“The Impact of Scholarships on Q’eqchi’ Maya Young Women’s Lives and Communities in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala” by Carley McCready and Dawn Bowen for January 2012.

“An Evaluation of an Environmental Education Program in Primary Schools of the Yalijux Mountain Communities of the Alta Verapaz, Guatemala” by David Wilcox for January 2012.

“Mapping Illegal Deforestation in the Yalijux Mountains of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala” by Wesley Roberts for January 2012.

In January, I took two students, Carley McCready ’13 and David Wilcox ’12, both of whom had received undergraduate research grants to Guatemala. Carley served multiple roles. She was my translator when we conducted interviews with scholarship students and teachers, helped to organize files for the final day’s graduation ceremony, taught English to the students, and also worked with the girls in the garden.

Because we received funding for David’s research before the IRB process was complete, he was not actually able to do the project that we has envisioned (environmental education). The IRB required that we get parental consent from each student’s parent and when we explained the reasons that such approval would be impossible to obtain (it could have been done if we hired a Q’eqchi’ speaker and could spend several days hiking to the homes of children from a single village), but this was impractical so the only option remaining was to interview teachers. After consultation with Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC), the NGO for which we were doing the research, we determined that such efforts would not yield meaningful results. That was a disappointment, but because the third student, Wesley Roberts ’13, for whom we received funding was unable to travel due to illness, David took on his project, and spent each day hiking and collecting GPS coordinates of areas that had been illegally deforested.

In addition, because of Wesley’s illness, I paid for a recent alum, Ian Pope ’11, who is now a graduate student at Purdue University, to accompany us and provide much needed mapping support for CCFC. Ian had traveled with my study abroad group the previous year, so was familiar with the work that needed to be completed.

I plan to return in January with another group of students, including Carley McCready. Ian has decided to undertake an analysis of soil erosion and food security for his Master’s thesis at Purdue, and is preparing multiple funding proposals to support field work this summer and in January 2013. If he is successful, he has asked if I would be able to bring a group of students whom he would train in basic GPS and have them collect data for a week. In short, while Carley alone completed the work that her grant supported, both David and Ian laid the foundation for future UMW geography students to travel to Guatemala and undertake field research.

Respectfully submitted,

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Professor