

HIGH *when nature & minds meet* MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

— **SPRING 2021** —

HIGHLIGHTING ALUMNI SUCCESS





PATHWAYS OF SUCCESS

This winter and spring have been invigorating ones at HMI. Last year, we had to send students home early because of the pandemic. The uncertainty of spring spilled into summer: we did not know if HMI would be able to operate in-person programs at all despite knowing our mission was more relevant than ever. This knowledge motivated us, however, to explore every pathway toward re-opening. Today, campus is alive with energy thanks to Semester 46 who is taking full advantage of their time together. Further south, HMI Gap cohorts are exploring the desert landscapes of the southwest. And, in March, 100% of our employees received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Having these programs operating and fully enrolled despite the ongoing pandemic is a milestone that did not happen by accident—it took lots of planning and determination on behalf of our employees and a mission worth the effort.

As we reflect on the importance of HMI during a time like no other, we recognize that the impact of the HMI experience lives on far beyond a student's time on campus. Students leave HMI with the leadership, communication, and community-building skills to pursue their wildest dreams and make the world around them a brighter place. This newsletter is dedicated to highlighting our remarkable alumni community, and to sharing their pathways of success.

THROUGH OUR LENS THIS WINTER & SPRING:



TO FOLLOW MORE OF HMI'S ADVENTURES, FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

THE NEXT 400 MONTHS:

ALUMNI STORIES SINCE THEIR TIME AT 10,200 FT

By: Danny O'Brien, Head of School



“HMI’s programs come just at the right time in the lives of our students: when they are asking who they are, who they want to be, how they will get there, and what skills will help them achieve their goals.”

HMI is not about four months in the lives of our students. It is the 400 months that come after. This edition of our newsletter proves this. HMI lives inside Evan Daniel, Bern Kenneally, Brayhan Reveles, Cakey Worthington, and Kelly Latterman. It lives inside alumni serving our country in the armed services, teaching in our nation’s classrooms, and raising children who will make the world better than it is today. Lessons memorialized while leading peers through a downpour in Utah, receiving tough feedback on the back deck on Who’s Hall, or sharing bravely an unpopular opinion during a class discussion continue to shape the lives of HMI alumni in countless ways.

We have known these things since the first semester students walked through the swinging plywood “door” of the Barnes Building for RMS 1 and our first Gap student ascended a tower in Moab. Now we have a better understanding of why our alumni regularly point to HMI as a peak experience in their lives. Researchers at the University of Utah recently completed a study of HMI alumni, along with graduates of

other schools in the Semester School Network (SSN). The study has resulted in published articles in several academic journals, including the Journal of Experiential Education and the Journal of Transformative Education.

HMI’s programs come just at the right time in the lives of our students: when they are asking who they are, who they want to be, how they will get there, and what skills will help them achieve their goals. The study shows that HMI guides students and answers these questions through setting up intentional and immersive mentorship opportunities with adults, providing chances for genuine reflection about impactful experiences, and offering residential communities where students can focus on growth in an environment relatively free from distraction.

Can you reduce HMI’s “secret sauce” to these principles? In the following pages, our alumni share their own stories of the places they have gone since their time at 10,000 feet. We are always excited to hear yours, too. ■



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY CONNECTED

By: Barrett Donovan,
Director of Communication & Engagement, Semester 26 Alum

The alumni community is a strong one—there are over 2,000 HMI of us spread across the country and world. HMI alumni are a thoughtful, intentional, and extremely fun bunch making important impacts in their communities. Curious how we keep the HMI alumni community connected?

Check out some of our alumni resources:



ALUMNI COUNCIL

The Alumni Council is made up of alumni who represent a range of HMI programs, professions, geographic regions, and interests. The Council convenes in Leadville for a long weekend every spring to reconnect with HMI, discuss opportunities for alumni leadership in HMI’s future, consult on HMI’s strategic planning and fundraising, and to stimulate the growing HMI alumni network. If you are interested in joining the Alumni Council, please contact HMI’s Director of Communication and Engagement, Barrett Donovan, at BDonovan@hminet.org.



COLLEGE CONNECTIONS

HMI alumni attend a broad array of colleges and universities. Our Advancement Office works to connect prospective students with HMI alumni at schools in which they are interested. Schools with larger groups of HMI alumni have HMI College Connections Representatives who serve as the point of contact for HMI alumni interested in learning more about the school. We also often host HMI reunions and gatherings at schools with big HMI cohorts.



HMI DAY

Each year on October 2nd (10/2 representing HMI’s elevation at 10,200 feet) we celebrate HMI Day! HMI Day is a time for the HMI community to come together over good food and shared experiences. In the past, alumni have hosted HMI Day events in over 15 cities across the country. Last year, we hosted our very first virtual HMI Day and it was wonderful to connect with folks spanning many different HMI programs and geographic locations.



HMI CONNECTS

We offer an online networking platform specifically for HMI alumni to use to connect with each other, host events, offer and receive mentorship, search for and share jobs, and to stay updated on the goings on at HMI. Are you an alum that isn’t signed up yet? Making an account is simple at HMIConnects.org.



DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM THE NATURAL WORLD

By: Evan Daniel, Product Designer for Packs & Gear at Patagonia, Semester 14

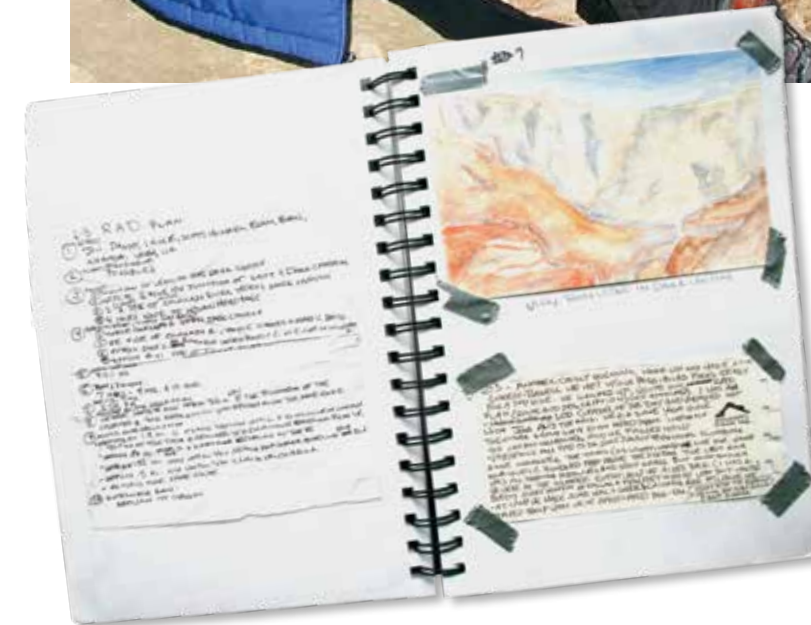


As a 16-year-old who, when permitted, happily stayed outside to snowboard from dawn till dusk, I was immediately intrigued by HMI when I learned about the spring ski expedition. I had never spent a night out in the winter and I was both intimidated and curious about the idea that you could not just survive but thrive in the harsh and snowy conditions of the Rocky Mountains in winter. The big blue Patagonia Das Parka that I rented, and which became my armor and shelter during that trip, went home with me and became something of a uniform for me during the Vermont winters of my college years.

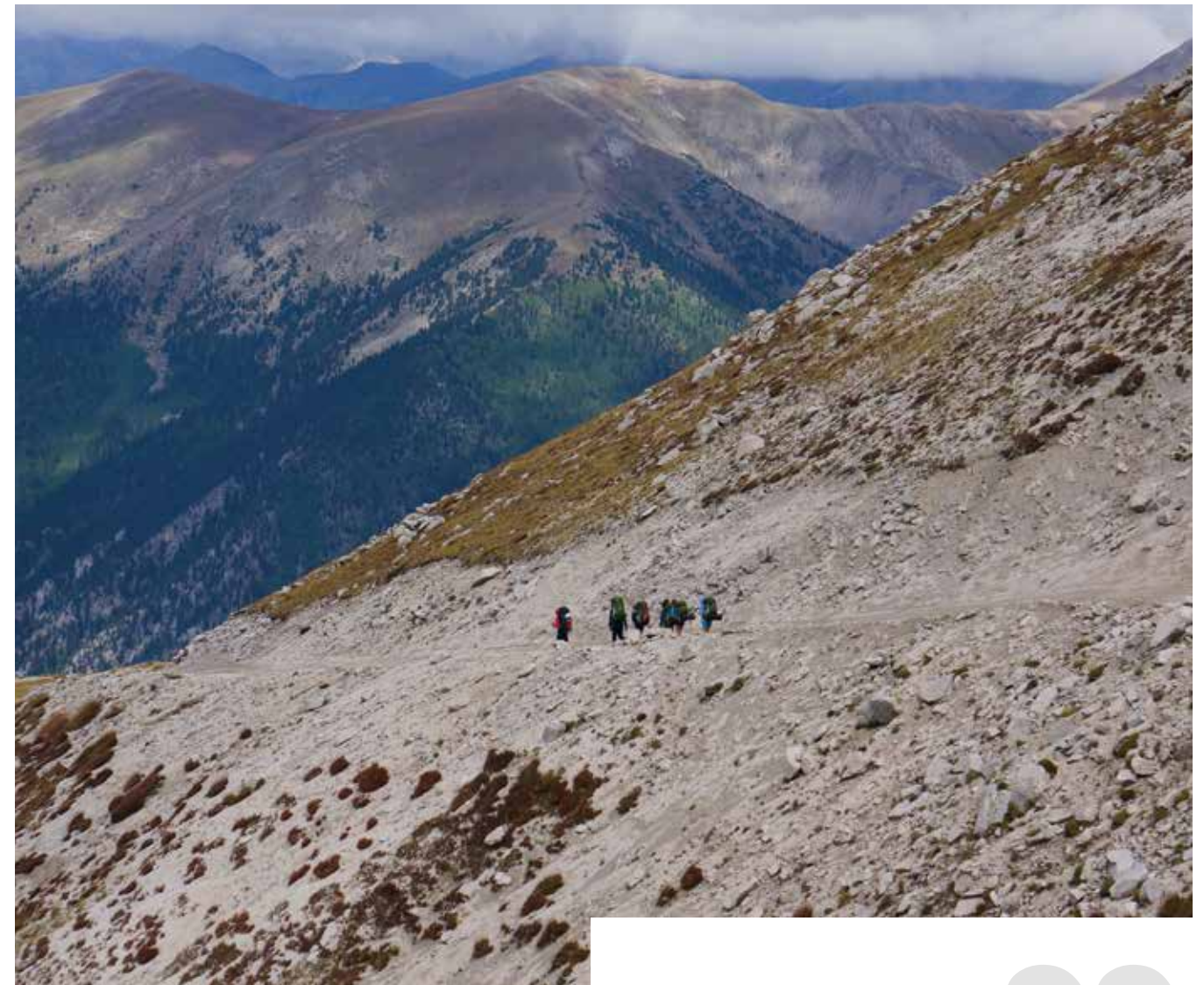
I kept a journal during my semester at HMI, creating a watercolor and written entry for each day. Looking back on these pages it seems that there were two clear themes that inspired me: the beauty of the landscapes I was witnessing and the tools, techniques, and organization that made the experiences possible. Drawings of landscapes were often accompanied by diagrams of logistics, like how to pack a heavy bag or variable route plans.

Five years later, when confronted with the “what do I do now?” moment of college senior spring, I imagine that HMI was on my mind. I don’t doubt that the love of the outdoors, confidence in venturing into the unknown, and curiosity to acquire new skills that I gained from HMI led me to pivot from my major in Architecture, borrow my mom’s sewing machine and begin independently building a portfolio of outdoor apparel and softgoods. I don’t doubt that having the privilege to develop in that culture of support and infinite possibility led me, with no years of experience, to apply to a job that required seven just to get a foot in the door.

I have been a product designer for Patagonia for a bit over a decade now, designing apparel for a number of years, and now as the designer for Packs and Gear. I enjoy this career for many of the same reasons I loved my experience at HMI—each day is different. Each day brings the opportunity to learn something new, from researching product life cycles and impacts, sketching concepts, sewing prototypes, or testing designs in the field. Like the journal I kept 16 years ago, each day truly ‘draws’ inspiration from the natural world. ■



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MAKING ME WHO I AM

By: Bern Keneally, Senior Data Engineer at Netflix, Semester 9

It has been a long strange trip from Nightingale-Bamford in Manhattan to my current role as a Senior Data Engineer at Netflix and HMI played a pivotal role.

At HMI, I learned that you must always be willing to adapt to changing circumstances (we've all been caught in that unexpected blizzard in August and have to scramble to ensure the tarp is as tent-like as possible) and to trust yourself to make the best decisions possible with the information available, and have tried to embody and apply these principles throughout my life and career. I had not grown up dreaming of being a Data Engineer (in fact I don't think the profession widely existed when I was at HMI...) or even of studying engineering. When I discovered that I loved math and physics, HMI gave me both the self-confidence and appreciation of hard work required to study physics as an undergrad

at Colorado College then to pursue a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from The Colorado School of Mines.

HMI places a strong emphasis on seeing the parallels between the backcountry and the real world, teaching me to not only understand the specific skill or lesson, but to also see the more abstract meaning or translatable skill. When I saw the parallels between the numerical modeling and data processing I did as a PhD candidate and the work being done by a big data startup, I took a path that seemed strange to my advisor and the other PhDs in my class, and accepted my first Data Engineering job. Although that startup went bust after eight months, the skills I learned laid a foundation for a career in Big Data. These experiences enabled me to move on to work in Corporate Strategy at an internet service provider, building and architecting the data system for and eventually

building and leading a team of data scientists, data engineers, ML, and software engineers at a small AdTech startup. After helping them reach profitability, I knew it was time for the next big adventure.

As I mentioned, it has been a long strange trip that has landed me as a Senior Data Engineer at Netflix, and while by no means a smooth one, well worth it. HMI taught me that hard work often allows one to do and see things most people can only dream about, and it's true! Every day I am incredibly lucky to be able to work with stunning colleagues to help improve the infrastructure that powers the Netflix platform (and let's not forget, getting to see the next season of *Stranger Things* before it's released to the public).

Thanks, HMI. The confidence, self-awareness, and life skills you gave me have been critical in making me who I am, and invaluable throughout every stage of my life and career. ■

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TAKING THE UNCOMMON PATH

By: Brayhan Fernando Reveles Olivas,
Healthy Eating & Active Living Coordinator at Lake County Build a Generation, Semester 38



My time at HMI was a formative time in my leadership development as I continued to build my “lead from behind” style.



As I stroll through the trees on the mountainside, I often think back to my time at HMI. Growing up in Leadville, I'd heard tales from friends of their adventures at HMI. When I was accepted, I was thrilled for what was to come! I knew HMI would be a culture shock of sorts. I was ready for that; excited to meet new friends and to broaden and heighten my perception of self and other cultures. My time at HMI was a formative time in my leadership development as I continued to build my “lead from behind” style. To me, this style is important because by providing tools and skills to others, they will become copowered in the process and pass their learnings onto others.

I've carried these learnings over into my current work. I am currently employed at a local nonprofit organization that works to improve the health and well-being of the Leadville and Lake County community. As part of my job, I work to build relationships between the Latinx community and local organizations to improve the health outcomes of our community. The work occurs through policy change, physical infrastructure improvements, and community organizing. I strive to copower community members to engage in systems change within their communities in order to create grassroots change.

During these last years, there have been many situations and projects that have made me proud and continue to excite me. One of the more tangible achievements was the installation of new crosswalk signage at two infrastructure improvements in educational and recreational locations in Leadville. Coordinating the local government and Colorado Department of Transportation on this felt like herding pigeons at times, but it is hopefully the beginning of many beneficial changes to come. Additionally, this past year, a Food Access project that I was a part of culminated in a \$200K grant to create a mobile food pantry and continue our food work in the community.

If I were to provide any advice for HMI alumni thinking about their next steps in life, it would be this: don't be afraid to take the uncommon path. Because others are not doing it, does not mean that you are doing it wrong. I wish you all health, felicidad, and success in your endeavors—keep exploring. ■



If you'd like to read more about my work and our community's work, you can read the following articles or reach out!

healthyplacesbydesign.org/a-conversation-with-brayhan-reveles/
rwjf.org/en/library/features/culture-of-health-prize/2019-winner-lake-county-colorado.html

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF NATURE

By: Cakey Worthington, Director of Forest Carbon at The Forestland Group, Semester 18



into non-forested land uses including agriculture and development. The money for carbon offsets incentivizes and enables landowners to manage their forests with a conservation ethic.

I work for a timberland investment company that manages over two million acres of sustainable, natural forests throughout the US, Canada, and Central America. The scope of the impact of my work is truly inspiring to me. As our Director of Forest Carbon, I manage our current carbon project portfolio and identify new forestlands in our ownership to implement and develop carbon offset projects.

A tremendous portion of the forests in the US, especially on the East Coast, are privately held. This is the frontier of conservation opportunities for our country's forested resources. The ability of our trees to store carbon is substantial and these evolving and emerging markets for carbon storage are key to mitigating the effect of climate change and keeping forests as forests.

On a personal level, this work is very rewarding and fun. I get to travel to remote forests around the country, explore hidden habitats, and meet the people and communities who manage these forests and call them home. Not only do I feel like I'm making a difference in the global effort to fight climate change, but I also enjoy getting to connect to the land. There is always something new to learn; the trees and the people who live there have stories to tell. At HMI, I learned to read the landscape through science and place-based learning. By helping to conserve these forests through sustainable management and carbon offsetting, we can continue to learn from them. ■

HMI taught me about being connected to nature, learning from the environment you're living in, and that nature has an intrinsic value worth protecting. Near campus, I remember conducting snowpack studies and learning that hill slopes and snow accumulation affect where trees can grow due to the availability of water resources. North-facing slopes get less sun, so the snow melts more slowly and the trees can grow better than the south-facing slopes. In the canyons, we saw how water shapes the rock and ancient peoples leave marks of their society carved into stone. Through scientific examination or cultural and historical stories, we learned about the places we were living and adventuring in.

Today, I work in the world of forest carbon offsets. Carbon emissions from industrial processes and land conversion are driving the climate crisis our society is facing. It is undoubtedly a very complicated and multifaceted approach we must take to tackle this problem—one solution comes in a very familiar, natural form. Trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Through photosynthesis, trees use the sun's light energy to convert carbon dioxide in the air into fuel for their cells. The converted carbon is stored in the biomass of the tree as it grows—about 50% of a tree's biomass is carbon. Carbon emitters such as oil and gas companies can pay forest landowners to store carbon to offset the emissions they produce but cannot otherwise reduce through internal process improvements.

This market turns out to be really important for forestland owners. In the absence of a market for carbon, landowners at a small and large scale seek to maximize their economic outcome through (often unsustainable) harvesting of timber, parcelization of their land, and conversion



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I am grateful for my time at HMI and I am honored to now serve in a position where I am able to support student access to high quality, relevant, place-based education.



COLORADO BASED & EDUCATION FOCUSED

By: Kelly Latterman (Semester 21),
President of Steamboat Springs Board of Education & District Director for Junior Achievement

At HMI we learned by doing, took on leadership roles, were exposed to the natural beauty of Colorado and experienced the impact of passionate educators with high expectations. My semester at HMI was the catalyst for my adult life being Colorado based and education focused.

After attending Colorado College, alongside many HMI alumni, I moved to Denver and worked at the National Conference of State Legislatures. There, I provided expertise to policymakers around the country, providing evidence-based research on school leadership, rural education, and governance. I testified on best practices, policies and programming, and delivered in-state technical assistance for legislative committees and state stakeholders. After lots of travel to state capitols, I was ready to establish roots in a smaller community and now call Steamboat Springs, Colorado home.

I quickly found myself wanting to get involved locally and after a yearlong appointment decided I would run for office, hoping to bring my national experience and background in data-driven policy to our local public schools. One of my priorities is closing the achievement gap between traditionally high achieving students and student subgroups that are consistently classified as not meeting expectations. I also want to see the board prioritize social and emotional wellness in addition to academic achievement and growth, ensuring our graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to function in our evolving world.

I was elected to the Steamboat Springs Board of Education in 2019 and currently serve as President. My responsibilities include managing our Superintendent, administering a significant annual budget, engaging stakeholders, addressing constituent needs and building consensus around district decisions. Lately, I have been absorbed by trying to make the best possible decisions for the health, safety and success of 2,600 K-12 students during a pandemic.



I also serve as District Director for Junior Achievement. In this capacity I work with local volunteers and classroom teachers to bring project-based programming that promotes entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and college and career readiness to K-12 students across Northwest Colorado.

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HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



We are excited to announce that starting Fall 2021, the HMI Apprentice Program will be stipend based rather than tuition based in hopes of attracting a more socioeconomically diverse cohort.

There will be seven apprentices per semester and they will each receive a \$4,500 stipend in addition to room and board.

APPLY NOW OR TELL A FRIEND!

**FIND MORE INFORMATION
ON OUR WEBSITE,**

hminet.org/apprentice

APPRENTICE PROGRAM

