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## Sameer Honwad, Assistant Professor of STEM Education, travels to Bhutan

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## Sameer Honwad

### Assistant Professor of STEM Education ~ travel to Bhutan



Sameer Honwad, UNH professor of STEM education (l.) with dean (r.) of Royal Thimpu College in Bhutan

Assistance from the CIE development grant helped me travel to Bhutan, in order to continue my ongoing work on environmental decision-making and formal curriculum design to support sustainable decision-making processes among youth in Bhutan. The trip was also meant to build partnerships with the environmental science faculty in Bhutan and to explore the possibility of designing a cross-cultural collaborative learning environment for undergraduate students at UNH and the Royal Thimpu College in Bhutan.

In the last several years, I have been working on a long-term research project in Bhutan that is designed to find out how Bhutanese youth merge different knowledge systems and make decisions to tackle urgent environmental problems. As part of the research project I also examine and analyze the environmental sciences curriculum that the youth study as a part of their undergraduate environmental sciences course. Based on my research I have made recommendations to the curriculum designers about how to design an environmental sciences

curriculum that would support sustainable decision-making among the youth in Bhutan. Using these recommendations and other evaluations and assessments the Royal Thimpu college (RTC) in Bhutan has designed a new Bachelors in Environmental Management. During the two weeks (February, 19, 2015 – March 4, 2015) that I spent in Bhutan, I delivered a workshop to the faculty of the Royal Thimpu college on how to deliver content in a way that is relevant to the socio-cultural background of the students.

I interacted with individual faculty to help them design their curriculum units in a way that aligns with the context of the youth in Bhutan. I also continued my collaboration with the environmental sciences faculty so as to map out the next steps on understanding how to deliver the content within the new environmental management bachelors program so as to optimize learning among the students. During this two-week visit I discussed with the Dean and the Associate Dean of RTC about designing an assessment for the new environmental management bachelors program. Finally I discussed with the leadership at RTC possible models of undergraduate student exchange as a part of the environmental sciences bachelors program.



Prof. Honwad (standing) delivering faculty workshop at Royal Thimpu College in Bhutan

Given the strong Buddhist tradition in Bhutan and the influence it has on educational practices, I made it a point to visit the nearby

Tango (pronounced: Thango) University of Buddhist studies. The university is located about 7 miles to the north of the capital city Thimpu. The recently-built university is connected to the Tango monastery that was established in 1688. Understanding the Buddhist culture in Bhutan is important as socio-cultural practices influence learning, along with decision-making in everyday life.

This trip allowed me to map out my future research goals in Bhutan. The trip also opened up conversations on how to design good study abroad programs that involve across culture interactions between students in Bhutan and students in the United States of America. I would like to take this opportunity to thank CIE for providing funding to help with furthering my partnerships in Bhutan. Latest research in science education has pointed out that building partnerships with different communities is extremely important and strong research community partnerships can support high quality science education programs for the public (<http://researchandpractice.org>). Building long-term research partnerships also allows for valuable longitudinal data to be collected and finally in environmental science education it is important to have local as well as global perspectives. I am grateful and excited that CIE recognizes and supports the building of long-term research and educational partnerships, thus allowing for exchange of knowledge and scholarship at a global scale.



Prof. Honwad on the way to Tango University near the capital city of Thimpu





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