

FROM THE EDITOR



The Newcomb College Institute's mission of educating women for 21st century leadership is fulfilled in many ways, including connecting students to a variety of opportunities to enhance their interdisciplinary scholarship. One major component is the Newcomb Scholars Program, which is a cohort honors program that selects 20 freshman women in each class to participate in a rigorous feminist leadership learning experience throughout their undergraduate education. This *Women Leading Change* journal is composed of exemplar case studies students write during their second- or third-year Scholars class.

Margaret "Meg" Maurer, was a senior Newcomb Scholar of Forest Lake, Minnesota set to graduate in May 2019. She published "Love in the Time of Logging: Conflicting Methods of Eco-Activism in California's Old-Growth Forests" in *Women Leading Change* Volume 3, Issue 1. Tragically, she passed away in an accident on March 5, and the Newcomb-Tulane community has continued mourning the loss of one of our most exceptional members. Meg was an outstanding student—valedictorian of her major, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, she wrote her honors thesis on ecological degradation in conjunction with the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe. She was an incredible artist, professionally as a scientific illustrator of tropical birds and insects for Dr. Tom Sherry, and personally, producing a collection of over 100 drawings and paintings in a variety of styles. She was also talented with language: she was fluent in Spanish and wrote beautiful poetry. She won numerous awards and grants during her time at Tulane, and was posthumously awarded the highest honor for undergraduate women who embody the spirit and mission of the Newcomb College Institute, the Under the Oaks Award. Truly a renaissance woman, Meg is missed by so many.

As I edited the articles that follow in this issue of *Women Leading Change*, I reflected on Meg's leadership. As her fellow Newcomb Scholar, roommate, and one of her best friends, I had the privilege to share in the laughter, tears, and late-night reckoning behind the scenes of her incredible work. Beyond her accomplishments and myriad skills, she epitomized what it means to be a leader. Intellectually, her commitment to feminism permeated her academic work, from choosing research topics that engaged indigenous women, to planning a career that centered women's empowerment in the context of scientific and artistic exploration. Deepening her feminism was a way of life, and she strove to sharpen her convictions through constant dialogues on the race and gender dynamics she encountered daily. Her probing challenged us all, and the conclusions we drew helped us develop healthier, more confident, and more inclusive approaches to the world.

Meg's leadership was also particularly powerful because of the qualities she brought to her everyday interactions and personal life. She entered every space with positivity and enthusiasm. Those who worked with her professionally described her as passionate and brilliant, yet always kind and humble. In her mentorship and tutoring, she patiently tailored her lessons to the students, teaching without judgment or condescension. She modeled the courage to admit what she didn't know and consistently dove into new disciplines to learn new skills, most recently teaching herself GIS programming to complete her thesis. For her friends, she offered unprompted encouragement at every challenge, reiterating time and again "You are amazing!"

and “I am so lucky to have you in my life!” Her quieter side promoted self-reflection and self-care, through which she taught me how to communicate my needs for support. These attributes allowed her to create an incredibly strong community and showed the power that committed friendship has to help us blossom.

Throughout *Women Leading Change*, authors frequently examine feminist dilemmas by highlighting specific women leaders’ pivotal actions or decisions in the context of their personal qualities. The goal is to present scenarios that help readers learn what creates successful leadership. Reflecting on Meg’s life and understanding all she embodied is important in this vein of exploring leadership, as she was a role model for implementing everyday feminism accessible to us all. Her pursuit of ever-deeper understanding and intentional action set an unparalleled example of what it means to live your truth. Most importantly, in each of her triumphs and tribulations, she invited the growth of everyone alongside her. To be her friend was to be inspired and empowered. To me, these are the ultimate qualities of a leader. Her life and leadership serve as an inspiration for us all; may we all strive to carry with us her love, strength, and commitment to bringing people together in service of a better world.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Williams
Newcomb Scholar
Class of 2019

Kelsey Williams graduated as a Newcomb Scholar with a BS in Public Health in May 2019. She is living and working in New Orleans before pursuing graduate school in sexual and reproductive health.