

Environmental Studies Newsletter

A Publication of Macalester's Environmental Studies Program

Volume 18, No. 1

May 2003

The Dream is Alive ... and Well

A farewell to arms, but not to hopes

by Aldemaro Romero

Well, it seems that this year was my last winter in Minnesota. After a five-year stint as Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Macalester College, I have decided to accept the position of Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University.

These past years have been of incredible growth and renovation in the ES Program. Numerous courses were added, a complete revamp of the curriculum took place; numerous campus-wide initiatives were born and developed; nearly one hundred papers, abstracts, and books were published. Unfortunately those transformations found a ceiling, and when that happens, you know it is time to move on. For the foreseeable future the ES Program will be in the more than capable hands of Prof. Brett Smith, a man with ample academic and real-world experience in environmental issues, a colleague with whom I shared a great deal of curricular and extra-curricular initiatives, an individual of unquestionable integrity and dedication to our students.

For that reason, and that reason alone, I leave Macalester not only with the feeling of having accomplished the mission within the circumstances I encountered, but also with high hopes for the future.

We, the many faculty, staff, students, and alumni that have contributed to the Program in the last few years, strongly believe in a Program that is strongly interdisciplinary in nature, that looks at environmental problems from a holistic approach, that tries to find solutions to the problems that result from the complex interactions between humans and their natural environment.

We believe also in an institution that practices what preaches; that keeps its word when given, that teaches by example, not rhetoric. We believe in an institution that is student-centered, that is uncompromising when it comes to quality education; that places

dedication over politics, calculated risks over bureaucratic complacency, vision over petty accounting.

We believe that our mission is to make better citizens and that the best return for the institution are those students who come back to us saying "what a great experience you gave us."

For all that and many other things, I believe that the dream is alive and will be realized, because dreams may be delayed, their realization postponed, but they can never be killed notions emerged from passing politics and petty personal inclinations.

After all, if history has taught us anything, is that after thousands of years, humans are still in search for a world of justice, of equality, of passionate reasons. We are not yet there, but when we see flashes of accomplishments, we rejoice because we know that those dreams will, sooner or later, become a reality.

With the same hope I leave Macalester today, a place and an experience I will never forget. And regardless of when those dreams are fulfilled in the college, I will always keep in my memory the echo of the three reasons why I undertook this task in the first place: the students, and the students, and the students.

Good Bye.