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Wes second in peace

Wesleyan has moved up four spots this year to the number two ranking in the Peace Corps's 2005 List of Top 25 Small Colleges and Universities. Wesleyan is the second-largest contributor of Peace Corps volunteers from small-sized colleges, with 187 alumni having packed their bags to serve in the Peace Corps since its inception in 1961.

The Peace Corps has three separate rankings according to school size: small, medium and large. While Dartmouth claimed the top spot over the University in the small colleges and universities category, the University of Virginia was the top ranked medium-sized university, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison led the pack of large universities, having sent 104 students and alumni last year to the corps.

"My work involves helping at the clinic, biking out to surrounding villages giving presentations, and occasionally doing AIDS [work] at the clinic," wrote Peace Corps volunteer Amanda Brown '05 in an email from Madagascar. "I do promotion of eating well, chlorinating water, washing hands, using latrines, and family planning."

Brown chose to focus on these issues because they directly address the needs of the citizens.

"I always see tons of children with enormous stomachs, incredibly skinny legs, and chests so skinny that you can see their ribs sticking out from pretty far away," she said. "These problems result from both malnutrition and worms in their stomachs. Other problems I've seen include absenteeism of teachers and extreme promiscuity of teenagers."

Although there is no specific area on the Common Application admissions form that asks about public service interests, many Wesleyan applicants often express an intention to participate in service work. This may lead to Wesleyan alumni's high enrollment in the Peace Corps.

"As an admissions committee that values that mindset, that desire to make positive contributions to the community, we value those things when they appear in an application, and they often do," said Chris Lanser, Associate Dean of Admissions. "These generally tend to be the sorts of students who are drawn to Wesleyan, and a number of applicants who are already interested in public service self-select themselves for Wesleyan."

According to Marlisa Simonson, Associate Director for Employer Relations at the Career Resource Center, 20 of the 27 Wesleyan alumni most recently reported to be serving with the Peace Corps have maintained records of their involvement with the Career Resource Center.

Of these 20 alumni, with class years ranging from 1973-2004, half of them have graduated within the past five years. They are currently serving in locations such as Romania, Africa, Kenya, and Burkina Faso, and are volunteering in disciplines like health education, youth development, and small business development.

According to the Peace Corps website (www.PeaceCorps.gov), the organization has had more than 182,000 participants since 1961. Participants are not required to complete college before serving, but 96 percent of volunteers do have an undergraduate degree.