As many of you know, TRIO/SSS programs around the nation are fully funded from the US Department of Education, as is our TRIO program at Carleton. The funding for TRIO/SSS programs is made possible through a competitive grant application process that takes place every five years. This 2009-10 academic year marks the final year of our program’s current grant cycle, and we must compete for renewal of our program funding with many colleges and universities around the country. This year’s competition is expected to be quite rigorous with recent changes in TRIO legislation that allow more college programs across the nation to apply for TRIO/SSS grants. In addition, both the Bush and Obama administrations have level-funded TRIO programs consistently in recent years, leading to a limited amount of money that the US Department of Education may disperse to competing TRIO programs.

With the help of our former TRIO Director, Rietta Turner, and Joy Klutz from the Office of Intercultural and International Life, we were able to submit a strong grant proposal in December that will help Carleton’s TRIO program to compete as effectively as possible to secure funding for the next five years. With this grant proposal, we remain very optimistic that our TRIO program will remain on Carleton’s campus. Carleton’s TRIO program has existed through federal funding for the last 28 years, and has evolved into a strong program that supports diverse students in a variety of ways, leading to recent academic success and graduation rates that closely parallel or even exceed those of the majority students at Carleton. News of this year’s TRIO grant competition is expected to be released later this spring, and we at TRIO will be sure to keep everyone informed of the competition results, so everyone can plan for next year and feel confident that there will be continued support for TRIO students on this campus.
All of the questions that I have been receiving about relationships on this campus have a lot to do with the dynamics in friendships between people of different levels of economic privilege. We have people who were born into money and people who had to work for every penny, and people in between.

How do we navigate through these experiences? Clearly they exist everywhere on this campus, as we have heirs to Fortune 500 companies and people who work two jobs that Carleton doesn’t know about.

I was able to ask some friends around campus, let’s keep them anonymous just for fun, about the way that they felt. One of them was a “Tell It Like It Is” kind of guy. He doesn't mind telling people about where he lived. He's proud of where he’s come from. He also loves to clarify points that are misunderstood about the lower economic classes, not because that is where he comes from, but mostly because he has been there before and understands it at an experiential level, rather than through theoretical class readings.

Another person had a “No One Has To Know” attitude towards the situation. She thought about her home experience as something that doesn’t need to be broadcast to the public. Not because it’s embarrassing but more because it’s private. She’s got a lot to say about the injustices that happen in her community, but she does not feel comfortable being the spokeswoman for each of those conversations.

Like I said before, I'm all about encouraging you to do what you feel comfortable doing. No point in making yourself more uncomfortable on this campus than you need to be, classes are hard enough! Here are some suggestions about using these approaches to navigate relationships at Carleton.

**Tell It Like It Is**
If you adopt this approach, you have to feel comfortable knowing that people will not always understand where you come from. Some may even judge you because of where you come from. Sometimes you will be fine with criticism and other days it will be very frustrating. The important part is that you have a core group of friends who understand and support you. How do you find those kinds of friends? Ask a TRiO peer leader, who will be more than happy to support you in your transitions of finding that particular community on this campus.

**No One Has To Know**
People who adopt this kind of logic sometimes feel like they are faking, or not being true to their multiple intersections of identities. The first question they should ask themselves is what made them feel this way? Was it something they said or did or was it something their associates said or did? Once you figure out what is bothering you, there are a number of things you can do: 1) You can just remember that it bothered you and avoid it next time; 2) Ask one of your friends what they think; 3) Talk to your TRiO peer leader and get some support; 4) Or take the most dramatic, but sometimes needed, option: stop talking to the people who made you feel bad.

I’ve only discussed two types of attitudes you can take towards this situation. Please feel free to come up with your own if you don’t feel like these fit with your experience. The point is that you should find friends who support you. Don’t let people make you feel bad about where you come from.

Remember that college is all about meeting people who are different from you. It is only through these interactions that you can truly challenge yourself.

Have a question for Mari? Email her at ortizm. (Write TRiO question in the subject line.)
Study Abroad in Africa

By Shakita Thomas

I had a wonderful opportunity to study abroad in South Africa and Namibia last fall through the Center for Global Education. The program was called “Nation Building, Globalization, and Decolonizing the Mind.” During the four months that I was in South Africa and Namibia, I took classes, interned at an organization, and traveled all over Namibia. Since the program was not a Carleton program, I had the opportunity to meet 24 other American students from around the U.S., which was great. Since I spent a lot of time in Namibia and South Africa, I have so many experiences that I am not going to be able to share all of them. What I am going to share is details about some of my experiences and information that will be helpful for those who want to study abroad or travel to South Africa and Namibia.

The program began in South Africa. We were in Johannesburg for ten days before we traveled to Namibia, where we were the majority of the time. While in both places, I visited many organizations such as USAID, Treatment Action Campaign, Rainbow Project, and Council of Churches. We also spoke to many people who participated in the liberation struggle against apartheid. For many who do not know the history of the two countries, both countries were colonized, South Africa by the British and Namibia by the Germans and the British. South Africa and Namibia received their independence in 1990 and 1994. During the years before independence, the apartheid system was in place. This system segregated people based on their “race” and required them to walk around with passbooks. If they were caught without their passbooks or in an area that they did not belong, they would be arrested and sometimes beaten. Although this system was eliminated, I was able to see the effects of the system on both countries today. For instance, Namibia has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, education is still unequal, and many of the people are still living in poverty.

Having the privilege to live with three different home stay families and learn about their culture and experiences in Namibia and South Africa was the best part of my experience. What is better than speaking with the people who live there about their own country? Overall, my experience was amazing and I sometimes wish I was back in Namibia where the weather is above 0 degrees and the scenery is beautiful. Anyone who has any specific questions about my experiences in Namibia and South Africa or about the whole process of studying abroad should feel free to contact me (thomash).

Meet the new TRIO program assistant!

I’m Ray Nelson. I’m from Cleveland, Ohio so I’m no stranger to this freezing MN weather. In my free time I like to read, eat snacks (preferably candy and cake), and dance! What kind of dance? A little bit of everything. If you see me on campus don’t be afraid to say hello in Spanish or English.

As for my advice for this term: Get out of your room or the library for a study break. If don’t you will definitely go crazy from being cooped up inside.

Fall in Argentina

by Ray Nelson

Estimated flight time: 13 hours. That was what it said on the airplane monitor before we took off to Argentina. I could not believe I was about to leave the U.S. for a country I had never set foot in. Throughout the plane ride, I imagined how Argentina would be different from the United States.

When I landed, I quickly realized that I was no longer at home. Instead I was in a South American country with a predominant European influence. Although I am Puerto Rican, my Spanish was not fluent enough to understand the Argentine accent spoken at the airport. Somehow I managed to leave the airport and meet my program director, who drove me to my host family.

The program I was in was called the Lexia study abroad program. What they emphasized was an examination of a country through history, politics, art, and language. Over the next 3 ½ months I came to a better understanding of the complex society that is Argentina.

Buenos Aires was rich with European culture, tango shows, ballet, art museums, cafes, live music, and fairs. There was always something to do.

Yet I also found a society dissatisfied with their government, poverty; and a loud and sometimes dirty city. All of these things challenged the preconceived notions I had before my trip. I was told that Buenos Aires was not a complete representation of Argentina.

Midway through the program, I visited Mendoza, Argentina on the border with Chile by the Andes Mountains. Also I traveled to Iguazu falls in the Northeastern part of Argentina. And as a final trip to compare Argentina to another country, I traveled to Brazil for almost two weeks. Each place was beautiful and distinct in its own way.

Regardless, I still found racism and a curiosity towards those of African descent. Part of this discovery came from my research about Afro-descendants in Buenos Aires. The insight my research gave me was tremendous, and I made great acquaintances and friends along the way. I would never change my experiences abroad for anything. Although I was thrust outside of my comfort zone, it was one of the best ways to learn. Furthermore, I thought about how much I had seen that many would never get the opportunity to. Thanks to Carleton, and also the Gilman Scholarship, my aspirations to see the world were made a reality. Coming back to the U.S., I was so grateful for my opportunity to see so much and to learn beyond what I ever could have by staying in the US.

If you have any questions about my experience please e-mail me at nelsonr.
Pennies For Change

Every winter the TRIO/SSS program, in honor of TRIO's National Day of Service, sponsors a fundraiser to benefit those in need within the Northfield community.

According to the 1986 Congressional resolution, National TRIO Day is meant to focus the nation's "attention on the needs of disadvantaged young people and adults aspiring to improve their lives, to the necessary investment if they are to become contributing citizens of the country, and to the talent which will be wasted if that investment is not made."

This year the Pennies for Change donations will go to HealthFinders. HealthFinders is a local health clinic run by Carleton alum Angie Koch ('02) that provides quality, accessible and culturally-sensitive healthcare services at no cost to low-income and uninsured residents of greater Rice County.

Thanks to your help, this year we raised over $125 for this organization!

Extership Program in New York Theater

by Stephanie Guerrero

When I first began my years as a college student I was unsure about which career path I would find myself going down, but I was absolutely certain that I was going to do with theatre. I had convinced myself that I had enough of it in high school, and that there was no way it would take over my life again. I was wrong, of course. After three months of feeling that something important was missing, I let myself be taken over by my one love: theatre. Two years later, I had declared theatre as my major, but after I turned in that piece of paper with the check mark that would determine my future, a wave of dread swept over me. “How do I pursue theatre as my career?” I asked myself.

And then my spring end-of-term meeting with Rietta came along, and I was given a key to answer my desperate question. I had explained to Rietta how my one and only internship opportunity for the summer was cancelled, and she mentioned an alum who graduated in 2002 who has been directing theatre in New York ever since. Theatre! In New York! I was thrilled to find out that someone from Carleton was surviving in The Big Apple doing theatre. Rietta suggested I e-mail Melinda Prom, the alum.

It took me awhile to get up the courage to e-mail Melinda. I didn’t know how to start. I think my initial e-mail began with something along the lines of, “I’m a theatre major. What now?!” We exchanged a few e-mails here and there, but it soon became apparent to me that I needed to meet her. Not just wanted, but needed to.

There was so much I needed to know. Should I go to graduate school? How much does it cost to live in New York? How much does I become an Equity actor? Will I need to live in a box and eat mac-and-cheese for the rest of my life? I had so many questions, too many for e-mails.

When fall term blew in, after a lot of questions and name dropping, I was told about an opportunity through the Career Center: The Mentor Externship Program. It’s a program that connects curious students like me with an all-knowing alum like Melinda for a “short-internship.” Through this program, I would be sent to New York to spend two weeks shadowing Melinda on the job, asking her all of my questions, and getting them answered. In addition to paying to get me to New York, the program would reimburse me for most of my travel and meal expenses. I applied for the program immediately, and I was thrilled to find out a few weeks later that I got it!

I spent two fabulous weeks in December with Melinda. Melinda had just been given the opportunity to direct a play for the Michael Chekhov Theatre Company, and I spent a lot of my time with her during the initial rehearsal process. In doing so, I got the incredible opportunity to meet her actors and ask them questions, and I even got to act with a few of them for a bit. Melinda also made it possible for me to see two plays at the conservatory she attended, the American Academy for Dramatic Arts, and two plays at the Algonquin Theater, a theatre she had worked for prior to the Michael Chekhov. I took a tour of AADA, I got to speak with and hang out with the actors from the Algonquin after the show, and of course I kept asking my questions. I also got the chance to dust off my theatre resume and audition for a play. It was one of the most terrifying and exciting experiences, and I didn’t get called back, but it was an experience all the same. In my two weeks in New York, I met, talked, and laughed with real actors and directors, and the icing on the cake: it was all in New York! I got to pretend for two weeks that I lived in and breathed New York. By the end of my stay I was very familiar with the subway and I was beginning to acquire a not-so good New York accent.

My two weeks with Melinda in New York were incredible and invaluable. I learned so much, and I came out of it feeling more prepared for and sure of my future in theatre. It gave me hope, but most importantly it gave me a great network of people in the theatre business. Because, the answer to a lot of my questions boiled down to one simple thing: it’s all about who you know! Everyone I spoke to stood firmly by that statement. And I’m happy to say that I came back from New York with a decent number of e-mail addresses and added friends on Facebook.

So, my fellow TRIO students, what’s the moral of the story? Carleton has an amazing alumni network and a fantastic program to get you connected with them! I encourage you to seek the answers to your burning questions at the Career Center.

Note: Because I had so many burning questions, I received a lot of answers from a lot of different people, and so I couldn’t very well fit them all in this article. So, if you have some spare time and you’re really curious, ask me for the answers.