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Cover: Students outside the Daniel Arts Center
Dear Simon’s Rock family and friends,

Here on Alford Road, students are enjoying the tentative arrival of spring. Despite a big snowfall or two, winter has flown by. Admission welcomed a talented group of new students in January, first-years are immersed in Sem 2, sophomores are busy planning their Moderations, many juniors are reporting in from their far-flung study locations, and seniors are thesising like mad.

If this snapshot of campus life sounds familiar to alums, it should. The College continues to be wholly focused on offering a challenging, deeply engaging college education to motivated, creative younger learners. And as in the past, Simon’s Rock students today experience the College as a transformative environment both intellectually and socially.

Your tremendous generosity continues to make Simon’s Rock possible. Thanks to you, the College met the Board of Overseers’ challenge in December, resulting in over $1 million being raised toward this year’s Annual Fund goal. We are extremely grateful—and there is still more to be done. Your ongoing financial support is critical to the outstanding program that prepares students so well for success beyond the Rock.

That success takes many forms. This year, as in the past two years, we have an alum traveling on a Fulbright, and a senior who’s just won the scholarship. For the second year in a row, four Rockers were acknowledged for their achievements on Forbes magazine’s ‘30 under 30’ list. Among them is Simon’s Rock’s first Rhodes Scholar, Ronan Farrow ’99.

The College takes pride not just in the accomplishments of individuals, but in a robust alumni network that contributes to success for all. Alumni Affairs’ outreach now includes events in nearly all parts of the country, and active alumni groups for lawyers, businesspeople, and now physicians, with more forming.

The growth of Simon’s Rock, and its ability to realize its ambitions, has been due in large part to the philanthropy of Emily Fisher, outgoing chair of the Board of Overseers. This magazine’s cover article highlights Emily’s passion for Simon’s Rock and her inspiring support of our program, students, and facilities. Emily’s generosity has had an enduring impact on every facet of the Simon’s Rock experience. Her lifelong commitment to education and philanthropy should serve as a model for us all.

This issue also features a snapshot of one of our beloved professors, poet Peter Filkins. Peter’s leadership in the classroom is as compelling as his lyrical imagination, and his stewardship of the Poetry and Fiction Series enriches campus literary life every year. You’ll also meet new Director of Career Services Liz Lierman who is working with current students to refine and meet their ambitious life goals.

Those goals are evident in portraits of students, past and present. An update on recent alum Todd Farrell ’00 reveals him immersed in his fourth amazing career. Profiles of two current students demonstrate the range of interests so characteristic of Rockers. First year Zev Vel ’12 is already an accomplished filmmaker; senior Marné Gerritsen ’10 is a medical field-worker planning a career in biomedical engineering. This issue also includes news, images, and reminiscences of Commencement, Reunion, and recent Salons.

No magazine can hope to do justice to the breadth and depth of the Simon’s Rock community. Only you have the opportunity to spread the Simon’s Rock message fully into the world through your work, your activism, your sharing the Simon’s Rock story with friends, colleagues, and prospective students. We count on you for this outreach. For these efforts, and for your continued dedication to the mission of Simon’s Rock, once again, I thank you. Happy reading, and stay in touch.

Sincerely,
Peter Laipson
Provost and Vice President
Emily Fisher: Common Purpose, Quiet Generosity

On Friday, May 15, 1998, Board of Overseers Chair Emily Fisher greeted assembled faculty, staff, students, parents, and other friends of Simon’s Rock at the dedication of the new Fisher Science and Academic Center, Emily’s first major building project at Simon’s Rock. She asked the audience to take note of the building’s design, of the angled piers supporting the front roofline. “‘The beams,’” she recalls observing, “‘are a little bit like our students. They aren’t cookie cutter. They’re a little at a angle. They think differently. They’re creative.’” The building, Emily wanted her audience to understand, was designed to reflect a quality of the students it serves, a quality Emily particularly admires: the boldness and bravery required to choose the atypical path.

“The funny thing is, I’m a very conservative person,” she explains, quickly noting that she’s not talking politics. “I grew up trying to always do the good thing, be the good girl. But I think I have a little envy of these students . . . I admire their courage—the courage to step out of a pattern.”

Through her philanthropy, Emily has chosen an unusual path, too. In her 20 years of giving to the College, Emily has contributed significantly to the construction of many new facilities. The Daniel Arts Center was built thanks to a campaign led by Emily and is named for her maternal grandmother, Jeannette Daniel. (“She was a musician, she taught music, and music was important to her. I was casting around for a name,” Emily recalls.) She was also a lead donor to the 2004 campaign that built the Kilpatrick Athletic Center, Hill House, and the Livingston Hall Student Union. She has led the College’s Board of Overseers for 17 years and has served as a trustee even longer, joining the board in 1992.
Though she didn’t grow up with wealth (in fact, she was a scholarship student at the Quaker schools she attended as a girl and at Vassar College), Emily Fisher credits her parents for her philanthropic bent. Her father, an American Baptist minister, always tithed. But his generosity wasn’t limited to his church.

At his funeral, Emily recalls, strangers kept approaching her to tell her their stories of how her father had changed their lives. “A young man said that his father was an alcoholic, but my father would always make sure that there was food. Another young woman said, ‘When I went off to college your father gave me $200.’ This would have been back in the ’50s. There was that sense of quiet generosity in my family. It was just what you did.”

Emily’s demeanor is also quiet, and some of her gifts have been, too. She says she enjoys fixing problems that others might not find exciting; she recalls in particular a boiler she purchased some years ago for an independent school in need. But in general, generosity at the level Emily displays, by the nature of its transformative impact upon institutions and recipients, draws attention to itself.

Emily first learned of Simon’s Rock from a friend, the late Geri Porter (parent of James Porter ’73), who served as an overseer and raved about her son’s experience at the College. “Her son came here,” Emily recalls, “in one of the very, very early classes. It was a transforming experience.” Later, Simon’s Rock seemed a good fit for Emily’s own daughter, who went on to earn an AA at the Rock before transferring to Vassar College, Emily’s alma mater.

Emily’s passion for education was already well established; after earning a master’s in education at Harvard, she worked as an elementary school teacher. She’d served on (and chaired) the board of an independent elementary school for children with learning disabilities in New York City, and she’d given generously to Vassar.

With a child on campus at Simon’s Rock, Emily came to know and admire Leon Botstein (“He’s the most remarkable man,” she says, smiling) and U Ba Win, whose leadership and kindness to students made a strong impression. These relationships, and the enthusiasm of her then-husband, the late Richard Fisher, for supporting Bard (he was on the Bard board, and Bard’s famed Fisher Center for the Performing Arts is named in his honor) led Emily to accept a stewardship role at Simon’s Rock.

That said, Emily didn’t always know what she was getting herself into as she embraced ever-greater responsibilities for developing the College over the years. After building the Fisher, she wanted to figure out what she didn’t have the pleasure of doing this herself. She lost something. She died kind of a solitary old lady, and yet she could have had a whole community of people that she would have had fun with.”

Emily absolutely finds community through her own philanthropy. “My closest friends have almost always been colleagues,” she says. The rewards are in both the process of the work itself, and the ability to improve the lives of students, faculty, and staff. “You have a common purpose. You’re all working on something together. It’s intellectually exciting for me to go [to Simon’s Rock] and talk about this college and what the issues are and how we can make something different . . . And it gives me enormous pleasure.”

As she steps down as chair of the Board of Overseers this year, Emily’s focus is firmly on the future. Her goals for the College’s next decade include increasing the endowment, renovating older campus buildings as necessary, and making sure resources are available for financial aid—critical to sustaining the College’s commitment to diversity. Incoming chair Stuart Breslow (Parent ’07) who Emily enthusiastically terms “exactly the right man for the job,” agrees, and is inspired by Emily’s legacy of generosity, and in particular, her ardent commitment to the College’s mission.

“Philanthropy at this scale requires some fearlessness, too. Even for those with the resources to make large-scale gifts, a willingness to give isn’t always present. This, Emily seems to think, is a pity—as much a loss for donors as for recipients. Back in the 1980s, she and a friend started an agency that provided in-home health care, often to the elderly. “I had one client who was dying, and when she died, she left two or three million dollars,” she remembers. “And she hadn’t designated it to anybody. She had no family left, no children, no husband, nobody. So, her lawyer and I sat down to figure out who we’d give this money to. We had a good time!”

“She loved the town of Vinalhaven [Maine] so we gave money to their library. We looked to see where her interests were. I kept feeling so sad that she didn’t have the pleasure of doing this herself. She lost something. She died kind of a solitary old lady, and yet she could have had a whole community of people that she would have had fun with.”
First Annual Rock the Community: A Day of Service in Honor of Emily Fisher

On Saturday, September 29, Simon’s Rock kicked off Rock the Community: A Day of Service in Honor of Emily Fisher. The first annual event was established to celebrate the leadership of Emily Fisher, chair of the Board of Overseers, for her commitment to both the College and the greater community.

Fisher, who steps down as chair at the end of the academic year, will continue to serve on the board.

Volunteers Give Back

A designated day of service each September is a way for the Simon’s Rock community to “give back” in the spirit of the long-standing chair. “Emily’s generosity and devotion over the past 20 years has been instrumental to both our growth and our leadership in the early college movement,” explained Provost Peter Laipson.

Over 200 students, faculty, and staff volunteered approximately 530 hours of service to 17 different community projects. Volunteers spanned out to sites from Sheffield to Lenox. “This is just the beginning,” said event organizer Karen Advokaat. “Our goal is to grow the program and add many more host organizations over the years.”

Teams headed off to project sites throughout the day to remove invasive species from meadows, trails, and woodlands; mulch and put the gardens to bed for the winter; build bridges on the Appalachian Trail; write dozens of letters to troops; and clean and organize buildings.

Rock the Community volunteers helped at sites off campus and on, including:

- Adopt-a-Highway
- Berkshire Botanical Garden
- Berkshire South Regional Community Center
- Community Garden
- Fairview Commons
- Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School
- Greenagers: Appalachian Trail
- Greenagers: Housatonic River Walk
- Greenagers: Sheffield Land Trust-Cosgriff Property
- Interpretive Trail and Simon’s Rock
- IS183 Art School of the Berkshires
- Letter writing to service men and women
- The Nature Conservancy
- Project Native
- Railroad Street Youth Project

Simon’s Rock students have a long history of volunteering at a variety of sites in the Berkshires. Organizing all of the programs under a single umbrella will reinforce the importance of community service. Rock the Community will also help introduce new students to the area they will be calling home for the next few years. The program brings greater exposure to the breadth and depth of service initiatives the College supports.
Three Alumni Join the Board of Overseers

CHRISTOPHER DERHAMMER-HILL ’86 is sales consulting manager at Oracle, where he manages the Eastern Region sales consulting team in support of Oracle storage products. Previously, Christopher was director of systems engineering at Pillar Data Systems. He has served the Simon’s Rock community in myriad ways, including a term as chair of the Alumni Leadership Council. Christopher earned a bachelor of arts at Simon’s Rock.

MARK LEITER ’81 is executive vice president at Nielsen and a member of the company’s executive committee. Nielsen is a global information company that provides the world’s most complete understanding of what consumers watch and buy in 100 countries. He also serves as chairman of the board of directors at The Demand Institute, a nonprofit organization that strengthens the global economy by helping senior leadership teams align investments to where consumer demand is heading across industries, countries and markets. Mark earned a bachelor of arts at SUNY Albany and a master of arts at Harvard University in sociology. He was also a research fellow at Harvard Business School.

ALVIN LOSHAK ’92 is director of exotic derivatives at Merrill Lynch, one of the world’s leading financial management and advisory companies. Alvin also sits on the board of directors of Internationals Network for Public Schools, which provides quality education for recently arriving immigrants through a national network of innovative international high schools. Alvin earned an associate of arts at Simon’s Rock and a bachelor of arts in economics and finance at Babson College.

Career Services

Director of Career Services Liz Lierman specializes in working with current college students as they navigate the beginning stages of their careers. When she joined the College (after four years at Oberlin) this fall, she convened student focus groups to see what Rockers expect from her. “They were very well attended,” she remembers. “I’ve already met with over 100 students.” She spends a fair bit of time helping students evaluate transfer options, but has also done resume review and counseled students hunting for jobs and internships in fields including communications, social services, scientific research, public policy, and more.

Students also seek Liz’s advice, along with that of their academic advisors, about graduate school. Says Liz, “Often I talk more with students who are looking at professional schools because that’s a bit different than students who are going on for an academic PhD.”

Liz is eager to hear from alumni who have an interest in mentoring current students, or who have job or internship opportunities for Rockers. But she can also help alumni contemplating their own career transitions. If you’re interested in speaking with Liz, email her to set up an appointment at lierman@simons-rock.edu.

The Simons’s Rock Alumni Directory is currently in production! The College has partnered again with Harris Connect to produce a published directory. With up-to-date information, the new directory will be a handy tool to help maintain and renew lines of communication with former classmates and friends, and it will help ensure that alumni receive Simon’s Rock event invitations and publications. The 2013 Alumni Directory will also provide valuable information for our new director of career services as she creates programs to help students and alumni in job search and career networking.
Like a lot of Rockers, his career evolved when he “just happened” on an opportunity, seized it, and made the most of it.

Peter’s love affair with German happened by chance. During his junior year at Williams College, he elected to study at Vienna University, primarily because of its English-language program. “I spent a semester abroad in Vienna—in an English-speaking program. I took a German class and had a great teacher,” says Peter. “I still visit when I go back to Vienna.” That teacher’s influence stuck with him. After graduating from Williams, he continued to Columbia University for an MFA in poetry. While there, he decided to continue studying German. After finishing his degree, Peter spent the next two years back in Vienna on a Fulbright scholarship studying German literature while translating the poems of Ingeborg Bachmann.

Now fluent in German, the Dalton, Mass., native returned to the Berkshires and was happy to get a job as an adjunct professor of English at what was then North Adams State College (now Massachusetts College of the Liberal Arts). At the same time, Peter came across an opportunity to fill in at Simon’s Rock.

He made the most of it.

“I started at Simon’s Rock in 1988 as a sabbatical replacement for Hal Holladay. The previous spring I had come to campus in tandem with a Russian poet, Viktor Sosnora, who was touring area colleges and needed someone to read the English translations,” he remembers. “At that reading I saw Hal, whom I already knew a bit, and he let me know he was going on sabbatical the next year.”

Peter didn’t want to risk burning his bridges at MCLA, so that first year he taught six courses in Great Barrington and five courses in North Adams. Somehow he managed to survive the grueling schedule, and, as he tells it, was fortunate enough to stay on at the college. He’s been here ever since.

Over the last 25 years he’s amassed a lot of memories and not a few teaching stories. One he thinks speaks to the best of what it feels like to teach at Simon’s Rock—and offers a glimpse of his teaching style—happened during some long ago campus crisis. Peter laughs that he’s now forgotten the source of the controversy, but his students’ classroom reaction was memorable. “We were reading Plato in Freshman Seminar, and a student asked, ‘Peter, why does everything that’s happening on campus have to do with Plato?’ I smiled and asked, ‘Now what makes you say that?’ And then we were off.”

For almost as long as he’s been at Simon’s Rock, Peter has been bringing award-winning poets and authors to campus. He began managing the Poetry and Fiction Series in his second year at the Rock, offering the campus and local community opportunities to hear contemporary authors speak about their most recent works, and feeding his own passion for the written word.

The 2012 Poetry and Fiction Series featured Jim Shepard, an award-winning author of six novels and four short story collections; Rosanna Warren, award-winning poet, and professor of humanities at Boston University; John Koethe, author of eight books of poetry, philosopher, and retired professor; and Debra Spark, novelist, journalist, short story writer, and professor at Colby College.
In 2007, with the arrival of faculty member Brendan Mathews, Peter began sharing the program duties, freeing up time to focus on his own writing and translating. He and Mathews run the Poetry and Fiction Series in alternate years.

Peter didn’t just wait for good fortune—he also made his own. In 2001 he happened upon holocaust survivor H. G. Adler’s novel The Journey in a Harvard Square bookstore. Adler (1910–88), a German-language author, wrote 26 works in fiction, stories, poems, history, philosophy and religion, but they’d never been translated for English readers. After reading only two pages, Peter says he knew that he would have to bring the novel to English audiences. “I was compelled by the haunting power of Adler’s voice from beyond the grave.” He pitched the book to over 40 publishers, and it was finally accepted and published by Random House in 2008.

Since then he has translated Adler’s Panorama—the Holocaust novel named a best book of 2011 by the New Republic—and is now wrapping up Adler’s The Wall, which will appear from Random House in the spring of 2014.

Thanks to Peter’s translations, Adler’s works have been recognized as key Holocaust texts. His work has been instrumental in bringing the novels, which are now widely read in English, the European languages, and Hebrew, to new audiences.

It’s been a labor of love that isn’t over yet. Peter is currently editing two volumes of Adler’s unpublished essays that will appear in German from the University of Konstanz Press this coming fall and the following spring, and also working on a biography of H. G. Adler. “I have gathered the main research for the biography. I expect to start writing on it seriously and also working on a biography of H. G. Adler. “I have gathered the main research for the biography. I expect to start writing on it seriously in 2014–15, with the hope of publishing it in 2016.”

Like a lot of Rockers, his career evolved when he “just happened” on an opportunity, seized it, and made the most of it.

Peter recently spent part of his winter break back at MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N. H. “I worked on new poems at MacDowell and am getting pretty close to a new volume, which I hope to finish this summer,” he updates via email. “My goal is to leave the colony with as many unfinished poems as possible, for I like to use the focus of such an opportunity to generate new material that I can revise later, and to go in as many different new directions with the work as possible.”

Last spring he spent a sabbatical semester as writer-in-residence at the James Merrill House in Stonington, Conn., working on poems and says he is “finding I am closer to finishing a new book than I thought I was, which is always a nice feeling.”

Peter’s work has appeared in the American Scholar, Paris Review, the American Poetry Quarterly, USA Today, and the New York Times Book Review, to name a few. His third volume of poetry, Augustine’s Vision, was the winner of the New American Press’s 2010 Chapbook contest. His most recent volume, The View We’re Granted, was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2012.

If you have the opportunity to hear him read his poetry, you’ll never forget it. “Peter is so eloquent,” says Dean of Academic Affairs Anne O’Dwyer. “As I listened to him read from his poetry, I thought, ‘I wish I could go back and change my major.’ He is that inspiring.”

First-Year Filmmaker Finds Festival Success

Zev Vel ’12 caught the filmmaking bug during his freshman year of high school. That’s not so unusual, but Zev’s eureka moment came in an unlikely setting: a robotics lab. “I was part of a FIRST Robotics team. I took my camera with me to the competitions and upon returning from the three-day-long event, I began to edit my first videos.”

The 16-year-old Rocker has now managed to find work on 50 different film sets. “It’s all about connections,” he says. “You get into one film as an unpaid production assistant and meet someone there who’s working on their own film, where you go work as a grip.” He’s worked on everything from shorts and features to a Blondie video, and values the broad exposure to different aspects of filmmaking.

Zev’s on-screen exploration of those feelings has now been shown around the country. It was first selected by the MovingMedia Student Film Festival and then earned a place in the Woodstock Film Festival, the Peace River Film Festival, and the Austin Film Festival.

“Having a film in any festival is an absolutely incredible feeling,” says the 17-year-old director. “Being in the official selection means that it has competed against some extraordinary films. And having The Symbol of Peace get into the Austin Film Festival—the largest festival I entered—was huge.”

Back on campus, Zev is partnering with junior Meredith Basler to adapt a short story into a movie. He hasn’t yet decided what comes next academically. “There are very prestigious colleges for film in New York and L.A., but I also really love the Simon’s Rock campus and community.” Wherever his studies take him, his goal is clear: He plans to pursue a career as a director of photography.

To learn more about Zev and view The Symbol of Peace, visit his website at zevimages.com.
Commencement 2012

Photo 1: Brian Hopewell ’73, P’08 leads the procession to the Commencement ceremony.

Photo 2: AA class speaker Rohan Ghatak ’10

Photo 3: BA class speakers Noel Dominguez ’08 and Joelle Chevrier ’08. Read more about Noel: simons-rock.edu/carving-a-path

Photo 4: The Commencement address was given by Poet Laureate Philip Levine. Read an interview with Philip Levine by Lizzie Meier ’08: simons-rock.edu/levine

Video from the Commencement ceremony is available at simons-rock.edu/2012-videos

Photos: Lisa Vollmer
A 17-Year-Old Senior Charts Career in Biomedical Engineering and Research

Drive and focus are common traits among Rockers; for 17-year-old senior Marné Garretson, they’ve created an impressive career head start. The Baltimore native started preparing for a life in the sciences back in middle school when she spent several summers in Temple University’s Physician Scientist Training Program. By the time she completed her freshman year of high school, Marné was aching for more challenging science classes. At 14, she enrolled in the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin College, declaring her major in biochemistry.

The following year, Marné transferred to Bard College at Simon’s Rock. “Studying pre-engineering at Simon’s Rock helped shape my career interests,” she says. “My short-term goal is to study biomedical engineering with a global health focus. My long-term goal is to earn an MD/PhD and have a career in research that serves underserved populations locally, nationally, and globally.”

During her recent winter break, Marné participated in a medical mission trip delivering care and supplies to Haiti, and conducted research on tuberculosis health care workers for her senior thesis: Perceptions of the Use of Point of Care Medical Devices to Diagnose Mycobacterium tuberculosis in Haiti. That’s not all. “Last year, I participated in a medical mission trip to the Dominican Republic where I assisted in providing care to nearly 1,000 patients,” she recounts. “I studied global health in the University of Virginia’s Semester at Sea Program and presented three summers of research at conferences including the New England Science Symposium.”

Marné also finds time for a host of other activities. The Acceleration to Excellence and W. E. B. Du Bois Scholar is a member of the Pre-Medical Society and secretary of the Black Student Union. The same discipline and motivation that have served Garretson so well in the classroom and lab won her the most valuable player two years in a row for the Lady Llamas women’s basketball team.

Developing mentoring relationships with faculty in her field has been a highlight of Marné’s experience at the College. With characteristic understatement, she says, “Attending Simon’s Rock helped me accelerate in my field of interest.” Simon’s Rock has helped Garretson define her path, but she’s running it, fast and surefooted, all on her own.
thank you, donors

In the 2011–12 school year, for the third year in a row, Simon’s Rock supporters significantly increased their support of the College, its students, and alumni.

Giving to the Fund for Simon’s Rock from alumni, parents, and friends increased by 20% compared to the previous year. Also, with the help of the Alumni Leadership Council and other official and unofficial alumni volunteers, more than 500 alumni made a gift over the course of the year to support the College—533 to be exact.

Over the past three years, contributions from supporters at large have increased by 71%, and alumni giving has more than doubled.

All of these gifts to Simon’s Rock make a special and lasting difference.

They create scholarships that enable prospective students who belong among us to join the Simon’s Rock community. They enrich the experience of the bachelor’s program at the College—into which over half of Simon’s Rock students now moderate—and increase the transformative impact of the associate’s degree, too. Contributions also enabled the creation of a career services office at Simon’s Rock to serve students and alumni, and helped start alumni professional affinity groups.

Thank you for changing lives forever through your gifts to Simon’s Rock.

The College gratefully acknowledges the alumni, parents, and friends listed below who made a gift to Simon’s Rock during the 2012 fiscal year, which began on July 1, 2011, and ended on June 30, 2012.

KEY:  
● Member of the Board of Overseers or an overseer-affiliated foundation  
■ Member of the Alumni Leadership Council  
◆ The Sapling Society identifies those loyal donors who have given consecutively in the previous five or more years.

The new Sapling Society recognizes donors who have made a gift for five consecutive years or more! Members are marked with ◆.

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Paul Reisfield  ▲  
In memory of Sol Resnik  
Leila and Gavin Greenewalt  
Nancy S. Hardin  ◆  
In memory of Noah White Burris  
Haoran and Ping Hu  
Anne M. Laughlin ’98  
Jessica ’84 and Zaw ’99 Lyn
Grant Spotlight: Davis Educational Foundation Funds Global Education

Simon’s Rock has always educated students to be responsible global citizens—through strong language programs, top-notch faculty with wide-ranging expertise, a growing number of international Signature Programs, and most recently, the establishment of the Liebowitz Center for International Studies. These efforts received an important boost with a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation that funds global education at Simon’s Rock.

Areas supported by the $150,000 grant include:

- Curriculum development to weave global perspectives and issues into courses exploring topics from African art to the Arab Spring
- The launch of two new courses required for all students planning or returning from study abroad. Preparation and Reflection
- New instructional technologies (including the College’s first “smart” boards) to help faculty bring the world into the classroom

Emily Fisher Faculty Fellow Maryann Tebben says the new programs help students meet the demands of an increasingly global environment, postgraduation. Students have particularly benefited from the Preparation and Reflection courses. She says, “Those embarking on study abroad now have a better idea of what to expect and how to plan. Those returning feel more engaged and recognized by the College, and often use their experiences abroad as a starting point for their thesis.”

The Davis Educational Foundation was established by Stanton and Elisabeth Davis after Mr. Davis’s retirement as chairman of Shaw’s Supermarket.

Know of a grant opportunity for Simon’s Rock? Please contact Margaret Keller at mkeller@simons-rock.edu.
Sometimes it feels like I’m crashing their party. There are alumni here who haven’t studied at the Rock in decades—actual decades. Longer than I’ve been standing up and breathing.

Simon’s Rock is all about breaking convention—the way we walk out of high school sans diploma, the way we question the status quo. This weekend is no exception. It’s not just a class reunion. Everybody comes. You get the feeling that people are not here simply to see old classmates. They’re here to meet new ones. They’re here to see professors. They’re here to capture the weird feeling that you can only recognize if you’ve been here.

“What year?” somebody asks me.

I give my entering year, not wanting to expose myself as a current student. “2010.” Another two to go!

“Oh, so you’re a recent alum,” the real alum says mildly.

“Very.”

I feel like the little kid who stays up late to spy on her parents’ party—not exactly invited, but not exactly forbidden.

We all browse limited edition T-shirts and tote bags. We eat goat cheese together at the brunch reception. We pore over archival photos. At the formal dinner dance, I shuffle along to Michael Jackson, while some of them actually know all of the steps to “Thriller.” In the evenings, we sit under the stars and let loose some very bad choruses of old Beatles songs as somebody accompanies us on the ukulele. I hear embarrassing stories about legendary people. A recent alum tells us about going on a rule-breaking adventure during her time here. An older alum grins slyly and tells his own story—the adventure that created the rule in the first place.

They come back to this place after seeing the real world, after obtaining careers and houses and children. They go to mock classes, hug favorite professors, and have those deep Simon’s Rock discussions they miss so much.

Everybody’s on the same page. It’s like they never left.

“You know, the more I come back, the more I’m convinced,” one alum remarks to me. “You don’t really get new people here. All Rockers are reincarnations, upgrades of other people who have already been here.”

It just reinforces the theory: you don’t really leave this place. It sticks with you.

The thing about Simon’s Rock reunions is that they are real reunions. This is not the awkward high school join-up where nobody remembers anybody’s name, only the gossip about them. What’s more, this is not even the uncomfortable family reunion where everybody spends all day trying to play some awkward rounds of Connect Four or Connect-the-Common-Ancestor.

It’s true that many of these alums have never met before, but they’re hardly strangers. And it’s true that we all went to the same college, but that’s not really what connects us.

“What year?” an alum asks me again.

This time, I confess: “I’m actually a current student. Sorry for crashing.”


What we experience at Simon’s Rock, we can’t find anywhere else on the planet. This weekend is not about seeing old classmates. It’s about being that person again, that fearless sixteen-year-old who walked out of high school to become an intellectual rebel. When you leave, that kind of fearlessness makes a mark on you. You’ve been a part of something fresh, something grand, that most of the world doesn’t even know about.

You don’t just come here for two to four years. When you’re in, you’re in for good.

Junior Bethany Geiger spent the summer of 2012 living and working at Simon’s Rock. One of her campus jobs was writing articles and blogging for the Office of Communications. Her blog post about off-season campus living, “Ghost Town,” landed on the coveted back cover of the Chronicle of Higher Education. In her spare time, Bethany worked on her illustrated children’s book, researched publishers, and pitched her book.

All that work paid off. Bethany is spending this semester as an intern with Little Golden Books (a division of Random House) in New York City.
1966–1969
Kate Knapp ’66 is in the middle of an arts movement in Housatonic, MA, with her Front Street Gallery. Victoria Munroe ’67 operates Victoria Munroe Fine Art on Newbury Street in Boston. Hilary Somers Deely ’68 is co-curator of Made in the Berkshires, a major regional arts festival in western Massachusetts.

1970–1979
Susan Manning ’72 is dramaturge for a new work by prominent choreographer and performer Reggie Wilson’s new work to debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in December 2013. Bill Tipper ’73 had a beautiful book of his photography published last year: The Nature of Yoga. Mark Clifford ’74 is executive director of the Asia Business Council and has published several books on global economics. Michael Koch ’74 is chair of the Philosophy Department at SUNY Onewonta. Danny Lipson ’74 is president of Camp Jam, which operates rock music camps in 22 cities. James Teeple ’74 continues his work with Voice of America, the international news service. Meriweather Clark-Connors ’76 is director of dining services at Simon’s Rock. Dave Jacke ’76 wrote the book on edible forest gardens and is a leading authority in the field. Lisa B. Martin ’76 received a 2012 Simon’s Rock Outstanding Alumni Award for her work in education. Fun Home, the graphic novel by Alison Bechdel ’77, has been turned into a musical that premiered at NYC’s Public Theater last fall. Pegeen Eslami ’77 practices medicine in Massachusetts and volunteers with an NGO to serve infant health needs in Kenya. Todd Maugans ’77, a pediatric neurosurgeon, has taken a leadership role in the establishment of Nemours Children’s Hospital in Orlando. David Byrd ’78 works at Bloomberg in NYC and hosted a Simon’s Rock salon in Hudson last October featuring Simon’s Rock professors Jim Monsonis and Jenny Browdy de Hernandez ’78.

1980–1989
Henry Alford ’80 has a new column, “Circa Now,” in the New York Times. Cati Ling Davis Carlson ’81 is executive director of The Legal Foundation of Washington, which helps provide low-income people with access to the civil justice system. Cindy Speaker ’81 is provost and dean of the College at Wells College in Aurora, NY. Miriam Shadis ’81 is now tenured at Ohio University as an associate professor in the History Department. Dave Goldberg ’82 is director of Federal Policy and National Partnerships at the National Center on Time and Learning, which works to improve student achievement in the United States. Margaret Heath Lazer ’82 and Zane Lazer ’86 live in southeast Ohio where Margaret works on her art and Zane works on eyes. Jeff Barton ’83 is assistant chairperson of the English Department at Edinboro University in Erie, PA. Barth Anderson ’84 and Gregg Charbonneau ’84 operate Barrington Coffee Roasting Company, recently named in Saveur magazine as one of the “can’t miss options for the culinary-minded traveler.” Simon’s Rock now has Barth and Greg’s coffee in the snack bar on campus. Derek Link ’84 features prominently in the Oscar-nominated IFC documentary How to Survive a Plague, which chronicles the fight against the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s. Julie Johnson Introcaso ’85 was named as a circuit judge in New Hampshire. BJ Timoner ’85 is walking across the United States in 2013 to support the fight against pancreatic cancer. Paul Cox ’86 is a strategy and risk analyst within the Department of Homeland Security. Wendy Hyman ’86 teaches at Oberlin College as a professor of English. Andrea Jefreces ’86 was recently named to the board of trustees at Mercyhurst University. Jeff Joo ’86 announced the birth of his daughter Emily Hana Joo in November 2012. Laura Sayre ’86 authored Fields of Learning: The Student Farm Movement in North America, the first book to profile the movement to establish on-campus farms and gardens where students can gain hands-on experience growing food for themselves and their communities. Alexander Souri ’86 and his business Relief Riders International are bringing a new model to the travel industry that combines humanitarianism and tourism. Kristen Anderson ’88 is a professor at Reed College in Portland where she heads up the Adolescent Health Research Program to investigate the development of substance abuse disorders. Rabbi Minna Bromberg ’88 serves Keshet Zion Synagogue in eastern Pennsylvania and many others through her regular musical performances. Ken Eppstein ’88 operates Nix Comics publishing in Columbus, OH, which produces “comics for the huddled masses by the wretched refuse.” Jesse Glick ’89 and Ali Mahood ’90 announced the birth of their daughter Leutitia Swayze Mahood in December 2012. Ali Hamilton ’89, a postdoctoral fellow in vertebrate zoology at the Smithsonian Institution, received a 2012 Outstanding Alumni Award for achievement in science and for mentoring other Simon’s Rock alumnies. Toni Johnson ’89, as part of the Council on Foreign Relations and Media Storm, won an Emmy Award for Crisis Guide: Iran.
1990–1999
Ben Bogin ’91 is assistant professor of theology at Georgetown University; his scholarship focuses on Tibetan Buddhism. Mishka Shubaly ’92 charted at #5 on the Kindle Single Bestseller List last September for his work, Bachelor Number One. Erica Spizz ’93 gave birth to son Carl in August 2012. Amanda McCormick ’93 writes about “Using Social Media to Grow Your Business” and entrepreneurship on About.com Entrepreneurs. Alex Bick ’94 recently earned a PhD in history from Princeton University, and joined the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at the U.S. Department of State, where he works on initiatives to mitigate conflict and advance democratic transitions in Africa and the Middle East.

John Espinoza ’94 is on assignment in Turkey as a diplomat for the U.S. Department of State. David Epstein ’95 is advisor for the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission in the Office of Russian Affairs. His book Left, Right, Out: The History of Third Parties in America was used as part of a series of speaking programs for university students organized by the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. Will Scott ’96 is vicar at St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Open House, an installation by Michael Zelehoski ’96, was featured in the Chicago and San Francisco offices of advertising giant Digitas, Inc. Eric Williams ’98 announced the birth of his son Kaleb in August 2012. Ben Anderson ’99 continues his work as a visual effect artist for DreamWorks. Recently, Ben has worked on How to Train Your Dragon, Puss In Boots, and Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted. Jack Cushman ’99 organized a flash mob to help with his marriage proposal to Teresa Elsey; the video went viral, eventually winding up on ABC World News with Diane Sawyer. Stephanie Denzel ’99 gave birth to daughter Eleanor in August 2012. Sumul Shah ’99 has been making noise with his band Wildlife Control—including an innovative viral music video on YouTube and a feature set at the 2012 CMJ Music Marathon in NYC. Maudie Hampden Shah ’99, writing as Audrey Auden, collaborated with a Pixar Studios artist on a special edition of her cyberpunk novel Realms Unreel. Loren AliKhan ’99. Jennifer Fan ’99, and Ronan Farrow ’99 were all named to the Forbes “30 Under 30” lists in December 2012. Loren and Ronan were recognized for law & policy; Jennifer was named for her work in finance.

2000–2009
Stephanie Swales ’00 recently earned her PhD in psychology from Duquesne University and is pursuing private practice in Texas. Tiffany Thomas ’00 is foreign affairs specialist at the U.S. Department of State. Charlotte Anderholt ’01 gave birth to daughter Theodora in November 2012. Heather Fisch ’01 has been busy performing her one-woman show Curbstone Follies, including a date at the Mahaiwe in Great Barrington, MA. Claire Rosen ’01 was named to the Forbes “30 Under 30” Art & Style list in December 2012; Claire was recognized by Forbes for her accomplishments in photography for the second consecutive time. Allyson Sgro ’01 is a postdoctoral research associate at Princeton University; her specialty is microfluidics. The Huffington Post highlighted the band Food Will Win the War in its article “Never Miss the Opening Act—Plus Three Great New Bands!” Jeff Young ’01 is a member of Food Will Win the War. Hillary Gardner ’02 was named assistant attorney general for the Republic of Palau, where she serves as legal counsel to three national government agencies. Recent art direction credits for Lisa Myers ’02 include the critically acclaimed feature films Higher Ground and Robot and Frank. Peter Tiso ’02 works at the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation where he is GIS & GPS technician for forestry, horticulture & natural resources. He led a forest walk on campus with Simon’s Rock professor Chris Coggins at last May’s 45th Anniversary Reunion. Steve Hager ’04 and Simon’s Rock professor Asma Abbas welcomed their daughter Zari Rosa Abbas-Hager in September 2012.

Evan Munsing ’04 is a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps, assigned to the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance of the First Marine Division. Evan also researches and coauthors papers on interagency affairs. Timothy Meyers ’04 was appointed executive chef of DA|BA Restaurant in Hudson, NY. Otto Stockmeier ’05 (writer, producer), and Derek Van Gorder ’05 (writer, director, editor) along with Kori Higgins ’04 (line producer, 2nd AD), Kate Twomey ’08 (production assistant), Jared Fuchs ’05 (executive producer) and others made the science fiction film C 299,972 Kilometers Per Second, which can be viewed on Vimeo. Noah Appelbaum ’05 is a company member at Cor Res Theatre in Chicago. Drew Levin ’06 was deputy operations director for the successful Tammy Baldwin Wisconsin Senate campaign in 2012. Alex Nathanson ’06 and Dylan Neely ’06 collaborated on the video art and music project What a Nice Time We Had Here, the project toured Europe last May and June. Andre Diehl ’07 is a visiting lecturer at Tufts University, where he taught a course titled “Locating the Folk in 20th-Century American Popular Music” for Tufts’ Experimental College Program. Lauren Dahlin ’08 is a research associate at the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. Rachel Feltman ’08 is earning a master’s degree at NYU in science, health, and environmental reporting while working as a web intern at Popular Mechanics.

2010–present
Catalina Islander highlighted Danny Rivkin ’10 for the second year in a row for bringing SAT training to Catalina Island high school students. Danny received help from Colin Eubank ’11 and Ali Martinelli ’10.
Todd Farrell: Rocker, Break Dancer, Chief Data Ninja

The 12-foot inflatable Godzilla lurking outside Todd Farrell’s Palo Alto office may startle visitors, but it shouldn’t really be a surprise. Both in his new role as Floodgate Partners’ Chief Data Ninja (yes, that’s really his title, at least one of them; the more conventional Chief Data Scientist works, too), and in earlier incarnations of his career, Todd’s become quite familiar with fast moves and large-scale innovation.

But what about that Godzilla? Floodgate, Todd explains, is known for investing in companies that founder Mike Maples Jr. calls “thunder lizards.” “Godzilla was hatched from radioactive atomic eggs and swam across the ocean and started to destroy cities,” Maples explained in an interview last year with Bloomberg TV, “I always thought that was a good metaphor for the disruptive start-up.”

Except for that urban destruction part, it’s a pretty good metaphor for Todd, too.

After a BA in mathematics earned here in 2004, Todd’s post–Simon’s Rock resume includes a nearly complete PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; his specialty is engineering robotic prosthetics. While at MIT, he also cofounded a start-up that developed technology to use smart phones to scan credit cards. The process of selling that company piqued his interest in investing.

But it’s not easy to land a job at a VC firm, especially one led by a star investor. (Forbes has twice listed the 44-year-old Maples on its annual “Midas List,” and in December, referred to him as on “one of Silicon Valley’s great investors.”) “Venture capitalists don’t tend to hire very much,” Todd muses. “I gave a speech at the Aspen Institute about my robotic prosthetics work and through that, I got to know the [director] of the MIT Media Lab. I started opening up about my career and my ambitions, and I told him I would be interested in trying out investing.” Shortly thereafter, Todd landed what he thought was an informational meeting with Maples. “I showed up in a t-shirt, really scrappy clothing. They took me in and said, ‘Hey, are you ready for your interview?’ I’m like, ‘What interview?’” Lack of advance notice didn’t hurt Todd’s chances: after a discussion of his resume (and his passion for break dancing), he was offered a job on the spot.

Todd’s break dancing wasn’t all that intrigued Floodgate. His take on investing involves using nontraditional data streams—specifically, information gleaned from social media sites—to inform investment decisions. Explains Todd, “I’m using different algorithms to find out what signals there are from websites like LinkedIn or Facebook that might tell you that a company is really interesting to look at from an investing perspective.” The goal “Is to create a database that you can use to track performance . . . to bubble up companies that would have otherwise been ignored from a value investment perspective.” And then, of course, to invest in them.

This is a shift for venture capitalists, who have been, Todd says, driven by emotion rather than data. “People pick companies by intuition. So it’s 80% intuition, 20% quantitative data in the early stage venture capital funding scenarios.” But in Todd’s estimation, social media may double the amount of data available. “We’re finding that there’s enough data about companies talking about themselves that it’s becoming more like 60% intuition, 40% data. That doesn’t sound like a huge transition, but within that 20%, a lot more companies are getting funded. And they end up doing well.”

Along with doing well, Todd wants to continue to do good. He’s still involved with developing prosthetics, for example. “I don’t want to be just some sort of dry investor,” he states. “I don’t think that’s my path. I want to be able to straddle the profitable and nonprofit ends of the world, and do good in both. There’s got to be a way to keep these two kind of counterintuitive things—that shouldn’t be together—closely knit.” Who better to take on this challenge than a game-changing, break dancing Rocker?

For more on Todd Farrell’s earlier work, read our Newsroom profile of him online at simons-rock.edu/farrell. ☝️
Alumni Leadership Council’s Outstanding Alumni Awards

Each year, the Alumni Leadership Council (ALC) bestows the Simon’s Rock Outstanding Alumni Award on one to three alumni. The award is given to alumni who bring the spirit of Simon’s Rock to their profession or volunteer service in the world. The ALC interprets this relative to each nominee, but will always consider doing something positive that is different, innovative, or unorthodox as a consideration for receiving an award.

Last June, at the 45th Anniversary Reunion, the Alumni Leadership Council awarded Lisa B. Martin ’76 and Ali Hamilton ’89 with the first annual Outstanding Alumni Awards. Lisa received the award for her work helping to bring indigenous people in Mexico access to education. Ali received the award for her work in the sciences, both academically and as a mentor to young women studying science at Simon’s Rock.

Each year, the ALC provides alumni with the opportunity to nominate people from the community they believe exemplify what it is to be a Rocker. These people have brought the spirit of Simon’s Rock to their profession or to their service, to their friends, their families, or their communities, and they are awarded for their efforts at the annual reunion in Great Barrington.

To nominate someone for a 2013 Outstanding Alumni Award, please visit simons-rock.edu/alumni/alc. You can also find links on this webpage to nominate new representatives to the Alumni Leadership Council.

May 31 to June 2
For more info: simons-rock.edu/reunion