



# Class of 2015/2016 Newsletter

Welcome to the December/January issue of the GRSP newsletter. If you have anything you would like to contribute in the future please let me know.

I'm sure all the GRSP's are glad to be done with finals and enjoyed the break having the chance to celebrate Christmas with their families and host families. I did a lot of travelling which you can see on my blog, and my family really enjoyed, meeting my host families.

- Lauren Darge, [dargie94@hotmail.com](mailto:dargie94@hotmail.com), (678) 599-4716

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## Leadership Conference / MLK Weekend

Coming together for the first time in the New Year, we found ourselves at the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Downtown Atlanta. It was a reunion filled with much joy, each and every one of us having so much to share from eventful Christmas Breaks as well as pure curiosity as to what everyone else had been up to.

We found ourselves at a place that not only taught us about the injustices of the world, but also the price that people have paid and are still paying for justice and freedom. We got a



broad understanding of the American Civil Rights Movement and also a good overview of human rights struggles around the world, both in the past and present. Our walk around the exhibitions and installations was followed by a discussion of the current refugee crisis in Syria as well as an introduction to the Syria Mapping Project and how data from social media can be coded and used to discover trait routes, terrorist networks and safe areas. Leaving the center, we found ourselves pondering the crisis as to



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what we can do, as fortunate individuals and GRSP students, to help out in our local communities.

The evening was spent at Slingshot, bowling, playing around the ninja course (with varying success) and catching up on holidays, travels, new experiences and thoughts and questions generated throughout the day.

We spent the night at our respective host families who on Saturday morning drove us to the beautiful campus of Oglethorpe University. First thing on the program was speaker Larry Hart, Past President of the Rotary Club of Dunwoody, who guided us through the values of daring to have fierce conversations and the principles of fierce communication. Mr. Hart used the metaphor of the world as a beach ball where we will inevitably see something from our own perspective, colored by our culture, upbringing, core values, individual experiences and the people with whom we surround ourselves. Through group talks, one on one conversations, practice in observation and in plenum discussions, we gained knowledge about the importance of silence, the art of truly listening and how each conversation is important as it will either built on the relation or gradually tear it down. We all got a little closer that day and having a real conversation with someone you might only have chatted with before made us realize the possibilities and power of conversation and paying attention.

Next thing on the program was the service project, Stop Hunger Now. As students and Rotarians worked together, we packed more than 10,000 meals in under two hours! Afterwards, we went with our host families to dinners hosted by Dunwoody Rotarians, where we enjoyed both good food and conversations.



Sunday morning was spent with the Rotaract Club of Atlanta, where they led us through a group seminar that applied the communication skills we had learned from Mr. Hart on Saturday – we got to create a non-profit organization and present it to a panel of Dunwoody Rotarians, all in about two hours. Congratulations to Clarissa, Raphaele, Valentina, Beata and Emma for winning the competition with their project #BrightFuture, aiming to help young women in Colombia establish a business by offering microloans and mentorships with local Rotarians.



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Thank you to Dunwoody Rotary Club, in particular to Scott Jennings and Mike Parks for all the work you have put into this event, to Lorri Christopher and to all the host families from the Rotary Clubs of Dunwoody, Buckhead and Brookhaven.

*-Camilla Aamaas and Emma Leschly, Norway and Denmark*

## **Columbus State University, Columbus**

Attending Columbus State University has broadened my horizons by introducing me to a new, different academic style and by meeting all sorts of people with a mentality unlike to my own. It has been thoroughly pleasant and undoubtedly educational and enjoyable. The way the campus is designed makes you think you are in some magical land not too different from a Disney World resort: the winding sidewalk trails, the picturesque benches in the middle of the lawn, the lush green trees and a soothing, pleasant summer breeze... all surrounding the impressive architecture that are the campus buildings. It seems everything

leads you to the centre of the campus, or at least in the metaphoric, not geographical, sense, which is the clock tower. At first sight, it does not appear to be anything out of the ordinary: just a plain, mundane clock tower.

However, sitting in one of the benches facing it and staring up at the clock tower, majestically towering up in the middle of the field and

gazing above the top of the trees and buildings, gives you a magical, tingly sense of something good to come. Maybe the clock tower is referring to what is the time of our lives, and how every passing minute should be lived to the fullest. I have enjoyed every moment at Columbus State so far, and the clock tower is a reminder that I should continue to do so, at least until my time here is up.



*-Sebastian Villa Molina, Colombia*



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## Georgia Southwestern State University



Georgia Southwestern State University is located in beautiful and historic Americus; a vibrant college town. To be honest, when I first found out where I was assigned to go to college, I was a little bit worried. The first thing I did was some research in Americus, and I found out it was a small town of 17,000 people. Then I wanted to know how it looked like, so I looked for images in Google, and I saw several pictures of the same building, the Windsor Hotel. So the first thing that came to my

mind was that there is absolutely nothing to do or see there. I didn't know what I was going to do until I got there and to my surprise, I'm more than happy in this small town.

Georgia Southwestern is a small university with 2,500 students, which provides an outstanding education in a warm, family like environment. The school is small enough to ensure that every student counts, but large enough to offer the diversity and depth of programs necessary to prepare graduates for success in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Among distinguished GSW alumni are former President of the United States and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Jimmy Carter, former first lady Rosalynn Carter, and the late Griffin Bell, former U.S. Attorney General.



*-Valentina Barbosa, Colombia*



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## Young Harris College

Young Harris is a small town located in the enchanted valley of the Northern Georgia Mountains. It is a town of only 300 people, which makes it seem strange that a four-year college with 1200 students is located right next door.



However, the college has been here a long time. The school was originally founded in 1886 by Reverend Artemas Lester, a circuit-riding Methodist minister who wanted to provide the residents of the Appalachian Mountains with an education. Young Harris used to be a two-year college, up until a few years ago, but through the efforts of the current school president Cathy Cox the school has now turned into a four-year college offering 23 baccalaureate degree programs. In these programs, students from 29 different countries are represented. Whether it's international students or locals, the close-knit campus builds more personal relationships between students, and to the faculty.

*-Fredrik Boen Gravdal, Norway*

## Brenau University

Brenau University was founded in 1878, and is located in Gainesville, Georgia. Brenau is a comprehensive, liberal arts-based institution, which includes the residential Women's College. It operates coeducational campuses in Gainesville, Augusta, Kings Bay, Norcross and Fairburn as well as a new campus in Jacksonville, Florida. Brenau houses around 3,500



graduate and undergraduate students, with the mass majority residing in the women's college. During my studies here, Brenau has offered me a wide variety of classes such as Genetics, Women and the global environment, Comparative politics, Karate, Self-defense, Anatomy



and physiology and Abnormal psychology. I reside in the freshmen dormitory called Crudup 2<sup>nd</sup> south, which is part of 3 freshmen dorms provided here. Brenau also is home to 8 different sororities on campus, including ΔΔΔ, ΑΧΩ, ΑΓΔ, ΑΔπ and ΑΚΑ. Like me, most freshmen have a roommate, which in most cases provides you with a friend for life. With Brenau being mostly a small women's college, you get to know every student on campus somewhat well, and expect to say 'Hi' at least 6 times on the way to every class. Brenau is a great university, and I couldn't imagine being anywhere else during my year in the GRSP.

*-Milly Paintain, England*

### **Clayton State University**

Located close to Atlanta, Clayton State University (CSU) was founded in 1969 and has grown a lot. Founded as community college, CSU is now a full-time university and a home for 7,000 students. The university offers a great variety of majors to choose between starting from Business to Nursing and Teaching English.

CSU is ranked #8 among Public Colleges in the Southern United States by US News & World Report, even media has recognized Clayton State University as an innovator of education.

CSU is known for its sport faculty. The biggest sport is basketball. In 2011 our own Lady Lakers won the NCAA Division II women's basketball national title.

*-Simon Hermanns, Germany*

### **Mercer University**

Mercer University is situated in Macon, Heart of Georgia. Founded in Penfield in 1833, it is the oldest private university in the state. Since 1871 Mercer's main campus has been in Macon, and today it also has a graduate and professional education campus in Atlanta, and a School of Medicine in Savannah. Mercer has around 4500 undergraduates and 4000 post graduate students. Mercer was founded as a Baptist school, but ended its affiliation with the Georgia Baptist Convention in 2006.



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Mercer's mascot is Tony the Bear. Mercer's best sports team is probably the Men's Basketball Team: Mercer Bears. Their most prominent victory was when they defeated Duke Blue Devils on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2014. Mercer is also renowned for its small but excellent McDuffie Center for Strings, which is led by Robert McDuffie, internationally renowned violinist.



*-Gabriel Damsholt, Denmark*

## **Scotland**

Fàilte; Ceud mìle fàilte! Welcome to Scotland. Yes that is another language we have, and no I don't speak it. Scottish Gaelic sounds a bit like a cross between Norwegian/Danish and someone with a really bad cough. Only 60 thousand people speak it, up in the beautiful Scottish Highlands and Islands. The language is perhaps dying but us Scots cling on to most other things cultural. We love our Scottish ceilidh dancing, our national tartan dress, our greasy food, and our bagpipes.





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Only 5 million people live in Scotland and most of it is uninhabited, which makes for a breathtaking landscape and scenery all across the country. Scottish people are known for being pretty liberal, very friendly and very tight with their purse strings. Most are proud to be a part of the United Kingdom, and those who aren't, well, Braveheart is a really good movie. Tourists come from all over to see our numerous ancient castles, impressive golf courses and misty mountains. We do however, have big commercial cities just like everywhere else, such as Glasgow and Edinburgh (pictured below) and a few smaller ones. Glasgow is where the



party is at, and Edinburgh is where the culture and deep fried mars bars are, as well as deep-fried everything else. The thing I love about Scottish people is that no one takes themselves too seriously; sarcasm flows through our veins (along with whiskey and saturated fat) and makes us to be a nation of humorous chaps. So yes I love my country, I'm proud to be a Scots lass, but in my opinion we could have gotten a better deal with the weather.

*-Lizzie McGhee, Scotland*

## Lebanon - Pearl of the Middle East



Lebanon, officially known as the Lebanese Republic, is located in the Middle East on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It is a tiny country, covering only 4053 sq miles, where its length is almost three times its width. It encompasses great diversity of climate and landscape. Its capital is Beirut where the American University of Beirut is located. Lebanon's population is 4.46 million. The country has all four seasons where summer is hot and dry and winter is cool and rainy in the coastal areas. At higher altitudes, temperatures usually drop below freezing with frequent snowfalls in the winter while summers are warm and dry.



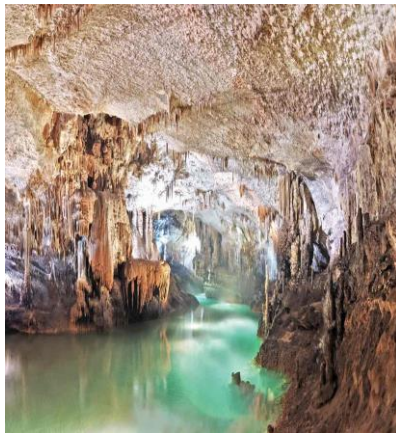
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Lebanon has astonishing beaches as well as high mountains. The Bekaa Valley, part of the Great Rift Valley, is the country's fertile vineyard. Lebanon's geography makes it easy to go from the city to the slopes in a matter of just one or two hours. How amazing is that?

Lebanon is a water-rich and most of its rivers and streams have their source in the springs of the mountains of Mount Lebanon.



Baalbek Ruins



Jeita Grotto

The famous cedars of Lebanon were traded and used to build their ships. The vegetation in Lebanon is typical Mediterranean plant life such as pine, cypress and an abundance of colourful wild flowers.

The top attractions that make Lebanon one of the most touristic countries in the Middle East are Baalbek, Anjar, Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, Qadisha Valley, and Bekaa Valley.

One thing we love to do in Lebanon is eat. Traditional mezze and meals include Tabbouleh, Fattoush, Hummus, Baba Ghanoush, Kibbeh, Mana'esh and stuffed grape leaves. Desert is typically Baklava, Kaak, Sfouf, and Maamoul.



*-Raphaelle Akhras, Lebanon*



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## Estonia



Estonia is a small country in Northeast Europe. It's next to Latvia, Russia and over Gulf of Finland there's Finland. Estonians consider Swedes also our neighbours. Most of Estonians believe that we are part of Northern Europe. I'm sure that most of our Scandinavians disagree. The truth is that we are somewhere between.

Estonia is tiny – with its 45,339 square kilometres, we are just a little bigger than Denmark (Greenland does not count), Switzerland and the Netherlands. It is about a third of Georgia. Estonian population is 1.3 million. That makes Estonia one of the most sparsely populated country in Europe. The only official language is Estonian, a small language that is similar to Finnish. It has nothing in common with Russian.

Estonian history is been long and colourful. We have been ruled by Germans, Russians, Swedes, Danes and Poles. Good job everybody. We re-established our independence in 1991.

Estonian weather is what it is. Winter is long, dark and cold. Both summer days are warm. Okay, it's little longer. In summer we stay outdoors a lot. We go camping, hiking, we grill outside. We go to the sauna. After a hot sauna you can jump into the lake. In winter when lakes are covered with ice you drill a hole into the ice or you just roll in the snow.



Everybody in Estonia loves nature. Half of Estonia is covered with forest and a quarter with swamps and bogs. There are a lot of trails where you can hike. In fall forests are full of berries and mushrooms. The main hobby of grandma's and mothers is putting these things in a jar.

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Estonia is known for its musical talents. World famous composer Arvo Pärt and conductors Neeme Järvi, Tõnu Kaljaste and Anu Tali are from Estonia. If you are interested in good music look up Elephants from Neptune and Three Leg Dog. We really like to sing. In every 5 years we have the Estonian Song Festival. In 2014 Festival there were 1,046 choirs and 33,025 singer. Plus audience of 100,000 people.

Estonia is also famous for its IT. Estonia is the birthplace of Skype and Transferwise. Since 2001 digital signature and electronic voting has been widely used in Estonia. In 2015 parliamentary elections a third of all participants voted over the Internet. Since 2014 everybody can become Estonian e-Resident.

*-Georg Astok, Estonia*



## Student Blogs

[dizylizzietheparttimehippie.wordpress.com/](http://dizylizzietheparttimehippie.wordpress.com/)

[laurendarge.blogspot.com](http://laurendarge.blogspot.com)

[www.nipunaambanpola.com](http://www.nipunaambanpola.com)

[nillinilli.wordpress.com/](http://nillinilli.wordpress.com/)

[nouw.com/mydreamcometrue](http://nouw.com/mydreamcometrue)

[nouw.com/myyearinthestates](http://nouw.com/myyearinthestates)