

Interview with Nimish Adhia

Todd Kumler

Name: Nimish Adhia

Hometown: Ahmedabad, India

Major(s) at IWU: Economics

Current Study: PhD Program in Economics

Current School: University of Illinois at Chicago

Expected Graduation: 2009 (yeah, I know!)

What did you do in the year between graduating from IWU and entering graduate school?

I went back to India and worked for my Dad, who is a motivational speaker and runs a book company that publishes motivational books in Indian languages. My dad put me in charge of his office, where, ironically, the employees were suffering from low motivation and productivity. I tried to get them to do things the "American way" - like use a lot of post-it notes, play music in the background and automate phone call answering. At first, they were suspicious; but as soon as they realized how fun this was, they took to it. I knew I had been successful in my job when I received computer-generated birthday wishes from the office a few months ago.

What type of work did you do for The Center for Civil Society?

In the summer of 2004, I interned at CCS, a New-Delhi based think tank promoting free market and libertarian approaches to public policy in India. The Center does this by documenting the success of free-market initiatives and by highlighting the wastes and follies of government activities. As a research intern there, one of my projects was to study the experiences of certain countries (U.K., South Africa, Chile, etc.) that have privatized some of their public utilities (like water, electricity, etc). I found that privatization worked well in these places, decreasing the costs and increasing the supply for consumers. My other project involved investigating the functioning of various college entrance exam coaching classes run by the Indian government (how they recruit students, how

they coach them, their success rate, etc). I still haven't figured it out.

Did you enjoy working for The Center for Civil Society?

Looking back at it, yes. But at the time, I was very frustrated with having to visit government offices everyday in a decrepit public transport system under a scorching sun (115° F is the norm in summer in New Delhi), and with trying to wean out information from uncooperative bureaucrats. I had been spoiled by my four years in America - air-conditioned facilities, 24-7 water and electric supply and the fact that most information could be availed on the computer at the click of a mouse. However, I relished the fact that I was doing something meaningful, not just a toy project, that was going to inform the policy debate in my country.

What do you like/dislike about being a graduate student?

Graduate studies allow me to study my subject at a depth not possible as an undergraduate, which I enjoy. But, the narrow focus that such intensity entails comes at the expense of a multi-disciplinary, well-rounded approach to looking at things, which I gained from my liberal arts education at IWU. I feel that this narrow focus is a handicap when you are trying to understand something as complex as human society itself.

Do you have a job as a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant? If yes, do you enjoy it?

Yes, I work as a teaching assistant for a large intro class of 300 students (Imagine, IWU students!). The class breaks up into small groups once a week, and my job is to lead discussions in such a group (besides grading, monitoring, tutoring, etc). Being in such a position of leadership forces me to clarify to myself

topics about which I am fuzzy. You can get through your graduate school classes (even get an A) without understanding certain topics 100%, but when trying to get through to a bunch of uninterested undergraduates, you have to know the concepts inside out.

How does the work in a graduate program differ from undergraduate work?

As an undergraduate, one is expected to understand the economic phenomenon merely intuitively, which makes studying Economics fun and stimulating. Math is used only to the extent it supports intuition. However, in graduate school, the math becomes all important - it is assumed that the intuition will follow from knowing the math. This regimen of equations and proofs sometimes kills the "feel good" factor in Economics.

What field(s) of Economics are you specializing in?

Not decided yet, but International Economics and Economic Development seem to be top contenders.

Following graduation, what career do you intend to pursue?

Definitely teaching. For me it is very satisfying to see a student understand the allocative efficiency of prices or the law of comparative advantage.

Do you have any advice for current IWU students who wish to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics?

Yes, quit your Econ major and switch to a Math major. Life will be easier in grad school.

In the 2003 Park Place Economist, you said you hope to take over Dr. Seeborg's job. Do you still plan to do this?

Sure. Though I may be able to take over his job, I don't know if I'll ever be able to take his place.

Anything else?

Keep up the good work with PPE. And I would like to see a center spread of Greenspan in the next issue.

Alumni Notes

Jennifer C. Dawson

Junaid Ahmed, '96, moved back to Bangladesh after graduation, where he spent 3 years working for a development agency raising funds for microcredit, education projects, and natural disasters. Currently, he is a radio journalist, producing programs in current affairs. He just completed a part-time Masters in International Relations. Junaid and his wife have a son, born in 2003.

Sabeen Ali, '01, worked as an economic consultant for Ernst & Young LLP in New York City from graduation until April 2003, when she became Development Program Coordinator for the Council of Foreign Relations. Sabeen has just learned that she has been accepted into the Masters in Public Administration/International Development Program at the Kennedy School, Harvard University. She will begin in fall 2005.

Awo Osei-Anto, '03, has worked since graduation in

Human Resources Outsourcing in the Health and Group Benefits department of Hewitt Associates in Chicago. Awo has recently been accepted into the Masters in Public Policy program at the Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago. Her interest is in health care consulting. She will begin in fall 2005.

Jeff Blend, '93, is an Environmental Economist for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. He has completed both a Masters in Economics and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University. Jeff's career advice for students studying Economics is to "not be afraid to think outside of the box in terms of how you can apply your skills."

Jesse Boyle, '96, has recently left his corporate job and transitioned into an entrepreneurial phase of his career. He founded and is the CEO of a million dollar entertainment company that is currently building

its first location in Chicago. This 7,000 square foot facility is an upscale restaurant/bar called Red Ivy. It is located on Clark Street just a couple hundred feet south of Wrigley Field and opens in Summer '05. Jesse says, "Stop by!"

Otis Carter, '00, is in his fourth year of the JD/MBA program at Washington University in St. Louis. He will begin as a Litigation Associate for a large firm in St. Louis in September 2005. Otis is busy studying for the CPA Exam, Bar Exam, and Patent Bar.

Timofey Chekhoyev, '02, has left PricewaterhouseCoopers in Peoria, IL, to join KPMG Risk Advisory Services, first in San Francisco, CA, and currently in Seattle, WA. Tim helps companies meet the new corporate governance requirement of the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. After this work cycle, he will focus on Enterprise Risk Management consulting and on implementation of the Basil II banking standard for large financial institutions. Tim believes his economics background at IWU has "helped me immensely to understand my client and their place in (the) global economy."

Amy Cline, '02, is in her third year of law school at Florida State University. She graduates in May with a J.D. and a Certificate in Environmental Law and will be taking the Florida Bar Exam in July.

Paul Davies, '92, was recently promoted to Director of the Division of SSI Statistics and Analysis at the Social Security Administration in Baltimore, MD. His division is responsible for producing data, publishing statistical reports, and conducting research on the Supplemental Security Income program and the Social Security Disability Insurance program. Paul received his Ph.D. in Economics in 1996 at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

John W. (Wes) Dyke, '02, lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, and works for Caterpillar, Inc. He works in financial report/planning and will soon begin in cost management. Wes says, "I will be married to my long-time sweetheart and best friend in July."

Jaclyn Hood, '99, recently left Hewitt Associates to join Milliman, an actuarial consulting firm, as an Implementation Analyst in the Employee Benefits practice. She is happy to report that she has main-

tained the travel bug she developed while at IWU. Jackie recently spent a few weeks in Egypt and will be traveling to Tibet this fall.

Katia Hristova, '02, is a Ph.D. candidate in SUNY Stony Brook, in the Department of Computer Science. She was married in July 2004. Her husband is also a graduate student in SUNY Stony Brook.

David Janashvili, '02, is a Business Analyst at Hewitt Associates. His duties range from actuarial calculations to systems design and testing to client and project management. David is applying to Business Schools. He says, "Economics RULES!"

Kimberly Ann Lawson, '96, has been with Hewitt Associates for the past 8 years. She and her husband are expecting their second child in September. Their daughter, Miranda Rose, just turned two. Kimberly says she loves balancing family and work. "Time really flies!"

Justin Leverton, '02, is in his final year at Indiana University School of Law in Indianapolis. His legal work involves three main areas: Commercial Litigation, Commercial Bankruptcy, and International Trade. In May 2005, Justin will begin work with the law firm of Stewart & Irwin. Justin says that his education at IWU has been instrumental in his success at law school.

Bryan McCannon, '98, is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Elmira College in New York. His main fields of study are Applied Game Theory and Industrial Organization. He does research on product quality, trade embargoes, voting theory, and plant physiology. His immediate future plans are to publish more work. Bryan received his Ph.D. in Economics in 2003 at Pennsylvania State University.

Matthew Mikulcik, '97, works at Discover Financial Services in the Marketing Department. His team builds models for direct mail and telemarketing campaigns. Matt and his wife Sandy have two daughters and live in Grayslake. Maia Caroline was born in September 2004 and has an older sister Claire. They "are both little bundles of joy!"

Amber Munday, '01, is an Office Manager at Microsoft Corporation. She is also a volunteer

fundraiser for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and just completed her first marathon as part of their Team In Training program. She plans on starting law school this fall.

Brett Roush, '97, is an Actuary for an insurance company located in Chicago's suburbs. He and his wife live in Arizona and are planning a fun getaway to London. Brett will be taking his first exam for the Court of Master Sommeliers, which is a career area he might enter in the future.

Andy Rowland, '03, is a Business Analyst in the Defined Benefits area for Hewitt Associates LLC. He may go into consulting in the executive compensation area with Hewitt and also may return to school for an MBA. His advice to graduates is "to remember that life is a journey, not a destination, and to always make sure to follow your passions because that is what will allow you to wake up everyday and want to go to work."

Guerric Russell, '97, is a Maritime Lawyer at the office of Nicoletti, Hornig, Campise, & Sweeney, located in downtown New York. He is getting married in August to Jeanne Volpitta.

Patrick Spangler, '03, is in his second year at Chicago-Kent College of Law. This summer he will be working as a Summer Associate for Vedder, Price, Kaufman, and Kammholz in Chicago; specifically within their litigation practice group.

Steve Strnad, '01, works for the McMaster-Carr Supply Company and attends the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business.

Gnanika Wijayaratne, '94, completed two Masters degrees in Human Resource Management and Educational Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University. She and her husband Ravi just bought their first home in San Jose, CA. They have two sons, Niviru, a 4 year old and Chehan, a 1 year old. Gnanika left a position at ChevronTexaco, completed her Senior Professional in Human Resources Management Exam, and is now a full time mother "and thoroughly enjoying it." She plans to be back in the workforce when Chehan begins preschool.

James Yonker, '02, is a Financial Consultant for graduating seniors in Chicago's western suburbs, specifically Wheaton/Winfield/Glen Ellyn. James and his wife Lindsay have a son, Jakob, and are expecting their second child.

Ron Zimmer, '92, is an Economist at RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, CA. Some of the research he led at RAND has been featured in the NY Times and LA Times. Ron received his Master of Science in Economics and his Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Kentucky. For a year after his graduation, he was adjunct staff for the University of Kentucky. Ron and his wife had a daughter, named Julia, last summer.

The Class of 2005

James R. Glenn

Want to know the truth about Illinois Wesleyan's Economics majors? Well, below they tell it all about themselves, including future plans, favorite classes, favorite professors and more.

Xun Bian

Xun is an economics and mathematics double major from China. After graduation he plans on attending graduate school in economics with the expectation of earning a Ph.D in Economics. He eventually wants to become an economics professor and work at a research university or to obtain a research position with the government, an international organization, or within industry. He says that the one nice thing about being an Economics major at IWU is that "It gave me the opportunity to study with intellectual and easygoing people. It made my four years in the US both interesting and inspiring." His favorite course, although he has many wonderful memories about all the courses, was Microeconomics with Dr. Durbal. After taking Micro with Dr. Durbal, Xun decided to pursue a Ph.D in Economics. Good job Dr. Durbal! However, Dr. Chapman gets credit for making him an econ major.

Samantha Dietz

Sam is an econ major from Manteno, IL. Her favorite part about being an economics major is that she isn't a business major. After graduation, she plans to join Americorps for a year. She then plans to pursue a degree in law.

Adrien Gatesman

Adrien, or A.J. as she is known to the Econ faculty and students, is a double major in Economics and Business Administration from Melrose Park, IL. After graduation she plans on going back to the Melrose Park area and hopefully getting a job close to her home. Adrien writes that she initially started as a Business major but decided to add Economics as a

double major after taking Econ 100 with Dr. Chapman. In her own words, "econ theories just came easy to me." She isn't quite sure what she is going to do with her econ major in the future, but she knows that the research experience she acquired in her Econometrics and Research Honors classes will be helpful when looking for a marketing research or data analyst position in the future. Adrien will definitely miss all of the Econ professors, and "really appreciated the close-knit atmosphere of the department and how professors are always working with students, whether on research or class material." Her favorite memory is the party at Dr. Seeborg's house to celebrate Dr. Durbal's tenure. She thinks it was great to see the faculty outside of an academic setting.

James R. Glenn

James is an Economics and Business Administration double major with a minor in French from Lincoln, IL. He has thoroughly enjoyed his academic career here at Illinois Wesleyan. He chose to pursue a double major because both of the subject areas complement each other extremely well. He also thanks Dr. Chapman for signing him up as an Econ major (second person to be converted by Dr. Chapman!). His best memories of being an econ major are tutoring, the Senior Seminar class, and Dr. Seeborg's jokes, which are often unexpected yet funny. His favorite classes were all the ones he took for his major. He thinks all the faculty members are wonderful, and wouldn't single one of them out as being his favorite. He also notes that the faculty was very accommodating when he continuously asked questions in class. James had a wonderful experience as an economics major and would definitely recommend it to anyone who hasn't decided on a college major because the subject matter is applicable to everything in life and the faculty is phenomenal.

His Labor Economics course with Dr. Seeborg inspired his interest in unions. This ultimately led to

his decision to apply for a seat in the Labor and Industrial Relations Institute at the University of Illinois for the fall of 2005. His future academic plans are to get a Master's in Human Resources and Industrial Relations (M.R.I.R.) and then enroll in U of I's law school and receive a J.D. degree. As a future employment lawyer, he hopes to make a small fortune and come back as alum to endow a faculty position in the economics department. Finally, he'd like to thank all his fellow students and professors for four unforgettable years.

Tim Hachmeister

Tim is a Mathematics and Economics double major from Elmhurst, IL. Tim has signed a contract with Kimberly-Clark and will be working in Nennah, Wisconsin for a few months before heading to Beech Island, South Carolina as a product supply analyst. Tim writes that working for Kimberly-Clark will give him the opportunity to apply both his majors. His favorite classes include "Econ Goes to the Movies", a May Term class taught by Dr. Durbal. He writes, "What could go wrong with playing games and watching movies? Ahem, and I guess learning some stuff as well." His favorite econ memory was realizing that his Senior Seminar presentation was done! But, according to Tim, the real question we should be asking seniors is if they had a good experience in Economics. His answer? Heck yeah!!!!!! Finally, Tim wants it to be noted that as much as he was interested in the subject, what truly made his work here worthwhile were the people he was working with.

Adam Houser

Adam is an Economics and Business Administration double major from St. Charles, IL. He writes that he is still looking for "that elusive full-time job offer in the financial services industry." He feels his Economics major will certainly help him in the financial services field as it has introduced him to several topics that the business administration major does not encompass. His favorite Economics classes were Dr. Chapman's "Money and Banking" class and Dr. Seeborg's Senior Seminar.

Stephen Mohrman

Stephen is an Accounting and Economics double major from St. Louis, MO. After graduation he plans to attend a one year Masters in Accountancy program with the intention to concentrate in passing the CPA

examination. After finishing the Master's program he will seek a position in the public accounting field. Steve thinks the critical thinking skills he has attained in his Economics major will facilitate his goals.

Sean Moran

Sean is a Political Science and Economics double major from Naperville, IL. His plans for next year are to get a job, but he doesn't know what the job will be yet, though he's looking at jobs in banks, political think-tanks, or anything that involves some sort of research that involves economics and politics. His favorite econ class was "Economics of Developing Countries" with Dr. Durbal. Sean writes, "It was one of the most interesting and informative classes I've had here at IWU." "Economics of the Environment", with Dr. Leekley, because "I got to see the economic approach to conservation as well as what the government has done positively and negatively to affect natural resources." Senior Seminar with Dr. Seeborg was also very enjoyable to him. His favorite econ professors are Dr. Durbal (his advisor) and Dr. Chapman, who convinced him to become an econ major (the third one for Dr. Chapman!). His favorite econ memory would probably be typing in data for twelve hours "only to have the computer reformat the document into read only, then crash and lose everything I worked on. Oh wait, that's the worst!" Best memories would probably be working with Dr. Seeborg and Dr. Leekley to "figure out how in the world I would set up my senior seminar and advanced research model." He's had great experiences in economics with the friendly department and positive attitude.

Elizabeth Planas

Elizabeth is a Hispanic Studies and Economics double major from Wauconda, IL. As of this spring, Elizabeth was accepted into the Spanish school at Middlebury College in Vermont. During the 2006 school year she will be studying in Madrid, working towards a Master's degree. She writes, "I had a lot of fun as an econ major at Wesleyan. My favorite class was probably Senior Seminar, where I got a real opportunity to use some of the things I learned in other classes. All of my classes were super fun classes full of super fun kids!" Elizabeth also had the idea of getting a t-shirt for the 2005 Economics class!

John Pritchard

John is an Economics and Business Administration

double major from Galesburg, IL. After graduation he will be working for Hewitt and Associates in Lincolnshire, IL. He writes, "I've had a lot fun being an economics major here at IWU. I have really enjoyed the classes, the professors and my fellow economists. I feel that economics was definitely a worthwhile major and will help me enormously in my professional life."

Ana María Romero

Ana María is an Economics and Accounting double major from Barranquilla, Colombia. After graduation she will be joining the Ernst & Young office in Chicago, in their audit practice. While working for E&Y she will also be pursuing a Master's in Accountancy at the University of Notre Dame, through Ernst & Young's master's program. Her favorite econ memories include going to Econ 100 classes with Dr. Seeborg to try and win over new econ majors (Dr. Chapman beat them at that) and the annual Movie Night at Dr. Seeborg's home.

Andrew Tarman

Andrew is a Business Administration and Economics double major from Carol Stream, IL. Andrew will be working for Prudential Capital Group in Chicago, IL as an Investment Analyst. In the future he plans on attending graduate school for Business Administration. He really enjoyed Senior Seminar because he got a chance to use all of his skills to research the baseball industry and get some great results for his project. He also enjoyed his "Labor Economics", "Microeconomics" and "Money and Banking" classes. Andrew writes, "Being an economics major helped me with my investments/finance skills by being able to look at what the government is doing to stimulate the economy using both monetary and fiscal policy. I can actually look at bonds and public policy and understand why the government is doing what it does. I think its important for finance majors interested in investment to take econ classes."

Amanda Thorson

Amanda is an Accounting and Economics double major from Cornell, IL. After graduation she will be working at Thomas & Associates, CPAs, a small public accounting firm in Bloomington-Normal. She will be sitting for the CPA exam in May of 2005. She writes, "I enjoyed the camaraderie among the econ students and the wonderful faculty."

The Undergraduate Economic Review

Adrien Gatesman

The Undergraduate Economic Review is the Illinois Wesleyan University Economics Department's newest endeavor. It is an on-line journal meant to compliment the Park Place Economist, but reach out to more students. The Undergraduate Economic Review accepts articles from students at different colleges and universities across the United States.

Our mission statement is: "The Undergraduate Economic Review, produced by students of Illinois Wesleyan University's Economics Department, is committed to supporting and encouraging high quality student research in all areas of economics by publishing the best undergraduate papers. Articles are solicited from undergraduates across the globe, and reviewed solely by student editors from select sponsoring institutions. Our unique editorial structure takes advantage of the latest online technology to promptly review and post accepted articles." Mahi Garg was the founding editor of the journal and developed most of the design of the web site and journal policies. Her hard work is much appreciated and will be remembered by all of the following student editors. Mahi made it very easy for the student editors to start publicizing the journal at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year.

We hope to have continual support from other universities by establishing Faculty Advisors on different campuses. These advisors are professors or staff that work closely with undergraduate economics students who have done or are doing original research. The Advisor's purpose is to encourage his/her students to submit their original research to the Undergraduate Economic Review year after year. If we receive many submissions from one university, we also hope to have student editors from that university read the papers and send the best articles to us. This year, we started with a list of 30 contacts at quality schools across the country. We sent them information about our journal and invited them to be a

Faculty Advisor. Although we have received some responses from a few contacts, we are making progress in establishing a network of support for our journal. We have also received a few submissions and have published two papers thus far.

The current editorial board under the supervision of Department Chair Mike Seeborg is: Adrien Gatesman, Editor-in-Chief, Adam Gray, Technical Editor, and Associate Editors Adrienne Ingram, Xun Bian, and Todd Kumler. The staff has done a great job this year and our next step is reaching out to more universities than the original 30. We hope to have a full issue published by May 2005.

The web site for our journal is <http://titan.iwu.edu/~econ/uer>. We invite you to check out our journal and we hope that you spread the word. If you need to contact us or are interested in being a Faculty Advisor please email us at uer@iwu.edu, or contact Mike Seeborg by email at mseeborg@iwu.edu or by phone at (309)-556-3184.

Breaking Out of the Bubble

Alexis Manning (2004)

I clearly remember shivering while rapidly walking across the stage at graduation last May amidst relentless rain, bolts of lightning, and cracks of thunder. As I grasped my hard-earned diploma and smiled genuinely for the camera, I felt prepared to leave for Nicaragua as a Peace Corps volunteer in a few months. Much like my stormy graduation ceremony, my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nicaragua has presented some challenges and is not exactly as I expected, but nonetheless, it has been interesting, and at the end of the day, I feel grateful to be here.

Although I had read books about Nicaragua and talked with returned Peace Corps volunteers, I could not have envisioned my day to day reality in Nicaragua. Recently, a friend from the US e-mailed me, asking me how many stop signs I have in my town. I could not help but laugh. We do not have a single stop sign, nor do we have a need for one. There is one primary unpaved road, and the horses, cows, chickens, and goats far outnumber the few cars that pass my house each day. My friend clearly did not have the slightest idea as to how I live if she were envisioning a town with stop signs.

Bright and early at 5:30, I wake to a cacophony of sounds far too loud for this early hour: roosters incessantly crowing to announce the morning, hungry pigs squealing for food, barking dogs snarling at each other, crackling of rice and beans frying in the kitchen, an eclectic mix of rap, Latin pop, and seventies music blaring from stereos, and Marvin's, my two year old host brother, giggles while watching his favorite Tweety bird cartoons. I then go out for a run, waving to my neighbors and friends who still momentarily stop their work to stare at me, unable to comprehend why anyone would choose to run for pleasure. I am careful to dodge stray farm animals, puddles of soapy, used water, and piles of animal excrement and garbage. I never tire of my daily runs, because I run by giant volcanoes, endless green

fields, and if I am particularly observant, I can catch a glimpse of monkeys in the tree canopy.

I return to my house for a cold bucket bath, and like all my meals, breakfast consists primarily of rice and beans. Later in the day, I might give a lesson about the difference between organic and inorganic trash at the local elementary school, or I might organize a tree-planting activity with my students. Every afternoon Francisco, my fourteen year old host brother and I watch *Los Simpsons*, while my host mom shakes her head and wonders why we like to watch a television show about ugly, yellow dolls. I often relax in a rocking chair on neighbors' front porches, while they talk about the rising price of beans, the weather, the most recent political scandal or the latest gossip in the town.

After dinner, I spend my evenings in the park playing Frisbee or dodgeball with my little host cousins and their friends. I often find myself sitting on a park bench answering questions about my life in the US, trying to satisfy the curiosity of young kids who want to know if I speak English, if the little kids in the US speak English, if I eat rice and beans in the US, if I have a mom and dad, if I am married, if I have been on a plane before, etc. I generally go to bed around 9:00 in darkness so complete that I cannot see my own hand inches away from my face.

I still wake up some days amazed that just a year ago, I was finishing up my last semester at IWU, running at Shirk, and working on the Park Place Economist at the Econ lab. Five seconds of staring at the white mosquito net hanging over my bed serves as a quick reminder that I am no longer a student at IWU but rather a Peace Corps volunteer in Nicaragua.

I joined the Peace Corps for many reasons: to experience another culture, to learn to speak Spanish fluently, to experience firsthand grassroots development work, to serve my country, and to avoid the daily grind of corporate America. Most importantly,

I feel blessed to have been given so many privileges simply by virtue of my place of birth. A child born to a poor family in Nicaragua is not responsible for his/her poverty any more than a child born to a comparatively wealthy family in the US is responsible for his/her wealth. I want to use some of the privileges that I have been given to help those people who were not given the same opportunities. When I wonder why I am here in Nicaragua, I think of my fourteen year old host brother, Francisco. He loves computers, and whenever he has money, he goes to the internet cafes. He wants to go to college for a degree in computer science. I want him to have the opportunity to go to college just as I did. Being a Peace Corps volunteer is not going magically give every child in Nicaragua access to higher education, but I am making a difference in Francisco's life.

John F. Kennedy founded the Peace Corps in 1961 with the purpose of promoting world peace and understanding. The goals of the Peace Corps involve promotion of economic and social development, transfer of technical skills and knowledge to host countries, and reciprocal cross cultural exchange. Since the establishment of the Peace Corps, 178,000 volunteers have served in 138 developing nations (Peace Corps).

Currently, 176 volunteers serve Nicaragua in the following sectors: environmental education, small business development, community health education, and sustainable food security. I am an environmental education volunteer, living and working in the small rural community of El Rosario, located in the southwestern section of Nicaragua.

Nicaragua, with a population of 5.5 million, is located in Central America, sharing a border with Honduras to the north and Costa Rica to the south (The World Bank Group). Often called the "land of lakes and volcanoes," Nicaragua possesses spectacular geographical beauty. From the hammock on my front porch, I can gaze at volcano Concepción, situated on the island of Ometepe in Lake Nicaragua, while eating juicy mangos picked from trees in my backyard. Just as impressive as the natural beauty, Nicaraguans are one of the friendliest, open people I have encountered. Since the very first day I arrived at their house, my host family has treated me as if I were their daughter/sister by blood instead of merely a visitor.

Unfortunately, Nicaragua's picturesque landscape and friendly population does not prevent

extreme poverty. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. Over half the population exists below the poverty line; 25% of Nicaraguans subsists on less than a dollar a day; the average per capita gross national income reaches just \$710 a year, (The World Bank Group). A third of Nicaraguans do not have reliable access to clean drinking water (Peaceworks), and less than half the rural population has electricity (The World Bank Group). 23% of adults are illiterate (The World Bank Group). The typical adult completes only 3.5 years of schooling, and only 60% of children enroll in secondary school (UNICEF). Approximately, 20% of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition (Fonsesca).

The question that remains is: why is Nicaragua so poor? The answer is, of course, very complicated, though I would like to state few observations that I noted during the four months I have been in the country. Nicaragua's economy is based heavily upon the exportation of primary, non-value added products, such as coffee, beets, sugar, bananas, shellfish, and tobacco (The World Bank Group). The profit from raw material is low compared to the profit from processed raw materials or manufactured goods. The majority of agriculture is subsistence and used only for domestic consumption (Berman). Consequently, a large portion of the 40% of the population employed in agriculture struggles just to satisfy their own consumption needs. Also, the price of coffee drastically declined to a fraction of its former price since 1997. The coffee industry employs approximately 15% of the nation's labor force and is one of Nicaragua's chief exports.

As an environmental education volunteer, I work at a cooperative, called Coofrutari, which processes locally grown tropical fruit into juice, candy, marmalade, and chips. The formation of the fruit-processing cooperative stems, in part, from the difficulty of earning a profit from raw primary products. Nicaragua possesses incredible natural resources, including fertile land, but even a high-quality agricultural product does not necessary translate into economic success. Much of the agricultural products produced from this land never reach the national market let alone the international market. Currently, the cooperative is still in the trial phase but will soon expand from the local market to the national market. Eventually, Coofrutari hopes to sell its products internationally. The cooperative produces

good products, but the cooperative members, who are primarily farmers, not business people, struggle with the commercialization and management of Coofrutari.

In addition to the problems associated with primary product agriculture, high levels of unemployment contribute to Nicaragua's poverty. Approximately one out of four Nicaraguans are unemployed, and an even larger segment of the employed population suffers from serious underemployment (The World Bank Group). 100,000 jobs need to be created annually just to match population growth. Almost immediately after arriving in Nicaragua, I noticed that a lot of people did not work outside of the house, and often, large households exist on a single income, particularly in rural zones. When I conduct surveys, inquiring about the community's problems, the overwhelming majority of people lament about the lack of available jobs.

Although lack of education and poverty are highly correlated, even my limited experience in Nicaragua causes me to doubt that education alone is the panacea for poverty. Children from poor families generally achieve lower levels of education, because their families cannot afford school uniforms and supplies, and their families need help planting and harvesting. Thus, many children never develop the basic skills and knowledge that would help them find employment as adults. However, many high school or college educated adults do not have the opportunity to apply the education they attained.

My host family exemplifies underemployment. My host mom, Claudia Sevilla Torres, graduated from college with a degree in agronomy. Despite her best efforts, she never found work as an agronomist and currently maintains the household. My host father, Javier Amador Cano, is a trained mechanic, yet he is only sporadically employed as mechanic in Nicaragua, and he only had steady employment as a mechanic when he lived in Costa Rica.

Due to the stagnant job market, many Nicaraguans choose to sell various products from their home. Almost every household sells some type of product, ranging from juice to tortillas to chips. My host family operated a kiosk in the park at night, selling snack food, such as fried plantain chips, tacos, and juice. This household selling exemplifies entrepreneurship, which, if expanded and modified, could help reduce poverty in Nicaragua. If jobs do not

exist, then create them.

In addition to small scale household selling, many Nicaraguans respond to the lack of available jobs with relocation. Approximately 10% of the Nicaraguan population lives abroad, most commonly in the United States and Costa Rica. Generally, individuals leave behind their children with extended family, work abroad in low-skill jobs, and send money home. Almost every family has a relative living in the United States or Costa Rica. For example, my host parents lived in Costa Rica for seven years in order to earn enough money to build a house in Nicaragua. Although a single person working in a low skill job abroad can support financially his or her entire family in Nicaragua, this practice fragments families, causing social problems. Also, while money sent from relatives working abroad helps improve the living standard of some families, it does not address the fundamental causes of their poverty.

When I talk to my family and friends about the Peace Corps, they invariably end up remarking about the huge sacrifice I have made. I can never quite convey that I do not view living in Nicaragua as a sacrifice but rather a privilege. Nicaraguans show me so much generosity, giving me anything from the only available chair in a room to the last slice of birthday cake to their genuine concern and affection. When I return to the US (assuming that I do not marry a Nicaraguan and stay here forever as everyone in my town hopes), I can take hot showers, use running water, eat lots of sushi, but for the next two years, I am happy to play tag in the park at night, to hear my two-year old host brother finally learn to say my name, to watch one of the many noisy parades and shoot off fireworks in the park, and to help my five-year old neighbor read her *Cinderella* and *Corduroy Bear* picture books.

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Six Years to Tenure

Nick Holland

Tenure is truly an achievement worth celebrating for anyone with a career in teaching. The grant of tenure is the culmination of years of hard work and proving oneself as a qualified and worthwhile academic. However, tenure is only a beginning in another light. Dr. Ilaria Ossella-Durbal is no exception to this, as she has earned tenure this spring semester, 2005, at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The daughter of a student of economics, she mentions this as her first experience with the social science. After being exposed to it from her father, Dr. Durbal knew she wanted to pursue economics in college. At Cornell University, as an undergraduate, she pursued both her passions: economics and mathematics. As graduation approached she was not sure what she wanted to do but she knew she wanted to continue her education. Dr. Durbal would enter graduate school for economics.

After one year at NYU, Dr. Durbal returned to Cornell and earned her Ph. D. During this time she was a teacher's assistant for a microeconomics course. It was this experience and her experience as an undergraduate calculus tutor that helped her decide to become a collegiate professor of economics. She finished her Ph. D. with research in development economics. One article she wrote discussed opening up countries to trade and whether or not the growth would be a one time shock that would taper off or would be sustained for many years to come from looking at growth and trade models. While this paper was mathematical and not empirical, Dr. Durbal did write an empirical paper on the allocation of limited resources in poor countries. It looked at, amongst other things, the benefits of spending on education or infrastructure. Dr. Durbal concluded that infrastructure was a major concern for increasing efficiency, especially in regards to electricity.

After earning her Ph. D. degree, Illinois Wesleyan University was looking for a professor to fill a tenure track position. Knowing that she wanted to work at a small liberal arts school, Dr. Durbal applied for the position. After multiple interviews

with faculty, she was offered the position and thus began another phase in her life.

As described by both Dr. Durbal and Dr. Michael Seeborg, Robert S. Eckley Distinguished Professor of Economics and head of the economics department at IWU, the tenure process at IWU is a six year program that grants one year contracts until tenure is received. During this period, a professor is evaluated on his or her skills in teaching, research, and service to the university. According to Dr. Seeborg, the most important category is teaching, and he knows Dr. Durbal excels in this category from sitting in on many of her classes and considers her a "great teacher." As for service to the university, Dr. Durbal is "super active", says Dr. Seeborg, since she chairs the Development Studies Committee in the International Studies Program and has participated in other university committees as well. After this step, the evaluations are done by the department head and Tenure and Advancement Committee which is comprised of faculty throughout the university. This committee also considers current students' feedback through student course evaluations and recommendations from faculty, alumni, and experts in the field that have read the faculty member's research. Also considered is the faculty member's self reflection, for which Dr. Durbal wrote 30 pages that included her teaching philosophy and progress. Six years after teaching her first classes, which were Statistics and Economics of Developing Countries, at IWU Dr. Durbal was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of Economics.

Both Dr. Durbal and Dr. Seeborg still see a need for tenure in today's society. Dr. Durbal believes it is always necessary to protect the freedom for professors to be able to focus on the areas of their interest. Dr. Seeborg shares this view, but takes it another step further. He sees tenure as being critical to preserving the quality of IWU. If professors cannot evaluate their peers honestly, the prestige of the university may be in jeopardy. Therefore, one's career needs to be secure from retribution from criti-

cism.

Dr. Durbal has certainly worked hard over the years; from college to graduate school, and her entire tenure process. Her dedication, charm, and research have earned her respect from her colleagues, students, scholars, and IWU. Now that she has tenure Dr. Durbal has further goals. She will continue her research and will be on sabbatical in the spring of 2006.