalities, cultures, languages, and visions find themselves in a small environment and have to overcome their differences and work together. I know that not only did I learn a lot from the wonderful people I met, socialized and worked with at W&M, but that I also taught quite a few people about my continent, Africa. As the Vice President of the International Students Association at the Mason School of Business, I worked hard to include events where the African continent was represented, which was not always the case in the past!

After graduation I decided to stay in Williamsburg and accept a job with the Peace Operations Training Institute, an international NGO that provides distance-training to United Nations peacekeepers and others interested in the study of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and security. We work a lot with the United Nations and other countries. As a person with an international background, I really like the nature of my job and feel fortunate that my work as a global impact contributes even slightly to peace all around the world.
Curtis Rojakovick graduated from W&M in 1999 with a degree in International Relations and a French minor. He currently splits his time between Geneva, Switzerland and Oslo, Norway, working with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He spent his junior spring semester (1998) studying abroad in Nantes, France.

I entered William & Mary wanting to major in International Relations and work in the humanitarian/NGO field, so study abroad was a natural part of that path. Studying abroad in my junior year changed my entire life. My senior year was spent juggling the balance between the idea I should do something “normal” like get a job in D.C., or do something crazy like go to France again and look for work. I pursued the second option and that led to two years of teaching English in France, two years of Master’s study in Europe and then working for the past six years for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society in Geneva, Switzerland in various capacities related to international humanitarian work.

Perhaps the biggest effect this international path has had on my life is it led me to my wife, a Norwegian who has worked for the United Nations since 2006. We just moved to Oslo, her hometown, and I will soon start a bike tourism company here while continuing as a consultant with the IFRC in the off-season. In May 2012 I will launch Viking Biking Tours of Oslo, targeting English-speaking tourists, many of whom arrive on cruise ships as a starting point for the fjord tours.

When it comes to studying and living abroad I would recommend everyone go in with a completely open mind, like a young child who is ready to try anything and do everything in a new way. Even the most mundane and small task like food shopping or going to the doctor can become a learning experience. Don’t think of study abroad as a time to hang out with other American students, but fully immerse yourself in the local culture. Get out of your comfort zone and live with a host family or local students, or work overseas, perhaps as an intern. The more contact you have with another way of thinking, the more you will develop as a person during your time abroad. With this open-minded attitude, your life will be enriched and you will likely find that there is a post-study abroad version of you that is different from the pre-study abroad version. Study abroad really can be a life changing experience, taking you in directions never expected but will always appreciate.
I was nervous as I hugged my mom and shook my dad's hand when they dropped me off at Reagan National Airport around dawn one day in June 2009. I was about to start my journey to London where I would spend 10 days before joining my classmates in Paris. My ultimate destination: Montpellier, a charming city situated on the Mediterranean Sea and the location of William & Mary's French summer study abroad program.

Being in a homestay was invaluable as my French language abilities increased immensely during the month I lived with my host mother. Since she was unable to speak English, she would only communicate with me in her native southern French tongue. In addition, my classmates at the university represented nine different nationalities with French as the only common language between us. If we wanted to talk to each other, French was it. By the end of it all I had made some good friends and gained confidence in my ability to navigate cultural customs different than my own.

But Montpellier was the only beginning of my time abroad, as today I work for IES Abroad in Beijing, China as a resident advisor supporting their program for American study abroad students. Though seemingly unexpected, taking this position actually makes sense as I focused much of my history study on modern China after an introductory course my freshman year. From there I got the inkling my sophomore year that I wanted to take Chinese, but my packed schedule saw me at the end of my junior year without a single Chinese class under my belt. So in June of 2010 I boarded a plane for Beijing and IES Abroad’s intensive language program. I landed knowing no one and about three Chinese characters. Regardless, I was determined to learn the language, and my success in France the previous summer gave me the confidence that I could achieve my goal.

By the end of the summer I was able to interact with Chinese people on a basic level and get around on my own. No less significant was the fact that I also knew that I wanted to be in China after graduation to further my studies. I applied for a resident advisor position with IES Beijing and by January I had secured employment starting three weeks after graduation. I now work for IES and continue to study Chinese here in the capital while teaching English on the side. I am living a dream – self-sufficiency in China while learning the language. My contract with IES continues through May 2012 at which point I plan to return to the US to look for employment or apply to law school or grad school.

Every day is an adventure here. Had it not been for William & Mary’s summer Montpellier program I never would have had the confidence to go into China cold with no knowledge of the language. I cannot overstate the value of study abroad if a student is willing to commit to it. Though it is tough being away from home and constantly exposed to different ways of doing things, it is among the most valuable experiences of college. For my part it was among the most impactful times of my college career.
When I was studying at the National University of Shipbuilding back in Ukraine I had a couple of friends who had studied in the United States on an exchange program. They loved the country and were very pleased with the level of education there. They always shared their memories about beautiful campuses and nice, smiling people. So when I graduated with a Master’s degree in Information Technology, I decided to apply to one of the PhD programs in the US. I sent 25 applications to different schools across the country. The College of William & Mary was one of seven schools which sent me a letter of acceptance. At that time, all I knew about the College was that it had a small but very productive Computer Science Department as well as a very old and beautiful campus. I was offered a decent graduate assistantship and I decided to go. I enrolled in the College of William & Mary in 2008.

I was as excited as I was scared to come to a foreign country where people speak a different kind of English than I was taught at home. It would be needless to say that I experienced culture shock. Everything was different. It didn’t matter that I had researched US nature, culture, people, and learned the language, living in a foreign country is something you cannot know until you experience it. When you come to the campus you realize that it’s not only you (Ukrainian) and Americans, but also all possible nationalities from the rest of the world. Everybody has his/her culture and language (often with strong accents) and you just have to understand them. It was really helpful to have friends at the Reves Center with whom I could go on unforgettable trips to Virginia Beach, to Washington D.C., to Charlottesville to see the home of Thomas Jefferson, to go skiing and skating, to enjoy the sunsets and sunrises of Outer Banks, NC and more. It made me feel that I was never alone.

During one of those trips I met a girl who was studying at the School of Education in the Counseling program. Because I was always interested in psychology and counseling, I was very excited to learn that you do not need to have an undergrad degree in psychology to complete your Master’s in Counseling. After some consideration, I decided to change my major and help my dream of counseling come true. I very much thank my professors Dr. McAdams and Dr. Foster who trusted me and gave me an opportunity to develop my natural capabilities and become a counselor.

In my second year of the graduate program at the School of Education I began to work as a graduate assistant at the School Leadership Institute. The Institute develops programs for building school leaders on critical educational leadership and instructional issues. I loved the work I did and people I worked with. When Dr. DiPaola and Dr. Rozzelle offered me the chance to continue to work with them as a full-time member of staff I was very pleased.

I think the most unique thing about W&M is its people. They are always smiling, they have ears that are ready to listen and hearts that ready to help. They make you feel like you are at home, even when you are at school on the other side of the world. The experiences of being at W&M and in the US changed my life, and me as a person, forever. I have become a confident, well-educated woman who knows what she wants from life and how to make it happen. I now move confidently in the direction of my next goal: a doctorate degree in Higher Education Administration.

Natalya Kostenko is originally from Ukraine. She enrolled in William & Mary in 2008 pursuing a PhD in Information Technology, then in 2009 was overjoyed to learn she could switch tracks to obtain a Master’s in Counseling with the School of Education. In making this change Natalya was able to make a life-long career dream come true.
I was attracted by the size and liberal arts focus at William & Mary. I grew up down the road in Richmond and always thought I would go to a different Virginia school, but I chose W&M because I liked the idea of being taught by professors who I could get to know, rather than by graduate students.

I lived in Switzerland during part of high school, and enjoyed the experience of making friends from different countries, as well as being immersed in another language and culture. I was seeking the same experience when I chose to study abroad during my time at the College, and was rewarded with a wonderful experience in Grenoble, France. It also didn’t hurt that one of my best friends from W&M was in the same program. This made it easier when I returned to Williamsburg because I often felt that I had experienced so much during one semester, and grown and changed substantially as a person. Sometimes it felt difficult to relate these changes to my friends who had not been with me. The friend who had been in France with me became my roommate and we shared an understanding about what it had been like to be away, to have had fantastic experiences, and now to be back home together in Williamsburg.

I chose to go abroad again for a postgraduate degree in France, where I earned a Master’s degree in Political Science from l’Instutut d’Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po) in 2004. I have since lived and worked in New Delhi, India, for a technology oriented venture capital fund. In September I moved to Zurich, Switzerland, where I started an alternative investment research business focused on India.

International education made a tremendous difference in my experience at W&M, as well as in my pursuit of a very internationally oriented career. I have a great love for the College and we decided to donate the Clark Campbell Scholarship which provides financial support for international students engaging in co-curricular experiences. The first recipient was honored in Spring 2011.
I grew up in the English education system, where we are required to focus on a particular course of study from age 16. Very early on I knew that this is not what I wanted for myself, instead I was interested in a liberal arts education which allowed for a broad education eventually followed by more focused study. I was intrigued by the idea of studying in the United States and the prospect of studying amongst students from all over the world, so I attended a college fair in London and enjoyed speaking with the representatives from William & Mary. I was attracted to the fact that the College is small, has a rich history, and a connection the United Kingdom. I left the W&M booth feeling that I would belong there, and that I would have a very interesting and rich experience. I was not wrong.

At first, I felt different. I was not familiar with American culture and norms. From my accent to my clothes to the fact that I showed up with one suitcase as opposed to the van full of belongings my roommate had with her, I felt very obviously different from the other students. In fact, I was a little lost when I first arrived. I had no idea about the US college credit system, orientation or sororities. But it was exciting to be in such a different place and to be from a different country, and I quickly made friends with my hall-mates and the other international students.

Of course there were glimpses of home every so often. Sir Christopher Wren’s architecture was a small reminder, as was seeing Lady Thatcher on campus! In day to day life however, I had to find replacements for many British essential foods. For example, Marmite was replaced by peanut butter, and baked beans on toast were replaced by ramen noodles. I learned to adapt to my new setting quickly.

Being an international student at W&M helped me build friendships and work contacts in many different countries. I studied abroad in Mali, West Africa and have since been passionate about working in development and working in other cultures. I have lived in New Delhi for the past four years and my husband, daughter and I just moved to Zurich, Switzerland in September. In New Delhi I worked for several Indian charities, helping them with fundraising as well as organizational development, and worked with a British charitable trust evaluating projects focused on empowering women in developing countries. I’m so glad my first step towards this international life began with William & Mary.
Contact Info

The Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies
200 South Boundary Street
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Telephone: (757) 221-3590
Fax: (757) 221-3597
www.wm.edu/revescenter

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