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A few days ago, a parent at an Admitted Student Weekend information session asked how an institution like William & Mary—well-established, highly ranked, and proud of its long-standing traditions—compares with “up and coming” universities. Why, she wanted to know of those of us on the panel, would W&M be the best place for an incoming freshman? What a great question! The answer, it seems to me, is that for all the strength of our traditions, it’s our innovations that make W&M the most compelling place to be. Looking down the table at the rest of the panel, I saw four people—a faculty member and three students—who embodied W&M’s “up and coming” spirit. The experiences and opportunities they had shared with the audience were anything but traditional, and beyond learning from this institution, they were shaping its course going forward.

In the international realm more than anywhere else, an institution like W&M has no choice but to be “up and coming”—how else, after all, can we effectively prepare our students for a global society and workplace, and how else can we benefit from what the world has to teach us? We innovate best, I believe, when we reach out: to new ideas, new people, and new partners.

As the stories in this issue of our newsletter make clear, our students and faculty continue to reach out in new ways, and to enrich the W&M community as they do so. This spring’s International Mercury Expo is the culmination of a three-year project in which faculty and students have modeled new ways to collaborate in studying and addressing global challenges. W&M’s selection as one of ten U.S. institutions to join a pilot program on U.S.-India partnerships reflects the growing significance of South Asia on campus and globally, as well as our eagerness to forge new relationships with institutions in this part of the world. Hanif Yazdi’s essay on Syria reminds us that every study abroad experience can be about reaching out to the new, even in one of the world’s oldest cities—and our story on the Reves Center’s Global Friends program provides insight into how members of our own local community are helping international students learn from new experiences right here in Williamsburg.

Of course, reaching out for the new doesn’t mean forgetting about the past. We were pleased to see so many of our study abroad, international student, and Reves Hall alumni at our first-ever Homecoming reception last fall—which you’ll read about as well—and we look forward to an even greater crowd this coming year. There’s nothing we love better than sharing stories about what’s new at W&M with our old friends!

In our last issue, I raised a toast to the Reves Center, in celebration of 20 years of great work. Here’s another toast, as we come to the end of the current academic year: To celebrating that “up and coming” spirit, and to reaching out—to new ideas, people, and partners, all around the world!
The World Comes Home

A Reves Center Homecoming

As alumni returned to campus for Homecoming Weekend 2009 (October 22-25), many gathered to reconnect, share memories, and enjoy campus life once again. For dozens of internationally-minded members of the William & Mary community this was a particularly special weekend: the Reves Center for International Studies hosted its first homecoming reception, which proved a wonderful chance for many to catch up and help imagine the future of internationalism at the College.

Dozens of current and former Reves Hall residents, international students, and students who had studied abroad through the Reves Center all found their way back to the Reves Room to reminisce and share what their international experiences brought to their lives.

John Bell ’07 sported his enduring affection for Reves Hall by wearing the hall t-shirt from when he was a resident. As one of the first students to live in the dormitory, Amanda Seidler ’95 also recalled endless memories, “from the Berlin Wall coming down, to our mystery ball!” Current Reves Hall residents were there to share their enthusiasm for the international dorm as well, including programming assistant Katherine Gosciewski ’12, who this year has organized activities such as coffee hours with professors, potlucks, and an “international holidays” series, in which students most recently had the opportunity to paint Venetian masks in celebration of Carnival.

Kuntal Bheda, a current international MBA student, appreciates taking advantage of the cultural experiences offered by the Reves Center, from trips to D.C. and Monticello to local activities such as hockey games and bowling. Like many international students, Bheda enjoys the community atmosphere at William & Mary and giving back to Williamsburg through community service.

Many of the reception attendees had life-changing experiences on William & Mary study abroad programs. Thomas Ball ’07 recalled the “outstanding” experience at Prague and Oxford he had as an undergraduate. “Studying abroad shaped my college and life experience,” agreed Lauren Connolly Nussbaum ’01, “and the Reves Center made that experience possible.” After hearing from current students who have recently returned from study abroad, many alumni expressed how impressed they were with the range of programs and opportunities being offered through the Reves Center today.

As the evening closed, the alumni exchanged contact information and bid farewell until next year’s Homecoming, excited that the Reves reception would provide an annual chance to celebrate the growth and impact of international life on the campus and in the William & Mary community.

“Studying abroad shaped my college and life experience, and the Reves Center made that experience possible.”

Study abroad, international student, and Reves Hall alumni reunited at the Reves Center during Homecoming Weekend.
The Reves Center is pleased to announce Anna Mahalak ’12 as the first recipient of the Harriet Mayor Fulbright Summer Fellowship in Peace Studies. She will undertake an eight week project entitled “Non-violent Communication in Youth Educational Programming” as part of her participation in the W&M Bosnia Project.

Student participants in the annual project volunteer as English tutors with the Bosnian NGO Creativus, founded in 2007. Due to the wide range of ethnic diversity in the post-conflict society, the English classes provide an opportunity for children of different backgrounds (who attend separate schools) to interact positively while pursuing the common goal of learning English. In addition to volunteering, Mahalak will be conducting literary and quantitative research on the use of non-violent communication in youth educational programming to build intercultural understanding in post-conflict society.

“The fellowship will give me the experience of connecting micro-level interactions in a Bosnian classroom to macro-level world issues such as violent conflict,” says Mahalak. “This experience will be an excellent exposure to the many ways education can be used to create societal and political change for a more peaceful and equal society.”

Mahalak intends to produce a report based on her research on the incorporation of non-violent communication by Bosnia education NGO’s, educators, and educational policy. She will also produce a curriculum and training guide for educators on how to incorporate non-violent communication strategies and themes into their lessons. Upon graduation from W&M, the government major plans to pursue a Masters in International Education, and to use her degrees and experience to shape education policy and programming.

EDUCATING FOR PEACE

First Harriet Mayor Fulbright Fellowship awarded

EXPO(-SING) MERCURY

Global Inquiry Group hosts international symposium

As the culminating effort of a three-year collaborative project, the Global Inquiry Group Mercury: A Hazard Without Borders hosted the International Mercury Expo at William & Mary from April 22-25. Planned to coincide with Earth Day weekend, the symposium brought together students, scholars, artists, scientists, and activists from around the world to learn about and discuss mercury as a transnational environmental pollutant.

Like the original Mercury Global Inquiry Group, or “GIG,” which brought together faculty from a wide range of disciplines (from the sciences to history, art, and film), the Expo was similarly diverse and enriching in its exploration of the dangers and long-term legacies of mercury. Featuring not only panels and presentations on the scientific aspects of mercury, the Expo included two art exhibits and gallery talks, a film series, theater workshops, field trips to the Dismal Swamp, and a special talk on social activism by actor William Mapother.

The GIG was particularly proud to partner with the Muscarelle Museum to host Aileen Smith, artist, activist, and widow of photographer W. Eugene Smith, who spoke about her and her husband’s experiences documenting the effects of mercury contamination Minamata, Japan. Their work is on display through June 20 at the Muscarelle in an exhibition entitled Unbearable Beauty: Triumph of the Human Spirit. Likewise, the exhibit Earth & Sky, featuring woodcuts by Linda Wysong, was also open to the public in the Andrews Gallery located in Andrews Hall.

Opportunities for students and teachers in local schools were also part of the Expo’s educational agenda. Visiting teachers and students participated in environmental theater workshops, a movie showcase, a scavenger hunt, and a visit to the Muscarelle exhibits.
LOOKING TOWARD INDIA
William & Mary selected for US-India partnership program

William & Mary will join nine other institutions in a new pilot program on higher education partnerships between the United States and India, which will begin early next fall. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, the pilot program is being led by the Institute of International Education (IIE), through its International Academic Partnership Program initiative.

During the next year, faculty and staff involved in the project will participate in a number of training activities and webinars focused on implementing and sustaining partnerships, and will join a study tour to India in the fall to visit potential partner campuses. The College has also committed to forming a campus task force to work on prospective partnerships, conducting an institution-wide inventory of activities pertaining to India, and developing a strategic plan focused on a partnership with India.

“This pilot program couldn’t come at a better time,” said Laurie Koloski, Director of the Reves Center for International Studies, who submitted the College’s winning proposal. Koloski is working on the project with other William & Mary faculty, including Arnab K. Basu, associate professor of economics; Rani D. Mullen, assistant professor of government; Pamela Eddy, associate professor of education, and Walker Smith, professor of marine science at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS). “It asks us to take a close look at what we’re doing now and to think hard about our goals and priorities going forward.”

Both faculty and students at W&M are already—and increasingly—involved in South Asian studies and activities. South Asia-focused courses are regularly taught in anthropology, art, business, economics, education, government, history, music, religious studies, sociology, and theatre, speech and dance. The College also has a summer study abroad program in Goa, India, William & Mary’s Mason School of Business annually takes a group of students on a study tour of India, and faculty members in different departments regularly bring in guest speakers with expertise in the region. The South Asian Students Association (the largest student organization on campus representing a geographical region—with more than 100 members) annually hosts a South Asian festival at the College. Additionally, W&M’s coed student Bhangra dance group is well-known regionally as well as on campus.

“By partnering with universities in India, we will certainly strengthen South Asian studies at W&M,” Koloski said. “But we will also create opportunities for students and faculty in all fields to engage in global knowledge networks. What’s so exciting about partnering in this way is that the results are both local—enhancing the work we do on campus—and global—extending our reach out into the world in the fullest sense of the words.”

Seventy-five U.S. colleges and universities applied to participate in the pilot program, with selections made by an advisory committee of experts in the field of post-secondary and higher education. Other schools chosen were California State University- San Bernardino, Florida Atlantic University, Oakland Community College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Spelman College, St. Cloud State University, The University of Tulsa, University of South Carolina, and Winston Salem State University.
It was a great blessing to be in Damascus for so long—longer than it took for the honeymoon of a new experience to wear away and for me to really be able to appreciate the city for its charms but also to get an understanding of its shortcomings. 

For part of my stay, I audited University of Damascus courses in the literature department. There, for the first time, I saw how Arabic was taught by Arabs for Arabs. An auditorium, packed with more than three hundred students, was abuzz with excitement as our professor read out difficult medieval passages and then challenged us to analyze them for their morphology and syntax. I have never seen so many people in one place, so passionate about language. Through these classes, I made Syrian friends who got me out of the psychology of a tourist or study abroad student. Through these friendships, I stopped seeing Syria as a place full of strange and exotic people to be studied and analyzed, but a country like any other, full of bright college students.

Later on I enrolled in the Arabic language school for foreigners to take official classes. While I looked forward to a more structured curriculum, I dreaded leaving the world of Damascus University’s History and Literature departments. When I walked out of those departments and into the Arabic Language Center, I felt as though I had walked out of Syria and into an international ghetto. Most of the students, I realized, had not made Syrian friends or interacted with Syrian society. They were there, for the most part, to perfect their written Arabic and pass their exams back in their countries of origin.

There, I encountered the views of my old self, who saw Syrians as this strange other to be studied, but never as friends and colleagues. I realized that being in a foreign country was not enough, because one can always create a comfort zone. This made me think about my life back in the U.S., about how political differences emerge when people of various groups segregate themselves into these comfort zones and create progressively more bizarre impressions of others. Syria was like this in many places, and I found myself walking in between completely different psychological universes united in very close spaces. In Bab Touma, where I lived, was the Christian Quarter, full of bars, nightclubs, and the latest styles. A ten-minute walk away was the Rokeyyah Mosque, a Shia shrine frequented by pilgrims from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. A few minutes later I could be in the Umayyad mosque, and later on, in a coffee shop discussing politics and philosophy with Syrian intellectuals. The rapid transitions were dizzying, and deeply instructive.

My experience in Syria rekindled my interest in anthropology, culture, and society, and has clarified my career goals for the coming years. I intend to spend that career giving Americans a better understanding of the complex yet nuanced societies of the Arab world, societies in very exciting periods of transition and change. I want Syrians and Americans, Jordanians and Egyptians to build a common future through real cooperation on projects, business, and education. I have already begun this process by writing recommendations and grant proposals for Syrian students to study in the U.S., and writing briefs for U.S. students seeking study in Syria.

I left Syria with a keen desire to return and would encourage others to visit and really live in the country. And while Syria has become a major destination for Arabic learners in the past few years, its ancient streets and highly diverse communities present a great deal more to learn than simply language. The Aramaic spoken by my neighbors, the Kurdish shopkeepers, Iraqis, Iranian pilgrims, and Korean immigrants, all made Syria a fascinating place to study not merely the way people speak, but the way they interact and live together in one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.
BEYOND THE BOOKS
Building friendship and family with William & Mary’s international students

Elaine Charles has children in France, Germany, Japan, and many other countries throughout the world. Some are now married and have their own children; others are traveling in the United States and across Europe. Her newest adoptees still live on-campus at William & Mary, as some of the most recent arrivals of W&M’s 380+ current international student population.

Charles has been hosting international students for the past ten years—most recently through the Global Friends Program at the Reves Center for International Studies. Though not technically family, each student she mentors holds a special place in her heart. “Everyone who participates in the program enjoys it,” says Charles. “The program has many families who take new students year after year.”

Although students and host families often form long-lasting, “familial”-like bonds, the Global Friends Program is not actually a home-stay program. Participating international students live and work towards a degree at the College; their Global Friends serve as “cultural ambassadors” who provide the chance for students to connect with real American families and experience what life in the U.S. is like apart from campus. In turn, community members have the unique opportunity to learn more about other countries and cultures, all while helping someone settle into life in the States.

A Global Friend can spend as much or as little time with their student as they like. Global Friends may invite their student over a few times a month for dinner, take their student to the movies, or simply enjoy other outings together, such as a walk through Colonial Williamsburg. Depending on their mutual interests (which are taken into account in the matching process), Global Friends and their students may share in other activities, such as outdoor sports or trips to local historical sites.

While Global Friends truly provide a service to W&M’s international population, the students are not the only ones who benefit from the exchange. In many cases, community members find their lives greatly enriched by spending time with an international student. Dick McGrew has been a Global Friend at William & Mary for nine years; three and a half years ago he was matched up with Hang Nguyen, a Public Policy graduate student. Upon her graduation, he and his wife hosted a party for her, and just last year he was invited to Hanoi for her wedding.

Another former student continues to send McGrew Father’s Day cards from her, her husband, and their new baby—whom he calls his “virtual grandchild.”

“Global Friends has given us experiences we would have never experienced,” said McGrew. Apart from his trip to Vietnam, McGrew is grateful for the many memories made right here in Williamsburg. “When we first took Hang on a bike ride, she had never seen tobacco growing and would stop to take a picture every five minutes. She’d never seen snow before. It’s almost like raising your own son or daughter, when you see some of their first time experiences.”

Are you interested in becoming a Global Friend and making a difference in the life of an international student? Simply go to http://www.wm.edu/offices/revescenter/programming/globalfriends/index.php to learn more.

GOING ABROAD... EASIER THAN EVER
Students applying to study abroad this semester were the first W&M users of Studio Abroad, a preeminent software program designed to streamline the study abroad application process. With help from Information Technology staff to implement the program, the Reves Center launched Studio Abroad this January.

Used by other leading educational institutions nationwide, Studio Abroad essentially digitizes the entire application process, making it more straightforward for students. “It’s about streamlining our current methods of application and assistance” said Emily Hogge, the Reves Center’s Study Abroad/ISSP Program and Services Assistant.

The new system offers many advantages to students—the main one being a clear step-by-step progression through the application process. At each step, students are prompted to submit all necessary information, so there is no chance they will come to the end of the application only to find they accidentally left an element incomplete. Forms can be signed digitally in Studio Abroad, and students also receive automated email reminders about required documents. The system also enables study abroad scholarship applications to be filed electronically, and allows for data integration with current student records.

Another key benefit of Studio Abroad is that faculty can directly access information on programs they are facilitating, provide additional pre-departure information, and communicate directly with students enrolled in the program.

While the system is not entirely paperless, Studio Abroad allows the bulk of application materials to be housed and completed online, thereby enabling the Reves Center to become more eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.

Studio Abroad operates seamlessly within the Reves Center’s website (www.wm.edu/revescenter), a new version of which also launched this January as part of William & Mary’s transition to the Cascade platform.