

# Lessons Ably Learned

**COLA students ready to put rich array of experiences to work**

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Monday, June 24, 2019

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Meet the 2018 – 2019 College of Liberal Arts student ambassadors. Each year, the college selects a small number of outstanding seniors to represent the college during their final year of study. This year's ambassadors come from as nearby as Dover, N.H., and as far away as Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Now that they've graduated, they take with them a new confidence born of an exceptional breadth of experiences and energized by their resolve to make a difference in their communities.

## Riley Boss



SVETLANA PESHKOVA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, AND RILEY BOSS '19

When Riley Boss was a kid growing up in Weare, N.H., her mom used an expression whenever Riley was panicking about getting good grades. The saying, “take the grade and move on,” delivered sound, practical advice about “trusting that things will work themselves out, and that I should focus on things I can control,” Riley explains.

As her career at UNH flourished, Riley says she’s given mom’s wisdom an update — “trust the process” — to make it “more applicable to my life and communicating with my peers, professors and others inside academics and outside.”

As a personal motto, “trust the process” might understate *just a bit* the extent to which this anthropology major is the consummate go-getter. As an undergraduate, Riley chaired the Native American Cultural Association, served as the vice president of the Anthropology Club and won a host of undergraduate research awards including the Rebecca Lang Scholarship in the summer 2017, a CIEGE Scholarship to study abroad, the Undergraduate Research Conference Award of Excellence and others.

During her spare time, she served as an intern for the Indigenous New Hampshire Collaborative Collective based at UNH.

Riley says she came to Durham to explore “the infinite number of opportunities available to you” and found “faculty who are just as excited about your projects as you are.” By her own account, she has learned aspects not only of her major, but also business, biology, chemistry, agriculture, psychology, forensic science and other disciplines. “At UNH, everything connects to your major. Professionally, it is important to make those observations and connections,” she says.

Her trip to Belize on an archaeological dig during January term 2017 remains the highlight of her UNH years. “I’ve grown a lot because of that experience,” she says. “I had great conversations with people from different cultures, gained a lot of archaeological experience and became close to the eight other students on the trip. We’re still great friends. You create a special bond with people whom you’ve stood on a fire ant mound with as you try to take a point for your map, waded through acacia plants and listened to howler monkeys serenading your dig with their screams!”

Riley, who says she’d like to begin life after UNH by working with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis in the Northwest and someday start up her own archeology company, has left few academic stones unturned.

## Adam Bovie



MICHAEL SOHA, SENIOR LECTURER IN COMMUNICATION, AND ADAM BOVIE '19  
As a sophomore from Vassalboro, Maine, Adam Bovie started making a podcast with some friends — essentially, they recorded some sessions of a game they liked to play and, after some editing, Adam would post it online.

On the surface, says Adam, this would seem to have no special relation to UNH. “I might have done this anywhere.”

But the idea to do it came to him because he had just begun working at the university’s Communication Media Lab, which gave the communication and international affairs dual major access to some top recording equipment, as well as a place to record undisturbed for a few hours.

And then, something magical happened.

“The friends I recorded with were all people I’d met through the Fencing Club,” says Adam, “and some of the most memorable points of the podcast had more to do with being in their company than with the game itself; something would happen in-game and we’d go off on tangents discussing it, often relating it to some area of expertise that we’d been developing through our studies at UNH.”

The experience taught Adam a little lesson: “You can learn from everybody,” Adam asserts. “That’s not to say that everyone is there to teach you, and you shouldn’t expect them to — but you can still choose to learn from them. On the flip side, anybody can be learning from you — so pay attention to what you might be teaching them!”

At UNH, Adam has learned from a wide range of sources. He’s studied abroad in Ireland as a part of his international affairs major and undertaken an internship with the Maine State Department of Education, helping them create their new website, which, he

says, “is something I had no experience with but found the critical thinking and communicative skills I’d developed at UNH enormously helpful.”

A perennial dean’s lister and winner of an award for Excellence in Russian Literature, Adam believes that three of the most useful tools a person can have are “the ability to think critically, to see connections between various areas of interest and to empathize and understand different perspectives.”

And it is with this impressive toolkit that Adam will pursue life after UNH, “confident,” he says, “in my ability to figure it out as I go.”

## Cameron Brusko



SUSAN SIGGELAKIS, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, AND CAMERON BRUSKO '19

Cameron Brusko grew up in the football rich community of Bethlehem, Pa. However, when it came time to choose a university to attend (and play football), he chose to bring his talents to UNH and Sean “Coach Mac” McDonnell '78.

As a justice studies and political science dual major and Wildcat linebacker, Cameron amassed a personal highlight reel that includes both academic and athletic accomplishments. In the classroom, he recalls with particular delight taking professor Andrew Macpherson’s course called Global Information Grid, which he says, “examined the uses and abuses of technology and social media in governments and societies around the world.”

On the sports side of the ledger, “nothing beat beating Richmond my freshman year,” Cameron attests. Coming off a tough loss and unsure of the future of their season, the

Wildcat win over fourth-ranked Richmond restored their confidence and propelled them into the national tournament. “It taught me about perseverance, teamwork and what it truly meant to be a Wildcat,” he says.

Cameron’s prowess on and off the field are amply reflected in his membership in Phi Beta Kappa (liberal arts honor society), Pi Sigma Alpha (political science honor society), Chi Alpha Sigma (college athlete honor society) and Alpha Phi Sigma (criminal justice honor society), and being named to the CoSIDA 2018 Google Cloud Academic All-District Football Team for District 1 and the CAA Football Academic All-Conference Team numerous times.

A summa cum laude graduate with University Honors, Cameron names “punctuality” as the noblest of virtues. “Whether it involves academics or athletics, an individual who shows up on time will always put themselves in a better situation than someone who is late,” he says. “It’s an integral aspect of one’s character.”

Punctuality served Cameron well at UNH and will, undoubtedly, continue to serve him as he pursues his long-term goal of attending a premier law school.

## Megan Cooper



SARA ZELA, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER FOR THE MUSEUM OF ART, MEGAN COOPER '19 AND LAURA CALHOUN, EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS MANAGER FOR THE MUSEUM OF ART

Megan Cooper has either attended or worked at sleepaway camps more summers of her life than not. These experiences instilled in her “a love for environments created for kids to be themselves, grow, explore, create, and gain confidence and independence.”

Such a childhood can also produce the kind of person who feels at home most anywhere in the world. And in choosing to attend UNH, Megan intended to do just that: make herself at home in the world.

Megan oozes maturity and perspective. She came to UNH from Matamoras, Pa., armed with a Presidential Scholarship and an open mind. “I chose UNH because of its variety of majors, as a very undecided freshman. I knew I wanted to do something with the arts but was unsure of what or where my interests would lead me.”

She chose art history and geography, bucking convention and determining “not to sweat it over this paper or that exam, but to see how the larger context of the research or concept I was working on would prepare me for life and help make me the person I was meant to be.”

See? Mature.

On the other hand, Megan was also curious and open to adventure. When she was unsure of what art history class to take, her advisor challenged her to take a harder one, European Modernism, with a new professor, Hyewon Yoon, instead of going the comfortable route with a more familiar professor. “This class gave me confidence where I had always been unsure,” Megan says, adding “and to think I almost didn’t take it!”

Yoon’s class launched Megan along a pathway of rich experiences that included a fellowship at the Museum of Art in the Paul Creative Arts Center, where she gained “professional experience” curating world-renowned exhibiting artists and “working with community members of all ages” who came to see exhibits.

A study abroad in London gave Megan a comparative understanding of the differences between London’s lively theater districts and the newer ones back home. “I really enjoyed the experience of exploring a new city, going to musicals and plays I usually would not splurge on, and immersing myself in as many museums I could fit into the schedule!”

After graduation, she plans on moving to Belgium to continue to gain experience in the art field by working at a gallery or museum and traveling throughout Europe as much as she can. Once there, the self-described “foodie” will continue to enjoy yoga, geocaching and walks on the beach.

At home in the world.

## Parker Gauthier



JAMES RIOUX, LECTURER IN ENGLISH, PARKER GAUTHIER '19 AND RACHEL TRUBOWITZ, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF ENGLISH

If you want to be successful, there's simply no substitute for putting in the time and effort, says Parker Gauthier.

An English education major from Dover, N.H., Parker never confused himself with Bill Nye The Science Guy and frankly admits to being “the kind of person who reads Emerson, Thoreau, William Blake and Cormac McCarthy for pleasure.” However, after taking a course on the science behind the weather — to satisfy a discovery requirement — Parker discovered something that changed the way he thought about science and learning.

“I could be successful in science! I could succeed at anything if I applied myself,” he says.

Parker is holding that thrilling feeling of discovery close as he prepares to work someday as a high school teacher in a classroom of his very own. To get there, he models himself on qualities he appreciates in his professors, whom he describes as “professional, accessible and empathetic.”

Parker didn't have to wait until he graduated to begin developing these admirable qualities. He has been involved as a tutor at the Community Literacy Center (CLC) on campus for several years. His job of helping students who struggle with reading and writing gave him a chance to apply lessons learned in the courses he takes and, more important, he says, “made me feel proud and accomplished that I'm making a difference, whether large or small.”

Among his favorite classes at UNH was James Rioux' writing and learning through music. “It really opened my eyes to the power of literature and reinforced my love of

reading and writing,” Parker says. It also put him on to playing the drums, a pastime he enjoys with friends he made in class.

## Peter Jaarsma



### PETER JAARSMA '19 AND ARNA BRONSTEIN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RUSSIAN

There's often a difference between the things that bring you to UNH as a high schooler and those that keep you here as a Wildcat. Peter Jaarsma, a history and Russian major from Cornish, N.H., demonstrates the point.

He chose to come to UNH because he liked the campus, wanted a university that was not too big and not too small and knew he wanted to have the freedom to explore different topics regardless of his academic program.

Once he got his academic and social feet wet, the formerly important considerations of location and size yielded to a new appreciation of the value his professors and classmates placed on asking questions and challenging each other. Gradually, his willingness to engage in the “back and forth” of scholarly debate took him to study abroad in Russia. “This was a valuable experience because it helped my knowledge of the Russian language,” says Peter. “It also helped me to learn about communication across cultures.”

Immersing himself in Russian studies, Peter became involved in the Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society. He also won several language awards for demonstrating excellence in his language classes. With each and every new skill he picked up, he grew more confident that the future looked bright, wherever it might lead.

“I think my liberal arts education has prepared me for career and professional success because it has taught me how to synthesize information,” says Peter. “It has also

improved my writing and reading skills.” After graduation, Peter plans to “go into the workforce and use the skills I’ve acquired at UNH.”

## Abigail McIntosh



ABIGAIL MCINTOSH '19 AND MICHAEL SOHA, SENIOR LECTURER IN COMMUNICATION

Abigail McIntosh believes the university experience is “beautiful because students are supposed to come out on the other side a totally different version of themselves.”

The high school version of Abigail initially “wrote off” UNH as a less appealing option because it was close to her hometown of Nashua, N.H. While touring campus in the spring of her junior year, however, the communication major found herself walking across the lawn for lunch and hearing the theme song from the Harry Potter movie peeling from the Thompson Hall bell tower.

“I stopped in my tracks and said, ‘Whoa, this is no run-of-the-mill state U!’”

Needless to say, Abigail enrolled at UNH, and embarked on a journey of ceaseless discovery and personal growth. “UNH is fantastic because it is a community of opportunity,” says Abigail, who numbers among her highpoints at UNH learning about surveillance in mass society, creating short films using the Adobe suite, exploring the history and practice of art, and trying her hand at travel writing.

On the topic of travel, Abigail used UNH as a springboard for study abroad in London where, she says, she found “breathing room . . . away from my beautiful UNH community” and had the chance “to take a step outside of myself and really, totally and completely learn about who I am.” She bonded with classmates different from her and “talked to 4 a.m. cab drivers about their families, their favorite foods and whether or not they believe in Brexit.”

Energized by her experience, Abigail returned to Durham and began to focus on her career, for which she had a very specific vision: “I wanted to work at a creative agency in downtown Portsmouth, live in a small apartment and walk to work every day.”

During her junior year, she got an internship in digital marketing in the heart of downtown Portsmouth. And today, *voilà*, she’s living the dream as a fully-employed creative living and working and walking in Portsmouth.

“Everything I’ve done, inside and outside the classroom during my time at UNH, has fed into the success of this professional venture,” says the alumna version of Abigail. “Being at university is an exercise in evolution, and I will carry the lessons I’ve learned about change with me for the rest of my life.”

## Olivia Olbrych



LISA MILLER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, AND OLIVIA OLBRYCH '19  
Once her classmates got over the fact that she’d never skied, Olivia Olbrych’s UNH career was all fresh powder, so to speak, from there.

Olivia’s is a tale in two parts, with part one involving the Charleston, R.I., native coming to UNH to study English journalism and, upon meeting professor Tom Haines, never looking back to the Ocean State.

“He was so inspiring,” recalls Olivia. “He’s so passionate about his work that it made me want to be a better writer and pursue my own passions. He was also really good about giving us opportunities to connect with alumni, which is a huge benefit when you are looking for a job.” The culmination of her work with Haines came during a trip to Budapest in which Haines led a student group to teach travel writing.

The trip not only helped her write better, it also enabled her to learn about the Cold War and the Soviet Union from a different perspective than that taught in American schools.

Further, it boosted her confidence to the point where, she recalls with pride, “I felt I could do anything I set my mind to.”

And that’s exactly what she did, interning at the Seacoast Media Group and getting involved in the College Democrats student organization during the 2016 election, during which she had the opportunity to introduce Sen. Bernie Sanders at a rally.

This is where part two comes in. Says Olivia, “My involvement with the club and in New Hampshire politics taught me I would rather work on the actual issues than report on them.” She plans to enroll in the university’s accelerated master’s degree program at the UNH Carsey School of Public Policy. But first, she’s taking time off from school to work as a social media specialist at a firm in Portsmouth.

Olivia says that studying and working don’t leave her with a lot of free time, but when she finds some, she like to spend it touching base with her network of friends. Now, if they can just get her on the slopes. ...

## Malaa Sultan



MALAA SULTAN '19 AND ED O'BRIEN, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

As an international student from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Malaa Sultan was both excited and nervous about attending a foreign university; but, she says, “the academic reputation of UNH and the beauty of its campus” made her decide to come to Durham.

Today, it seems as if ages have passed since the psychology major arrived on campus and enrolled in what would become two favorite courses, Introduction to Forensics and Introduction to Humanities, that would initiate her into university life.

“I was very intimidated by them in the beginning,” Malaa says. “But as time went by, they opened my eyes to another world I was unaware of. I became very invested in topics I would have never thought would interest me.”

Little could the first-year student know that, one day, a professor would actually invite her to take a graduate level class. “It meant so much to me to have somebody I have worked closely with believing in my abilities more than I did,” recalls Malaa. “If he was willing to recommend me, well, I was willing to take the risk. It was both humbling and motivating to be able to see yourself standing side by side with people I thought were far out of my reach. It gave me hope and an instinct to believe in myself more.”

By the time she graduated, Malaa had participated in an independent study, served as an undergraduate teaching assistant in psychology and worked in the Cognitive Psychology Lab for 2 ½ years, applying what she learned in class but also diving more deeply into her field of study than she dreamed possible, “seeing connections where I never thought they existed.”

Malaa plans to apply to medical school after graduation.

## Ari Toumpas



ARI TOUMPAS '19

Ari Toumpas enjoyed a *classic* UNH education. Yes, she majored in the classics, but a major is only what you make of it, and Ari made the most of hers.

Let's start in the classroom where Ari fell in love with the Introduction to Classical Myth. She took the course her first semester at UNH and was an exam proctor and tutor for it every year since. After class, Ari's intellectual community often spilled outside the classroom on to the third floor of Murkland Hall. Here she and her friends hung out

between classes, rubbing shoulders with their classics, humanities and Italian studies professors who might give them an ambush quiz of cognate Greek and Latin words or engage them in heated debates about whether spoilers matter in movies.

In addition to the benefits of intellectual fellowship, Ari says the most important lesson she's learned at UNH is that "pitfalls and challenges need not have long-term negative effects on my life. Every class, every semester and every year offers just another opportunity to identify my weak points and do what is necessary to overcome them."

*Carpe diem.* Seize the day.

Ari was a student leader on Professor R. Scott Smith's project "Putting Greek Myth on the Map," cataloging mythic events in the second-century book Pausanias' "Description of Greece" for an online map database of real-world locations associated with Greek myths. "Working with Professor Smith has been one of the most formative experiences in my academic life," says Ari, who turned her participation into a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, a study abroad experience at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome and, ultimately, a senior thesis on mythical genealogical systems.

A member of the UNH fencing club and an enthusiast of historical swordsmanship, mainly focusing on medieval longsword and renaissance rapier traditions, Ari has been accepted to present her senior thesis at the Classical Association of New England annual meeting after graduation.

Being so "well versed" in his particular academic discipline hasn't make Ari feel "pigeon-holed" into it. To the contrary, she says, "I can carry a conversation with any of my friends about their disciplines. This versatility makes me feel comfortable that if my initial plans for the future don't work out, I will be able to adapt and find a fulfilling career."

Those initial plans have her starting a Ph.D. in classics at Ohio State University in the fall.

*Carpe diem, baby.*

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