

# The Independent Leader

News from the Independent Colleges of Washington

## Students at Independent Colleges: A Force for Global Change

College presidents and faculty members marvel at the giving nature of the current generation of college students. They donate countless thousands of hours working on social causes in their own communities. Increasingly, bright and creative students from independent colleges are using their institution's programs – or creating their own – to become global citizens and make remarkable contributions to social justice around the globe.

In addition, these experiences help students put their studies into a new perspective and sharpen their career focus. Students see first hand how we are becoming a more global society, increasingly interdependent on each other for survival. This experience, along with their independent college education, gives them the edge they need to succeed in the changing international climate, while doing their part to combat inequity.

## Saint Martin's Student Pictures a Better World

Rebekah Bruns has found the camera to be a powerful tool for social change.

Bruns, a student seeking a master's degree in education at Saint Martin's University, founded the Rosetta Project, a non-profit initiative to empower indigenous groups through media. After serving as a photojournalist in the Iraq war, Bruns, as part of her graduate studies at Saint Martin's, initiated a photography project with Saint Agnes Orphanage and Secondary School in Chipole, Tanzania, where she spent the summer of 2007.

"Photography has a way of giving voice to those who might otherwise not be heard," Bruns said. "It is a powerful medium that can cause people to actually stop what they are doing, look, and hear what the kids have to say. Words alone don't always have that power." The Rosetta Project has expanded to include documentary films, academic research, the exhibition and sale of indigenous music, and other art and media related projects. The proceeds from this art are invested back into the education of the Chipole community, while simultaneously drawing attention to the plight of under-represented groups.

It works because it helps others understand something personal about the problems these children face. As

Bruns put it, "It's their perspective. Photography helps them express ideas that they may not yet be able to fully explain in English." Where words can get in the way of intercultural communication, images express some things more easily.

Throughout the development of the Rosetta Project, Bruns has stayed in touch with her teachers at Saint Martin's. Three faculty members advise Bruns on the Rosetta

Project, charting not only the project's progress, but her progress as a student.

Most impressive of all to Bruns was the dedication students gave to their new craft. "They start school by 7:30. School gets out around 4:00 and they have a short break to take care of the garden and personal needs before they are back at school until 10:00. The girls who volunteered gave up their personal time to work with us." Even with all the hard work, Bruns found the students stayed positive. "Despite the adversity and challenges they face in trying to obtain

an education in sub-Saharan Africa, they greet each day smiling and giving 100 percent. Their kindness and generosity is of the purest form," she said.

For more information visit [www.therosettaproject.com](http://www.therosettaproject.com)



Rebekah Bruns with two students from the Saint Agnes Orphanage in Chipole, Tanzania.

Courtesy of Saint Martin's University

## Whitman Students Take Direct Action for Global Change

When students take time off between high school and college to travel it doesn't usually lead to the formation of an international community development organization. But that's how it happened for Joseph Bornstein, now a senior at Whitman College.

While living for three months in Nicaragua, Bornstein became close friends with Alix Fermin, a fisherman in the village of San Juan del Sur. When Fermin died in a fishing accident Bornstein organized some friends to help build the home Fermin had dreamed of for his family. From this project, Whitman Direct Action (WDA) was born.

"I think that's how life often works out," Bornstein said. "Something happens to you and you respond to it, and you find you're on a path."

Since the home project, WDA has taken on rising petroleum prices through its Central American Biodiesel Project by coordinating international conferences and creating biodiesel cooperatives and resource centers in Nicaragua and Honduras. This year WDA is in rural India working to bring access to safe drinking water to millions of people for whom that basic necessity is not a given.

The student-run group's projects must be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.



WDA member Jyotsna Shivanandan (right), a Whitman senior, surveys citizens of the Sadhana community in India.

Photo by Daniel Bachhuber, WDA

Funding has been a challenge. "We are smart, capable, and organized enough to do a project," he said, "but getting the funding needed to make it happen requires at least 70 percent of the energy that we're putting out there."

A philosophy major, Bornstein is an answer for those who opine that you can't "do anything" with a liberal arts degree.

"We're college students and we're there for a summer or a spring break, and we need to set things up so that the power is in the hands of the community that we're working with," Bornstein explained. "There's a diplomatic and collaborative nature that is an attractive element of Whitman Direct Action."

"I intend to go to graduate school and focus on environmental justice," Bornstein said. "However, I think that having a philosophy degree as a background, and a philosophic lens to how I approach environmental justice, will serve me well by helping me to be more thoughtful in how I engage in the endeavor." He has received a prestigious Truman Scholarship to support his graduate studies.

Whitman Direct Action is actively seeking grants, business partnerships, and a board of advisers. To support WDA or to learn more, visit [www.whitmandirectaction.org](http://www.whitmandirectaction.org)

## Whitworth Students Transformed by their Service Abroad

Students at Whitworth University have ample opportunities to study in other countries. The Central America study program, which includes a strong service component, started more than 30 years ago and is the flagship of Whitworth's off-campus study offerings. Twenty-six students are spending their entire semester in Central America this spring.

Sue Jackson, director of the International Education Center at Whitworth, said the Central America program offers a well-rounded education.

"There's always Spanish credit, and there's always political science and sociology credit, and they're always looking at the church and at poverty issues," Jackson said.

The actual "major" can't be found in the college catalog.

"They come back with a degree in life," she said.

Students spend their first month immersed in Spanish language studies in Guatemala, then fan out to live in various villages in Honduras for the service component. Sometimes that's with a well-known organization such as Habitat for Humanity. More often it's with local projects.

For most students, living among people who are in abject poverty really rocks their world.

"It takes them a while to settle back down and not go into shock every time they're in a grocery store and see all of the choices, and the waste that our society produces," Jackson said. "Not only are they having deep cultural revelations, but this is a Christian school and a particularly Christian study abroad program, and often they will be broadly challenged in the way they look at some of their faith issues."

Jackson explained that's why they give students lots of chances to talk it out. "Students are transformed and deepened, and they need ways to internalize that when they get back and figure out what to do with what they've learned and discovered."

For some participants, the pull to return is strong. In fact, Jackson said many of Whitworth's contacts in Central America are alumni of the program who have moved there to do something meaningful with their lives.

In addition to the Central America program, Whitworth has programs for semesters abroad in Europe, exchange program placements at 150 colleges around the world, month-long study opportunities in the

U.S. and abroad, and opportunities for individually designed study programs.

Whitworth University's mission is to provide its diverse student body an education of the mind and the heart, equipping graduates to honor God, follow Christ, and serve humanity. International study is clearly contributing to the integration of faith and learning, and helping students reach the understanding that helps form their value systems, priorities, and commitments to serve a world in need.

*"They come back with a degree in life."*

*-Sue Jackson, director of the International Education Center*

Learn more on-line; the students publish photos and a travelogue at [www.whitworth.edu/Academic/Department/OffCampusStudies/Travelogues](http://www.whitworth.edu/Academic/Department/OffCampusStudies/Travelogues)

## Seattle University Program Creates Global Citizens

Both the Jesuit tradition and the tradition of independent higher education stress service and the promotion of social justice. It's no surprise, then, that Seattle University has such dedication to international support. The International Development Internship Program (IDIP), which sends students to 24 countries across the world, is just one of many examples of this spirit of altruism.

The goal, as program director Janet Quillian sees it, is not only about international service, but about changing perspective.

"The program challenges students to go beyond a fragmented view of life," she said "and to explore the root causes and consequences that undermine the well-being of people who live in the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America." Quillian said this work creates "global citizens," people who are informed about the issues confronting the world and have the skills to advocate for change.

IDIP students team up with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to do tasks such as data collection on program outcomes, developing and evalu-

ating different programs within the NGO, visiting villages and interviewing recipients of programs and projects, and writing reports and policy papers. It's a lot of important experience in a diversity of subjects.

"Students return with more research skills, improvement in their ability to write, and knowledge on how

to put a report or manual together," Quillian said.

But an IDIP student learns more than just skills for their résumé. They learn, in Quillian's words, "how to work in a different environment and accept cultural norms that are different from the western world."

They're well on the way to

becoming global citizens. As with the education they get at independent colleges, the emphasis is not only on what the student learns, but teaching the student how to think.

For more information go to [www.seattleu.edu/idip/](http://www.seattleu.edu/idip/)



An International Development Internship student (right) helps manage a women's rights organization.

Courtesy of Seattle University



## New Ways to Give

Washington and the world need students like the ones highlighted in this newsletter – hard working, intelligent and eager to change the world. Helping these students get a high-quality education is easier than ever. Just log onto the ICW Web site at [www.ICWashington.org](http://www.ICWashington.org) and click on “Donate to ICW” in the upper-right corner of the home page. Giving on-line with your credit card is easy, and you can target your gift to specific scholarships or support general scholarship funding at our member colleges.

New scholarship opportunities developed at ICW include:

- Biology and Environmental Science
- Business and Economics
- Math
- Nursing and Health Services
- Science

If you prefer to talk with someone before making a contribution, or would like to consider establishing a named scholarship program through ICW, contact Director of Development Jim Moran at [Jim@ICWashington.org](mailto:Jim@ICWashington.org).

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SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

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WHITMAN COLLEGE

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One student at a time.



Independent Colleges of Washington

[www.ICWashington.org](http://www.ICWashington.org)

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at independent colleges in a variety of  
global service opportunities*