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Standout Spiderlings

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What can you accomplish freshman year?

Amazing people are doing incredible things all over campus. Each issue, we recognize a few students or alumni that are working to make their lives—and our community—better through self and social improvement. Here's how these five students made the most of their first year on campus.

**CASSIE DeCESARE '76**

Cassie became an elected member of the Westhampton College Senate while achieving outstanding marks in class during her first year. Developing a rapport with her professors showed Cassie the value of their mentorship, and that their advice often times transcends curriculum. "I have a few professors that I know I can go to for advice when it comes to classes, careers, or anything else," Cassie said. Cassie spent time volunteering with the World Pediatric Project (WPP) as well, an organization that flies children from third world countries to the U.S. for life-saving surgeries. Each week, she spent time with children and families who were either preparing for or recovering from surgery. Cassie said juggling her volunteer work, Senate duties, and schoolwork, made her time at Richmond more fulfilling.

**SAMUEL DIAZ ’76**

Samuel Diaz, an international student from Venezuela, returned to his native continent in June to begin summer research. Alongside Dr. Mary Finley-Brook, Sam completed research about the developments of tourism impacts and community involvement around the Lago Yarinacocha in Peru. Sam earned an offer from Professor Finley-Brook to accompany her on research after serving as her CLAC assistant during the fall semester. The CLAC assistant meets with environmental studies students weekly to review their course content in Spanish. When he wasn't helping fellow students beef up on their foreign language skills, Sam frequented the offices of his professors. "In meeting with people from so many different back grounds and perspectives, I've been able to learn a lot," Diaz said. Since Sam's first year at Richmond was already his third abroad, he was well prepared for the organizational discipline required at the university level.

**MASNOON MAJEED ’76**

For Masnoon Majeed, succeeding as a freshman became tied to structure and schedule. An international student hailing from Pakistan, Masnoon took a systematic approach to arranging his courses and allotting his time each day. "By the end of my courses I had specialized my habits and techniques in each," Masnoon said. In French, Masnoon studied new vocabulary that appeared in class, staying mindful to not let it build up over days at a time. He created a spreadsheet that he referred to at the end of each day, adding the French words and translations that appeared in morning class. By the end of the year Masnoon established his presence on campus by campaigning to re-establish the university's philosophy club and launching a non-believer/atheist club. As a member of several recognized campus organizations, Masnoon was quite busy but says that this structured schedule enabled his success.

**RICHIE WISMER ’76**

Richie Wismer punctuated an admirable first year with an internship at the Law Library of Congress. Upon entering freshman year, Richie was interested in law, so he enrolled in a First Year Seminar (FYS) taught by a professor from the law school. His performance in the class certainly impressed his professor, who provided Richie with a recommendation. Richie formed relationships with other professors as well. Until taking two classes in the Journalism department Richie had never considered the discipline as a potential major. Now he plans to double major in economics and either English or Journalism. Becoming immersed in new and unfamiliar territory helped Richie define a path for his coming years at Richmond. "More involvement means knowing more people and learning more things," Richie said. He also worked in the Parson's Music Library, served as a member of the debate team, and joined a fraternity during his freshman year.

- CLAY HELMS

ORIENTATION 2013