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### Bioregionalism: A Mindful Walk into the Greater Living Community

According to Jim Dodge, “the way we choose to live is the deepest expression of who we truly are.” On a college campus, this remains true. From a bioregionalist perspective, the focus on self is reduced by the importance of incorporating the individual into the living environment. This perspective, allows us to be fully present, serve, and protect the place we inhabit. However, when eager-high school graduates arrive at their new homes for the next four years, they immediately become absorbed into the embodiment of “the student.” At Wake Forest University, though, conforming to “the student” perspective is not always a positive thing. Instead, we propel ourselves to meet the demands of a highly competitive academic environment where the exclusion of outside forces, commitments, and relationships brings greater success. All too often, we are enveloped into a life focused on the self. Wake Forest students begin to adopt this self-centered mentality as we worry about our future, our busy day, and how we will achieve our personal goals. This mindset is encouraged by our community. The emphasis on self limits the depth of life that is offered at Wake Forest; self-absorption and environmental oblivion create a strong relational disconnect within the greater community-- with nature, and with place.

This disconnect from the present environment is evident in the rhythm students find walking to and from class each day. After observing the traffic of students in between classes on the quad, certain habits occur in most individuals. The common practice is for a student to walk head down, absorbed in the world inside his/her cell phone. The eyes and consciousness of the student is shuttered. The present moment, the gentle breeze ushering in an afternoon rain, goes unnoticed. Even if we are not focused on our phone, there is an active effort to *not* make contact with community members that walk past. We avoid eye contact or simply pay no regard to those who walk by us. Our blinders are rigidly aligned to only include the immediacy of the self's desire and thus the active, rich community of nature and fellow students is neglected. Many students are oblivious to the way the shadow of Wait Chapel's steeple is cast into the sky at night. While we can argue that our thoughts of schoolwork or texts to our friends are more pertinent than acknowledging shadows or sensing the early morning mist, the bioregionalist argues that this engagement is vital. The constant thought of “what do I need to do next?” inhibits the ability to see, hear and feel the present place we inhabit. The schism between the individual and the environment exacerbates the already stressed relational connection to the community of students at Wake Forest. Even when we are physically present with a friend, are we mentally present? Or is the phone lighting up and the to-do list lengthening? It is important that as students, we acknowledge this disconnect from our environment. Whether it is the ecosystems teeming with life around us or our human peers, it is crucial that we reconnect and pay attention the living and breathing world around us.

An illustration of the ways that students succumb to the mindset of self-preservation and self-absorption here on Wake's campus is in our inability to view nature as an escape, a source of freedom and a life-giving resource. As students, we daily express complaints and frustrations; we run through our mounds of homework, one-up each other with our number of paper assignments, and drown ourselves with the endless numbers of tests and projects. All the while, we trap ourselves within the confines of various buildings, libraries, and dorm rooms, apart from civilization. Never, then, does the thought cross our minds to go out and experience, explore, rest in, and be renewed by the intoxicating smells of nature, the coolness of the wild air, and the infinite beauty that nature encompasses. In turn, we do not see the contribution that a relationship with nature can bring to our lives. In attempt to alleviate some of our stress, we ironically trap ourselves further within the confines of the gym for a run on the treadmill, neglecting and separating ourselves from the dirt

paths, roads canopied by colorful trees, and open fields free for play. Not only are we depleting any appreciation for nature, but we are affecting the places we inhabit by choosing to use energy and resources indoors on a nice day, rather than investing in the natural gym out of doors. However, in our defense, we are not wholly-conscious of our actions. To a degree, we have become creatures of habit, conditioned to settle for a counterfeit nature, one that we neither benefit from, nor fight to protect and preserve.

The chasm between our community and the environment is widened with students' tendency to calibrate the earth's seasons through commercial culture. For example, it is common to hear a Wake student exclaim "You know it's fall when the Pumpkin Spice Latte is here!" Social media and conversation stir as the Starbucks decorations transition into holiday festivities and students begin to sip on gingerbread and pumpkin sugar syrups. Meanwhile, there is no discussion of the extended "golden hour." The sun's position alters and shadows stretch even larger on an October's eve. Nature's hints of the changing seasons are overlooked. The miraculous, colorful death of leaves on the avenue of oaks is neglected. Instead, students rely on materialism to mark a mere calendric change. The age of the towering trees is one of the few remaining links connecting the past and present histories of campus. The tapestry of willow oak, magnolia, and dogwood trees continues to renew students with fresh oxygen, but few students acknowledge this daily symbiosis. We limit ourselves to a contrived construction of seasons and become oblivious to the persistent manifestation of the greater, more powerful change taking place in nature.

The constructed distance between students and the environment is also present in how we unnerve our peers when we publicly sit outside without a clear purpose or task. Recently, I sat on a bench along the edge of the quad without music or a book, and no homework in sight. I noticed a few curious looks as people passed. Eventually, a friend approached me and asked "what's wrong?" This question is unsettling. Have we become so out of tune with nature that our peers worry when we are still? The pace and length of our schedules have altered our realities so that simply being present in the breathing world has become unnatural and wrong. This social construction needs to be adjusted so that we are able to find a sense of self-reflection, peace of mind, or spirituality within the environment without judgment. It needs to be acknowledged and socially accepted that stillness is natural and human. In these moments of stillness, we understand the worth of our actions and the significance of our time as undergraduates. Instead of off-putting, moments of solitude and silent meditation should be recognized as a necessary component of self-growth within the environment in which we inhabit. These moments are imperative in realizing our role as students within the small community of Wake Forest if we wish to fulfill the motto of "Pro Humanitate" (for humanity) when we depart from the University and situate ourselves among a greater community.

The role of the student needs to be redefined into one of both appreciation and exploration of nature. The Wake Forest University status quo of achieving both high academic and social demands prevents students from being present in the surrounding environment, and ultimately inhibits students from living deeply. As students, we become enveloped in our everyday routines and are blinded by opportunities for active engagement within the campus and surrounding community. In order to forge a deeper connection with the world, the relationship between the student and living environment, both nature and human, must be reconciled. A more comprehensive culture exists in redirecting the focus away from recursive, social media habits, detaching from the status quo, and moving towards a more bioregional view. In this paradigm shift, one is able to recognize the significance of engaging the self in the greater world. This recognition allows the student to form a better sense of connection with the campus community by activating the human senses in order to explore, learn, and understand the place in which we live. In short, an individual's self expands and we begin to find identity within the interconnectedness of our world. From here, advocacy for protecting the surrounding environment can be encouraged.

Whether through increased, active involvement or simple appreciation of natural beauty, students are able to identify with the need for environmental protection. This effort encompasses more than just the physical surroundings, as students now understand that in protecting nature, you also protect yourself. When students are able to be fully present in nature, we become activists for environmental literacy, awareness, and sustainability, not only in our habits but in our relationships as well.

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Alex Gibson

### Responsible Progression: An Analysis of Wake Forest's ThinkPad Policy

The world is moving faster than ever before. Distance, something that previously inhibited trade, communication, and personal relations is a decreasing factor in both business and personal decisions. The curtain to other cultures, language, is being quickly raised. What is it that is making continents feel puny, and humans feel so powerful? What is turning Mandarin Chinese, one of the most difficult languages to learn, into a few keystrokes of translation? Computers. They have elevated the human race to levels unprecedented. Wake Forest University recognizes the power of computers and, among other schools and businesses, gives a computer to every single student and faculty. But with eyes focused on shiny new computers with the latest hardware, we fail to see what happens to our mildly outdated computers.

No one in the U.S. buys their computer; we rent them. Constructed in Taiwan, Mexico, China, and Indonesia, the computers are sent to the Western world for people to use. We use them for a couple years only to develop a wandering eye for the new technologies, like the extremely important fingerprint scanners to protect students' Netflix passwords and Spanglish compositions. And so a whole new round of computers are purchased, and we resist all temptation to smash our computers Office Space style and instead responsibly send them to an electronic waste company to be safely disposed of in this era of environmentalism, right? A lot of the time, our computers are actually sent right back to the countries that made them (not normally known for their workers' rights or environmentalism), and the cycle is complete.

Most people don't know that they own something in Guiyu, China. Each year, this city receives 1.5 million pounds of electronic waste, or e-waste. With 5,500 businesses devoted to stripping down the electronics for lead, gold, and copper, the city simultaneously thrives (\$75 million a year) and dies off of the e-waste. The wells, streams, and groundwater have become poisoned from this industry. Many citizens experience directly-related health problems. With no regulations, employees experience all types of medical conditions, like lung disease. Guiyu is reporting extremely high rates of lead poisoning in children as well as high rates in miscarriages. The city is literally killing itself, and we're selling them their poison that they are forced to chug for survival.

From both an IT and social perspective, I think giving each student the same laptop is a great idea. It levels the playing field, standardizes software, and allows students to bond through complaining about their "cavemen-era pieces of shit." But a new laptop every other year is unnecessary. If your car is feeling a little off, you don't buy a new one; you inflate the tires, change the oil, and get a car wash. Maybe you even replace the transmission, but you don't scrap the entire car for a new one. Every day I hear complaints of slow ThinkPads. I glance over and see five Word documents, four Notepads, three browsers, two Excel spreadsheets, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Keeping a computer running for four years is not difficult: close what you're not using, occasionally remove unused programs, delete old files, defragment your hard drive, and you can even clean your internal fan and buy more memory if you really need some more speed. Computers don't just "get slow" or "get old." They are not organic beings. They are not permanently broken or slow. They do not need to be replaced.

I propose we continue giving students new laptops every two years. It's working well and it keeps students happy. But instead of giving them a new physical laptop, just wipe all their computers. Reset it to factory settings. The computers will operate like they're brand new and it will show students that the computers are slow because of them and largely reduce e-waste at Wake Forest. Being at the forefront of technology and education in the United States means responsibly and resourcefully providing the latest technology. Technology is intended to accelerate mankind, but I fear technology's foot is growing too big. It is pushing on the brake and the gas pedal simultaneously and when the gas runs out we will finally realize that technology advanced faster than mankind's wisdom.

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Sophie Kacha and Anmargaret Warner

### "Spirit Places"

Jim Dodge's term "spirit place" embodies the interaction between a significant place and a person's inner emotional connection with nature. Dodge defines it as a "predominate psychophysical influence where you live" where a "psyche-turning power presence" occurs. Dodge continues to describe the spirit place as somewhere that "You have to live in its presence long enough to truly feel its force within you and that it's not mere descriptive geography" (357). Before reading his essay, neither of us were familiar with the notion of a spirit place, but we recognized the concept and sentiment Dodge describes right away. Instantaneously the images of our own unique familiar spots that we are connected with appeared in our minds. These spots, one a secluded pond and the other an open shore line, are representatives of the physical truths of our being. In his description of the term Dodge mentions two needs: an obvious need for oxygen, and a more subtle need for moonlight. Spirit places correlate to this idea of a subtle need by feeding the psyche. The two places we describe are locations of comfort and serenity that ultimately feed our souls with a replenishment of peace through the natural unification of our setting in nature. They are our spirit places.

I am from Rye, New York, your stereotypical dominantly white and wealthy community that thrives off drama, gossip, and competition. In such a town an adolescent girl is in need of an escape, therefore I found one and can now identify it as my spirit place. A short walking distance from my home, down a winding road, and through a few yards of tall grass hides a large serene pond. I found this place walking my Golden Retriever one day in the late afternoon. She tugged me trying to chase a duck and thankfully I gave in. The sun was a deep orange halfway into its set, reflecting off the dark water perfectly. The reflection is beautifully encompassed by the tall grass and graceful trees creating an ultimate sense of seclusion. Then straight across from me is an old abandoned red barn, so unique in comparison to the luxurious modern homes that dominate the streets of my hometown. This place is unlike any other in Rye, and the feelings that overwhelmed me when my spirit place and I first met were surreal. I was rejuvenated; I had a sense of complete relaxation that overcame me.

Taking a deep breath my mind was drawn to an uplifting sentiment of peacefulness, which is what I believe a spirit place ultimately should provide. This remarkable picturesque place is so unique within my town and gives me the most heartening warmth and empowerment. The cohesiveness of the privacy, seclusion, and entirety of the view reveal my true spirit place.

I am from Ocracoke, North Carolina, a barrier island on the far eastern coast that separates the Pamlico Sound from the Atlantic Ocean. By design, the island is isolated and quaint. Without any movie theaters, bowling alleys, or shopping malls to explore, I spent much of my childhood outside in the thick salty air with my brother and friends. I didn't recognize a link between my sense-of-self and surroundings until I left for boarding school in Pennsylvania. Reorienting myself in the middle of farmland was difficult. Whenever I came home for holidays and schools breaks I'd head straight to the wide, undeveloped shoreline. But the beach was more than a place for me to sunbathe on the sand; it was my doorstep to the Atlantic Ocean. The ocean has become one of those special facets in my life like the Counting Crows sing about - "Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got til it's gone..." - Once I left Ocracoke, I realized I had a subtle need for the ocean that I'd previously ignored. I'm not a religious person, but the ocean invokes a spirituality in me that takes work for me to find elsewhere in my life. I'm much stronger of a swimmer in the ocean than in any kind of pool. I can confidently navigate waves, ride them to shore, and stay afloat like a mermaid. When I'm in the ocean, I feel at peace. If I'm flustered and overwhelmed, a dip in the water soothes my mind. But I've also seen the Atlantic in times of fury: when a hurricane enveloped the island my family went to gape at the roaring waves and receding shoreline. I respect the ocean and its moods of serenity and rage. Because I hadn't heard of a "spirit place," I'd never recognized the Atlantic Ocean as such, but now I realize that that's exactly what it is for me.

These "spirit places" function as elemental parts of our identities. They are not ruined when shared in the company of others, but we've found that their effect on us is stronger when we visit them alone. Both "spirit places" are linked to water, but we feel this has to do more with the expansiveness of the places and the subsequent sensation they create of being connected to something bigger than ourselves. We crave these places in times of stress and homesickness, but also spontaneously. While the pond and the ocean are both geographic locations, visiting them sparks within us an uninhibited connection with the larger world, enabling us to feel comforted and at peace. Because the pond in Rye and the ocean in Ocracoke nurse and feed our psyche, they are our "spirit places."

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Marina Flick, Jenny Magruder, Gordon Maas, Helen Williford

### "The Upper Quad"

1. A "spirit place" arises when a person finds a special importance in a specific place, intertwining a physical location with the intangible significance that the individual assigns. When considering our spirit place as a group, we all found ourselves focusing on one location on campus: the Upper Quad. We felt that this location encompassed Wake Forest University and what it means to be a Demon Deacon, in a symbolic sense. We found that the WFU motto, *Pro Humanitate*, centers around the Upper Quad, also serving as the location for Hit The Bricks, Project Pumpkin, and numerous other outreach activities. Furthermore, we all felt a deep connection to the place, as

individuals and as a community, knowing that the Upper Quad, Wait Chapel, and the surrounding framework represent the entire student body. While we all share a deep connection with the Upper Quad, the significance of the place has evolved through our individual experiences and thus resonates differently for each.

*Helen:* To me, a spirit place is a place where I can feel a connection to something greater than just myself. My connection to this school and my spirit place here actually goes back about 35 years. My parents met here at Wake Forest and because of this I have been a Wake Forest fan basically since I was born. When looking at pictures of my childhood there is no shortage of baby pictures of me in a WFU onesie or later in front of Wait Chapel in a black and gold cheerleading outfit. My spirit place here at Wake Forest is the upper quad because this is where my parents first met their sophomore year 33 years ago. Standing on the upper quad on my first tour of Wake I pictured my parents meeting here and felt a sudden devotion to the school and the community. Everyday I walk down the upper quad on my way to class and smile because this is where my family first began. Tradition and family both tie people to places in a powerful way. I feel like Wake Forest is my second home, and even though my parents aren't physically here, I still feel like I am carrying on a tradition that connects me them.

*Marina:* For me, the upper quad functions as a beacon of tranquility. Whenever I need to clear my head, or get it together, I go to the upper quad. Particularly, a few of my teammates and I will stunt on the quad, outside of formal practice, just to work on mastering our stunts with our partners. We find that the location of the quad is of particular significance, as stunting with the chapel and the archway in the background resonates within all of us, as we remain centered on why we work so hard to promote the school spirit of a place we love so much. Ironically, when it's raining and we're forced to practice indoors, we just aren't as productive as we are on the quad. Furthermore, I often take study breaks late at night and walk a few laps around the quad. The combination of the fresh air and the beautiful buildings late at night remind me why I'm here and what I'm a part of, and that gives me the motivation to push through the late nights and the early mornings.

*Jenny:* Every time I walk up onto the upper quad and see Wait Chapel, the sight of it affects me more and more each time I see it. As I am nearing the end of my time at Wake Forest this spring, I can't help but think about all the memories that have happened on that quad and in the chapel. I first fell in love with this school my senior year when I was on a college tour. It was a gorgeous day, and there were students on the quad playing Frisbee, football, and tanning. It just looked like a place where everyone was truly enjoying their experience. Later that week, I sent in my early decision application, ready to be part of that community I saw. Ever since arriving on campus, there have been countless memorable moments on the quad that have shaped my college experience. The first time we entered Wait Chapel during Convocation, rolling the quad the night we found out about Bin Laden, squeezing past a huge crowd in order to get a slice of pizza during Seize the Quad, watching the Christmas lights turn on for the first time, and lying outside on the first warm day of spring. The special part about all these times is not just the events themselves, but the friends that were involved in making these memories. That is why the upper quad is a spirit place for me. After graduation, whenever I see a picture of Wait Chapel, I will remember not just the school itself, but the friends that helped to make Wake Forest the greatest four years of my life.

*Gordon:* Although I only recently learned the meaning of a "spirit place," I realize that I have been building them my entire life. In my hometown of Boston, Fenway Park embodies the heart of the city and the core of my being, one that has been growing since my first game at the age of

three. At my grandmother's house on the Maine coastline, the weathered granite dock and extensive tidal pools began as sources of summer time fun but now represent so much more—a link to my family and childhood. Lastly, I have been gradually building a spirit place at WFU over the past four years, and Wait Chapel exists at the center. As a touring high-school senior, the Chapel served only to delineate Wake Forest from a myriad of college pamphlets and information sessions. As an incoming freshman, the symbol of Wait Chapel actualized during orientation, and though I was unaware, began initializing the synthesis of important relationships and memories. As an underclassmen, the association with the Chapel expanded to include sub-par Subway sandwiches, community building events like Project Pumpkin, and a friendly Upper Quad to read, unwind, or play catch on a sunny spring day. By weeknight, this beacon of hope transforms into a veritable lighthouse, beckoning the masses of stumbling degenerates towards the safety of their dormitory beds. Now, as a battle-hardened WFU Senior, I stand on the precipice of graduation, which will complete the construction of my “spirit place” on the Upper Quad in late May. Wait Chapel, once a symbol that welcomed the Class of 2014 with a promise of excitement and adventure, now commends us for our educations and propels us into the “real world.” Reflecting upon my three major spirit places, I am presented with an epiphany: the significance of a place evolves over time, and the impact only becomes apparent upon some movement away from that location. Therefore, a spirit place forms through personal progression by combining a tangible place with the intangible associations of memory and meaning.

While we all define our connection to the Upper Quad differently, we each feel a powerful and spiritual connection to this campus. Often, one cannot truly understand the significance of a place until they have moved away, and perhaps this explains our deep attachments. Over four years as a student away from home, we are completely immersed in the “Wake Forest Bubble” and the impact of leaving comes to full fruition upon our abrupt removal over Winter and Summer breaks. The Upper Quad becomes a spirit place within a spirit place, and only in these periods of separation can we realize the importance of our connections.