Nine Clark U. undergrads pursue creative research, community service projects with support of Steinbrecher Fellowships

WORCESTER, MA— Nine Clark University undergraduate students were awarded 2014-2015 Steinbrecher Fellowships this spring to pursue original ideas, creative research, and community service projects. Some students conducted their projects over the summer; other projects are continuing through the 2014-2015 academic year.

Following is an update on the Steinbrecher Fellows and their projects:

John S. Oliveras, of Worcester, went to Colombia for three weeks over the summer and worked in the Seeds of Hope School in Mulatos, Antioquia. He taught an English course, and conducted research on the school’s effectiveness in, and for, the surrounding community. Oliveras is a member of the Class of 2015 at Clark, he majors in Spanish and minors in education. He plans to become a teacher and hopes to build a school for low-income children.

Pinar Barlas, of Kyrenia, Cyprus, volunteered with Hollaback! Boston, a nonprofit organization that aims to raise awareness of, and put an end to, street harassment. Barlas designed ads, flyers, posters, and other materials for Hollaback! to educate the public and enlist their support to help stop street harassment. Barlas is a member of the Class of 2016 at Clark; she double-majors in cultural studies and communication and women’s and gender studies.

Ryan Barney, of Easton, Conn., ventured to the Strait of Georgia (a marine region of British Columbia) and conducted research on changes in stickleback fish due to ecological stresses. He assisted researchers from Clark’s Foster-Baker Lab, and compared the size and age of fish from different lakes. Barney is a member of the Class of 2015 at Clark; he is majoring in environmental conservation biology and geography.

Molly Burns, of Old Saybrook, Conn., researched the impact of high unemployment of native Spaniards on their attitudes toward the Latin American, Eastern European and North African immigrants who have moved to Seville, Spain, over the course of the past 15 years. Burns is a senior at Clark; she majors in Spanish and international development and social change.

Suaida Firoze, of Dhaka, Bangladesh, compiled stories and photographs of victims of rape, domestic violence, and sexual assault who were housed in a shelter run by the Bangladesh National Women’s
Lawyers Association (BNWLA) in Gazipur, Bangladesh. Firoze is creating a book and a blog to increase awareness of and support for the BNWLA’s work, particularly for this shelter. Firoze is a junior at Clark, majoring in economics and management.

Joel Helander, of Granby, Conn., conducted research on the relationship between music and text, and is writing a screenplay for a short film and while composing and recording a set of musical themes for the film’s soundtrack. He is using research on how music and narrative were paired before movies began, and in the early film period, for his senior honors thesis in English and hopes this will help launch his career as a composer for films. Helander is a member of the Class of 2015 at Clark; he majors in English and music.

Kimi Ko, of Yangon, Myanmar, traveled to Myanmar to research the impact of Buddhist institutions on the military regime that was in power until 2011, and on the democratized government in power today. She interviewed military officials, members of a monastic community, local government officials, newspaper reporters and scholars to provide original data for her senior honors thesis in political science. Ko is a senior at Clark, majoring in political science and economics. She hopes to pursue a career in politics in Burma after graduation.

Melat Seyoum, of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, conducted two projects with the International Water Management Institute, a nonprofit research organization in Ethiopia. She assisted with field research on the suitability of the Kilti watershed for shallow groundwater development. She also helped facilitate communication between the Geda (elder) system in the Gumuz community and policymakers (with language and cultural differences). Seyoum is a member of the Class of 2015; she is majoring in geography and political science.

Demet Senturk, of Ducze, Turkey, spent time over the summer exploring and analyzing the concepts of “home” and “personal origin” through her own personal “lens” as a “Third Culture Kid.” Senturk was born and spent her early childhood in a small village in Turkey, and then lived for eight years with her mother in a Tel Aviv, Israel, neighborhood populated by immigrants and refugees mainly from African countries. She traveled to Turkey to photograph the people and places that made up her “home” and helped shape her identity. Senturk is a sophomore at Clark; she majors in photography and minors in political science. Senturk plans to pursue a career as a photojournalist after college.

“I continue to be impressed by the extraordinarily high quality of the applications we receive for Steinbrecher Fellowships and the diversity of the projects applicants proposed,” said Sharon Krefetz, professor of political science and director of the Steinbrecher Fellowship Program. “The new Fellows all share a tremendous excitement about the work that is possible only through the support of their Fellowships.”

The Steinbrecher Fellowship Program was established in 2006 to encourage and support Clark undergraduates’ pursuit of original ideas, creative research, and community service projects. The Program was established in memory of David C. Steinbrecher, class of ’81, by his parents, Phyllis and Stephen Steinbrecher, class of ’55, and is funded by generous gifts from the Steinbrecher family and friends of David.
Founded in 1887 in Worcester, Massachusetts, Clark University is a small, liberal arts-based research university addressing social and human imperatives on a global scale. Nationally renowned as a college that changes lives, Clark is emerging as a transformative force in higher education today. LEEP (Liberal Education and Effective Practice) is Clark’s pioneering model of education that combines a robust liberal arts curriculum with life-changing world and workplace experiences. Clark’s faculty and students work across boundaries to develop solutions to complex challenges in the natural sciences, psychology, geography, management, urban education, Holocaust and genocide studies, environmental studies, and international development and social change. The Clark educational experience embodies the University’s motto: Challenge convention. Change our world.

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