[Speech given at Celebrate event.]

Hello, my name is Courtney Latta and I am proud to be a member of the Periclean Class of 2009. I use present tense because once you are a member of this program, I don’t think you ever graduate or stop being a Periclean Scholar. The skills and values I learned from this experience are still a part of my everyday life.

When I was inducted into the program in 2005, it looked very differently than it does today. We did not receive an area of focus, and started out with over 70 members of our class. Everyone who applied was accepted. Needless to say, that first year was difficult. Few decisions were made, and many ideas for areas of focus and projects were expressed. We finally got our act together, and I was proud to travel to Zambia twice with my class, where we worked on housing and development in a village named Kawama.

One of my mother’s favorite stories to tell is about the first time I toured Elon (also the day I made my decision to come here). I heard about the Periclean Scholars program and the inaugural class that had worked in Namibia. I looked at my mom and said, “That is really cool! I bet if I come here I can travel to Africa!” The seventeen-year-old version of myself did not know what to wish for.

While I would get to go to Africa three times over my time at Elon, at seventeen, I didn’t know what that would mean in my life, or how the Periclean mind set of partnership would influence me, or how my class and my time in Zambia would change me in ways I am still understanding.

The Periclean Scholars program is so focused on the students. We get to make the decisions, call the shots, and our mentors watch us from the sidelines, cheering us on. They are part of the heart and soul of what it means to be a Periclean Scholar, and they helped us all get to where we are today. I am happy for the opportunity to stand here today, and thank them for all of their hard work. The hours that they pour into the program and the commitment that they make to the students is truly a special thing -- and part of what makes Periclean Scholars great. Thank you for all that you do.
As a member of the inaugural Periclean Scholars Class of 2006, I learned I would only be satisfied living a life of service to others. My passion is still global service, but I felt strongly that I would have to gain skills in the United States before I could make a meaningful impact abroad. For the past three years I have been teaching in an urban public school, serving a majority low-income immigrant population in Washington, DC.

In just three months, I will be returning to Namibia to teach for a year with WorldTeach (www.worldteach.org), a non-profit organization that places volunteer teachers in schools in developing countries. As I learned through our work as undergraduates, Namibia is still struggling to catch up after suffering for so long under the apartheid system and in the face of HIV/AIDS. WorldTeach volunteers take part in all facets of this relatively new education system, with some teaching mathematics, science, or English in secondary schools, and others working as resource teachers at primary schools, training other teachers, or working on community English teaching projects involving adults. I am excited to return to Namibia and contribute in a new way to the development of this vibrant country. I hope to reconnect with our Periclean partners on the ground and further the work we began so many years ago.

Please feel free to get in touch with me if you have any questions, ideas, or if you know anyone who might be interested in this project. Donations to help me get there are appreciated! Also, I’ll be keeping a blog during the year, so feel free to bookmark it and check back in January http://wideworldcomforts.wordpress.com/.

Left: Jenn Pierson and a student from Namibia attending the future leaders summit on HIV/AIDS organized by the Class of 2006
[Speech given at Celebrate event.]

Good Afternoon,
my name is Brittany Car-roll, and I am a Fulbright Scholar. Everything that
has led up to this mo-
ment, the mere opportu-
nity for me to utter these
words, baffles me still to
this day. I’m honored to
speak to you all today and
share the things that have
helped me get to where I
am now.

I won’t leave with
too many details or a
step-by-step chronology
of the events that led up
to my departure for the
fellowship in July of 2011.
I will just share with you
some stories, things that
bring me back to remem-
brance of why I am able to
tell you my story, not with
the hope that you will fol-
low mine, but are inspired
follow your own.

Before Fulbright,
I was a Periclean Scholar
in the Class of 2011 - Sri
Lanka. At the culmination
of applying for Periclean,
I had no idea what I was
getting into. All I knew
were these three things:
international, service, and
somewhere in Asia.

Yes—before I applied
to the program, I needed
to do some serious re-
search, because Sri Lanka
was nowhere on my radar.
At the time, China was on
my radar—and to this day
it still is. But there was
something alluring about
learning about a different
culture, exploring the idea
of civic engagement, and
the possibility of seeing
my ideas come into frui-
tion. Periclean Scholars
required three years of
commitment, three years
of constant planning,
and three years of team-
work. Out of those three
things, I think I was only
comfortable with one—
constant planning. The
other two drove me crazy.
Teamwork? I absolutely
despised group projects.
Commitment? That
means I have to commit?
Yikes.

I remember sitting
in the orientation class my
sophomore year and star-
ing at all the faces in the
room, listening to Crista,
our advisor, talk about the
opportunities we could
embark upon throughout
the next three years. We
were to come up with our
own personal initiative
as well as set a group goal
for our class over the next
three years. At first the
task seemed daunting. I
was a freshman with no
idea of how to construct
my own personal initia-
tive, and the course didn’t
necessarily give a clear cut
guideline on the purpose
of the 2011 class. We had
to define our own pur-
pose.

Many people live
out their lives as a carbon
copy of someone else, or
something else. Maybe
we are inspired by what
another organization did,
and try to mirror them by
repeating their actions.
Maybe we are enamored
by an important figure
and try to replicate their
style, their diction, their
attitude. Periclean Schol-
ars really taught our
class how to build and
construct ourselves as a
group, but also individually. As the years waned, so did the group. We started with a strong 40 and ended our school year with 20 to 25 active individuals. We had to come up with funds, write grants, and create engaging events within our university and outside the community. But most importantly, we had to find our purpose and construct our efforts so that we were engaging for our community, but also effective to the communities in Sri Lanka. You find that many people can be passionate, but aren’t effective. Or that people can be effective, but not passionate. I found myself struggling with my passion to promote change not just at the university level, but also internationally. I was struggling with my purpose. I still struggle with my purpose, but I’m realizing that “struggling” to find your purpose doesn’t necessarily mean that you are lost. It just means that you know the importance of purpose, and are currently working on defining it. Periclean Scholars, along with other experiences, has helped me define my purpose, work with the negatives, and be authentic in my approach.

Maya Angelou said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.” In the spirit of tonight’s guest speaker, I would like to just share with you some stories that have helped me define my purpose, or at least figure out my authenticity.

I’ll start with China and my hair. Most would ask, “What does China have to do with my hair?” I would say it was probably my hair that helped me connect with people on a different level than most foreign interactions. I first graced China’s soil when I was 14 years old in 2004. It was my first time flying to Asia, and my first time out of the country. The idea of a black American girl was still a foreign concept to many Chinese people. Even having hosted the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the World Expo in 2010, which drew millions of foreigners, the concept of being black and American was still mind-blowing. Now, fast-forward to China in 2010. This is what I wrote in my personal statement of Fulbright application:

“It’s amazing how a single whiff of a familiar smell, in the most random of places, can instantaneously transport you back to a particular moment in your past. I was reminded of an all too familiar smell back in my hometown of Washington, DC at a local Caribbean market. The pungent smell of the blood from the fish and beef being sliced and diced by the butcher in the fresh produce reminded me of one of first and many visits to the meat vendors at the wet markets on Jianhe Lu in Shanghai and HepingliBei Lu in Beijing. My many visits to the markets were often visits of unexpected cultural showcases. On many occasions, I was the only foreigner to bravely walk through a fairly worn out building full of the stench of raw meat sizzling on hot coppering boards, live chicken and fish anticipating their final destination and mounds of superfluous vegetables...
and fruits stacked high in front of anxious and curious Chinese vendors hoping to make their days’ quota. On most occasions, I was always noticed; I was always the showcase. As I would walk slowly through the middle isle of the wet market, I felt the stares and heard the curious whispers as I inspected the potatoes and green peppers. When I would stop to make my selection, all eyes would watch with intensity and excitement as I spoke the all too familiar phrase of “Ni hao! Zhege duo shaoqian?” (“Hello how much is this?”) As the Chinese rolled from my lips you could see the Chinese vendors’ eyes grow large with amazement. Often ignoring my initial inquiry, they would excitedly respond, “Ni de zhongwen shuo de hen hao!” (Your Chinese is good!) Anticipating the inevitable, I would hold a short conversation about where I am from, how long I’ve been studying Chinese, and what I was doing in China. While others might have been annoyed with the constant staring and sometimes invasive questions, I’ve learned to embrace them. These brief exchanges are the pinnacle moments where one culture meets another, in the most humble of circumstances. I cherish those moments when they ask about my hair and reach out to touch the texture of my twists because I imagine the opportunity to ever be that close to a culture so different from theirs is few and far between.

Ironically, my experience in Taiwan wasn’t much different. Here is what I wrote in the Fulbright Newsletter, Issue 34.

“Although this is my first time in Taiwan, I’ve visited Mainland China three times over the course of seven years. Since 2004, I’ve seen Mainland China and its hustle and bustle on the streets of Shanghai and Beijing to the edges of the Gobi desert in Jiayuguan. Although Taiwan’s history is rooted in Chinese culture, I knew from the moment that I applied for my Fulbright grant that my experiences in Taiwan would be much different than my travels, study and work in Mainland China. Some of the differences between Mainland China and Taiwan are instantaneously notable, some not so much. As an American, especially as an African-American woman, the curiosity about the texture and styles of my hair are still a topic of daily conversation. The confusion about my ancestry still lingers; thoughts of my family residing in America for more than two hundred years don’t line up with the Taiwanese assumption that my immediate ancestry is from Africa, based solely on my skin complexion. Throughout my travels in China, I was baffled and sometimes frustrated that some Chinese, and now some Taiwanese, really don’t understand America’s complex diversity.”

I’ve been blessed with numerous opportunities to travel, study, and work abroad, and I’ve been successful in landing great scholarships to help me accomplish what at times has seemed impossible. However, I wasn’t always successful. I’ve probably received twice as many rejections as I have acceptances. Ironically, I wrote this a couple of days ago on Facebook:

“I remember being at the brink of tears when I wasn’t selected for my University’s $15,000 Lumen Prize and in a state of panic when Teach for America rejected me (My Plan B), and then God placed Fulbright right in my lap. Prayer. Persistence.”

The best advice I can give you today is to never give up being who you are supposed to be. You are supposed to be you—authentically you. As you tap into your purpose, it is okay to get lost—it’s all part of the definition. I hope that what I say today doesn’t inspire you to duplicate my action but create your own. After all, no one can create your actions better than you.
Dr. Francis Amedahe, our main contact in Ghana, reports that: “The roofing of the second nurses building [in the village of Kpoeta] is starting this week. We purchased the wood for the roofing and have also purchased five packets of roofing sheets, nails and clamps for the roofing. Once the roofing is completed, I will send pictures and we will proceed to purchase wood for the door and window frames.” Otherwise our group is working on getting a new Ghana Card put together (our fourth) and preparing for a African/African-American ‘Read In’ we will host on November 13th, during International Week (which has a West Africa focus this year).
[Speech given at the Celebrate event.]

The class of 2015s journey began last spring when we were inducted into the Periclean community. It was then that we were presented with the honor and responsibility of spending the next three years working together to create a brighter future for Haiti.

At the induction ceremony, we were given Paul Farmer’s book, *Haiti: After the Earthquake*. It was through reading this book over the course of the past summer that we began to fully understand the gravity and depth of the issues that are present in Haiti. In our classes so far, both the students and our mentor Dr. Warner have continued to educate ourselves on Haiti by researching relevant topics and presenting them to one another. It is through this process that we hope to eventually gain enough knowledge to narrow our focus and to develop our class’ project.

Throughout its history, Haiti has faced a number of issues including poor health care, a struggling education system, political instability, and economic uncertainty amplified by the recent natural disasters, most notably the devastating 2010 earthquake. Other issues have also been born from the earthquake – such troubling problems as lack of access to clean water, insufficient and unsustainable aid, cholera epidemic, a broken infrastructure and homelessness. We understand that we cannot possibly tackle all of these daunting issues, but we are optimistic that with our diverse array of talents and interests, we will be able to work with the Haitian people to make a significant impact.

There is an old Haitian proverb that says, “To stumble is not to fall.” The Haitian people have proven their resiliency in the face of enormous and continued adversity, and they have inspired our class tremendously. Our class is cognizant of the fact that we will face enormous hurdles as we begin this journey, and we are prepared for the inevitable stumbles that will meet us. But we, like the Haitian people, will not allow the stumbles that we encounter to make us fall.

On our journey, we will look to our older Periclean colleagues to provide insight and guidance. We are excited to become active members of this institution; and we hope to continue the Periclean legacy of developing our own global consciousness and responsibility. We will strive to apply this awareness both internationally and locally.

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**susie masecar /15**

On Friday, September 28, the Haiti Lab at Duke University hosted Haitian Creole and the Linguistic Situation in Haiti: Myths, Realities, and Prospects. The evening of Haiti-related presentations consisted of five guest speakers, a reception, and a film screening. A few members of the 2015 Periclean Class were able to attend two of the speakers’ talks and the reception.

The first talk they attended was entitled “Language and Education in Haiti: Implementing the Réforme Bernard,” presented by Albert Valdman. Michel DeGraff, a Haitian native, presented the second talk: “Haitian Creole: From Margins to Center.” These talks discussed various angles on Haitian Creole in regards to education, Haitian government, and international relations. Such discussions included how parts of the Haitian constitution regarding Creole are not being implemented and thus continuing the disparity between the poor and the powerful, proof that teaching in French is not an advantage for the students, and an argument about why changing the language to French would not help the nation relate and communicate with the rest of the world. The presentation provided the Class with insight into the history of Haitian Creole, as well as the current situation that surrounds it.

Following the lectures was a reception, during which presenters, Duke faculty, and attendees were given the opportunity to interact with each other and continue the discussions that had been forming throughout the afternoon. The scholars found the reception to be a chance to form a relationship with the Haiti Lab at Duke that will hopefully continue to build over the years. Through their discussions with Deborah Jenson, the co-Director of the Haiti Lab, Jacques Pierre, a Haitian native who lectures at Duke and the main coordinator of the event, and Carlo Diy, the founder of HaitiHub, LLC, the Class of 2015 now has a number of people who would be willing to come talk to the Class, an invitation to visit the Haiti Lab, knowledge of a local Haitian population, and a viable way to learn Haitian Creole.
As many of you know, I returned from Peace Corps, Mali in April, after being evacuated from the country following the March 22 coup d'état. I was uprooted 21 months into my service and returned to U.S. soil in the spring having not started an official job search. During the months that followed I met with many of you and benefited greatly from your sound counsel, excellent career advice and unfaltering support.

After sending out countless applications, powering through many rounds of interviews and weighing my options, I am excited to report that I accepted a position with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (http://www.mcc.gov)!

A couple of weeks ago, I started working with the East and Southern Africa team in the Department of Compact Operations. I am working specifically on the compacts of two of MCC’s partner countries - Tanzania and Mozambique. There is certainly a steep learning curve, but I am enjoying the challenge. I look forward to the day when I can rattle off the ins and outs of the compacts, and understand the complexities of the countries in which they are being carried out.

Thank you so much, again, for all that you have done to help make this opportunity possible. One thing is for sure - I would not be where I am today without your guidance.
As a Senior Class, one of the items very high on our priority list has been preparation for our trip to Chiapas, Mexico this upcoming Winter Term. We have been drafting a syllabus, calculating costs, researching what credit we can potentially receive, and reaching out to other students, specifically fellow Pericleans, who might be interested in coming with us. These have all, of course, been challenges for us and have required us to think critically, get creative, and examine all of our options.

Of course, this is not the only thing we have been focusing on. We are also putting into practice one of the pillars of this program – sustainability. After the hearth model that we implemented over the summer regarding women’s health in Alamance County, we have been focusing on making sure the women with whom we have worked continue to pursue knowledge regarding health care for themselves and their families.

Our ultimate goal is to continue to be in contact with this group of women after we graduate; yet more importantly, we hope that they use the knowledge they have acquired and continue to meet with one another and learn together.

Also, this experience has been a humbling one as our class has recently read a book called Toxic Charity by Robert Lupton. It has opened our eyes to the ways that we could – and should – be working with the Hispanic population here in Burlington. Lupton offered us some tough, yet very true words: “Doing for rather than doing with those in need is the norm. Add to it the combination of patronizing pity and unintended superiority, and charity become toxic.”

Our class has been striving to embody these truths in all that we do and Lupton’s words have significantly contributed to our learning process. We would recommend this to all Periclean Classes – and the entire Elon community – as it offers a very critical view of what “aid” and “service” really looks like and what our purpose and place is as Elon students and global citizens.
As I write this Dr. Martin Kamela, Mentor for the Class of 2012 and Jack Dodson, Periclean Scholar Class of '12, are reroute to Istanbul, Turkey where they will be greeted by officials from the Turkish government and then transported to the city of Izmir. They will be working with the Turkish government, representatives from Izmir, and officials from a consulting firm that is working for the city of Izmir in their bid to become the host city for World Expo 2020. World Expos (formerly referred to as the World’s Fair) are held every five years and, much like with the selection of the host city for the Olympics, the decision process is long, contains many steps and the final selection is made far in advance of the actual event so that the host city can properly prepare for the millions of visitors.

What is the connection between Izmir and the Periclean Scholars program? On one level the answer is as simple as a name: as one of its many initiatives, the Class of 2012 has been working on a documentary about health care in India entitled “Health for All.” In an amazing coincidence the theme that was long ago chosen by the city of Izmir for its Expo bid is, “New Routes to a Better World/Health for All.”

A major step in the bid selection process is that each aspirant host city will have 20 minutes up on the stage this November in Paris, in front of officials from the selection organization Bureau International des Expositions. Six cities from around the world will be represented.

The team in Izmir has decided to take a non-traditional –and dare I say very Periclean-path toward their bid. They are ignoring convention, and instead of using the time to talk about how great their city is and what they think can be accomplished by a focus on their chosen theme, they have decided to begin enacting their theme now. That is where the Class of 2012 comes in. The planning committee for the city of Izmir has decided to screen a 5-7 minute clip from “Health for All” as part of their 20 minute presentation and then have a representative from the Comprehensive Rural Health Project (one of the 2012’s main partners and featured in the documentary) and director Jack Dodson speak to the meaning of the phrase “health for all.” They will elaborate on the future partnership between Elon, CRHP and the city of Izmir to immediately invest in the CRHP campus in India and materially further the cause of health for all. There are tentative plans to give copies of the complete documentary to the 200+ officials attending the presentations in Paris.

How did this come about? You might call it blind luck, but another way of looking at it is recalling the quotation attributed to Seneca, namely “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” The 2012’s, along with their able Mentor, worked hard for over three years to learn all they could about India and to make deep, meaningful and lasting partnerships. One manifestation of all this work is the documentary, the value of which was recognized on yet another continent and, well, the rest is unfolding just now.

One main take home point in all of this is what I have been telling Periclean Scholars Classes since the very beginning of the program: never, ever, ever underestimate what can be accomplished by a motivated and focused cohort of Pericleans. Work hard and with true intentions and leverage the potential of your Class to do amazing things now and in the future!

A note from the director:

tom arcaro/director

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