To the Rodman Scholars Community,

The start of winter break marks the end of yet another fast-paced and challenging semester. But whether this fall semester represented the beginning of the end, or simply the beginning, of our college careers, we can all agree that we have continued to explore our passions, friendships, and goals.

In conducting the selection process for the mid-year class, it has become apparent to us that no qualities better characterize current and potential Rodman Scholars than this voracious appetite for learning coupled with entrepreneurial bias for action. One does not have to look very far for examples. Our scholars are leaders in all forms of active learning: research, design competitions, and teaching student-led courses both through the E-School and through our own RodSems, to name a few. We thrive on the principle that there is no better manner to learn than by doing. As one of Thomas Jefferson’s great contemporaries, Benjamin Franklin, once said, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

It is in this spirit that serving as co-presidents of the Rodman Council has been such an immense pleasure. We are honored to have the opportunity to effect innovative changes that will continue to strengthen our program and community of learners. Thanks to our dedicated council members, we have been able to accomplish a great deal to this end.

With the help of increasingly involved first-year council members, the first-year class - the largest to date - is closer and more collaborative than ever, evidenced by their planning of an intensive service project scheduled for late March. The project fits into the broader scope of our growing service program, which has been an exciting vehicle for interclass, experiential learning. Our co-chairs have planned and executed a RodSem that provides scholars with weekly opportunities to connect with local students through science experiments, which we seek to expand this coming semester. This seminar, along with monthly Saturday projects with a variety of community partners, has increased our appreciation for both the issues the Charlottesville community faces and our civic responsibility as engineering students. On a different front, our networking and communications committees have worked diligently to open new avenues of learning for our scholars, hosting receptions to engage recent alumni and parents.

Yet, with another semester ahead of us, there is still so much left to do. For example, our augmented academics program will be heavily invested this spring in bringing in speakers from the University and Charlottesville community to offer their experiences in leadership, entrepreneurship, and service. Our advising and social programming will be ambitious and regular, devoted to bridging gaps among various years to foster vertical integration and learning.

With these goals in mind, we hope that you join us in this endeavor in continuing to advance our program. Whether that is through engaging in the multitude of service, social, and advising events, working with committees to develop our new initiatives, or offering your ideas and sincere recommendations, we are confident that when we take ownership of our learning, our efforts will translate into concrete growth not only for this year but for the years to come.

Best wishes for the holidays,
Ben and Joey
Rodman Council Co-Presidents
LEWIS AND CLARK EXPLORATORY CENTER BRINGS RAIN, SWEAT AND SMILES

On Saturday, November 7th, a group of six Rodman students ventured to Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center. As described by the center’s website, the “Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center is a hands-on center focusing on the historic expedition as a gateway for learning about exploration, transportation, the arts, science, the natural environment, and native cultures....”

The project day focused on helping with any tasks needed to prepare the Center for a reception being held for donors of the new building on the following day, November 8th. This included moving furniture, tidying up rooms, clearing a walkway of weeds, adjusting a mast to a boat on display, and moving a boat from storage to the new building. The boat moving was the main project, which took most of the morning. Due to rain, mud, a small trailer, a low traction and torque vehicle, and the size and weight of the boat, this was no easy feat. After several attempts lifting it onto the trailer, dragging it down a grassy hill, barely making it up a gravel hill, and chasing after a runaway boat, everyone felt very proud of the feat; this can be seen in the symbolic image of the Rodmans conquering the boat (like George Washington navigating the Delaware River).

The members of the center greatly appreciated the assistance and all students loved the day, despite the rain. First Year Brad Houska, new to Rodman volunteer events, exclaimed after the experience: “Woo! That was the most fun and exciting service project I have ever done. I’m signing up again!” As Houska proved, all involved had a blast, and the Rodmans will be returning to Lewis and Clark in the spring. —Kathleen Galligan

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity receives opened or otherwise unsellable furniture donated by a number of vendors across Charlottesville. Once assembled, the furniture is sold in the Habitat Store, generating revenue for Habitat for Humanity operations. As our final service project of the semester, we decided to help Habitat for Humanity build furniture for its Habitat Store. We were able to build a coffee table, a desk, and a display shelf. It was pretty much like adult Legos, and our time felt more like fun than work. —Gage DeZoort
This summer, Kathleen and I spent a while deciding what Rodman service should be. As the first co-SERVICE CHAIRS of the Rodman Council, we were handed a blank slate. There was no precedent to follow, no framework in place—all we knew was that the Council needed to address service and we were to lead the way. We decided to split our focuses, so Kathleen turned to public service and I turned to STEM outreach.

In order to establish a regularity to our STEM outreach efforts, we decided to implement a Service RodSem. We had three goals: to make a positive impact on the community, to become familiar with STEM outreach, and to establish a service-oriented Rodman Scholars presence in the community. I believe we were successful on all three fronts. Throughout the semester, we volunteered with City of Promise, an after-school enrichment program not far from Grounds. There, we conducted Montessori-style science experiments and engineering projects with the kids. It was a total blast.

Of course, that’s not to say it was easy; we didn’t expect it to be. Some kids were more interested in projects than others, some projects worked better, and sometimes we did not prepare as we should have. What matters is that we, along with the students, learned along the way. As the semester moved on, it became clear what it took to make an interesting lesson. We helped the kids build catapults and lava lamps, make Coke rockets, and play with static electricity. Those were my favorite days, and I think that’s when we really hit our stride.

There won’t be a service RodSem next semester, as Kathleen and I have seen our initial goals fulfilled: the Rodman Scholars have a reputation for service in the community. Next semester, we’ll expand that presence while maintaining the community relationships we’ve worked hard to form. I can’t wait to see how the Scholars community will rise to the challenge. —GAGE DEZOOTR

GLASS BLOWING RODSEM A SUCCESS

This semester, several Rodmans participated in the glassblowing Rodman Seminar, which consisted of three trips to Richmond to learn about the art of glassblowing. First-year Rodman Carlton Higby said, “My favorite part was watching how deftly and nonchalantly they handled molten, thousand-degree glass,” when asked his favorite aspect of the RodSem. Third-year RodCouncil Service Committee Co-Chair and mechanical engineering major Kathleen Galligan agreed: “I thought it was really cool to watch and do it. We made vases and pumpkins,” she said. She went on to describe the process of glassblowing, which included helping and observing the instructors roll the glass into colors, inserting it into the furnace, using a tube to inflate the molten glass, and cleanly tapping it to break the piece off. When asked about his experience, third-year RodCouncil Advising Chair and biomedical engineering major Naveed Tavakol said, “The glassblowing trip was one of the coolest experiences I’ve ever done in terms of crafting. I never really knew what to expect, but it was amazing to work with the instructors on the glass...I’m happy to bring the glass back home and spice up my apartment!”

—MARY-MICHAEL ROBERTSON
The first year Rodmans got together for pre-Thanksgiving dinner inside Wilksdorff Hall. We talked about going home to see our families while enjoying Canes chicken fingers and Take-It-Away sandwiches. The event was organized by the first-year representatives on Rodman Council and ended up bringing about half the class. All enjoyed the food, which was mostly gone by the time everyone returned to the Balz-Dobie dorm. It was a fun night of socializing and good fun as the first years continue to bond over school and Elzey’s class.  
—Danial Hussain

POTTERY SEMINAR

With a workplace where development happens more quickly than ever before, the purely analytical engineer is about to brush with extinction. What will be left to fill the void is a design engineer, one who can envision a product and make it into reality. To prepare for this new workplace, engineers-in-training are going to need to learn to build and envision. Besides being a collaborator and an investigator, this new-age engineer needs to be an artist. To prepare for a new world, Rodmans needed something like a Pottery Rodman Seminar.

Pottery doesn’t seem like something engineers would be concerned with, but Rodmans say they grew through their experience with Pottery. Every Tuesday around 7PM, students would gather in a studio downtown called City Clay for two hours of artisanship. Students used the time to grow in their artistic abilities, and others grew more unintentionally as they used the two hours for an enjoyable bit of relaxation amidst the Rodman lifestyle. In the words of Shota Ono, one of the students leaders of the Pottery Rodman Seminar: “Many of us are looking for creative outlets at UVA, whether it be artistic or sartorial. It’s why we do pottery, and it’s why we wear sweater vests as tank tops.” He notes that his college life often needs more of what the Pottery Rodman Seminar has: balance and serenity. Though new Rodman Seminars will be introduced for next semester, Shota hopes to channel his passion for ceramics into Ceramics Club at UVA.

This world is a different beast today. Calculations for space missions that used to take a room full of 30 frantically calculating NASA engineers hours can now be finished in a fraction of the time with a laptop computer. After learning to leverage this newfound technology to do the old analytical work, most of the work engineers do today is design. Engineers now can be artists, philosophers, or businesspeople first; the analytics are just a means for completion of the projects that are most important to them. By promoting creative thought in our engineers, UVA is proud to prepare graduates for the robust and volatile world to come.

—Matt Anderson.

FIRST YEAR RODMAN BONDING

The first year Rodmans got together for pre-Thanksgiving dinner inside Wilksdorff Hall. We talked about going home to see our families while enjoying Canes chicken fingers and Take-It-Away sandwiches. The event was organized by the first-year representatives on Rodman Council and ended up bringing about half the class. All enjoyed the food, which was mostly gone by the time everyone returned to the Balz-Dobie dorm. It was a fun night of socializing and good fun as the first years continue to bond over school and Elzey’s class.  
—Danial Hussain
HAVE A GREAT IDEA FOR A STORY?

If you would like to write a column in our newsletter, please reach out to Co-Communications Chairs Catherine Pollack (ccp3qz@virginia.edu) or Sean Sequeira (sbs6eh@virginia.edu). We’d love to hear what you have to say!

THANKS ALL FOR A GREAT SEMESTER!

We hope you enjoyed this edition of The Rodman Chronicles. Look to our Spring Semester editions for updates on more community service events, our new Rodman Seminars, Days on the Lawn, Rodtunda Annual Dinner, and more!

Finally, a special shout-out to Matt Anderson, Kathleen Galligan, Matt Gummersbach, Danial Hussain, Gage DeZoort, Ahmed Osman, Sean Sequeira, Mary-Michael Robertson, Ben Gilbert, and Joey Hsu for their contributions to the newsletter. We couldn’t have done it without you!