

THE RESULT OF A PATH-BREAKING EFFORT

Mark C. Gordon, President, Defiance College

Welcome to the 10th anniversary edition of the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity Journal. In 2002, Harold and Helen McMaster and their family embarked on an innovative project to pioneer a new approach to undergraduate education in the 21st century. The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity at Defiance College is the result of this path-breaking effort, and its impact has been extraordinary.

Since its inception, the reach of the McMaster School has been amazing. Two hundred sixteen student scholars and 79 faculty fellows and associate fellows have undertaken over 280 projects in a series of diverse locations: Belize, Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, Ireland, Jamaica, New Orleans, and Thailand. Projects have ranged from training rural health care providers in Cambodia to use microscopes to diagnosis malaria and tuberculosis to assisting a group of women in a small village in Belize to start a restaurant; from assisting victims of domestic violence to training both educators and students; from doing chemical analysis of drinking water in small towns and villages to installing solar panels to protecting endangered species.

The reach of the McMaster School during this past decade, however, has been far more extensive, as its approach has shaped Defiance College in profound ways. Harold and Helen McMaster's initiative has led to the creation of an annual symposium at Defiance College that focuses on important issues related to individual liberty; it has led to Constitutional Conversations that challenge students to think about the American Constitution and political systems of other countries; it has led to a focus on entrepreneurship and service, with the recent addition of programs such as Project 701 (Defiance College's student-run non-profit), the Defiance College Partnership for Jobs and Defiance's new Work Experience Program (which together have helped over 100 students in the past year alone gain work experience in both on- and off-campus jobs). And it has led to the development of Defiance College's new Imagine Initiatives, which commit the College to providing a range of life-changing domestic and international cultural and travel opportunities for all of its students.

This issue of the journal describes a set of discrete projects which Defiance College students have undertaken in Belize, Cambodia, and Ghana as part of their recent McMaster School activities. The abstracts that follow give lots of detail and factual information about each of these projects. But the numbers and the raw data do not come close to telling the full story of the impact of the McMaster School. There is no way to describe on paper the look on the faces of parents in a small village in Belize when they see the electricity come on in their village school, thanks to the work of McMaster School scholars and fellows (as well as other McMaster School volunteers). How can one explain the importance to a small town of tracking the safety of its drinking water system? How can one begin to imagine the significance of improving health care in a rural province of Cambodia? Or of assisting disabled athletes or domestic violence victims in that country? How can one understand the significance of improving health for an aging population through mobility training at a senior center in Ghana?

What we often forget as well is the impact that these experiences have on the Defiance College students participating in them. It is fair to say that on a certain level our Defiance College McMaster Scholars benefit even more from their service activities than do the intended "recipients" in developing countries. Participation in McMaster School programs has truly been a life-changing experience for many, many students. In fact, let me share with



The McMaster Family

you excerpts from two letters I received recently from students who were McMaster Scholars:

“As a McMaster Scholar, I have grown in so many unimaginable ways. First off, I extensively expanded my education within my scientific discipline... in doing so I was able to offer the potential to save lives in places around the world. As an undergraduate student, I think that the opportunity to do such a thing is pretty amazing. I’ve learned how to communicate and train across language barriers, tailor presentations to a vastly dynamic series of audiences and environments, and think quickly on my feet in circumstances that were not expected. After such enriching and intense experiences, I feel that I can do anything.” – Brittany Coats

“I have traveled to many amazing places thanks to the McMaster School and Defiance College such as Belize, Italy and Central Europe. These trips have been life-changing because of my opportunity to do research and service for others. Throughout all my experiences at DC, I have developed a passion for international issues. One of my professors told me that she is confident that I ‘... will make significant contributions towards progressive and humane change in our society.’ I am very honored and humbled by her confidence in me and her assessment of my work here at DC, and her words have become my goal in all I do. I am the first in my family to graduate from college, and I am currently attending a well-respected law school. I want to practice International Law. Non-profit endeavors are my main interest. I have seen first-hand what the McMaster School accomplishes, and I want to have an even greater impact.” – Bryant Green

It is rare that a single family can make such a significant impact on such a broad scale in such a short period of time. But, that is what the McMaster family has achieved. And that is what this year’s McMaster Journal celebrates as we recognize the 10th anniversary of the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity at Defiance College.

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