College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Newsletter, Spring 2024

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As Commencement approaches, I wanted to share just some of what has been happening here at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Only a few weeks ago, CLAS was well-represented in the path of totality of April’s solar eclipse. Versant Power Astronomy Center director Shawn Laatsch and his team were in the middle of it all, with months of outreach and research culminating in an amazing day of important experimentation and natural wonder that so many will never forget.

Anthropology professor Bonnie Newsom is collaborating with the National Park Service to help protect Acadia National Park’s Indigenous archaeological sites from the impact of climate change.
change.

Back in February, the School of Performing Arts produced the Maine premiere of the inclusive swashbuckling comedy "A Pirate's Life for She." A group of graduate students from the School of Policy and International Affairs attended the annual Camden Conference, this year focused on India. A current political science student is changing the conversation around food waste, while a recent history graduate had the internship of a lifetime at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Finally, Michael Delorge, a student double-majoring in political science and biology, will be honored as co- valedictorian for the 2024 Commencement.

These stories offer a window into the remarkable experiences and contributions of our College’s students, faculty, and staff. Our hope is that peering through that window will give you the opportunity to remember your own unique, unforgettable experiences here at the University of Maine.

As always, we thank you for staying in touch.

Emily A. Haddad
Dean

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Meet Michael Delorge, 2024 Co-Valedictorian
Michael Delorge of Biddeford, Maine, is a 2024 valedictorian. Pursuing dual degrees in political science and biology, Delorge crafted coursework focused on public health policy with the goal of generating skills to improve medical care. Originally a pre-med student, he altered his studies to meet his interests and spent class time integrating topics such as plant biology with substance use policy.

Having enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic, Delorge sought to improve his experience by finding community in a way that joined leadership and public service. For the next four years, he participated in student government and UMaine’s Partners for World Health (PWH) chapter, a nonprofit organization that distributes recycled medical supplies to global communities. His senior year he became student government president, responsible for leading a 30-person team, making administrative decisions and advocating for undergraduates with an organizational budget of $1 million and oversight of 150 student groups. Delorge became co-president of UMaine’s PWH chapter his sophomore year, serving as president for the next two. In addition to distributing medical aid to communities in Senegal and assisting in sending 22,000 pounds of medical supplies to Ukraine, he more than doubled the number of student volunteers and secured $30,000 in grant funding. Through his commitment, he found a home in UMaine and learned the gratitude of leaving a community better than when he arrived.

Read more here.

**Political science student seeks to turn leftovers into long-lasting impact**

In the United States, more than 133 billion pounds of food are thrown away each year. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, food waste is responsible for 33% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Maine, and about 11% of emissions nationwide.

Kate Flynn, a fourth-year political science student at the University of Maine, was exposed to the extent of food waste across the state and nation during a class project that dealt with nutrition insecurity and the redirection of excess food to where it is needed most. Her project inspired her passion for making a difference in how people can access food.
"We like to frame it as connecting excess or surplus food to where food is needed because frequently, the phrase ‘food waste’ has a negative connotation. It is ‘wasted food,’ because the majority of food waste is perfectly good and edible food that is falling through the cracks of our food access system,” said Flynn.

Read more [here](#).

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**Newsom, UMaine students and Wabanaki partners aid effort to protect Acadia’s Indigenous archaeological sites from climate change**

Along the rocky shores of Acadia National Park are 24 known archaeological sites that preserve the history and heritage of Wabanaki people. Many of the sites house pottery sherds, tools, animal bones and other artifacts that showcase ancient Indigenous culture from a bygone age.

Sea level rise, flooding and storms are eroding these sacred and culturally significant places.

The National Park Service (NPS) is launching a new effort to protect Wabanaki archaeological sites in Acadia from climate change using Indigenous and western knowledge and recruited UMaine anthropologist Bonnie Newsom and archaeology Ph.D. students to help.

Using a “two-eyed seeing” approach, Newsom, her students and NPS will devise a co-stewardship strategy to manage and preserve Indigenous archaeological sites in Acadia with members of the Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Penobscot and Passamaquoddy nations, all of which are part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. The five-year project, which builds on 15 years of collaboration between NPS and Indigenous communities, will involve consultation from tribal historic preservation officers, elders, natural resource caregivers, fluent language speakers and artisans.

Read more [here](#).
School of Performing Arts produces Maine premiere of inclusive pirate adventure

The University of Maine School of Performing Arts took to the high seas with the spring production from its Division of Theatre and Dance.

*A Pirate’s Life for She*, written by Amie Root and directed by D. Granke, graced the Hauck Auditorium stage for six swashbuckling shows, running from February 23 through March 3.

The play is a queer-friendly nautical romp packed with action and friendship and plenty of laughs, with a sea shanty or two in the mix as well. Additionally, one could make the case that those same descriptors (minus the shanties) match the relationship between Root and Granke.

Granke – who performed in the first workshop production of the show – expressed their excitement at bringing “A Pirate’s Life for She” to the Hauck stage. It’s an opportunity to celebrate the stage combat lineage that brought Granke and Root together.

“There is a certain fascination with the swashbuckling movies of the Errol Flynn/Douglas Fairbanks era,” said Granke. “The stage combat lineage

Recent graduate hits home run with Baseball Hall of Fame internship

As a lifelong baseball fan, Delaney Colson landed her dream internship at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York last summer after earning her undergraduate degree in history and secondary education from the University of Maine.

“It was really the perfect intersection between both of my majors, combining teaching and education with history and my love of baseball,” says Colson, who is from Rutland, Massachusetts and grew up cheering for the Boston Red Sox.

She was one of just 19 interns out of more than 500 applicants to be selected for the Hall’s summer 2023 *Frank and Peggy Steele Internship Program for Youth Leadership Development*, which provides opportunities for college students and recent graduates to work in various positions at the museum. Her internship was in the education department, where she helped coordinate in-person and virtual field trips, created exhibits and programs for general museum visitors, and developed free lesson plans for classroom teachers.

“I helped create or update lessons for all grade levels on topics like science, economics, labor history, geography and multicultural diversity, pretty much any subject you could think of, we were
that we come from is rooted in replicating that style and panache. It's a modern treatment of that attitude and style that is more inclusive of different expressions of humanity than those older flicks that are deeply tied to gender roles.”

Read more here.

One of the highlights of the summer was assisting with the Hall’s annual induction ceremony in July, where Colson says it was all-hands-on-deck as the museum welcomed Class of 2023 inductees Fred McGriff and Scott Rolen.

Read more here.

The University of Maine was front and center for much of the coverage surrounding the solar eclipse in April.

Shawn Laatsch, director of the Versant Power Astronomy Center, and his team engaged in months of outreach ahead of the event, with Laatsch even receiving the nickname "Mr. Eclipse" from a number of local media outlets.

On the day itself, Laatsch and company were hard at work in Jackman, preparing for and performing dozens of experiments made possible by the eclipse. The Orono campus hosted some events as well.

If you'd like to learn more about the sheer extent of eclipse-related experiences and events, you can check out the full gamut at UMaine's eclipse website here.
In February, 16 students from the School of Policy and International Affairs represented the University of Maine at the annual Camden Conference.

The topic of this year's conference was "India: Rising Ambitions, Challenges at Home" and explored the future of the country - both domestically and as a global power - as it continues to grow, some 75 years after achieving independence.
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