The Colby-Sawyer graduates featured here are business owners, educators, nurses, administrators, journalists, designers, organization and industry leaders, future doctors, and life-long learners.

Every one of them can name a Colby-Sawyer professor who made a difference in his or her life. Or two. Or more. They understand and appreciate the benefits of a liberal arts and sciences education that prepares them with hands-on experience for a world that demands versatile, creative, critical thinkers.

As students at Colby-Sawyer, these alumni led campus organizations, played on varsity and club teams, conducted research that still shapes the college’s future, studied abroad and studied hard. Input equals output, they will tell you, and from Colby-Sawyer, you can go anywhere.

For some of these graduates, Colby-Sawyer’s internship requirement turned into a first job, as it does for so many of our students.

The Capstone project, which involves extensive research and is the culmination of each student’s academic experience, set the stage for some of the work they do now. They built solid foundations at Colby-Sawyer that prepared them for graduate school and careers in their fields.

They are confident. They are proud that Colby-Sawyer is part of their history. They are excited for the future. They hope that you will find what interests you and relentlessly pursue it at Colby-Sawyer, a college where you won’t get lost in the numbers and professors who are passionate about what they teach are there for you every step of the way.
The acceptance rate to University of Vermont College of Medicine is only 3.7 percent. My class includes Ivy League graduates and college valedictorians, but after only a few weeks, I knew I belonged among them.

When I visited Colby-Sawyer’s campus as a high school student, I found the environment comfortable and friendly, but what really made the college click for me were the small class sizes. At Colby-Sawyer, professors know you, give you lots of one-on-one time, and push you to learn. The small group setting gave me a great opportunity to grow—I learned to stand out in the crowd and to build relationships with professors, which has helped me succeed in medical school.

A lot of medical schools look for applicants with something beyond the typical biology major; they are looking for well-rounded students who will bring diversity, creativity and knowledge to their program. Anyone can memorize facts, but in medicine you have to think on your feet. Colby-Sawyer’s liberal arts education, and in particular the Wesson Honors Program, pushed me to expand beyond the facts of science. The first-year honors seminar forced a deeper personal exploration, and the senior honors projects taught the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving. Colby-Sawyer and the honors program did a great job preparing me to understand both the science and art found in medicine.

My experience as captain of the Colby-Sawyer soccer team built my time management skills, which I’ve had to use during my surgery rotation with its 13-hour days plus studying piled on top. The soccer team also strengthened my interpersonal skills and taught me the importance of teamwork, which is helpful when you’re working with nurses, other doctors, medical assistants and office staff.

I still have more than a year to decide on a specialty, and I’m excited for the challenge that the rest of medical school will bring. I feel well prepared with the foundation Colby-Sawyer provided, and I look forward to continuing to learn, teach and help others in the medical profession.

Patrick Benson ’09
B.A., Biology and B.S., Exercise Science
Medical Student at University of Vermont College of Medicine
Recipient of the Colby-Sawyer Scholar-Athlete Award, Sawyer Fellowship, Biology Baccalaureate Award and member of Alpha Chi Honor Society

The requirements for the pre-med program can be fulfilled in combination with any major, though most of the required courses are in the Biology major. Academic advisors work with students interested in pre-med, pre-vet and pre-physical therapy to ensure necessary pre-requisite courses are completed to apply to doctorate programs.
Soon, I will be Dr. Lisa Giordano. I’ve always wanted to earn my doctorate degree, and during a semester studying in Australia I found my passion: forensic psychology. This field bridges the gap between psychology and the law.

I loved being at Colby-Sawyer, and the Psychology Program prepared me well for graduate school. Even now there are things we’ll cover in my doctorate program that I learned about at Colby-Sawyer. I really liked the internship requirement. In my senior year I worked with the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth and Families, where I was able to get experience in my major.

I had great resources at Colby-Sawyer. Professor Lynn Garrioch talked to me a lot about graduate programs. Professor Basia Pietlicki was my advisor, and I ended up assisting in her Personality Psychology class. I always met with writing tutors at the Academic Development Center to review my papers, and the Harrington Center for Career and Academic Advising helped me write my résumé.

The Capstone project was really helpful, too. I had to do a literature review along with a study, and I can’t tell you how many lit reviews I’ve written in grad school. Learning as an undergrad how to read research articles and focus on the details, as well as critique articles for their limitations, has been invaluable.

I earned my master’s degree in Forensic and Counseling Psychology in 2010. My thesis was on cultural and linguistic considerations when working with Spanish-speaking clients for competency to stand trial evaluations. While working on my master’s I interned at a medium-security prison that has now hired me as a part-time clinician; I do mental health screenings and crisis work. I’m completing another internship now at the only state facility that is a male prison as well as a state forensic psychiatric hospital.

My hope is to do forensic evaluations, which would put me more on the court and legal side of things rather than treatment. It will be up to me to assist the court in deciding if someone should be held responsible for a crime they allegedly committed or if they need mental health care.

My studies at Colby-Sawyer provided me with the opportunity to go far.
I took honors classes at my Maine high school, but for a long time I had no desire to go to college. A friend went to Colby-Sawyer, though, and invited me to visit. It was beautiful, and I like small communities where you know a lot of people, so I applied.

I’m the administrator of the Orleans Conservation Trust, a nonprofit whose goal is to preserve open space. I’m the only full-time employee, but my work is overseen by a board of trustees. I write grants; raise funds; create land management plans; negotiate land acquisitions; work with local, state and federal agencies; clear trails, manage volunteers and steward the land. I’m proud of how our educational programs have grown and that our membership has doubled since I started.

I’m always interacting with the public, and having a liberal arts education has been a real benefit. I used to question some of the required classes; at the time you can’t envision how they might help, but in the end, you can communicate with people who have a wide variety of interests. Every day I use business skills, history, politics, economics, science, communications, even law. You have to be versatile.

With regard to the major, the third-year project is the heart of the program. My class conducted a year-long, community-based research project to develop a plan to green Colby-Sawyer. The work continues to influence the future of the college. All the pieces of my education have come together: My Capstone project was to develop a land management plan and now I often craft land management plans for properties that OCT intends to acquire.

I had some stand-out professors at Colby-Sawyer, like Professor Laura Alexander, who was also my advisor. She could see what would be best for me professionally. I remember complaining, “Why do we have to do this GIS mapping course, I’m never going to use this.” Well, guess what—I use it every day.

Looking back, the only thing I would have done differently is study abroad for at least a semester. I wish I’d done that. Make sure you do.
I entered Colby-Sawyer shy and introverted but graduated with confidence, tight friendships and a determination to deliver positive messages in my career as a broadcast journalist.


Colby-Sawyer is a community where the students encourage each other and the professors give invaluable feedback. Professor Ann Page Stecker taught me the importance of service and the potential for a small group to enact great change. My advisor was a strong female role model and taught me that we in the media industry have to be aware of what message we send out and that above all, we must maintain our integrity.

From writing scripts and news releases to digital-media marketing and video and audio production, Colby-Sawyer shaped my passions into a versatile skill set that I use to seize business opportunities. The Media Studies Program was so diverse and, because of the small class sizes, so deep, that I graduated feeling equipped to take on this evolving industry. You have to embrace what you’ve learned and trust that knowledge. My Colby-Sawyer education feeds what I do and gives me a professional advantage.

As facilitator of the Wesson Honors Program, I developed essential leadership skills. The caliber of the courses challenged me to think creatively and critically, which has been as asset when developing television story lines. My internship at New Hampshire’s ABC affiliate gave me experience and great contacts. It also compelled me to consider whether broadcast news was the right industry for me. I didn’t want to perpetuate a culture focused on negativity and hyperbole, and the internship helped direct me toward the health and wellness niche.

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Some in my industry are surprised to learn I graduated from a liberal arts college, but Colby-Sawyer has a way of making you feel as if anything is possible. Colby-Sawyer students are grounded in authenticity but encouraged to reach for our dreams, and given the tools to get there.
There are two types of people in the world: Those who wake up and want to go slay the dragon, and those who want to watch the dragon get slayed. My dragon is oil, and I founded Poly Recovery to eliminate landfill dumping, reduce carbon waste, and sustain both the environment and the local economy. We are a plastics processor and full service recycler, and I’ve created a company with people who want to go slay the dragon. We love what we do and are the pioneers who have defined what we call sustainable recycling.

Colby-Sawyer taught me so much. I would not be half the person I am today without that education. Professor Tony Quinn, Professor Beth Crockford, Professor Leon Malan ... that business department is second to none. It’s hands-on and you can’t get lost in the numbers. They pushed us to find ourselves. Colby-Sawyer gave me the ability to say you know what, I can do anything. I have the skills, I’ll bump shoulders with anyone. I was accepted into plenty of other schools, but choosing Colby-Sawyer was hands down the best decision I ever made. I wouldn’t change a thing. If you told me I had a free ride to some Ivy, I’d tell you to forget it. I couldn’t be happier with my education.

The internship program is fabulous; I wouldn’t expect to get a business degree without practical application. What does your résumé say, that you took HR? Wonderful. So did every-one else with a business degree. I got a job right out of the gate teaching CEOs and CFOs all over the country how to use and implement hospital information systems. When that got old, I started selling mortgages. I got licensed, started my own mortgage company when I was 22, and grew it to 75 employees. I sold it when I was 26.

I’ll never forget Professor Malan telling us that a business plan is basically a living organism. The day you try to stick to that piece of paper and follow it like a road map, you’re in big trouble because everything changes every day. I learned that immediately with Poly Recovery, dealing with the largest manufacturers in the area. And you know what? We’ve grown just over 5,000 percent in the last six months.

What my Colby-Sawyer education gave me was the confidence to say I will go out there and I will slay the dragon.
I am a registered nurse in the Intermediate Special Care Unit (ISCU) at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) in Lebanon, N.H. This is the state’s only academic medical center; I trained here as a Colby-Sawyer nursing student and had a job waiting for me when I graduated.

I knew what I wanted to do in life when I was 16 and saw what a difference the nurses made when my grandmother was hospitalized. They answered every question and were so caring. That’s my philosophy now: Be there. I don’t have just one patient who’s in the bed; the family members in the waiting room are all my patients, too.

Colby-Sawyer is a very personal college; everyone knows your name. I loved it there; as soon as I met the nursing faculty I knew I’d found the right place. Professor Shari Goldberg, Professor Renee Vebell, all the others … they’re great. You can go to them for anything, and I still do.

As a nurse, you never stop learning. In fact, I’m working on my master’s degree. I would not feel safe doing what I do if I weren’t constantly learning. We make a big impact on people’s lives; nursing is not just a career, it’s a lifestyle. Now I teach Colby-Sawyer students when they have an instructor on the floor and during their 12-week senior practicum here at DHMC. They get a lot of bedside time with patients—they’re not afraid to go in a room, introduce themselves and take a set of vital signs. They have communication skills, and that is so important. They are very open and relaxed, and with other schools’ students I don’t see that. The relationship between Colby-Sawyer and DHMC is amazing, and a lot of bright futures are coming out of it. It’s a great alliance.

I’m proud to be a nurse. I love what I do, and it all started with Colby-Sawyer.
I majored in Child Development and graduated in May with a teaching certificate. Three weeks later I had a position teaching English, art and history at the private German International School of Boston in Massachusetts.

The biggest thing I learned at Colby-Sawyer is the idea that you’re teaching the whole child. A kid is not just your student in class. He’s also part of a family; he’s a big or little brother, or someone whose parents aren’t together anymore. There’s a whole life behind that student in your classroom. We need to understand who the kids are, what they need, and what excites them to learn. When you study child development and education, you’re really studying developmental psychology.

The philosophy taught at Colby-Sawyer is the constructionist approach, which is literally that the students construct their own education. I use that approach as much as possible now by having my students work independently and with others, aside from teachers. That’s putting your trust into the student.

Many Child Development classes at Colby-Sawyer come with a practicum, just like a science class has a lab. The college has its own early childhood laboratory school, The Windy Hill School, right on campus. Windy Hill offers the opportunity to do real, practical work with toddlers and kindergartners instead of just learning about what a classroom would be like. By the time I graduated, I’d completed three practicums and had experience teaching in two public elementary schools.

My student teaching experience was significant in helping me understand how to be a teacher. I doubt I would have been able to find a full-time job right out of school without it. I student taught in a second-grade classroom in New London for half my senior year. It’s an awesome public school, and I worked with the kids every day. I got to know them and give lessons and learn about classroom management as well as teaching. Now I have student teachers in my classroom!

What makes a good teacher? You have to be a people person. Kids are little people. You have to be outgoing and flexible. We need teachers who are motivated to learn and grow and participate in their own education so that they can pass that love of learning on to their students.
I grew up in New Hampshire and love the outdoors—visiting Colby-Sawyer’s beautiful campus during my college search sealed the deal. It was the perfect size, both inside and outside of the classroom, and everyone was so friendly. Being recognized as an individual rather than just another student was important to me.

College gives you four years to turn into whatever you want while surrounded by resources: fellow students, professors, the library, everything. My best piece of advice for incoming students is to find what interests you and relentlessly pursue it. If you just do what professors assign, you’re not going to be smarter than anyone else. Professors do a good job of bringing you to the door, but you have to take the next step and pursue your interests.

I really enjoyed my professors at Colby-Sawyer; they are passionate about what they teach. I’ve never met a professor more willing to help students than Loretta Barnett. She always went the extra step and even sent me job leads long after I graduated. Professor Bert Yarborough was great, too. I would have my ruler handy to create perfect line drawings but he’d give me a twig he’d found, dip it in ink, and say, “Draw that with your left hand.” His lesson was to explore what you’re not comfortable with and to push yourself.

Creating an online portfolio and completing an internship are absolute musts. Having a polished website that showed my work is what landed me my internships and my first job out of college. I did three internships and at every one of them I made sure I was the first person in the office and the last to leave every day. I made it a point to talk to the CEO and the creative director and ask what they were doing, how they were managing their jobs, getting work. Input equals output! I turned one of those internships into a full-time job that started a week after graduation. I was there for about a year and a half and went from a designer to creative director.

In 2009 I started working for myself full time and I’ve been flat out ever since.