

NEW NHS GRAD EYES HEALTH POLICY, MEDICINE

By Bill Cessato

When **Roland Dimaya (NHS'09)** first came to Georgetown as a high school student, the Los Angeles native knew he had found the place to begin his studies toward a career in health and medicine.

On May 16, Dimaya moved one step closer to his career goal when he earned his degree from NHS.

“As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to go into medicine. I’ve always wanted to be a doctor, and I knew that I would be entering some kind of pre-med program,” Dimaya recalled. “The human science curriculum just really spoke to focusing on the human system, and I knew that would help me toward my goals.”

Today, Dimaya still has plans for medical school, but his undergraduate experience has broadened his horizons. Dimaya is now pursuing his master’s degree at the Yale School of Public Health.

“I’m focusing on microbial disease, and I hope to pursue research internationally and later receive my M.D.,” the human science major said in May.

Dimaya said the disciplines within NHS made him a well-rounded student.

“My research and academic interests are an intersection of nursing, health policy, international health, and human science,” he said.

And he has been able to blend those interests together through his research.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

In summer 2008, Dimaya traveled to the Philippines to study the effects of nursing migration on the country’s health care system.

With a nursing shortage in the United States, many recruiting agencies have turned to foreign countries to replenish the country’s workforce. In turn, the recruitment has prompted a significant drain on global health systems.

During his research abroad, Dimaya held focus groups with nursing students and professors. He conducted site visits to regional and private hospitals. He also met with public health professionals and government representatives.



Roland Dimaya (NHS'09) in front of St. Mary's Hall

Kathryn Leonhardy Fioravanti, an assistant professor of international health who closely studies international nurse migration, called Dimaya’s work impressive.

“As a faculty member, I find it fulfilling to see an undergraduate student employ his knowledge and love of the various facets of health care to address a real global problem,” said the professor who advised the NHS student about his research. In addition, NHS Dean **Bette Jacobs** and Dimaya worked together to shape his study interests.

For Dimaya, whose parents are from the Philippines, the experience also allowed him to combine his cultural heritage with his passion for science and health care.

“As I grew at Georgetown, I found myself growing closer to my ethnic culture,” he said. “My studies abroad were able to take my interest in medicine, my strong roots in being a Filipino, and my interest in service to the community and combine them all for my future plans.”

Josefina Tuazon, dean of the College of Nursing at the University of the Philippines at Manila, provided her expertise to Dimaya.

“His diligence and dogged pursuit of his personal and

professional goals make me wish he was one of my students,” she said. “I know he’ll do my university and country proud (with his research).”

Aside from his work in the Philippines, Dimaya also pursued scientific research at Georgetown University Medical Center as part of the human science honors program. For his honors thesis, Dimaya studied language function and Tourette’s syndrome in the lab of neuroscience professor **Michael Ullman**.

“While I was defending my thesis, there was this great feeling of being able to inspire a kind of awareness in others with my research,” said Dimaya. “It also showed the product of all the hard work I had done.”

Dimaya also participated all four years in the university’s annual Undergraduate Research Conference. During his junior year, he acted as co-chair of the conference’s student planning committee. And in his senior year, he

served as chair.

“I think I’ve grown as a leader at Georgetown,” he said.

GETTING STUCK ON GUMSHOE

Through the Georgetown University Math and Science Hands-On Enrichment (GUMSHOE) program, Dimaya used his leadership skills to tutor D.C. high school students in math and science.

Dimaya launched the program, which now includes 80 undergraduate tutors who work with Coolidge Senior High School, H.D. Woodson High School, Georgetown’s Meyers Institute for College Preparation, and the Smithsonian’s Lemelson Center Spark!Lab.

Dimaya noted that launching GUMSHOE was not a single-person effort. Half the credit, he said, must go to **Jonathan Brower (C’09)**, who majored in biochemistry at Georgetown College.

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Dimaya during the on-campus Discovery! Summit



Dimaya presented Frank Torti, former acting commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, with a gift at the 2009 Undergraduate Research Conference.

“A lot of people quote (Mahatma) Gandhi, ‘be the change you want to see in the world.’ I didn’t realize how I could embody that quote until I reflected on my time here at Georgetown.” –Roland Dimaya

“When Jon and I developed GUMSHOE, we really wanted to address the math and science education gap in two ways,” he said. “One is tutoring students who are struggling. And the second is mentoring students who are already excelling.”

Brower and Dimaya co-founded the program with the help of **Suzanne Tarlov**, associate director of the Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service. She praised their efforts.

“Roland has been so impressive as a leader,” she said. “He wants to understand the school system, rather than criticize it, and he really believes that math and science are the way out of poverty.”

On April 25, GUMSHOE welcomed participating high school students and their families to campus for the Discovery!Summit, GUMSHOE’s capstone project.

The students worked with “GUS,” the human patient simulator in St. Mary’s Hall; analyzed the physics behind bridge-building; and put their chemical knowledge to use by running tests on city water.

“The most rewarding thing for me in co-creating GUMSHOE is to see how an idea that was written on a piece of loose-leaf paper can be transformed into tutors working in the classroom, giving students that spark of realization and understanding,” Dimaya said.

Just as Dimaya’s initial visit to the Hilltop had a profound effect on his academic decisions, he hopes GUMSHOE may do the same for other high school students.

“A lot of people quote (Mahatma) Gandhi, ‘be the change you want to see in the world,’” he said. “I didn’t realize how I could embody that quote until I reflected on my time here at Georgetown.”