First-year Kevin Iglesias ’17 feeling right at home in Curtis Hall
Photo by Andy Daddio
It's hard to imagine that the Class of 2017 began their Colgate experience just ten months ago. In this short time, this cohort of OUS scholars has certainly left their marks and integrated nicely into the Colgate community. Their overall scholastic achievement is solid, and a number of them are already slated for summer research, study-groups, the sophomore residential seminars and work as community leaders. When asked about their first year, their comments have included: “Darn difficult, but worth it; supportive and understanding; holy cow; challenging; all-nighters; eye-opening; stressful but rewarding, and absolutely phenomenal.” Take a read of the following from a few of our first-years and get a sense of their reflection and impression on the summer institute and their first year at Colgate.

Looking back on your first year, how do you think the summer institute has helped in your transition to Colgate?

Alexis Beamon ’17: “It prepared me to handle the amount of work for the academic year, and I learned how to better organize and manage my time.”

Abril Cardenes ’17: “OUS is a big reason why I even decided to stay at Colgate. It prepared me for the social pressures that I would confront during the regular school year. It also helped create a network of people that shared the same struggles as me. Today, I lean on that network and am highly grateful for everything OUS did.”

Federico Elizondo ’17: “In a metaphorical sense, the summer institute was like watching the trailer to a scary movie. You’re anxious to watch the movie, but you don’t think you’ll be ready to handle it all at once. Being thrown into college seemed frightening at first, but after the summer institute, I was confident to tackle the world ahead. It was like a preview in the sense that I had a good idea on what the next four years would be like and could prepare myself for handling it. It was an opportunity for me to develop the appropriate skills and connections needed to succeed here at Colgate.”
Dylan Frisbie '17: “The Summer Institute integrated me into the Colgate system before everyone else arrived onto campus. This allowed me to create friends on campus and get a feel for the workload of Colgate. When the semester began, I didn’t have the nerves that all the rest of the first years were having, because I had already experienced and overcome the fears of the transition to college life.”

Kevin Iglesias '17: “The OUS program has helped me tremendously because it helped work out the rigor and pace that Colgate calls for. The professors I had helped me understand and be ready for the academic workload.”

Prenna Jackson '17: “I’m glad for OUS because I have awesome benefits from the program (especially the “Franks” and Renée Chapin), and people who make sure I turn in financial aid forms on time, or apply to internships, or keep me informed about special opportunities like SRS, or make me feel like I can compete on a more equalized playing field with kids who have parents or other support systems that help them glide through college. I also love how, if I ever have a problem regarding academic, financial aid, or whatever, I can just email the Franks, and they will put me into contact with whomever I need to speak with (or help me out directly), so that I can get the problem fixed.”

JB Lei '17: “The summer institute did an excellent job of showing me how to conduct college-level research using the resources provided by the university. I also learned how to be comfortable speaking up in class and to professors.”

Melissa Persaud '17: “OUS has prepared me for Colgate by simulating a stressful environment; however, I was not prepared to juggle the academics, a job, extra-curricular activities and a social life. I do now.”

Brittany Ramirez '17: “During the Summer Institute, I had Professor Yoshino and Professor Brice, who both taught completely different courses. Professor Yoshino led us to resources through the library and other sources Colgate had to offer that were very beneficial to writing research papers, while Professor Brice helped us with writing a paper in general and helped each of us find our own writing style. Both of these became very important to me as I went through my first semester, and I feel that without these skills, I would have not been prepared for any college-level writing.”

What special memories do you have about Summer Institute 2013?

Nina: “The impromptu girls’ night my roommate and I hosted. We all painted our nails, did face masks, and sang to Leona Lewis. Of course, one of my OUS classmates with whom I had not been previously close came to join the group; looking back, I couldn’t imagine my Colgate experience without her.”

Federico: “The memory I like to recall every now and then is the time we went to the ropes course. Till this day, I still don’t know how we managed to get up at six in the morning. Not only was it physically challenging, but it was mentally and at times emotionally challenging as well. I remember it well because it demonstrated how I could get through all these sorts of obstacles and set-backs, all the while having a good time and getting to know others and myself in the process.”

Dylan: “One special memory I have is when my friends and I were so fed up with work that we decided to have a movie night. This was no ordinary movie night though because we built a fort out of the furniture and blankets in the dorm. It was a night full of laughs and good company that I will always remember.”

Prenna: “I like to remember the fun things, and going to Darien Lake was awesome. I also enjoyed the mall trips as well as the barbecues and cookouts. I also have fond memories of the times there would be mass study sessions in my room or someone else’s.”

JB: “Exchanging our coming-of-age stories in Professor Brice’s class and discussing great works of literature with my RAC and other students.”

Brittany: “The Summer Institute was a place where you got to know people EXTREMELY fast. Probably less than a week into the program, I met a person that would become one of my best friends at Colgate. The first day we met we were in the lounge, and we had a paper to write. Of course we got the paper done, but we also stayed up until 4 am talking about our lives and some of the struggles we have been through in life. It’s definitely a day I will always remember, and the first of many memorable moments that occurred after that day.”
Looking back, what would you have done differently on the topic of schoolwork during the Summer Institute?

Dylan: “During the Summer Institute, there are going to be times where you may have 150-200 pages of reading due the following day. You do not have to completely read all of these pages word for word. If the Summer Institute taught me anything of value, it was learning how to skim enough to understand the main concepts. Also, come to class with some quotes that interest you from the reading because it brings about discussion in class and makes class more interesting for you and the professor.”

JB: “I would definitely have tried harder to believe that the right connections and friendships would fall in place at the right time.”

Federico: “Throughout the summer institute, my time management wasn’t the best. I found myself studying after-hours. In some instances, I would choose not to go out because I needed to catch up on work or sleep. If I could do something differently, I would have liked to be more efficient with my time.”

What recommendations do you have for the incoming class of students to get ready for Summer Institute 2014?

Alexis: “Don’t procrastinate.”

Nina: “Be genuinely you when you walk into the room full of your peers for the first time. You are all going to go through some of the most trying and some of the most rewarding experiences of your lives at Colgate, and the people in the room on that first day are going to be the ones to stand by you through it all.”

Federico: “Get out of your comfort zone. I’d never think I would be at the giving end of this advice, but I can honestly say it is worth it.”

Dylan: “The only recommendation that I have to share with the incoming class is to be prepared. Be prepared for late nights, hard work, and the “struggle bus”. There will be nights where you could be up until 4 or 5 in the morning or perhaps not sleeping at all. It happens, so be prepared for it. Also, organization helps! Use your Google Calendar on your colgate.edu (Gmail) account!”

JB: “When I arrived, I had no idea that summer in Hamilton is so excruciatingly humid, and that there are many unpleasant insects and critters, such as ticks and frogs, that come out during this time. I would highly recommend that students purchase insect repellent and sunscreen before arriving at Colgate. In addition, I think that it’s important that students learn to keep an open mind during this transition from adolescence to young adulthood and bring to the table what they have learned from their teachers and heroes. Also, students should not hesitate to utilize the study techniques that they learned in high school.”

Melissa: “Don’t pull consecutive all-nighters; you will suffer.”

Brittany: “I would first say be prepared to work hard, but never miss an opportunity to have fun. Some days it seemed like you have no time to have fun, because there’s always another assignment due. Somehow, you would need to find that time to have fun and get to know people (even if that means a little less sleep). Just remember everyone else is on the “struggle bus” too, but it’s worth it on so many levels.”

What would you consider to be some of the key “takeaways” (or important lessons) you acquired from your summer-institute faculty member(s)?

Alexis: “There’s always more to study.”

Federico: “I have all the resources I need to succeed; I just have to take advantage of them.”

Dylan: “The big “take-away” from my Summer Institute faculty member would be to never give up. Even if you don’t seem to be doing well, keep trying, put the effort forth, and go to office hours. Professors recognize when a student tries to do well even if they don’t always succeed, so show the professors that you are trying!”

JB: “One of the most important lessons that I took away from this summer is that I should always remain true to who I am as a person.”

Melissa: “Make sure you set time aside to relax.”

What would you say about your interaction with your residential academic coach (RAC)? What about your summer-institute faculty member?

Abril: “My RACs were probably the most helpful people in the whole program. They worked harder than we did and were realistic about what we would face in the academic school year. They also stuck through even during the school year making it easier to transition.”

Federico: “They were great! I was as close to them as with any other students in the program. Honestly, they are now my closest resources here at Colgate. They are definitely my go-to people – school, questions, concerns, and even socialization.”

Dylan: “The RAC staff is a fantastic group of people who were selected through an application process and then trained to be there over the summer to assist the Summer Institute
students. In other words, they are amazing individuals who are always there if you need help academically or emotionally. They are truly astounding individuals who always make time for you.”

JB: “My interactions with my RAC were very rich and intellectually rewarding. I was never turned away when I needed someone to talk to, whether it was for academic or general advice. It was also easier, at least for me, to talk to someone closer to my age. In this way, I think the RACs are one of the many strong pillars that hold up the summer institute at Colgate. They definitely have an immense influence on the way students perceive Colgate and what they will expect from it. My interactions with the summer-institute faculty members were also very positive and they made me feel very accepted and cared for in the community.”

Brittany: “My RACs were the best! They were so supportive and were there through everything, literally. If you had life questions answered, academic questions, just needed to complain – whatever it was, they were there and still are today. Everyone involved in the Summer Institute was like that. If you ever needed something, someone was there to help. The best part is that this support hasn’t ended.”

Do you have any other general comments or feedback regarding the summer institute?

Dylan: “The Summer Institute is an opportunity that has literally changed my perspective on schooling/college life and allowed me the time to create friendships before the major influx of first years arrived on campus. Moreover, it also granted me the opportunity to take two extra full credits, courses in which I got to explore some subject material that Colgate offers, get to form a relationship with professors on campus, and allow myself to successfully adjust to college life in a rigorous and academic environment. I wouldn’t have passed it up for anything. I am glad I did not, because Colgate has become my home.”

Kevin: “For the incoming OUS class, be prepared for everything that this summer will bring you! There is so much growth, work, and experiences that you will live through in the few weeks you are here. I remember how nervous, alone and sad I felt as I was moving in my first day. But, by the end of the summer, you will have gone through so much that you cannot help but feel connected to everyone in your class. Then remember, you have three classes ahead of you that know how you feel and are waiting to meet you at Colgate. Regardless how you feel, this will be an unforgettable summer.”

Brittany: “If I had to do it again, I would do so, several times over. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life and it was the most beneficial thing I’ve done for myself and my future.”
The Spanish Debate Team forms a branch of Colgate’s Speaking Union. During the academic year, the club meets bi-weekly to practice British parliamentary debate. In British Parliamentary debate, four teams composed of two students each debate a controversial motion, with two teams supporting the motion and the other two going against it. In the end, a judge scores the whole debate and ranks the teams from first to fourth place. Of course, the Spanish Debate Team also competes in similar format but all in Spanish. This year, Wendy Hernandez ’14 serves as the co-captain of this debate team, and three first-years (Abril Cardenes ’17, Federico Elizondo ’17, and Cynthia Vele ’17) has joined her and others on the team.

These students took their skills learned on campus and participated in the Pan American Universities Debate Championship hosted by the University of Miami this past January. The debaters participated in eight rounds of debate in teams of two, competing against international universities including those from Columbia and Venezuela. Debate topics ranged widely, from issues of international relations to moral and social issues; for example, the allowance of nude beaches was one such debate topic.

Both the first-year and senior teams went onto the quarter-finals of the tournament, although it was the first time the first-year team has debated in Spanish--in fact, it was their first time debating at all. Remarkably, the senior-team with Wendy Hernandez ’14 and Stella Yoh ’14 went on to the semi-finalist round and were recognized with a trophy. While Wendy and Stella finished off their last year by setting the standard for the future of the Debate Team, all participants gained much more than just a tangible award. Abril and Federico gained the know-how and confidence of competent debaters for future competitions. Cynthia, who served as a judge in the tournament, learned valuable insights on the process and criteria of debate judging. The club is now in full preparations for the World Universities Debating Championships hosted in Mexico City this July. With consistent practice and strong team organization, our club of enthusiastic young debaters is sure to succeed this summer and in subsequent tournaments to come.
What was the hardest part of your involvement in the Pan American Universities Debate Championship?

Cynthia Vele '17: "For me, the hardest part was judging the debaters from countries like Venezuela and Colombia. It was difficult because they were so experienced, and initially, it was hard finding flaws in their discourse. I had been judging our team for the semester and so it took a little time getting used to the way that these other debaters carried on their arguments and what to look for in terms of good feedback. Because they were native Spanish speakers with their own unique accents, it also took some time getting accustomed to this change in style."

Abril Cardenes '17: "The hardest part was understanding the different dialects of Spanish. As a native speaker growing up in a Dominican family and within a country that predominantly speaks English, I was never exposed to the different types of Spanish. During the tournament many words that the speakers mentioned were either foreign to me or signified a different meaning. This did not serve me well in understanding the difficult complex topics."

Federico Elizondo '17: "The one thing college does not teach you is how to accept defeat, but this tournament gave me the opportunity to learn this life-skill. If I didn’t perform as well as I could have in a debate, I learned to brush it off and move on to the next debate."

How was it like competing in Spanish?

Cynthia: "I didn’t go as a debater this time around. I went as a judge for our team. At that point, I had little debating experience but had more of an idea of what to look for in a debater's argument - not just as a debater, but as a judge. I believe that I have demonstrated more confidence expressing my thoughts and opinions in Spanish. It’s a language that I grew up learning along with English; however, there were a very few moments during the debate where the "Spanglish" had come out by accident. But other than that, it was not a significant challenge."

Federico: "Competing in Spanish is not as easy as I took it to be, but overall it was an interesting experience. I realized that debating in Spanish made me ground myself to my roots. Although I was raised learning Spanish, I had disowned the language and assimilated by using English in everyday discourse to the extreme that it became difficult to connect with my culture and my relatives - especially my parents."

What was the best part?

Cynthia: "The best part for me, personally, was being able to judge alongside the champion of the last International Debate Tournament (CMUDE in Spain). He was very professional and gave me plenty of tips on exactly what to look for, and he also helped me figure out exactly what I was trying to say as "constructive criticism." There were moments where he also opened my eyes to different ways of viewing an argument. When it finally came time to deliberate, even though I was not as experienced as he was, we both contributed equally to the decision of the rankings."

Abril: "The best part was being able to meet international students. I learned many things about different cultures outside America. In Colombia, college students cannot be undeclared."

Federico: "I really enjoyed learning from others. Debate, in itself, forces you to take different perspectives and positions on real world topics. Not only do you argue a position you would normally oppose, but you have the opportunity to see how other people do the same. It is amazing to see how one topic can generate a multitude of ideas and voices."
Professor Kezia Page is no stranger to the OUS program. Most recently, she served as a Summer Institute faculty member last summer. Over the five weeks that she taught her course, New Immigrant Voices (ENG 207), Professor Page realized a sort of “strange ideal,” where she got to know her students as “whole people.” By seeing interactions among OUS scholars, and in turn interacting with them, Professor Page remarked that a connection was formed. With an interesting dynamic of students, the classroom became a wonderful learning environment. Most notably, Professor Page shared that her students were able to reveal really wonderful features of the literature as they got the hang of close reading and brought their very specified knowledge base to the table, uncovering meaning in the texts in places she hadn’t seen before. Instances such as those are unlikely occurrences in her class during the regular semester.
When asked what were the common denominators for success in the summer institute, and furthermore at Colgate, Professor Page stated that “talented, risk-takers” are identifiable in both of her classes. OUS scholars “think in ways that are not prescribed,” and take the literature to original places. Students dedicated to hard work are known to excel in her class. It should be noted that excelling isn’t necessarily just about grades. It is also about having an encounter with the literature that “makes the hair stand at the back of your neck.” Having that moment where you “get” something and that something excites you and you want more is the mark of a true scholar. For Professor Page, and students alike, something about the community over the summer always makes its way into the four-year experience.

Regarding her path as an educator, Professor Page “always knew that [she] wanted to study literature, particularly Caribbean Literature.” She remembers being quite young when she saw a description of T.S. Eliot as “poet, novelist and critic.” There was something about the way that sounded and what it signified that prompted her to mold her aspirations after it. “After graduate school the natural place to go was in academia.” Her decision to teach in college was largely due to connecting with Caribbean students and other members of the diaspora community while aiming to have a positive impact. Colgate, in particular, wanted a Caribbeananist and offered the context and community in which to best follow her passion.

Currently, Professor Page is writing an article on what some call the reggae revival. She was inspired to research this topic after noticing some trends in popular culture on her recent visit to Jamaica. She is also beginning a project on the role of mytho-politics and fable in contemporary Caribbean fiction. Outside of the more “scholarly realm,” Professor Page revisits a stack of books she likes to read in her spare time. Recent titles include Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad, and Craig Steven Wilder’s Ebony and Ivy. She also reads to her sons, which is always an interesting experience as they get to really know the books. If her leisure affords her more time than is involved in reading, she enjoys spending her time travelling.

Last spring, Professor Page led a study group to Jamaica where students were offered a pleasant balance between travel and academia. The group studied at the University of West Indies at Mona, an institution whose range of students differs by age, class and culture, altogether providing a unique learning environment. On the study group, Professor Page taught a course on Jamaican literature and culture, travelled to historical and cultural sites with her students and also attended talks by cultural workers. Along with the obvious benefit of tropical weather, the vibrant culture of Jamaica is especially rewarding for students who don’t come to Colgate through the mainstream. The study group really immerses students within a new majority culture, much different from campus life here at Colgate.

As a final message to OUS students, Professor Page shared that not only is she a better professor because of OUS, but Colgate as a whole is a better place. “It was the single most rewarding teaching experience I have ever had.” Her words alone should remove any doubts students may have when considering OUS’ place on campus.
Mekedelawite (Maya) Atakilti ’15
Ashley Brekke ’16
Kalani Byrd ’16
Genesis Cedeno ’14
Nina Cook ’17
Lokelani Cummings-Watanabe ’15
Chelsea Faryke ’14
Dylan Frisbie ’17
Melissa Gamez-Herrera ’14
Valerie Garcia ’15
Anzeuth Gonzalez ’15
Chitrani (Alicia) Gopi ’14
Larissa Grijalva ’17
Elena Havas ’15
Wendy Hernandez ’14
Fareeza Islam ’14
Prenna Jackson ’17
Yuliya Karashel ’14
Alan Kim ’16
Samantha Lee ’14
Jia Bao (JB) Lei ’17
Ying Lin ’15
Javier Magana ’14
Jennifer Martin ’14
Melissa Melendez ’15
Martha Montufar ’17
Haley Moya ’17
Noufo Nabine ’16
Nga Nguyen ’15
Tram Nguyen ’16
Kelli Palaka ’14
Estrella Rodriguez ’17
Samantha Rodriguez ’17
Providence Ryan ’16
Tatiana Sanabria ’15
Elizabeth Tavitian ’17
Aishwarya Teegala ’16
Solomon Tesfaye ’15
Sherry Tran ’15
Alexandra Young ’15
Hassan Zahir ’15
Jia Zheng ’14
PerspicaciOUS  [pur-spi-key-shuh s]

1. having keen mental perception and understanding
2. acutely perceptive or discerning

Excerpted from Dictionary.com

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