When I arrived at the beginning of April, I found an exciting combination of treasured history and new possibilities waiting at the Kelly Adirondack Center. The traditions of scholarship represented by the Adirondack Research Library (ARL) are being passed on to a new generation of students, to faculty and staff of Union College and to the wider public.

A fine example is the work of the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) grant archivists. They are making accessible a trove of information about 20th century wild lands conservation in the papers of two giants of the movement, John Apperson and Paul Schaefer. Along the way, they’re finding such quirky treats as a photo of skate sailing on Lake George—using a nine-patch quilt as a sail.

We also have newer Kelly Adirondack Center traditions, like the lecture series. This year we’ll explore the Adirondacks through folk art, fine art, music, theatre and photography. People of many cultures and eras have found their artistic muse in the wilds. The Adirondacks have influenced artists from Winslow Homer to Garry Trudeau and David Smith to anonymous rustic furniture makers and folk singers.

And through the series, we’ll get to ponder a range of important questions. How has the Adirondack environment inspired artists? What can Adirondack art tell us about the lives and times of the people who created it? What did their art mean to them? What’s going on in the Adirondack art scene today?

New possibilities for learning from and about the Adirondacks abound. In addition to the ARL, the resources and people of the region offer incredible opportunities. We want Union students to visit the Adirondacks so they can experience first-hand this amazing natural area through hiking, boating and skiing. The center sponsored an outing to Tenant Creek Falls near Northville as part of Adirondack Week this spring. I’ll also be taking this year’s summer research fellows on a canoe and hiking trip to the Bog River. Now wilderness, it was once a huge industrial enterprise.

In addition to outdoor expeditions, the center will become a hub of research projects that encourage students to learn from Adirondackers and others who study Adirondack issues. They’ll delve into issues as diverse as road design for the era of climate change, resource management, rural poverty and the Hudson River School of painting.

And this is just the beginning. I welcome your questions, comments and observations, and hope to meet you at our programs.

Sincerely,

Hallie Bond

Hallie Bond is the new director of the Kelly Adirondack Center. She is a native of Colorado but moved to the Adirondacks in 1983 after graduate school to work for the Adirondack Museum, where she served as education director and then, for 27 years, curator. Her publications include Boats and Boating in the Adirondacks and A Paradise for Boys and Girls: Children’s Camps in the Adirondacks. She lives in Long Lake with her husband, Mason Smith, and two children.
Living in New York City, Andy Zou ’17 had barely heard of the Adirondacks. Shannon Holly, on the other hand, grew up in the foothills of the sprawling, six-million acre Adirondack Park, in Gloversville, N.Y. But by the end of the summer, both students will share a keen understanding of a critical issue or policy affecting the Adirondacks, an area bigger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier and Grand Canyon National Park combined.

Zou and Holly are the latest recipients of a summer research fellowship program offered through the Kelly Adirondack Center. Now in its third year, the competitive program selects students enrolled in an undergraduate, master’s or doctoral program in urban planning, public policy, environmental science, the physical sciences or social sciences.

Over the course of eight weeks, fellows conduct independent research on an issue impacting the Adirondacks. They also participate in workshops and seminars, meet with representatives of organizations involved with Adirondack advocacy and policy, and write op-eds related to their topic. Hikes and visits to places such as the Adirondack Museum are also part of the itinerary.

Zou is majoring in managerial economics and environmental policy. As part of his research, he is looking into whether the Adirondack Park Agency is ideally suited to manage the park, or whether it’s feasible to revisit the idea of having the preserve be included in the National Park System, as was once proposed in the 1960s.

“There has been considerable debate about this over the years,” said Zou. “I want to find out whether the park is actually better off under the APA today and whether conservation groups believe that the abandoned Adirondack Mountains National Park proposal promised more robust protection of the Adirondack experience.”

Holly graduated with a degree in biology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 2014. She plans to pursue her master’s in epidemiology at Brown University in the fall. She has been poring over census documents and other material to see how residents within the park, at a population level, compare in terms of health to those in other poor, rural areas of the country.

In particular, she is looking at the correlation between the regulations on private land use within the park and the overall well-being of the full-time residents (as measured by occurrence rates of the “big four” non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer). She will compare those rates to others such as the Catskills, the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and Shenandoah National Park.

“I plan on showcasing ways in which wilderness could be preserved without damaging human lives,” said Holly.

The fellows will present their findings at a reception at the center Aug. 5 from 4:30 to 6 p.m.

“The idea of the fellowship is to showcase how many different topics you can study just from our collection in the Adirondack Research Library,” said Caleb Northrop, special assistant to the President’s Office and Kelly Adirondack Center. “The library boasts the largest collection of material outside of the Adirondack Park, including rare books, maps, photographs, documents and the personal papers of some of the region’s foremost conservationists.”

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