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ANNUAL REPORT

THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES

2018



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

In our current political environment, even as we experience increasingly extreme weather patterns and other severe consequences of a changing climate, ranging from impacts on livelihoods to national security threats, climate change is still questioned and science itself is under attack.

There has arguably never been a more important time for our SFS donor community to invest in transforming our nation's young talent into the next generation of leaders and advocates for

sound environmental practices and policies - and we are incredibly grateful for your generosity and support.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria dealt a harsh blow to the SFS Center for Marine Resource Studies (CMRS) in the Turks and Caicos Islands, but we are happy to report that the program re-opened in less than a year in renovated facilities, and it is stronger than ever. We received an outpouring of support to help us get SFS-CMRS ready for students and to help the devastated community recover from the storms.

SFS continues to focus on exploring new regions for education and research, while concurrently enhancing the quality and capacity of our existing centers through program innovations and upgrades to our facilities and transportation systems. This year, we re-launched our wildlife management program in Kenya, and look forward to welcoming our first student cohort in the Patagonia region of Chile this fall.

Our efforts over the last several years to improve our quality and effectiveness, while significantly expanding our reach, have us poised to make a major leap forward. We look forward to serving a larger and more diverse student cohort at a greater range of ecosystems around the world - and we are excited to partner with our donors and supporters to make it happen.

Sincerely,

James A. Cramer
President

OUR SCHOOL OF RECORD

The University of Minnesota has served as the SFS School of Record (SOR) since June 2014. The University of Minnesota works closely with SFS on program quality through representation on the SFS Partners Council and through program reviews every five years. As a U.S.-accredited institution, the University of Minnesota can also issue official transcripts to SFS students who need them.

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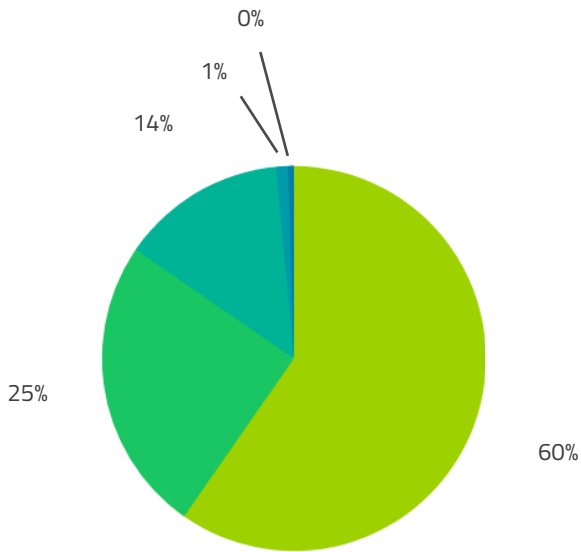
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For the most up-to-date information on SFS governance and staff, please visit our website.

REVENUES	
Tuition and Fees	\$7,580,599
Gifts and Grants	\$1,663,131
Other Revenues	\$590,472
TOTAL REVENUES	\$9,834,202



EXPENSES	
Environmental Programs	\$5,559,146
Program Support	\$2,299,038
Administration	\$1,303,532
Development	\$94,373
Other Expenses	\$36,584
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$9,292,673



HURRICANE AID ON SOUTH CAICOS



The staff and families of Creighton's Corner Elementary School in Ashburn, Virginia, donated an astounding 47 boxes to be distributed at the South Caicos local schools - containing everything from crayons to Lego bricks to graph paper to white boards to jump ropes.

SFS Parent Lisa Shamlian, a speech-language pathologist at Creighton's Corner, led and coordinated this school-wide effort. She learned about the devastation on South Caicos from her daughter Leah Shamlian, an alumna of the TCI Fall '13 program, and enlisted the help of her school community. In December, she and her husband drove a van full of the donated supplies nearly 500 miles to SFS Headquarters in Beverly, Massachusetts so that the boxes could be loaded onto a pallet bound for South Caicos.

In early January 2018, SFS Turks and Caicos Center Director Heidi Hertler and her team hand delivered over 50 boxes of school supplies to Iris Stubbs Elementary School on South Caicos. Sixth graders were on hand to help to unload, and everyone was excited to receive the materials.

"Even before we left the school, the books were being read by the children," Dr. Hertler recounts. "It was a very moving experience for all of us!"

South Caicos had withstood a direct hit from Hurricanes Irma and Maria the previous fall, and the island suffered devastating damage and loss. The response from the SFS community was immediate. Over \$22,000 was donated to help South Caicos residents recover from the storm, alongside boxes of school supplies and gym equipment given to assist the local schools.

"We are extremely glad that we were able to give a little help to a place many of us consider a second home," said Sarah Koth, TCI Summer '17, who helped organize a donation drive from her class.

Ben Adams, TCI Fall '90, reached out to his fellow classmates to reconnect and encourage contributions. "There is no shortage of people needing help around the world today and we all have finite resources, however for us, when we think back to how openly the island and the islanders embraced us, and the experiences we had, from backgammon, Jamaican patties by the school, hanging with the ex-Governor, volunteering at the local elementary school, the slew of amazing dive experiences and the amazing times we had together. It makes us want to give back."



"I'm proud of what our school accomplished," she said, "including cash donations made the day before we drove up, which covered van rental and gas and tolls. These funds were donated by teachers who wanted to help other teachers and kids."







ANDREA KOLAROVA

SFS Bhutan Fall '18 | Duke University

Every morning I woke up to crisp clean air, the sound of the Pa Chhu river, and the stunning view of the Paro Valley through my open window. My semester abroad in Bhutan was among the healthiest and happiest times of my life. Three months in this beautiful and unique country was just enough time to forge meaningful relationships and develop a deep understanding of the Bhutanese way of life – but it was also long enough to make saying goodbye so hard. Every day on the program was full with a satisfying kind of busyness. There was a balance of work and play. We had classes six days a week, with excursions and cultural events planned throughout. This semester truly redefined the way I think of experiential education. I realized that much of what I had learned happened in moments where I was not sitting behind a desk. Everywhere we traveled and every person we met was a learning experience in itself. While understanding Buddhism and the Bhutanese way of life could take a lifetime, I returned to my home institution with an appreciation for the country I left behind.

The School for Field Studies in Bhutan prospers from a wonderful and hardworking team of faculty and staff. The professors, directors, and support staff communicate and coordinate with each other to craft a program that takes us to important sites across the country that illustrate ideas we are learning about in class. SFS has an incredible array of partnerships with organizations from the local to international scale and is able to pull resources and guest lecturers from a variety of backgrounds. What I learned in this past semester came together in a tight, interconnected package. What we studied in my Language and Culture class served as a background to the Buddhism-influenced policies we learned about in Political and Socio-economic Dimensions of the Environment. The environmental policies we learned about helped us understand the changes occurring in Bhutan as discussed in Land Use, Natural Resources, and Conservation. Finally, Mountain Ecology illustrated the land use and human population distributions changes occurring in Bhutan with a focus on the local wildlife so valued by the Bhutanese. And all of our field excursions supported concepts we were studying in every class! Never before had my daily observations and all of my classes come together to paint an all-encompassing, complex picture of a society in transition.

There were two big take-away impressions from this program: a sense of optimism about the potential of good environmental policy and an understanding of the intricacy created by the interactions between different levels of government and the community. Bhutan is often hailed as the “last Shangri-La,” and for good reason. The emphasis on how important the environment is for the country and its citizens is reflected in both attitude and legislature. 60% of forest land is constitutionally protected for eternity. More than half of the country is within a system of protected lands and wildlife corridors. Partnerships between the constitutional monarchy, NGOs, international aid organizations, and local communities resulted in a variety of environmental protection efforts that have claimed success over the years. With this being said, simply stating that Bhutan is a Himalayan kingdom of happiness and carbon neutrality isn’t the whole truth. We explored the shortcomings of using GNH and the challenges of an urbanizing population. As low volume, high impact tourism drives the service industry, more development projects destroy important wetlands and compete with generational farmlands. Young Bhutanese are highly educated and interested in Western ways of life. Less young people are choosing careers in agriculture and are looking for employment in cities. They are less likely to wear the National Dress and perform important Buddhist rituals. The influence of the Western world is driving cultural changes, including an increase in mass media and processed goods consumption. You see a Bhutan that is striving to modernize like the rest of the world while remaining environmentally and culturally intact. This dilemma sparked many explorations and discussions in our classes and in the field.

“My semester abroad in Bhutan was among the healthiest and happiest times of my life.”

One of the first field lectures had the strongest impact on me. As a class, we traveled to a roadside rock painting site of Guru Rinpoche. The painting was relatively new, only a few decades old. Most *ney* and *beyul* (Buddhist holy sites) were established centuries ago. At the site, there were prayer wheels being turned by the creek and prayer flags draped across the site. Once we stepped out of the vans, the serenity of the site silenced us. The color of the waving flags, the feel of the wind, and the sound of the water gave this small holy site an air of importance and respect. The professor leading the trip, Dr. Kuenga, explained that this spot used to be a popular place for people living in Paro town to come and wash their cars. This was a harmful polluting activity, and in order to curb this activity, the rock painting was created to make this a holy site. Given the cultural and religious context of Bhutan, this method worked. It stopped the harmful activity because Bhutanese would not pollute or exploit a holy site. This was the first of many instances where I learned about the connection between culture, religion, and conservation.

This experience influenced my interest in community-based conservation. I now realize that the conservation methods used in the US – like the strategies I learn at Duke – are not always the best tactics and may even be ineffective in certain communities. If the government had posted a placard asking people not to wash their cars at this stream site, it probably would have been ignored. But making the location a holy site was effective. This is a unique characteristic of this community; a similar tactic most likely would not have worked in America. My semester in Bhutan influenced me to enroll into two courses this semester: International Conservation & Development and Community-Based Conservation. After this experience, I realized I have a lot to learn about working on different environmental and governmental scales.

Another highlight of the trip was the directed research. I chose to work with Jesse Lewis, who taught Mountain Ecology. I was eager to get into the field to gain a closer relationship with the ecology of the region. I chose to work in the local watershed. Right outside of our Center flowed the Pa Chhu river, one of the main feeder rivers of the larger Wang Chhu river. *Dzongs*, which are ornate buildings with religious, military, governmental, and social importance, are sometimes located on the banks of beautiful rivers. I wanted to know if the Wang Chhu river system was healthy and clean: especially since it flows past two rapidly urbanizing cities of Paro and Thimphu.

Designing my research question and process was a unique experience. I’ve never had to think through an entire process like this from start to finish. I was conducting *new* research, and I had to pave my own path. It also taught me a lot about staying positive through trial and error. With help from my advisor, I reworked and perfected my data collection methods until I had a scientifically solid process. I also collaborated with three other group members who were collecting river data for other research questions. We helped collect data from each other and we also helped improve one another’s methodology. Seeing it through was a satisfying process. After the data had been collected, analyzed, and synthesized into a paper, I had the opportunity and honor to present my findings at an environmental convention in Thimphu with a diverse and distinguished audience!

I originally chose The School for Field Studies because I wanted rigorous academics with a focus on experiential learning. Many of my peers from my home institution chose to go to Europe for their semester abroad to avoid leaving their cultural comfort zone and to go clubbing on the weekends. What I wanted for myself was to have a meaningful experience and learn a lot about a culture that was different from mine. I hoped that my interactions with the local community in trying to solve environmental issues and the directed research component of the program would give me a clearer idea of where I wanted to take my academic and career goals. My expectations for this program were met and far exceeded. I cannot describe how wonderful the entire semester was. I’ve made lasting friendships, seen a unique part of the world, and pushed my comfort zones all while furthering my education in both concrete and intangible ways. Thank you!



SFS is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational institution. We depend on the generosity of people like you, who have seen or felt the impact of our work, to make the SFS experience possible. This past fiscal year, you gave an amazing **\$1,663,131** in support of SFS and our mission - an increase of more than 60% from the previous year. From the bottom of our hearts, **thank you**. We truly could not do what we do without you.

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