Creating a legacy: Purposes, focus of projects reflect sustainability

annie huth '12

Sustainability. The 2010’s said it in their elevator speech. Elon preaches it in many contexts. Periclean is all about it.

But what does it mean for our project to be sustainable as our class nears the end of our time at Elon? Last month our class gave an update on the CSR-Nonprofit Summit we are co-hosting with our partners in Pune this January. The summit aims to create sustainability within our broad topic of focus: women’s empowerment and rural development and healthcare.

Our hope is that this summit will facilitate corporate-nonprofit partnerships that will expand and sustain the work of NGOs working on our focal issues. But our efforts for sustainability don’t stop there – much of our work this semester has focused on creating tangible strategies for sustaining our connections and impact with our local and global community partners after graduation.

One thing we’ve learned is that a key aspect of partnerships is that they’re mutually beneficial. While we could have focused primarily on creating a sustainable financial flow to CRHP after graduation, we decided that we wanted to send a person rather than paper. With this in mind, we’ve created the Elon Postgraduate Fellowship at CRHP, a paid position that will be open each year to an Elon graduate passionate about working in the nonprofit sector.

The fellow will use his or her skills to further CRHP’s mission and will gain a deep understanding of community-based healthcare and nonprofit work, while keeping the connections between Elon, Periclean, and CRHP strong. The Fellowship Advisory Committee has now begun to review applications submitted for the inaugural Elon Fellow, and our class’ grant committee is working on funding and endowing the fellowship so that it can be sustained for the long-term.

In terms of establishing a lasting impact with our local partner, the Burlington Housing Authority’s DreamGirls program, our class is working with the Kornodle Center’s LINCS coordinator for BHA to ensure that the extracurricular and cultural events we host monthly with the DreamGirls become a fixed part of their program.

The cooking classes, hikes and Indian cultural events that we have done with the DreamGirls have been a valuable outlet for all of us to learn more about each other and to establish a connection between the DreamGirls and the Adolescent Girls Program at CRHP.

Our plans for the future also include starting a blog project with the DreamGirls that will allow them to continue to use the cameras we donated to the program as a means of sharing their stories with the Burlington community and the adolescent girls in India. Both the newest member of our class, sophomore Becky Hackney, and the BHA LINCS coordinator can act as on-the-ground correspondents with the Elon Fellow in India for the next several years in order to sustain and strengthen the connection between our local and global partners.

Lastly, our class is working on ways to pass down the lessons we’ve learned to current and future classes. We have come a long way since our induction freshman year and in many ways have stood on the shoulders of past classes in our efforts, such as our upcoming conference in January which follows conferences hosted by the 2011s in Sri Lanka and the 2007s in Namibia. Finding ways to pass down the bits of wisdom and experience we have gained is one way we hope these insights can be used to further the sustainability of other projects as well as our own. PS.
Class of 2013/Mexico:

‘I 3s to everyone: Should there be a grant database? Also, some short updates!

eliza gibson/2013

Over the course of the past few weeks our class has been dedicating substantial time to researching grants. Although our project plans are still in the beginning stages of development, we recognize the importance of pursuing funding and want to be prepared when the time comes to seek it.

This experience has revealed some dead ends as well as some very promising opportunities. Searching for relevant grants has required us to consider the focus and characteristics of our work, and this total experience, in turn, has shown us how far we have to go.

Not only has it been exciting to imagine the possibilities that lie ahead of us, but also we have come to realize how important it is for Periclean classes to collaborate and share information. As we pursue grants we have been wondering about the funding successes and failures of previous classes. This led us to develop the idea of a Pan-Periclean grant database.

This resource would be a collective space for classes to share grant opportunities, fundraising efforts, and other funding-related advice. If you are interested in collaborating on this effort, please contact us at periclean2013@gmail.com.

In addition, we have been preparing for our third teaching session with the fifth grade students at Hillcrest Elementary School. We hope to be back in their classrooms during winter term. We have also been collaborating with the Periclean Alumna, Courtney Latta, ’09, in implementing a positive deviance community health program in Chiapas. More news on this development to come! PS.

Class of 2010/Ghana:

lauren taylor/2010

Now that I have been an Elon Alum for almost 20 months, I finally feel that I have acclimated to what we as students referred to as the “real world”. With a full-time job and Master’s degree in hand, I have, at least for the moment, found a sense of stability. However, life post-Elon proves to be both exciting and challenging on a daily basis. I am still living on shoe-string budget- most weeks, I am pretty excited if I can afford the “nicer” cheese for my afternoon snack. In fact, it seems that finances are a constant headache. While the burden of tuition has been temporarily lifted, things like rent and utilities often prove to be my least favourite thing to pay every month- and they never go away! By moving to a new city and country, I have been pleasantly surprised by how easy it can be to find organisations to get involved in that directly address humanitarian issues. Yet, on the whole, we are still confronted with an apathetic world that often struggles to look beyond the walls of the homes we live in. How then, can we live in the “real world” without necessarily allowing it to pass us by?

The longer I am out of Elon, the more simple the solution seems to be: read widely and talk often. In London, there is no shortage of people, in fact, with 12 million, finding just one person to talk to on the commute to work can be a bit daunting. Yet, I have had some lovely conversations about Ghana and South Africa with complete strangers, some of whom have become friends.

Advise for current students: While I am no wise owl, I can definitely make two recommendations for those still at Elon. The first would be to clear your schedule as much as possible for your last semester as you’ll want to have the time and energy to enjoy all of the events that will be going on throughout your senior year. Second, when you are able, try something new and take a friend. This past month I found myself in a life drawing session and a bikram yoga class. It felt so refreshing to get out and try something new and meet new people. PS.

Lauren with Frances Gee
Honduras started out for me as a project through Periclean Scholars, and our Class of 2007 raised money to help build a kitchen in a very poor hospital in Honduras. However, once we raised that money, we needed something else to do during our study travel in Winter Term 2007. Then we found Karen Godt from Hope for Honduran Children (www.hopeforhonduranchildren.org), and we spent the majority of our trip to Honduras with her working at her project sites. There is when I fell in love with the bright and loving children of Honduras. You’ve heard it a thousand times, but they have nothing and yet give you so much.

I’ve been back to Honduras five times since that first trip, and it’s hard to imagine a time when I cannot make the trip each year. A couple of months before each trip, I find out from Karen what the kids need, and then, I send a letter to everyone I know asking for donations. I typically bring two 50-pound suitcases of donations, bringing my clothes for the trip in a carry-on. Even with two suitcases, I often have to leave a ton of donations at home because I just don’t have enough room. Additionally, friends and family always give generous monetary donations, and I’ve raised a total $5,000 over the years just by asking friends and family for support. I choose to donate that money directly to Hope for Honduran Children in lieu of paying for my trip, which I do myself. I know that the money goes directly to the support of these children through food, construction projects or schooling.

I was also able to put on a fundraiser in April of 2009 at a local bar in Boston. We sent out invitations, charged $10 as an entry fee, got donations for about 20 raffle prizes, and sold raffle tickets. In the end we raised about $2,000. We used this money to sponsor a child in the Flor Azul project (www.hopeforhonduranchildren.org/florazul) and towards an education fund.

In 2010, I was able to bring my mom down to Honduras. It was great to experience the love in Honduras with her since she has supported me for so long in the project. This past summer tragedy struck in Honduras when two boys, formally from the Flor Azul project, were attacked at their place of work.

We lost one boy and the other is still fighting to return to good health. In August, when I was married, we made a donation to Hope for Honduran Children in order to support the education fund set up in the name of the boy who passed away. PS.
Class of 2011/Sri Lanka: Expanding projects at Panangala Junior School

kate vogt/2011

Last January, our 2011 class took its first visit to the Panangala Junior School in Sri Lanka, a school with which we had been partnered for over two years. We had raised funds to build a library for the two-classroom school and stock it with English and Sinhala books. The day of our arrival we participated in an opening ceremony for the library and stocked its shelves. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this two-day visit. Not only were we able to meet with the teachers to discuss the current state of the school and its future, but we developed personal ties to the staff and students. After returning to Elon, we made a plan for continuous partnering and improvements for the Panangala Junior School.

The library

The school had a new room with shelves and books, but there was one major issue: it was bare and uninviting. So we worked with Rainforest Rescue International (RRI) to order tables and chairs and paint them with mural type designs.

A new toilet

This item was at the very top of the teachers' wish list as the school only had one rundown toilet. However, the initial quote for this item was out of our budget range and we were concerned that this was becoming a give-take relationship. In order to build stronger ties to the community and reduce costs, we decided to supply the materials, but community volunteers would provide the labor. The new toilet was completed this fall and the model worked very successfully. I would recommend that any construction-related projects should take this approach as it is a win-win situation.

Future

As we move forward from these successes, it’s important to consider how we’re going to sustain these relationships post-graduation. Following the theme of sustainability, we are looking to encourage Panangala Junior School to work with their local environment officer and develop a recycling program. Next on the teacher’s wish list is some playground items so we will look to see if this could be implemented as well.

Overall, our class is encouraged to see that the Elon-Panangala Junior School relationship continues to thrive and grow even after we’ve moved away from Elon. PS.

The ‘11s have been working to expand their partnership with the Panangala Junior School in Sri Lanka. Photos courtesy of Kate Vogt.
Graduation may be a long way away for most Pericleans, but sustainability of projects post-graduation is a factor inherent to the success of every Class. Periclean Scholars alumni David Higham is a member of the Class of 2006. While at Elon, Higham wrote the original bylaws for the Periclean Scholars Alumni Association. Now five years after his graduation, Higham is a business owner and local entrepreneur, with several business ventures in the Burlington area. His most recent retail success was the successful Halloween Spirit store at Holly Hill Mall.

Higham will soon be adding a Periclean section to one of his year round stores, For Every Season, also located in Holly Hill Mall and online through Amazon. The merchandise for the “Periclean World Corner” of For Every Season will be goods purchased in areas partnered with Periclean Scholars. Students will bring back the bulk of the items from upcoming visits to their focus countries.

“This is a sustainable and structural way to support the Periclean Scholars,” Director Tom Arcaro said, “And to match or go beyond the yearly endowment from the Redwoods Group Foundation.” A percentage of the profit from the Periclean goods will go to the Periclean Scholars Alumni Association and the individual Periclean Classes where the items were purchased. PS.

Class of 2015/Haiti:

Class of 2015, Apply Now!

Class of 2015, apply to the Periclean Scholars Program! If you are interested in contributing to a substantial service project and making a positive contribution in Haiti, then Periclean Scholars is for you! The application process is open to all first-year students from now until March 1, 2012. For the application you will need a letter of recommendation from a faculty person and a letter of application. Upon receipt of these materials, you will be contacted for an interview with the 2015 Class Mentor, Dr. Bud Warner. The Periclean Scholars program is a unique opportunity at Elon that allows students to put their ideas into action through service. For more information about the application process refer to Elon’s website and type in Periclean Scholars in the search bar. PS.
All classes/discussion:
The issues with mountaintop removal with the Class of 2014

Mountaintop removal hurts environment, people of Appalachia

emily forniash/2014

Coal is one of the main nonrenewable resources that fuels the United States’ economy. Many people fail to realize are the negative connections that surround this fossil fuel.

Mountaintop removal, the extraction method that supplies only 5 to 10 percent of the U.S. coal production, is prominent in the Appalachia region. The process involves coal companies clearing and blasting the tops of mountains in order to reach the coal deposits below. The waste generated is dumped into streams and valleys, chronically impacting the lives of the people in the region.

Coal mined by mountain top removal only accounts for 4 percent of U.S. electricity. With it comes climate change, environmental degradation and critical social and economic issues.

Biodiversity reduction undermines opportunities for local agriculture. Overloaded trucks spread coal dust that permeates the air. Sludge from coal “cleaning” ends up in community water supplies. Not to mention the miners themselves; black lung is rampant in coal mining towns. These economically depressed communities have come to rely on the coal companies for their source of livelihood.

With this reliance comes poor mental and physical health; obesity and Oxycontin are both prominent in the region. By supporting the Periclean Class of 2014, you will help us make a positive change in partnership and collaboration with the local population. PS.

Mountaintop removal is an issue that affects both the environment and the people of Appalachia. Photos from appvoices.org, ohvec.org, nrdc.org.
A note from the director:

Partnerships & Sustainability

Leonard Shikololo from northern Namibia has a smile that brightens even the darkest – both literal and figurative – room. I first encountered him through Dr. Lucy Steinitz, co-founder of Catholic AIDS Action, another partner. We met him face to face in 2004 when our Class of 2006 took our first travel to Namibia. Leonard is now working with another HIV/AIDS related non-governmental organization, and I have Skyped with him many times in the past several months.

Here’s my central point: the transfer of funds to the small non-governmental organization TKO-MAS will most definitely make a material difference in the lives of many both infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in rural Namibia, thus continuing the mission of the Class of 2006.

However, sending funds on an annual basis is not enough. Each partnership that is developed is, yes, a relationship between two organizations, but much more than that it is a relationship between people, between individual Periclean Scholars and Francis Amedahe (’10), Lucy Steinitz (’06), Peter Brown (’08), Voster Tembo (’09), Karen Godt (’07), Ajanta Perera (’11) and so on. A complete list of all our partners – past and present – will soon be up on our web site. I encourage all of you to email or write these partners and express your thanks and also simply to reach out once again, thus sustaining these partnerships in the most meaningful way possible.

On a final note, in this holiday season please remember that the greatest gift you can give is the gift of yourself. PS.