

Journeying Many Paths

Brandon McInnis '09 might be found recording music on his equipment at home for interested SONY Music representatives, but he isn't a music major. McInnis, who became a certified nursing assistant in high school, might be found volunteering as a first-response medical staff member for a large convention in Dallas, but he doesn't major in any science. When McInnis meets a fork in the road, he considers it an exciting opportunity rather than a perplexing decision. Austin College's emphasis on broad, liberal arts education has presented him many opportunities.

"I feel like I'm walking five different roads, which shouldn't be possible," McInnis said. "It's possible at Austin College and great preparation for the real world." The very fact that Austin College would open many paths to him is why he ultimately decided to attend. McInnis developed a passion for music, especially vocal performance, after earning a role in a middle school musical. He eventually earned all-state honors in vocal performance and was offered a "tempting scholarship package" to attend Baylor University.

"I knew that if I did that, I would only ever do music and voice," said McInnis, who plans to pursue a career in medicine, specializing in vocal chord injuries. "I chose Austin College because the ultimate goal for me was to be a physician." Austin College has allowed McInnis to continue his passion for music through involvement as assistant director of the A Cappella Choir and as a member of The Quartette, a men's a cappella group.

Austin College also enabled him to pursue pre-medical studies and introduced McInnis to his major area of study, Japanese. "You start with the language, and it opens up this window into a culture," he said. "Then, you study abroad and go through a door to see a different world entirely." In fall 2007, McInnis studied abroad in Tokyo through the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) and completed internships in interpreting and translation for a variety of business groups and conferences in the U.S. and abroad.

McInnis has had the good fortune of witnessing his many paths converge on occasion. While studying in Tokyo, McInnis met with a former head of the Japanese Fulbright program to discuss continuing his Austin College honors thesis on the Japanese healthcare system through Fulbright study. McInnis has completed a Fulbright application in hopes that his love of Japanese and his career aspirations in medicine can continue as one road for additional study through that program.

While volunteering as an interpreter at an annual anime conference, McInnis met an editor for an American music magazine who showed

interest in the fact McInnis had written and recorded his own music (some of it in Japanese). The editor put McInnis in contact with representatives of SONY Music in Japan, who wanted to hear his music. McInnis sent sample tracks of his work and is awaiting word from SONY.

McInnis readily admits that walking so many different paths can require a lot of time and energy. "I don't sleep, let me tell you," he said. Sleep or no sleep, the availability of so many opportunities is what McInnis thrives on. "You have to see an opportunity and grab it," he said. "Just go for it all the time."



COURTESY PHOTO

Brandon McInnis

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 Listen to Brandon's Music

Junior Earns Boren Scholarship for Study in China

Claire Balani '10 has been awarded a National Security Education Program (NSEP) Boren Scholarship for study abroad and is spending the 2008–2009 academic year in China. Claire, a political science and international relations major, is studying Chinese culture and ethnic minorities this fall at the School of International Training in Kunming of the Yunnan Province. In spring 2009, she will complete intensive language study in Beijing with the International Education of Students, focusing on improving her Mandarin language skills.

“Throughout my time in Yunnan, I hope to understand the real challenges facing Chinese, if not global, society today, from environmental degradation, to rural poverty, to health epidemics,” Balani said. “I want to examine the relationship between China and Southeast Asia, particularly Burma, by examining these important social issues through the eyes of immigrants, migrant workers, and visiting students. Hopefully, I can use what I learn throughout my time abroad in a position that could influence relations between China, Southeast Asia, and the United States, either through the government, think tanks, or non-governmental organizations.”

Boren Scholarships provide up to \$20,000 to U.S. undergraduate students to study abroad in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. interests and underrepresented in study abroad, including Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The scholarships fund study that focuses on geographic areas, languages, and fields deemed critical to U.S. national security. Applicants identify how their study abroad program, as well as their future academic and career goals, will contribute to U.S. national security. NSEP draws on a broad definition of national security, including not only the traditional concerns of protecting and promoting American well-being, but also the challenges of global society, including sustainable development, environmental degradation, global disease and hunger, population growth and migration, and economic competitiveness.



COURTESY PHOTO

Claire Balani

Students, Faculty Begin Look at “Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World”

Austin College history students **Austin Tooley '09**, **James Hannan '09**, **Victoria Sheppard '10**, and **Elizabeth Elliott '09** accompanied **Hunt Tooley**, associate professor of history, to the Southern Historical Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, in October. Hunt Tooley was chair and moderator of one of the conference sessions. The students attended sessions and workshops, choosing at least one session on the theme of Austin College’s History Department Mobley Project “Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World.”

The four students offered their perspectives on the conference at a campus presentation in late October. Faculty and students will undertake a number of research initiatives through the Mobley Project. Tooley hopes students will be prepared to participate in an upcoming Phi Alpha Theta history honor society graduate and undergraduate conference.

Hunt Tooley is the Andrew Pickens Mobley Scholar for 2008–2010 and selected the theme for the project, which will combine his own historical research, student and faculty presentations, conference participation, and guest speakers to “create a kind of intellectual awareness of the scope and nature of the historical and human dimensions of mass violence.”

Tooley’s academic career has included a great deal of study of mass violence in 20th century Europe, and his courses have included focus on the Holocaust and Stalinist mass killing and forced migration. In addition to student research initiatives created through the Mobley Project, he hopes to complete a book he began some time ago on the topic of mass violence.



PHOTO BY KAITLIN MCCOY

Left to right, Victoria Sheppard, Elizabeth Elliot, Hunt Tooley, Jamie Hannan, and Austin Tooley, shared their experiences.

Senior Speaks on Behalf of American Youth

It isn't every day that U.S. college undergraduates have the opportunity to meet the presidents of foreign countries, much less discuss economics and foreign policy with them. Yet, that is exactly what **Lurissa Tucker '09** found herself doing over dinner with Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo at the Association for Peruvian Institutions in the United States and Canada conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

A Latin America studies major and public health minor at Austin College, Lurissa was the only U.S. American invited to present a speech at the international conference held in May 2008. Lurissa, who made the speech in Spanish, discussed the awareness of and involvement in third world countries among youth in the United States. "Basically, I had seven minutes to convince Latin American diplomats that not all young people in the U.S. are lazy and ignorant," Lurissa said.

Lurissa's involvement in service and study abroad made her an ideal candidate to make that point. She lived in Cusco, Peru, in 2007, volunteering at La Clinica de San Juan de Dios and researching the status of maternal and child health among the region's indigenous population. In March 2008, she was a part of an Austin College LISTEN (Letting Intensive Searching and Traveling Enlighten North Americans) delegation to Guatemala, focused on fair trade and collaborative work between non-profit, non-government agencies and the recipients of aid. In summer 2008, Lurissa completed an internship at the New Mexico Health Policy Commission, performing research on undocumented immigrant healthcare.

Lurissa's speech highlighted the change that occurs in many students who serve or study abroad. "We go forth with what we consider to be the best of intentions, prepared to save the world with all of our wealth and knowledge," she said. "However, many young people in the United States, me included, return to our homes and societies changed. In our enthusiasm to 'change the world,' we are changed by the people we meet and the work we do. This is the real souvenir we bring home."



Lurissa Tucker

PHOTO BY VICKIE S. KIRBY

Student News of Note

Cicily Smith '08 spoke at the annual summer meeting of the Mathematical Association of America in early August in Madison, Wisconsin, presenting "Paracycles in Snell Geometries," highlighting mathematics research done during her senior year. The research involves the description of a new type of geometric object in a new category of geometries. Jack Mealy, Austin College professor of mathematics, said the presentation received an enthusiastic response. Smith is now doing graduate work in industrial engineering at Texas A&M University.

Priscilla Lo '11 has been awarded a scholarship from the Jimmy Rane Foundation of Alabama. According to foundation information, Lo's selection was based on standout academic achievements and career goals as well as letters of endorsement. The scholarship is open to high school seniors or to college freshmen.

Lo, an Asian studies major with a minor in educational psychology, plans to complete the Austin Teacher Program at Austin College. "I've wanted to become a teacher since fourth grade and have explored this career through various volunteering opportunities and courses throughout my high school and college years," Lo said. "I really love working with kids — especially in a small setting. I love influencing their lives and teaching them new things that can help them as they grow into young adults."



Priscilla Lo

PHOTO BY VICKIE S. KIRBY

Ethan Tanner '12 was awarded Eagle Scout rank August 9, highlighting training that began as a Cub Scout in first grade and transitioned into the Boy Scouts at age 12. Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable for a Boy Scout.

A major requirement of the rank is completion of the Eagle Project, an extensive service project that the scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. Tanner's project was refurbishing an old kitchen in the Helping Hands Center in his hometown of Rockwall.

In addition to the survival skills the Scouts taught Tanner, "the most important thing I learned was the concept of leadership and 'followership,'" Tanner said. "Basically, there is a time for you step up and be a leader but there also is a time for you to know your place and be a follower."

At Austin College Tanner plans to pursue the five-year Master of Arts in Teaching track and put to use the things he learned in the Scouts such as "responsibility, loyalty, and a strong work ethic." 🦅