

Alternative Breaks program provides opportunity, promotes awareness

Fall Break Trip Options

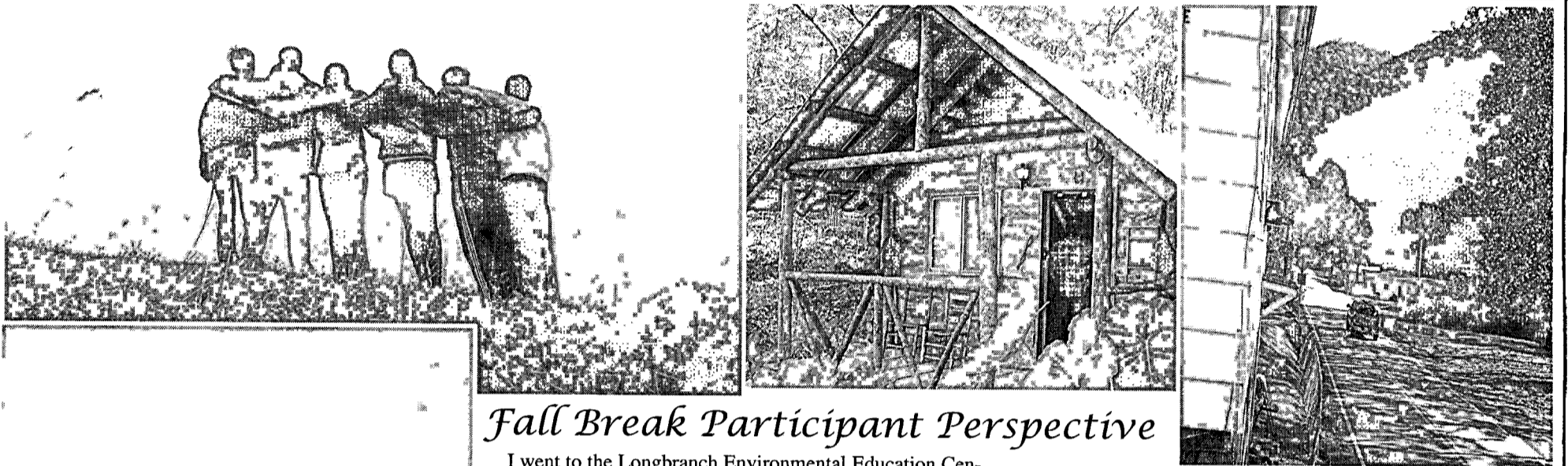
The Urban Plunge – trip to Washington D.C. Participants lived in CCNV, one of the nation's largest homeless shelters and learned about issues of homelessness and housing. One highlight of the trip was a 48 hour "homeless challenge," where students were paired up, dressed-down, and sent out on the streets to experience homelessness. Conversations with people who were homeless and the realization of societal perceptions of the homeless helped foster an empathy for breaking down stereotypes and inspiring a new outlook on issues of urban poverty.
Trip Leaders: James Johnson, Alyssa Moudy

Piedmont Biofuels – trip to Pittsboro, N.C. Students learned about alternative energy by helping volunteer at a co-op that produces bio-diesel and promotes sustainable living. The trip included a visit to the Grassroots music festival, where they assisted with advocacy initiatives run by Piedmont biofuels.
Trip Leaders: Claire Naisby, Blake Candler

Longbranch Environmental Education Center – trip to the center run by Paul Gallimore, near Asheville N.C. This trip engaged students through hands-on labor with sustainable agricultural practices and awareness of the environmental concerns.
Trip Leaders: Jeff Banks, Kate Weddington

Big Creek People in Action – trip to War, West Virginia to one of the most impoverished counties in the region. Students helped with construction projects.
Trip Leaders: Whitley Raney, Tim Hudson

Thanks to Jon Springfield for these descriptions



Fall Break Participant Perspective

I went to the Longbranch Environmental Education Center which is located in Buncombe County's Newfound Mountains (18 miles northwest of Asheville). The farm serves not only as an education site, but also has a tremendously maintained orchard that is full of apple trees, raspberry trees, blueberry trees, and more. Under the guidance of the owner, Paul Gallimore, my group indulged in forgetting about all the work and stress at Davidson and got our fingers dirty by maintaining the soil with coffee grounds and newspaper and by weeding mugwort. The true highlight of the trip, however, was working alongside Paul and getting the chance to soak up his incredibly insightful, unique stories and perspective. Paul definitely has a holistic view of the world; family to Paul includes not only the "two-leggeds" but also Mother Earth, the "four-leggeds", and all other living things. We definitely all left Paul's farm with plenty to think about and plenty of quotations to mull over. This is definitely a trip every Davidson student should experience before graduating!

- Jaime Dybuncio '13



Exploring diversity and multiculturalism on Davidson's campus

Part two: re-examining a commitment to diversity...what does it really mean?

MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE

It is a popular belief that diversity, however one understands it, enhances a society. William Sloane Coffin, a long-time peace activist, once said, "Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without." While Davidson College has recently revised its commitment to diversity and inclusion on this campus, it is important to understand how diversity functions in relation to its true meaning. What is the elusive concept of diversity?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "diverse" as, <people with diverse interests> and, "composed of distinct or unlike elements or qualities <a diverse population>." The benefits of diverse elements in a setting are all around our society. In finance, investors are advised to diversify their portfolios to minimize their risk of losing money and to increase the potential for better results. This idea encourages them to invest in different assets. In biology, the term biodiversity is used to describe the variety of plant life and organisms that live in a functioning ecosystem. Each different plant and animal

is necessary for the ecosystem to survive and function effectively.

Yet, when it comes to humanity, diverse can be used to describe the people of different races and ethnicities in a community. But, it can also be used to describe people's different experiences based on where they were raised, their parents, and their school and work experience. This lack of clarity about diversity in communities with people has led some to question its importance. The benefits of a diverse environment seem easy to understand when the term is used in every type of setting except humanity.

Merriam-Webster defines diversity as, "the condition of being diverse: variety; especially: the inclusion of diverse people (as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization <programs intended to promote diversity in schools>" and, "an instance of being diverse <a diversity of opinion>." If one types in the term diverse or diversity into a Google Image Search, the results are laden with people of different colors holding hands, or hands with different skin tones united. It is interesting to note the difference between the definition of diverse and the act or state of being diverse. If a well-

respected dictionary and the most popular search engine in the world minimize factors aside from race in their definition, how do we understand the term diverse or diversity to mean something beyond race and ethnicity?

Davidson College uses the term diversity in two prominent ways. The first is in the college's commitment to diversity as stated in the first article of this series. The commitment extends beyond race, and includes national background, religion, socioeconomic status, ability, and other classifications.

The second is in an SGA sub-committee, the Diversity Coordinating Board (DCB). The DCB is comprised of ten student organizations: Asian Culture and Awareness Association (ACAA), Black Student Coalition (BSC), Curry Club, Davidson International Association (DIA), Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), Hillel, Interfaith, Middle Eastern Cross-Cultural Association (MECCA), Muslim Students Association (MSA) and Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS). Whitney White '08 started the Diversity Coordinating Board (DCB) in 2006 with the intention of giving DCB organizations representation in the SGA. The board of representatives from these ten organizations elects

four senators from amongst themselves to serve as DCB Senators in the SGA. These senators represent the interests of these ten organizations on campus. The DCB includes the representation of different groups from the affinity groups of race and ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and international background.

It is clear that diversity must be analyzed from a variety of viewpoints to fully understand its meaning. It is more than different races and ethnicities that make a community diverse. It is more than different religious backgrounds and socioeconomic backgrounds. Davidson College has taken action to encompass ideas beyond race and ethnicity in their understanding of diversity. However, in many instances, there is still a push to continue to enhance the diversity of Davidson's campus. Why does this still happen?

There are many assumptions with the use of the term diversity that diminish its positive connotation and encourage debate. The final article in this series will attempt to tackle some of these assumptions and shed light on prominent issues in the debate of diversity, multiculturalism, and its value to this campus and any society.