GLOBAL STRIDE FELLOWS

Meet the 2010-11 Fellows

Adrienne Horne, Kimberly Fong, Marichuy Gomez, Katie Paulson-Smith, Chelsea Villareal, Zoe Falk, 2010-11 Global STRIDE Fellows.

This year’s Global Stride fellows—Zoë Falk, Kimberly Fong, Marichuy Gomez, Adrienne Horne, Katie Paulson-Smith, and Chelsea Villareal—have in common the eagerness to make their college education meaningful in a global society and to diversify their curriculum through foreign language study and field courses that offer new perspectives on the world. In addition, they enjoy sharing knowledge during our weekly meetings, and having the space to think critically about the process of learning a foreign language and studying abroad. As part of their Global Stride scholarship, each of the six fellows interviewed and profiled international students in the college’s graduate program in American Studies, to help familiarize them with people who have made cultural transitions and exchange ideas about culture shock.

Mostly acquainted with Romance languages (French, Spanish, and Latin), Adrienne Horne decided to study Chinese at Smith not only to try something completely different, but also because she is interested in China’s position toward engineering sustainability. Currently enrolled in Engineering 100, Horne enjoys studying engineering at a women’s college (her high school engineering class was all guys and her, she describes) because she feels more confident, and she already plans to major in this field. Down the road, she wants to bring together her love for languages and cultures and her engineering aspirations by working for Engineers Without Borders. During her sophomore year in high school, she traveled to Italy with her Latin class, and after graduation she went to France on a school trip with her French class. Although these were only short trips, Adrienne was amazed at how much it opened her mind. "I knew it [a different world] was out there," she says, “but until you see it, it's not really concrete, real, you don't fully believe it. It's in the back of your mind." Because her focus on engineering won't give her much time to take classes about world cultures, Adrienne enjoys being part of the Global Stride program for its potential to round out her academic program.
As a second generation Chinese-American, Kimberly Fong is deepening her pride in her cultural heritage through the study of Chinese, which she began six years ago and is continuing at Smith. In summer 2009, she attended Mandarin immersion classes at Beijing Capital Normal University. "It was so powerful to live in a country in such an amazing state of rapid transformation," she says. "During her stay, she visited five different cities, which allowed her to witness the cultural differences among Chinese people, and she made a point to take every opportunity to interact with as many people as possible to learn more about the country and hear some of their views on the United States. Over all, Fong’s stay in China was a transformative experience that made her more interested in global issues and in U.S.-China relations. One of her first priorities at Smith was to enroll in an economics course. "If you want to understand how the world works, you have to take economics," she notes. Fong also plans in the near future to fulfill her love for painting by taking an art history course. "It's fascinating to see how art can reflect society," she says, mentioning the influential work of artist Jackson Pollock. At Smith, where she attends on a regular basis a variety of conferences and public lectures, Fong tries to make every day meaningful, hoping that some day she will be in a position to make a contribution to the world. "For now, there is no other place for me," she states with a satisfied smile.

Born in Los Angeles but raised in a little Mexican town, Villa Hidalgo, until age 14, when her parents decided to return with their family to the United States, Marichuy Gomez is not sure of her own identity. She does not feel Mexican, she says, nor American. But she is sure of two things: on one hand, she knows there are many ways of living in this world; on the other hand, living in the U.S. at this stage of her life offers her more opportunities for higher education and bigger career aspirations. In this regard, she feels lucky compared with her friends in Villa Hidalgo, who do not have the same educational opportunities, and is highly motivated to succeed. When she started learning English four years ago upon her return to her place of birth, she realized how much she likes foreign languages and decided to study other languages in college. She has in mind to learn Portuguese and French at some point, but for now is taking an intensive introductory Italian course, as she would like to study the rich cultural history of Italy during her JYA in Florence. Also, taking a course this semester on the history of Latin America in the colonial times opens up new avenues for Marichuy. Contrary to her expectations, she’s considering majoring in history and would be interested in researching the way we teach Mexican history in Mexico and in the U.S. in order to compare the two perspectives. It may be an excellent way for her to better understand her identity.

Katie Paulson-Smith likes to push her limits, and feels challenged in a good way at Smith. She is already involved in several student organizations (e.g., Students for Social Justice and Institutional Change, the Smith College Model United Nations, and Spirituality in Action) and she is part of the cross-country team. She arrives on campus with a goal of trying new things, she says, so she put aside for a while her interest in environmental studies to explore different fields, such as anthropology, English literature (through a first-year seminar on Shakespeare), and Swahili (through a mentored program offered by the Five College Center for the Study of World Language). Studying Swahili, which is spoken in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and the democratic Republic of Congo, allows her to envision a trip to the eastern part of Africa for her Global Stride summer study abroad in 2011 in order to immerse herself in the language and undertake either community work or an internship. As an active citizen and someone passionate about saving the earth, Paulson-Smith feels she has the responsibility to make a difference and take action for making a better world. Last December, she was fortunate enough to attend the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark, as an accredited observer, and she hopes to have the chance to take part in this kind of global initiative while studying at Smith.

For Chelsea Villareal, Northampton was no secret as she grew up near Westfield, Mass. Although she is happy to be close to home while studying at Smith, she is eager to explore the world, and traveling abroad to experience different cultures is among her life goals. It is the main reason she was interested in the Global Stride program. After studying French and Spanish in high school, she planned to learn a new foreign language in college, and Arabic was her first choice. "The first time I was interested in learning Arabic, it was during my second year of French when the instructor was away and a substitute teacher in French and Arabic shared with us her passion for Arabic culture and language," recalls Villareal. To deepen her understanding of Islamic culture, she is taking a history course, "The Making of the Modern Middle East," as well as religion class.
Villareal wants to combine her interest in Middle East studies and psychology by studying behavior analysis because she aspires to work in the field of counter-terrorism with suspected criminals. This summer, she plans to pursue the study of Arabic in Jordan, where she plans to immerse herself in the culture she has been studying in the classroom. To reach this goal, she is in the process of applying to the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program, funded by the U.S. Department of State.

Coming from a very liberal school located in a tiny town in New Hampshire, where she felt she was at the top of her game, Zoë Falk is happy to be challenged at Smith and to live in a diverse environment. She also feels that she is at the right place because of the open curriculum at Smith, which allows her to fulfill her interest in science and other fields while pursuing her love for French culture and language. The summer before her junior year in high school Falk spent three months in Switzerland and France as a nanny to three Swiss children. "Going abroad by myself was the best experience of my life," she declares enthusiastically. She had the opportunity to speak French on a daily basis, and came to realize that what she learned in the language lab was not necessarily the way local people spoke. "I used to say to the children I was in charge of, 'Allons-y' when we were ready to go out," she explains. "But they were laughing at me saying, 'On dit ‘On y va,’ pas ‘Allons-y!’’" Zoë's ideal career goal would be to combine her double interest in French and medicine and go to a French-speaking African country with Doctors Without Borders. While at Smith, she wants to master the French language and gain knowledge of current affairs in France. For this reason, she feels that the Global Stride program is a good fit and will offer her various opportunities for studying abroad.

By Hélène Visentin, Associate Professor of French, Global STRIDE Mentor 2010-11