Native American Studies – Alumni Testimonials

Class of 1998
“I think that the greatest impact that NAST has had on me intellectually was the ability to seek and incorporate information from such a wide variety of disciplines… I feel that there are few programs that would encourage the combination of History, Anthropology, Religion Studies, Astronomy, Art and Art History, etc.—in addition to Geological science—as enthusiastically as Colgate did. The combination of such ostensibly disparate coursework encourages intellectual flexibility, innovation, and independence; the challenge is to synthesize between different sets of information, to seek relations and mutually-intelligible perspectives, and to not compartmentalize… I currently split my time between my dissertation research (an archaeological survey of land-use in highland Peru) and consulting as a geophysical/remote sensing specialist for archaeological field projects… I never would have anticipated any of these opportunities while at Colgate, but being able to learn some of these methods, apply them to cultural problems, and be involved with these ventures has in large part been due to the kind of intellectual flexibility and independent curiosity that the NAST program fostered for me. It has been a very rich experience professionally, and (I have to say it) a hell of a lot of fun personally!”

Class of 1994
“My experiences in the Native American Studies Program at Colgate were instrumental in leading me to my chosen career as an archaeologist. . . . I found my niche during a month-long tour of Maya sites across the Yucatan peninsula with Tony Aveni. Upon my return, I began research on what would become my Senior honors thesis on farmer's almanacs in the Maya codices. Ironically, when I continued studying the ancient Maya in graduate school at Boston University, I investigated archaeologically the very rain rituals depicted in the codices as part of my doctoral research on the ritual use of caves by the Maya of Belize. . . . One of the greatest values of the NAST program is its interdisciplinary nature. I embrace an holistic approach that combines anthropology, history, art history, religion, and science. At a big research university like BU, I had to initiate the dialog with other departments in order to conduct the types of analyses that I wanted to perform. The NAST program taught me the value of cross-disciplinary research which is rarely facilitated elsewhere like it is at Colgate.”

Class of 1994
“As a cross-disciplinary program, NAST at Colgate shaped my study of Religion, Anthropology, and History, combining them in a more comprehensive approach. Academically, the NAST degree also shaped my approach to crossdisciplinary Anthropology and to a certain extent shaped my Masters Thesis, notwithstanding that it was centered on Indonesia. Native American Studies enriched my understanding of native populations, colonial and post-colonial history, and the polysemic nature of religion.”

Class of 2003
“I have been teaching since graduating in ’03, and I owe my calling to my experience with the Headstart program on the Tesuque Pueblo. Spending two days
a week working with the youngsters of the pueblo was my first glimpse into the world of education. . . . I taught English in Costa Rica and Honduras for awhile, and my experiences in Mexico and New Mexico assisted me greatly in the assimilation process. In addition to being forced to live in a close environment with other students, I was forced to place myself out of my comfort zone in terms of language and culture. Since I teach in a boarding school that is comprised of students from all over the world, there are many students that are dealing with these same issues I had to overcome.”

Class of 2001
“When I was a student at Colgate . . . , my major was Molecular Biology. In my sophomore year, I discovered the NAST program through Dr. Aveni's Archaeoastronomy course. I continued taking NAST courses after that and graduated with NAST as a minor. The professors and coursework in the NAST program taught me the importance of culture, and cultures, which in turn influenced how I framed the rest of my liberal arts education at Colgate. After graduation, my interest in culture continued and I enrolled in the PhD program in Cultural Anthropology at the University at Buffalo. I was recently awarded my Master's Degree and I am still pursuing a PhD . . . In short, what I discovered in the Colgate NAST program changed my life, not only in my academic focus, but it began in me an inquiring interest in culture that has increased my depth of understanding in the world around me.”

Class of 1995
“Since graduating from Colgate, I have not had regular interaction with issues pertaining to my Native American Studies courses, but I do feel, however, that my pursuit of a Native American Studies minor increased my awareness and sensitivity to those issues as I have periodically come in contact with them. For example, I seized on the opportunity, while in law school, to attend a Habitat for Humanity trip to Rapid City, South Dakota, where I spent a week helping to build a home for a low income Sioux family. While there, we spent the evening with the family who would be living in the home, as well as exploring that area of South Dakota about which I had read and heard so much during my studies. Seeing the Badlands, which I had understood to be sacred ground, in particular that which had been preserved and that which was in a state of decline, was a very enlightening experience. The most important by-product of my studies, I believe, is the ability to take notice of Native American issues when they might not otherwise be obvious… In sum, while it might not have meant a career that directly involves Native Americans or the issues important to them on a daily basis, I am pleased that I chose to undertake a Native American Studies minor and am grateful for the experiences and enlightenment that it has provided and will continue to provide me.”

Class of 1998
“My first year after graduation I worked at a market research firm - mostly because I wanted to live in Manhattan, hadn't dealt with my plans for graduate school yet, and really - the job was available. I was there only a year and then moved to . . . a human resources consulting firm. I had no particularly relevant skills when I was hired but I knew how to write well, think creatively and critically, and communicate effectively - all skills I cultivated through the Native American Studies program. . . . Santa Fe inspired me to be an independent traveler; to have compassion for
communities and individuals dealing with identity, poverty, and alcoholism; and to learn how to participate in a small community of my own. The Native American Studies Program is the reason I found my education so fulfilling."

**Class of 1996**

“Tony Aveni's study group to the Yucatan as an extension to his archeoastronomy course was the learning experience that had the most impact on me as a Colgate student, not only as a NAST minor. I saw more than the Mayan ruins, though -- I saw Mexican people and how they live. An opportunity came my way a few years later to join a mission team to northern Mexico, and I have made nine trips with them, building houses and schoolrooms."

**Class of 2003**

“Going to New Mexico changed my whole life. I was 19 years old, New York city raised, and I remember the visit to Tesuque Pueblo. We sat on the floor as a strong, stunning woman named Virgie walked in- the next moment I raised my hand to volunteer as the fitness program director. . . . The towers in NYC fell that September. I was miles and mountains and time zones away from my family, my friends, my stomping grounds- and I was given tremendous love, support, and encouragement from my new family. By the same token, Joe Suina from Cochiti and U.N.M., and Sarah Wider from Colgate, opened up a door of expression for me - the pen and paper. I started to write that year, and 7 years later, I have filled notebooks, napkins, even my own walls, with my words. . . . Since the year 2001, I have gone back to Tesuque at least once a year, staying with family on the reservation, attending feast days, helping, and sometimes going back for sad occasions as well. So, yes, I am so grateful for my experiences at Colgate, for the Native American Studies program - words are nothing compared to human connection and trust on such a generous level. No college tuition, no degree, no grade – ever - could come close to the "education" I continue to receive from my relationship with Tesuque and New Mexico: the people, the mountains, the sky that paints itself over and over - how to be a person - in All worlds without attachment to one in particular. The idea of moving fluidly through moments, relationships, life - regardless of what pre-conceived barriers may exist, regardless of the jagged edges that stick out sometimes - is one that I explore through hatha yoga practice and teaching, through collaborations on film, whether moving or still. I wouldn't be me- all of me now- if not for every single moment of my life so far. Tesuque and my family there are in my heart.”

**Class of 2002**

“The most impacting learning experience I had as a Native American Studies major was studying abroad in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There I was able to immerse myself in the Tesuque culture where I completed a four month internship on their reservation. Working with the Tesuque children led me to my interest in the importance of language and in turn I completed my thesis with the Oneida Nation near Hamilton, NY. I currently . . . sell HIV medications to physicians. One may believe this career completely opposes my NAST major, but I believe with the classes I took at Colgate, the abroad experience I had in New Mexico and my senior thesis, I was able to gain the ability of working with people from different backgrounds. This in turn has led me to forming incredible relationships throughout my career and has enabled me to be successful.”
Class of 2003
“Since graduating, I have stepped back from the professional world to stay home with my three children. My experiences from NAST have greatly impacted our family dynamic and how I raise my children. We face countless instances in our daily lives that provoke discussions where lessons from NAST are invaluable. It is wonderful to watch how my children are able to apply the knowledge I gained through NAST to other topics or situations and to see how it colors their understanding of the world from a young age. Although I am not directly applying my NAST degree academia or professionally, I often find it creeping into various aspects of my personal life. For example, as the co-chair of a local social justice group, NAST has provided me with an understanding of social/racial injustice, cultural value and loss, historical mistrust, poverty, etc. that can be readily applied to numerous issues. Recently, I have been working with several individuals and organizations to bring medical services and educational opportunities to Southern Sudan. Although the atrocities and aftermath are a continent removed, knowledge drawn from NAST enhances my understanding of the historical and current situation there.”

Class of 2002
“Since graduating from Colgate University, my education in Native American Studies (NAST) has been the foundation in some of the greatest experiences in my life so far. For two years after graduation I was the Librarian for the Oneida Nation Library and involved in the Education Resource Center (ERC) for Oneida Youth. During the school year, elementary school groups would tour the nation and make a stop with us in the ERC and I became the storyteller, and highlight, of the tour. I would always tell two traditional Haudenosaunee stories that I heard as a child growing up on the reservation . . . . My degree from Colgate in NAST was the high point for hire in Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, Inc. That foundation provided me with enough understanding and connection to strengthen relationships between this organization and the artists. To bridge the gap between traditional artists and contemporary artists in the Native world, as well as provide growth and sustainability in Native arts as a whole is the goal of SWAIA, Inc. and I am very proud to be a part of it and very proud to have begun my travels through the NAST department at Colgate. Nya: weh!”

Class of 1997
“Since graduating from Colgate University, my experience as a Native American Studies major continues to have an impact on my life, both personally and professionally. After I graduated, I moved to Washington, DC to become an elementary school Spanish teacher. As I was the first teacher to teach Spanish
at the school, I had the opportunity to design the foreign language program and create a curriculum for teaching Spanish language and culture. Naturally, as I was designing the curriculum, I included a unit on the Aztec and Mayan cultures and integrated the knowledge that I gained through taking courses at Colgate and studying in Mexico with Dr. Aveni. After teaching for six years in DC, I moved to Pittsburgh to attend graduate school. In Pittsburgh, I completed my Masters in Teaching Spanish and currently I am pursuing a PhD in Foreign Language Education at the University of Pittsburgh. As I have moved through my graduate program, I discovered that I have developed a strong skill for academic writing. I attribute this skill to the many opportunities that I had to conduct research and write about topics of interest during my enrollment in courses in the Department of Native American Studies at Colgate. I thank the professors for providing helpful feedback on my writing, and creating learning opportunities to summarize academic literature and investigate a particular topic. In addition to impacting my life professionally, my experiences in the NAST program at Colgate have also influenced my life personally. After traveling to Mexico and participating in courses on the art, mythology, and way of life of Native American cultures, I have a continued interest in traveling to museums and sites around North and South America that relate to particular Native American cultures.”

Class of 1996
“The mere existence of the NAST program was one of the main reasons WHY I chose to come to Colgate as an undergrad...and it was fortuitous.... As a member of the Class of 1996, I arrived at Colgate in the midst of seminars, dance festivals, and symposia marking the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. I decided to take the first-year seminar taught by Gary Urton (Spain and the Americas after 1492) – a remarkable professor who would become a long-time mentor, a close friend, and a permanent fixture in my life. . . . I took advantage of yet another unique opportunity during the summer between my Junior and Senior years when I conducted independent study research on campus -- examining the controversial issue of repatriation and the role of NAGPRA, as well as initiating the process of creating an inventory of all Native American human remains and funerary objects held in Colgate's collections. My research, as well as the relationships that I subsequently developed with many members of the Oneida Indian Nation, helped to shape some of the most fundamental values and beliefs that I continue to hold today as an archeologist working in the Americas. My reputation as an archeologist who will passionately defend the rights of indigenous groups and who will happily say, if necessary, "To hell with the science," has followed me to Maryland, and I am currently working with our State Terrestrial Archeologist in efforts to rebury 139 sets of Native American human remains that are held at the Maryland Archeological Conservation Laboratory. When I decided to continue my studies in archeology as a graduate student at Cornell University, I (and my professors at Cornell) discovered that Colgate had provided me with a SOLID background in archeological theory and methodology and had thoroughly prepared me for the intensive writing, fieldwork, and CRITICAL THINKING that would be required of me throughout my four and a half years of graduate studies and research. In fact, most graduate students in the Anthropology Dept. at Cornell are required to take 3 years of courses prior to beginning their doctoral research. However, after scrutinizing my records from Colgate, my committee agreed that I would only need to take 2 years of graduate courses -- they were THAT impressed
by the curriculum of Colgate's NAST and SOAN programs!" 

**Class of 2004**

“My interest in Native American Studies manifested naturally as a result of my familial ties and experiences in Ecuador as a child and an adolescent. The country's endemic poverty fueled my academic interests at Colgate, particularly with respect to the condition of its indigenous peoples. Understanding poverty in a way that focuses on indigenous populations naturally involves a concomitant understanding of an array of disciplines. Fortunately for me, Colgate's liberal arts curriculum supported my conviction as a young undergraduate that a diversified, interdisciplinary approach was the only logical way to understand any given issue in a more complete way. . . . The Santa Fe study group is an extraordinary program, and Professor Wider did an excellent job directing the group. The program had many strengths. These include: top rate faculty consisting of Eric Blinman, director of the New Mexico Museum system and chief archaeologist, Prof. Joe Suina, U.N.M. professor and former governor of Cochiti Pueblo, and of course, Prof. Wider; and, a strong emphasis on service learning by working at a Pueblo reservation.

It was through Professor Wider and Professor Suina's leadership, in conjunction with our internships with the Pueblo communities, that the group obtained a heightened awareness of the power dynamics historically at play between western researchers and indigenous communities, as well as the reality of the tensions that resulted from a culture having been dominated by another. Also, we gained first-hand knowledge about concomitant erosion of native culture that has since resulted since colonization, and what the response has been from various Southwestern Pueblo communities. It was this experience that gave me the most insight into contemporary issues of Native communities, and the legacy of colonialism. The experiences at the Pueblo reservations along with the commitment to partnerships of long-term trust with the communities we work with proved to be a deciding factor in me being hired by the Amazon Conservation Team.”

**Class of 2006**

“Since my graduation in the spring of 2006 the experiences I had as a Colgate undergrad in Native American studies (double major with Music) has had a tremendous impact on my life. I went directly from Colgate into the Musicology Ph.D. program at Cornell University where I am focusing in ethnomusicology and doing a minor in American Indian studies. I feel that the Native American Studies program at Colgate prepared me very well for my graduate work. I am currently in my second of five years of support and next year I will be a teaching assistant
in American Indian Studies. My most memorable experiences from Colgate are the study group to Santa Fe, N.M. I attended with Professor Sarah Wider and the Archaeoastronomy extended study to Guatemala and Honduras with Professor Anthony Aveni. I also went on several field trips in New York State in my first year seminar on the Iroquois, which was taught by Professor Vecsey. All of these trips were once in a lifetime experiences and I believe that they helped shape my personal and academic growth far beyond what any classroom experience could. In addition to my fieldwork experience, I believe that Colgate’s Native American Studies faculty influenced my life significantly. I was able to connect with each NAST professor with whom I took a class and was consistently encouraged to pursue study of topics that connected my interest in music and Native American studies. This has helped motivate me to pursue graduate study in ethnomusicology and has given me an impression of the kind of teacher I hope to be—a teacher that inspires students to pursue their passion and supports them along the way.”

Class of 1991
“I completed a master’s certificate in American Indian History and Culture at the University of Denver while working full time and attending night classes. I did this with no professional goal in mind, but rather out of intellectual curiosity. I spent a semester teaching English at a Bureau of Indian Affairs high school on the Tohono O’odham reservation. I passionately shared my knowledge of NAST with my parents, which must have had some effect because my mother has since become a docent at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. And the Archaeoastronomy trip to Chiapas, Mexico must have left an indelible mark on my psyche as I found myself living and working in Mexico for five years, eventually marrying a Mexican. I am currently in my second year of law school pursuing a career in corporate law. One might view this as a far cry from anything to do with NAST and it may be so. Yet the program enriches my life in such a way that I can’t help but think no matter what I do, it has an effect.”

Class of 2004
“Having concentrated in NAST during my time at Colgate I can honestly say my life has been immeasurably influenced by my participation in that program. Currently, I am in the Art History PhD program at UCLA with a focus in Pre-Columbian art. I simply would not be here if it were not for my introduction to the subject through various courses including Anthony Aveni’s Archaeoastronomy, Alan Maca’s Native Heritage of Mexico and Central America or Carol Ann Lorenz’s Arts of Africa, Oceania and North America.”

Class of 2002
“I graduated from Colgate University in May 2002, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, with a double-major in Educational Studies and Native American Studies. Three days after commencement, I was headed west to New Mexico where I have now made my home. Specifically, I live in Grants, New Mexico, a small town of about 9,000 people. The Acoma Pueblo and Laguna Pueblo reservations and several Navajo communities are in the environs of the town. When I came to New Mexico, I entered a Teacher Licensure Program at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. A year after completing this program,
I received my Master’s Degree in Elementary Education with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction. . . . There are seven elementary schools within our Grants/Cibola County School District. I teach at Mt. Taylor Elementary School, aptly named as it sits at the base of Mt. Taylor, one of the four sacred mountains to the Native American people of the Southwest. The student population of our school is approximately 550 children with a Native American student population comprising 49%. It goes without saying that my coursework in Native American Studies at Colgate University continues to play a significant part in my professional life and personal life as well. . . . The traditional world of a Native American person is not only extremely rich but carefully protected from the outside world. Being of Native American descent, I was raised to have a deep respect for Native American people and their lifeways. My upbringing and my Colgate coursework prepared me well for my professional pursuits and private life here in New Mexico.”

Class of 1999
“Because of my positive experience with NAST as an undergrad, I decided to pursue a Master’s Degree at Syracuse University in Museum Studies. So, NAST influenced my decision to pursue graduate school at all, and the type of program that I selected. Because of the preparation of the NAST program, this particular graduate school program was a breeze for me. I completed the two year program with one school year and two summer internships, only having to “make up” two classes to meet their distribution requirements, and graduating with a 4.0. Colgate NAST classes prepared me for the written assignments required and a basic familiarity with the use of museum and cultural artifacts as teaching tools. Connections between Colgate NAST and SU Museum Studies faculty also made it financially possible for me to attend graduate school. . . . I will be forever affected by my studies in NAST at Colgate. Because of my academic training, I still have a special interest in the American Indian cultures and native cultures of North, Central, and South America. Books on the subject will always catch my eye. News stories and magazine articles about the latest finds in the Mayan realm get my special attention. I constantly critique the presentation of American Indian life in films and television shows and in children’s books or programming… I participated in Tony Aveni’s Archaeoastronomy trip (1999 – Mexico City/Yucatan Peninsula/Belize/Guatemala) and this was a huge turning point in my life. Up until then, I had never left the US (with the exception of Canada, of course, being a Rochesterian). I had never even had a passport. I had not been on an airplane since I was a toddler. I had never been to a country where English was not the primary language spoken. To participate in the trip challenged me in many ways. It was an opportunity to participate in field research. I cannot look at anything Aztec or Mayan the same again because I have been there physically. . . . I was one of the few students who applied to Colgate specifically because of the NAST program. It was not something that I stumbled upon once I was matriculated. My freshmen seminar class was NAST (Professor Frost), and . . . I adored the idea of being a NAST student – what with stimulating reading materials, provocative classroom discussion and experienced professors. It was simply a very special time and opportunity for me to go through as a young adult. At what other time can you spend four years devoted to the idea of learning for the love of learning and for being a better person? Where else can you explore new ideas so easily, in such an accessible way? So, even though I have enjoyed each new phase of life that adulthood has granted me, I will look back fondly on that period as a time where my
mind was nourished like no other time before or since.”

Class of 2006
“I am a Native American of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe from the Akwesasne Reservation in upstate New York. Many of our Native members are uneducated, poor, and unemployed with little hope to change their positions in life. I was blessed to be given the opportunity of attending a private high school. By attending this private institution, . . . I was also given the social capital to be able to attend an elite college, Colgate University. I graduated from Colgate in 2002, with a Bachelor’s in Native American Studies and Sociology/Anthropology. My struggles and my ability to surpass obstacles remind me of my capabilities as a person. I have recently graduated from Marymount University, Virginia, with a master’s in Forensic Psychology. I am now waiting a pending position in the law enforcement branch of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.), within the Department of Interior. In the very near future, I aspire to apply my education and experiences to serve as a liaison between the U.S. government and Native American tribes, strengthening the ties and understanding of the government to government relations. I also work part-time at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, in which I have been a Cultural Resource Assistant for nearly a year.

Looking back at my life experiences, I believe in this day and age, my degree at Colgate was a major catalyst for my future experiences. My degree in Native Americans studies, as well as my off-campus semester in New Mexico, opened many doors in the career field, particularly a job at the prestigious Smithsonian Institution. The rewarding experience that I had working with the Tesuque Pueblo children left me with a feeling of wanting to continue to make a difference in Native peoples lives. My potential position within the B.I.A. will give me this opportunity to fulfill this desire.”

Class of 2000
“My Native American Studies interest focused into a Lakota studies interest. Colgate enabled me to pursue Lakota studies: I graduated with an understanding of the Lakota studies literature and Colgate-sponsored life experience in Lakota Country. Collecting and understanding the Lakota studies literature is a theme of my life. More than that, Colgate gave me a love of learning. Learning is one of my life purposes. . . . Our program introduced me to the field of federal Indian law. I earned a law degree with the goal of making Indian law contributions. Most importantly, my Colgate experience gave me the intellectual energy and work ethic that every attorney needs. I am now attorney-examiner for the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Hearings and Appeals in Washington, D.C.”

Class of 1999
“Through several opportunities to do archaeological fieldwork and coursework in NAST and SOAN at Colgate, I learned the importance of mutual respect and collaboration in Archaeology (and beyond) and was struck by how much everyone takes away from collaborative projects - not just about Archaeology, or the past, but about people today and how the past is an active part of the present. At the time, I understood this as how Archaeology was done, not realizing that in fact, Archaeology done with, by, and for Native communities was the exception, and not the rule. I had some great role models at Colgate, especially Jordan Kerber. After graduation in 1999, I began work as a curatorial assistant at the Peabody Museum
of Archaeology and Ethnology. I assisted in the catalogue and inventory of North
American archaeological collections for NAGPRA reporting and in several
repatriation consultations with Native groups. This position made me sensitive to
the complexities of the relationships among Native groups and institutions -
something first introduced to me in my Archaeology courses, but also in Carol Ann
Lorenz’s Contemporary Issues in Native American Art course. I am currently a
PhD candidate in Anthropology at University of Massachusetts Amherst and my
focus is on Archaeology and Native American history in New England. This is a
region where Native histories have long been subverted by historical erasures - a
concept I was first introduced to in NAST courses at Colgate. I have continued my
commitment to repatriation and collaborative projects through work on the
Department’s Repatriation committee and in my current research. My dissertation
research is focused on engaging multiple stakeholder communities, Native and
non-Native in archaeological research. I credit many of the instructors and courses
I took at Colgate for setting me on my current path towards a doctorate (hopefully
soon!), and a career in undergraduate teaching and cross-cultural collaborative
research.”

Class of 2003
“A lot of what we studied in NAST classes, especially regarding the European
conquest of the Americas, has resurfaced in my grad classes - particularly the
history and theories of globalization and Western power, and even with respect to
current conflict studies.”

Class of 1993
“. . . the end result influenced me much more personally than professionally,
albeit not for a lack of trying. Upon graduation, I did attempt to parlay my interest in
Native American Studies by attending Detroit College of Law (now Michigan State
University College of Law), as it offered a Native American law program.
Unfortunately, fate (or one of those pesky Trickster gods) intervened and the
school dropped that program during my 1st year. I wound up not even going into
a legal career, and instead joined the family business.”

Class of 1989
“I’m currently a senior product manager for Microsoft, and came up from computer
trade and textbook publishing. I manage a global digital literacy curriculum that
helps learners new to computing acquire basic skills so that they can better
participate in the knowledge economy. . . . While it is often strange to my
colleagues, I find that what I learned in NAST is truly elemental to my work… I think
a critical pivot for my career was the interdisciplinary nature of NAST, which brings
together the hard sciences like Physics, Astronomy, and Math with History, Art,
Archaeology, Religion, and more. Essential to my career is bringing together the
science of computing with education and writing, and with business skills like
business planning, marketing, and product development. In this respect,
developing a business case for a Korean localization of my curriculum is amazingly
similar to writing a paper on the astronomical influences of petroglyphs in Chaco
Canyon.”

Class of 2001
“In my professional career NAST paid immediate benefits as I was able to find a position in a contract Archaeology company almost immediately following graduation (a challenge given the economic climate in the summer of 2001). While I quickly discovered that pursuing a professional career in Archaeology was not for me, NAST was invaluable as I entered consulting because it equipped me with the analytical skills to understand the human side of issues when many of my colleagues only looked at the quantitative problems. Finally as I applied to various MBA programs I relied heavily on NAST as a point of differentiation.”

Class of 2001
“As a major in the NAST program, I participated in the Santa Fe Study group with Sarah Wider, the extended study group in Archaeoastronomy with Tony Aveni, and the Iroquois on-campus study group with Chris Vecsey and Carol Ann Lorenz. After graduating in 2001, I went on to get a masters degree in American Civilization at Brown University, am currently working on my Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of New Mexico. The interdisciplinary coursework in the NAST program was helpful in transitioning to an American Studies program. I still try to maintain breadth in my scholarship, combining history, literature, and art… Professionally, my degree in Native American Studies allowed for specialized job opportunities. Specifically, I curated an exhibit on Native American watercraft at Brown's Anthropology museum, and presently serve as the Editorial Assistant for the academic journal, American Indian Quarterly. As I begin to apply for academic jobs, I hope that my NAST degree will make me stand out as a candidate. Personally, my semester in Santa Fe had a lasting impact, as I now live in New Mexico! I doubt I would have decided to come to UNM otherwise. My best friendships at Colgate developed during the Santa Fe study group. It was very positive to be part of such a small, specialized program. I not only worked closely with my professors, but got to know their families as well. The study groups also opened up parts of the world (remote areas of the Yucatan with the Avenis, and interning at Santa Clara Pueblo) that I would not have experienced otherwise. Years after I graduated, I appreciated being able to contact my advisor (Chris Vecsey) for advice about graduate school, and having the opportunity to meet with students on recent Santa Fe study groups.”

Class of 1991
“I was a Mathematics major and Native American Studies minor while at Colgate. I traveled to Central America with Tony Aveni during both my sophomore and junior years. . . . One of the reasons that I chose to attend Colgate was a television special that my parents and I saw on the Nazca Lines, which introduced me to Dr. Aveni and his work. The ability, as a student, to travel to Central or South America to study the astronomy of an ancient culture, epitomized for me what I wanted a liberal arts education to provide. Following graduation from Colgate, I went on to the University of North Carolina for a Masters degree in math, then on to the University of Virginia for a PhD in Systems Engineering. I am now an associate professor of Business Information Technology in the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. . . . My liberal arts education at Colgate prepared me to think and to act with an understanding of and an appreciation for complexity and diversity in life and in academics. My experiences with the Native American Studies program contributed as much as anything to this preparation, and I feel that I am a much better and more rounded person because of it. I am extremely proud that I was a
Native American Studies minor at Colgate, and that I had the opportunity not only to participate in both the travel and the coursework associated with the program, but also to be exposed to the issues and ideas for which they served as vehicles."

**Class of 2007**

“Since graduating from Colgate, I've been working for a local nonprofit organization... As the Grants Manager, my main responsibility is to research, write, and submit foundation grants on behalf of the organization. While this job is unrelated to Native American studies, it does entail applying the writing/researching skills and that I acquired in my NAST classes... Also, since participating in the NAST study group in the fall of 2006, I’ve kept in close touch with my friends at Cochiti Pueblo, and have returned to Santa Fe several times. This fall, the Head Start in Cochiti was shut down due to under-funding, and the emergency youth shelter in Santo Domingo is currently facing the same problem. I would like to gain enough professional experience to eventually be able to assist these tribes in acquiring the funds to support such valuable social programs. I would also like to continue researching my senior thesis topic (the counter-hegemonic efforts of tribal schools), and eventually publish my work, as it is intended to improve Native American schooling.”

**Class of 2008**

“It is difficult for me to measure exactly how much of an impact my time with the Native American Studies Department and native community at Colgate has had on my life. I grew up knowing who I was and where I come from but growing up off the reservation, it was sometimes difficult for me to understand how my culture fit into today's world. The NAST Department at Colgate allowed me to do that. The archaeology, anthropology, and history classes were all fascinating to me but it was the contemporary courses that have had an immense impact on me today. The courses I took with Michael Taylor, in particular, gave me an opportunity to see how native culture remains resilient in the face of an often oppressive dominant culture that would love nothing more than to see the "Indian problem" go away. Reading the works of Sherman Alexie and then having the opportunity to meet him were truly eye opening. The discussions we had in classes at Colgate regarding the perception of natives in Central New York was a primer for the myriad of issues that exist in the Phoenix metropolitan area and Arizona as a whole. I felt my experiences at Colgate had exposed me to some of these issues in a broad sense but it took being more connected to the local communities to actually engage the issues and seek solutions. There's no doubt that my intellectual curiosity, with regard to native issues, was piqued at Colgate. The issues I was exposed to through my extracurricular research, which were delved into with my independent study through Professor Vecsey became a focal point of my work in law school. Simply put, the manner in which I approach federal-tribal issues today is directly informed by the work that I began during my tenure at Colgate. That work goes on today in the continuing evolution of my perception of federal Indian law and the work that I perform for my tribal clients. Today, I represent tribal clients on a multitude of issues including land, water, housing, fishing rights, and gaming, among others. The fire that burns inside of me, which drives me to fight the uphill battle on these issues is something innate that was not lit but certainly stoked at Colgate. I am grateful for the opportunities I had to learn from the devoted and passionate staff at Colgate and to soak up some of the indigenous culture that still resonates in Central New York. Those experiences had
an absolute and powerful impact on the professional person that I am today and I cannot understate how much they mean to me."

**Class of 2009**

“I very much enjoyed my classes as a minor concentrator in Native American Studies.

Since I left Colgate, I have joined the Peace Corps and was placed in West Africa. I live in a village without electricity and that only sometimes has running water. While Africa is not the America's I feel that many aspects of what I learned about history, culture, and the transition toward the encroaching western society have helped my move into living in a remote village and gaining an understanding and appreciation for the people I live with.”

**Class of 2011**

“In my year after graduating Colgate University, while I have not entered a field that deals directly with Native American studies, I find my background in NAST informs much of my post-graduate self. One of the most memorable experiences I gained through Colgate’s NAST department was my semester spent in Santa Fe, NM, in the Fall of 2009. There I gained many friends, including those made through my internship at Cochiti Pueblo. I am connected to my Cochiti friends still through Facebook. This connection serves as an ever-present reminder that there are people and events important to me even if they are not in my immediate sphere of daily life. Having described an example of the impact on my personal life, I find it difficult to separate personal impacts from professional impacts. I find that life after Colgate for me has meant meeting people with narrow perspectives on various topics, not the least common of which are issues concerning Native Americans. For example, to complement my graduate school, I have been working as a real estate salesperson, and in such a position I meet lots of different people with different worldviews. One man I met was very interested in the American Old West so we chatted a bit about the West and my experience in New Mexico. As it turned out, this man held an ill-informed view on Native Americans. We had a good-hearted debate and I gave him suggestions on books to read. (He later emailed my boss telling him I’m “the smartest realtor” he’s ever met.) It’s these types of conversations that can come up in everyday business, and my knowledge of Native American studies gained through Colgate’s department has provided me discussion material to engage others. For this reason, my education helps me connect to other people interested in Native American studies: art, history, politics, culture, etc. This is certainly a benefit for professional networking. Professionally, I still want to be active in Native American issues. The education given me through NAST has charged me with a passion to solve local, regional, and national problems concerning indigeneity, environmental justice, and autonomy. Though I am in a field not directly dealing with Native American studies (urban planning), I try to keep up with current events and stay informed. I hope one day to find an outlet for my special knowledge and passion.”

**Class of 2011**

“As I begin the next chapter of my academic career, I am able to reflect on my academic experiences as an undergraduate and how they have influenced my intellectual development. I can sincerely say that the courses I took in Native American Studies, and the professors I worked with in that department, were among the most important influences on me as a student and a person. As far as
the curriculum, Native American Studies opened my eyes to an often ignored component of American and world history. As an American history major, I found that my experiences in NAST complemented my history studies, and even expanded on areas of history that are largely ignored by authors in the historical paradigms they construct. More importantly, I found my professors in NAST to be among the most approachable on a personal level, always taking an interest in me as a person as well as a student. The diligent work of my NAST professors who assisted me in learning how to become a better writer, and not allowing me to settle for average work, pushed me to become the best student I could be. I will now use the writing skills I have learned in this program, and the amicable and encouraging relationships I have developed with professors in this department to prepare myself for my studies at Fordham University School of Law in the fall.

Class of 2011
“I fulfilled the majority of my NAST minor while participating in the Santa Fe Study Group, based in New Mexico. This experience deeply enriched my life in two specific ways. First, my interest in and appreciation for cultures other than my own increased dramatically. I believe this is a direct result of the first-hand, contextual experience in Santa Fe. Through traveling the SW and working on a farm at Tesuque Pueblo, I saw - and to a large degree experienced - a people and way of life vastly different from what I had been used to during my first twenty years of life. I now have a tangibly greater level of curiosity about human diversity in its many forms, and am exploring this regularly in professional and social settings. The second impact of the SF Study Group and the NAST minor is that through my work I am able to pass along this curiosity to others. I spent the past working in two two Seattle-area high schools with 250 college-bound students enrolled in the national AVID curriculum. Not only were students interested in many of the specific historical facts of indigenous peoples, which I learned through my NAST minor, they also became interested over the course of the year in discussing their own unique backgrounds. I intentionally balanced academics with exploring personal culture, language, and history and I found that students really came alive when they could relate their own experiences to others.”