

Pitzer student knows the true meaning of giving

Richard McKinney, a triple-major at Pitzer College will be graduating this spring after only 3 years. The Seattle-area native is studying psychology, philosophy and political studies, and was recently awarded a 27-month Peace Corps placement in Romania.

He takes at least 6 classes every semester, an overload compared with the typical load required for on-time graduation. But Mr. McKinney doesn't just stop there. He's on the Faculty Executive Committee at his college, where he works with Pitzer President Laura Trombley and Dean of Faculty Alan Jones. As a member of Student Senate, he tries to give students a voice in college matters.

"There's a growing disenchantment among the students," said Mr. McKinney about the Student Senate, and he describes the process as tumultuous.

Mr. McKinney plays for the 5C Rugby Club, which hired 2 new acclaimed coaches this year. They are ranked 2nd in California Division II rugby and are projected to go to Nationals. Mr. McKinney has played rugby since high school.

Mr. McKinney has volunteered with Camp AP, Prototypes and on a suicide prevention hotline. At Camp AP, Claremont College students lead a poetry workshop for incarcerated youth at Camp Afflerbaugh-Paige High School. The program concludes with a performance at Pitzer College, where students from the camp and the Claremont Colleges perform, and borrow and share the voices of the incarcerated persons whose voices aren't being heard.

"After being on the other side of that reality once upon a time, it's a nice place to be to be able to look at someone, know they're a human being who warrants respect."

Volunteerism has provided a positive outlet for Mr. McKinney, perhaps even a means for self-healing and a way to give back to the organizations that provided support during his childhood.

"Camp AP, Prototypes, and the Suicide Hotline each reflect very active dimensions of either my personal or intimate relationships at some point in my childhood," he said. "To be able to contribute positively to these types of organizations is a great experience."

Mr. McKinney's experience volunteering has proven to be relevant to the work he will do in the Peace Corps. He will spend the first 3 months in Romania training and learning the language. He will be working specifically in Youth Development, which



COURIER photo/Steven Felschundneff

Seattle native Richard McKinney will be graduating from Pitzer College in May with a triple major in philosophy, political science and psychology. After graduation he will be off to Romania for a 27-month commitment with the Peace Corps.

is one of many sectors of the Peace Corps. Mr. McKinney will be working with at-risk youth in outreach programs.

Mr. McKinney is looking forward to his placement. "I get to go to Eastern Europe," he said, "which is a place that I really wanted to go."

Only about a quarter of applicants this year received placements. "Few people have the opportunity to remove themselves from everything they've known and implant themselves into a new context," he said. "This is something I genuinely wanted to do since I was in high school."

He deliberated whether or not to apply. He was unsure "whether I was going to do more harm than good." After reaching the conclusion that he would be able to achieve his personal goals, he applied to the Peace Corps.

Mr. McKinney's achievements come despite personal hardship. "I'm on full financial aide at Pitzer," he said. "I'm graduating with no debt."

To help out he has worked during the summers to cover his own expenses. His mother struggled with maintaining consistent employment and, reflecting on his high school years, he and his brother were not

afforded the comforts of being raised in a traditional living situation.

"I never lived on the streets for any extended period of time, but neither of us had a home for much or all of our high schools with any personal family," he explained. "We lived with various friends throughout much or all of this period."

Mr. McKinney now lives in Washington near his younger brother Christopher. Although their mother lives in Michigan they call her regularly and visit her every 2 years or so. Their father has not been an active part of their lives since they were very young. Christopher is currently looking at colleges and is considering attending Pitzer as well.

Mr. McKinney has a list of 94 life-goals, which includes both immediate and long-term. He would like to do the Iron Man race. He wants to write an autobiography with his brother. "We've taken the first plunge into it," he says.

The McKinney brothers have learned to make the most of life and plan to continue writing together this summer.

— Julia Gibas-Jones

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These accelerated class sequences are given by the Claremont Colleges' Joint Science Faculty. They provide year long college level introductory courses with laboratory that meet premedical requirements and allow entry to upper division science coursework. Classes are limited to 24. Application deadline: April 29, 2010. For information contact Veronica Scott at vescott@scrippscollege.edu or 909 607-1788.