

Students Contribute World View at PCEE
Student Assistants with International Experience Help PCEE Broaden Its Perspective

Slippery Rock, PA – May 16, 2007 – Like any not-for-profit organization, the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education exists to accomplish its mission: to provide a link between those engaged or interested in environmental education and the resources they need. And like many other non-profits, PCEE accomplishes this task with a small budget and very limited staffing. But because PCEE is housed at Slippery Rock University, it also has a special resource: the graduate and undergraduate students of Slippery Rock University.

PCEE's full time staff is currently supplemented by three undergraduate student workers and four graduate assistants. Most of the students are planning to pursue careers in the environmental sector, so working at PCEE offers exposure to the broader field of environmental services, as well as connections that may turn into future employment.

"We are pleased that in exchange for a pool of talented and affordable workers, PCEE can offer valuable exposure to the professional opportunities that exist in the environmental sector," noted Kathleen Paul, PCEE director. "We consider this one of the mutually beneficial perks of being affiliated with a university like Slippery Rock that offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees related to the environment."

Among the student employees, two were born outside the United States and one has spent several months abroad.

"Environmental education and stewardship is a world-wide endeavor," added Ms. Paul. "Although PCEE was established to serve the special interests and needs of Pennsylvanians, we all benefit from the shared perspectives of these three students based on their international experiences."

The three SRU students are:

Erin Frisk – Erin is completing requirements for her Masters of Science in Sustainable Systems and expects to graduate in December, 2007. She is a native of Green Bay, WI. Her goal is to bring the concept of sustainability into the mainstream culture. At PCEE, she researches, writes and posts the "Question of the Week" on www.pcee.org. Erin sees this as a fun way to teach the young about the environment and to, hopefully, create a future generation that will be more conscious about its surroundings. During a four-month backpacking tour of Honduras and Guatemala, Erin earned several diving certifications, climbed the pyramids in Tikal, and jumped off the cliffs of Lago Atitlan. There she learned respect for the environment and the importance of protecting it.

Heather Harvie – Heather was born and spent her early childhood years in New Minas, Nova Scotia, before moving to Alabama when she was in middle school. She will complete her Masters of Science in Sustainable Systems in May, 2007, and was recently honored as an "Outstanding Graduate Student" in recognition to her contributions to the program. Although she is uncertain what career path she will pursue, she feels her time at PCEE has helped her gain many important skills – such as time management, research and planning, information gathering, attention to detail, acceptance of responsibility, delegation and goal setting – which will serve her well in her professional life. Heather is still a Canadian citizen, and reminds us that Pennsylvania shares the "environment" with its neighbors to the North.

Angela Ndungu – Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Angela currently calls western Pennsylvania home while a student at SRU. She expects to graduate in the Spring of 2010 with a bachelors degree in psychology and physics. She views her work at PCEE, her “first real job,” as the beginning of a long journey of professional experiences that will culminate in her goal of becoming a pediatric neurosurgeon. She speaks four languages. Angela contributes both an International viewpoint, as well as a minority viewpoint to the daily operations at PCEE.

“Environmental stewardship benefits all cultures,” commented Ms. Paul. “Angela reminds us of that important message every day.”

About PCEE: The Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education (PCEE) was created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1997 to “provide an avenue for increased participation by educators, local officials, citizen and non-profit groups, business and industry as partners in the implementation of quality environmental education on a state-wide basis.” Administered by the PA State System of Higher Education, PCEE is housed at Slippery Rock University.

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