

change lives

THROUGH STELLAR PROGRAMS

Defiance College builds on its long history of service to affect both students and communities

by Kathy Punches '96, Director of Public Relations and Marketing

Imagine yourself riding on a dirt road in Belize. The road is so potholed that it takes hours to travel a few miles. The van stops along the edge of a forest. From your research, you know that some of the trees and fallen branches hold amazing gems. A ranger leads you to a tree, and there, deep in its hollow, is a nest of yellow-headed parrots. If they are lucky, they will live out their days here in the forest. But, many will be poached for the pet trade, with the majority dying before they are sold. You are here because you want to save endangered species like these wonderful creatures.

When then-student Kaitlin Studer traveled to Belize as a McMaster Scholar to research the plight of the yellow-headed parrot, the experience opened her eyes. “It developed a passion in me that I never knew I had,” she recalls.

Her work also created awareness among Belizeans of the critical role conservation has in the world and how the protection of endangered species is directly tied to a region or community.

Studer’s project is one of hundreds of research and service projects conducted in recent years by Defiance College students. Whether the project is ongoing or a one-day event, such experiences make a lasting impact not only on the students but on communities, both locally and globally. A Defiance College education incorporates the belief that individuals are part of something bigger, an education that instills a sense of social responsibility. With that in mind, students are able to positively impact



Former McMaster Scholar Kaitlin Studer shares her book about the yellow-headed parrot with students in Belize.

communities by applying their academic expertise and skills.

Defiance College is recognized on a national level for its stellar programs of engagement in the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity and its affiliate programs, Project 701 and the Service Leadership Program. These programs are modern-day examples of the institution's long history of service, a mission that incorporates a liberal arts education with leadership, communication skills, critical thinking, moral reasoning, global awareness, and respect for diversity.

Students understand that their achievements, their role in a global community, can enhance lives. The newest example of real-world experience that joins classroom knowledge with service is Project 701, a separately incorporated nonprofit organization that gives students an opportunity to create, develop, manage and run a wide range of projects. DC students serve on the board of directors along with administrators, faculty and alumni. Management and staff positions are held by students. Interdisciplinary project teams offer a multitude of opportunities for students to lead, learn, and bring about positive change within neighboring communities.

The list of Project 701 initiatives is impressive and growing. DC PC Solutions was formed by digital forensic science students to provide computer repair and related services to the local community. Graphic design students started a design studio, Creating Defiance, offering design services to nonprofit organizations and small businesses. Business students involved in Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) have started an effort to provide loans to microbusinesses in Jamaica.

The Backpack Buddy program involves numerous community partners to provide backpacks filled with food for scores of area youngsters who qualify to receive much-needed nutrition for themselves and their siblings each weekend. DC students coordinate the logistics of the program, purchasing food and scheduling volunteers to fill the backpacks at St. John United Church of Christ.

This fall the newest Project 701 initiative, Defiance Cares Free Clinic, opened its doors. A group of students assembled a collaborative with Mercy Hospital of Defiance, the Defiance Clinic, and Promedica Defiance Regional Hospital to provide a free primary care health clinic. Defiance County residents who are

uninsured or otherwise in need of medical care are eligible for medical services at the monthly clinic. At its first half-day clinic in September, 20 local residents were served, and that number is expected to increase as word of the free service grows.

Rachael Lange, junior life science and chemistry major, was a co-manager in the initial stages of the free clinic. Her involvement in the project began "as a way for me to help the community with a growing need and to provide a way for nursing and pre-med students to gain experience," she says. "It has since grown into something that defines me. ... This project has given me an appreciation for everyone around me and has given me hope that even a dream that seems impossible isn't." Lange is now executive director of Project 701.

Additional Project 701 initiatives are in the planning stages including a fair trade store on campus and a mentoring program for area youth at a local detention center.

Project 701 is just one of the numerous initiatives housed under the path-breaking McMaster School for Advancing Humanity.

"What a tremendous gift Harold and Helen McMaster and their family gave the College when the McMaster School was created through their generosity back in 2002," said DC president Mark C. Gordon.

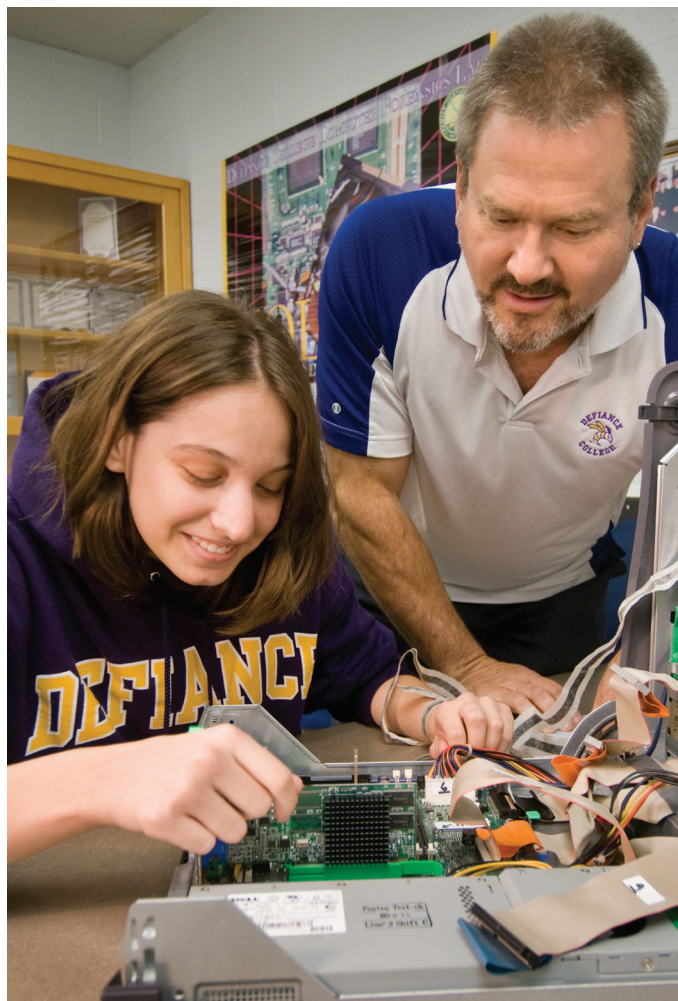
The McMaster School is a program that is distinctive among colleges and universities across the country. McMaster gives students opportunities to conduct specially-designed projects around the world. Since its inception, 168 student scholars from all academic divisions have worked with faculty members in Belize, Cambodia, New Orleans, Guatemala, Ireland, Jamaica, and Ghana.

"The McMaster Fellows and Scholars Program supports students as they apply their academic expertise in the context of the real world to solve problems and address issues within communities in

need," said Mary Ann Studer, dean of the McMaster School. "Many of these efforts occur in partnership with communities in the developing world. Once students have had the opportunity to merge traditional knowledge with real world application, they advance their learning exponentially."

Students and faculty work together in learning communities for several months prior to their travel, fine-tuning their projects and preparing themselves for international travel, a first for many. The McMaster learning communities for 2011-12 include Belize, Cambodia and Ghana.

Like Kaitlin Studer who made multiple trips to Belize, students participating in McMaster learning communities have transformative experiences. Traveling and working in Third World countries often change the way students understand the world and their place in it. Such experiences can transform ideas of power, privilege and humanity from the abstract to something as tangible as a children's book about endangered species. Or a microscope.



Dr. Gregg Gunsch provides guidance to students involved in DC PC Solutions, including senior Ilana Goch.

Imagine yourself standing in a medical clinic in rural Cambodia. The air is hot, and it is filled with the excitement of the day. The project you have been working on for months is about to be fulfilled. You are here to teach lab technicians how to use microscopes that you have delivered from America. The equipment and training will help them to better diagnose malaria, one of the greatest health problems in Southeast Asia.

Brittany Coats has made two trips to Cambodia, continuing the work of previous student scholars to provide much-needed medical equipment and training. “After going to Cambodia, I realized that my passion was to help college students help the world through research and service, like the McMaster School. Going to Cambodia has helped prepare me for this in getting a better idea about what it’s like in a different part of the world, as well as how to prepare other students in going to a different part of the world.”

Learning communities work with partners in the countries they serve. In Cambodia, major partners are the Southeast Asia Children’s Mercy Fund and the Cambodia Women’s Crisis Center. The principle Belizean partner is Programme for Belize as well as the Belize Educational Cooperative, Muffles Junior College, and government schools in San Carlos and St. Paul’s Bank. During recent projects in New Orleans, students and faculty worked with the New Orleans Family Justice Center, the University of New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana University. These alliances ensure that projects are appropriate and provide services most needed in their respective locations.

The projects that students and faculty have undertaken through the McMaster School are often ongoing, with new students picking up the mantle each year for successful projects that have been well-received on previous trips. Many student projects in Belize and Cambodia have focused on water testing for contamination, an ongoing battle in rural areas. Depending on the need in each area, testing is done for substances such as parasites or arsenic. Databases are created

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Brittany Coats '12



McMaster Scholar Brittany Coats demonstrates use of microscopes in Cambodia.

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First-aid, water safety and CPR are lacking in areas of Belize and Cambodia, so students have conducted education and training in recent years. Much work is also done in rural schools in these countries, implementing teacher training modules based on educational needs.

Students and faculty have worked for several years with the Cambodia Women’s Crisis Center, conducting training on non-violent parenting techniques, sharing micro-lending information for women to develop basic business skills and business plans, and teaching natural birth control methods with the Cycle Beads program.

The Service Leadership Program at Defiance College has for many years recruited students who have been involved in civic engagement during their high school years and want to continue that experience in college. Service Leaders apply their academic and personal expertise

to real-world issues through service learning projects. Each is required to perform a minimum of 150 service hours each calendar year to maintain their scholarship.

Many give their time and talents to local nonprofit agencies and engage in service opportunities such as managing tutoring programs, building and/or repairing low-income housing, or serving meals to the homeless or elderly. These students gain experience in planning, organizing and implementing an in-depth service learning project or fulfill a significant leadership role. Their work in the community allows them to network with professionals from a wide spectrum.

Many Defiance College students are involved in service in smaller doses – through the classroom, an athletic team, or a campus organization. Numerous classes design and carry out service projects. A First Year Experience class hosts a Christmas party each December for local children in foster care. Business students prepare tax returns for elderly and low-income residents and write business and marketing plans for local small businesses and nonprofits. Students from various majors volunteer at local elementary schools, helping youngsters with reading skills. Religion students conduct workshops

for area pastors and church educators. Criminal justice students assist with security and clean-up at a local festival. Student organizations conduct fund-raisers for local charities. The list goes on and on ...

Nearly all DC athletic teams conduct service projects, viewing their efforts in part as giving back to a community that supports them. During the 2010-11 academic year, Defiance College student-athletes contributed 2,948 hours of community service. Their service learning projects are many and varied: working with animals at the county Humane Society; cleaning and refurbishing at a community playground and county fairgrounds; helping with Special Olympics; and assisting in proper disposal of hazardous waste material, just to name a few.

The DC men's basketball team was the first Yellow Jacket team to go on an international service trip. In May of this year, the men traveled to Jamaica where they spent several days in the poorest region of the island, painting at a rural high school and playing basketball and soccer with the students. While their work was fulfilling, team members were most affected and inspired by the one-on-one relationships that

Imagine yourself outside the classrooms of a high school in a mountainous region of Jamaica. If you close your eyes, the sounds could be in any high school in America. But these students, in their immaculate blue and white uniforms, come from families living in deep poverty. You know that when school is over, each will walk to a house that is no bigger than your bedroom back in the States. But in this moment, you are laughing with them, sharing Facebook pages, showing them how to dribble a basketball.

were built with the Jamaican teen-agers.

Many of the team members called the experience "life changing." Many said that the experience caused them to learn more about themselves, gaining self-confidence and leadership skills, making connections with teens and adults from another culture.

And that is at the heart of the Defiance College mission, to not only help students

develop the professional skills to be successful in the marketplace, but to grow as individuals, and make a difference in their communities and in the world. Empowered with the support of the entire college community, students step out of their comfort zones, see the world beyond the boundaries of a classroom, and touch it with their own hands.

"What Defiance College is providing to communities both local and global is an innovative, intelligent workforce that is well-trained and anxious to partner for positive impact," said Mary Ann Studer. "What Defiance College is teaching its students is to recognize the connection between their

chosen discipline, their future career, and the positive impact they have the potential to make on humanity. It is the goal of the McMaster School, its affiliate programs, and Defiance College to have our students graduate from here with a much wider view of the world and their place in it as professionals." ♦



The DC men's basketball team spent a week volunteering at a high school in rural Jamaica.