

When Monika Jones first arrived at the University of Washington, she felt overwhelmed.

“I was taking interesting classes” she says, “but I guess I was sort of floating along. There were so many people, classes, and groups, that I had trouble envisioning where I fit into the entire situation.”



MONIKA HELPS A STUDENT IN BREWSTER DEVELOP STORY IDEAS.



Turning Points > MONIKA JONES

She began the introductory chemistry sequence, and considered a major in English, but Monika's coursework and activities felt rudderless and unconnected until she renewed a commitment to something she learned in her youth: giving back.

The pieces came together for Monika when she discovered the Pipeline Project's Alternative Spring Break. Monika spent spring break of her junior year in Brewster, Washington, a farming community of about 2,200. There, she taught creative writing to fifth and eighth graders, helping them explore their culture and identity through stories. For Monika, the experience “injected a magical feeling of purpose into the normally academic and theoretical university setting...[It] motivated me to learn more about the process of storytelling. It was a reflective process of thinking ‘Where is it that I come from, and what stories do I have to tell?’”

Monika's spring break in Brewster dovetailed with her interdisciplinary major in the Comparative History of Ideas Program (CHID)—a major that encouraged her to combine her passion for literature, politics, and community service.

The intersection of Pipeline's and CHID's values shaped Monika's research interests and she decided to undertake a senior thesis that focused on the personal and vital connections between people and their stories. Monika returned to Brewster for the spring quarter of her senior year and, with the help of a Mary Gates Endowment leadership grant, took her Brewster writing project to 9th grade students.

“You can transform yourself, or transform the way you think, through writing,” says Monika. “What I was teaching is mirrored in my senior thesis because it reflects the process of transformation I went through myself. I'm motivated by how education can empower people, and how it empowers me. It's a lens for looking at the world.”

Monika's commitment to writing and personal connections crosses international borders as well. She co-founded *Letters Home*, a literary journal that publishes UW student travel writing; researched globalization, culture, and identity through autobiography; and is currently connecting local elementary and middle school students with international pen pals.

After Monika graduates this spring, she is interested in continuing her literary and educational endeavors, possibly through a master's degree in English and a teaching career.



MONIKA CONSULTS WITH DR. JAMES ANTONY, HER FACULTY MENTOR, ABOUT HER SENIOR THESIS.

Dear Friends of Undergraduate Education,

Social scientists tell us that being part of a community of peers with common interests, desires, and concerns is one of the most important contributors to personal success.

Monika Jones, featured in this issue, found a community in the Pipeline Project, one of the Office of Undergraduate Education's (OUE) programs that help students create a meaningful education. Through Pipeline and her Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) major, Monika combined her interests in globalization, culture, and personal narrative and initiated a senior thesis project in which she explores these issues.

Monika found her place, but participating in experiential learning opportunities such as research with faculty, community-based learning, or international study can require

substantial time commitments. This often means that students who must work to support their education miss out on some of the University's finest undergraduate experiences. We want every student to be able to enrich his or her education through experiential learning, and are growing programs and scholarship support so all students can take advantage of these opportunities.

Encouraging involvement,

George Bridges, DEAN AND VICE PROVOST, UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Contact us at 206-616-7175 or ugrad@u.washington.edu

