Cocochó Trip by Laura Barbas-Rhoden

Every once in a while, you get to see storylines of hard work converge in a single, energizing experience. Recently for me, that experience was 36 hours in the Peruvian village of Cocochó during a trip I made as interpreter-friend of Little River Roasting, our local coffee company.

Our crew journeyed to meet a cooperative of farmers doing their best to do right by way of environmental, business, and community sustainability: they cultivate shade-grown, organic, fair trade, coffee in high elevation plots that nurture biodiversity and protect watersheds.

As the moon rose over the Andes, and our pickups pulled into the deeply rutted main street, people poured around us, welcome banners bobbed, and a band played. Storylines converged. Months before, an entrepreneur (and Wofford alum) took a calculated risk that aligned with his values and bought their coffee. His daughter (a Wofford alum), who a few years before had shot footage for a documentary during a term abroad, snapped photos for marketing. On the Andean side, coffee growers toiled for decades for a better future. The international cooperative movement gave them means to organize. Education in prestigious Peruvian universities sharpened their agricultural expertise. And finally, consumers who increasingly choose sustainable coffee created a market for the product.

Want some advice drawn from our mountaintop experience? Become part of an awesome story. Buy from or invest in farm-to-consumer enterprises, learn a language, promote education, advocate for sound environmental practices, and take your liberal arts love into the world for good.
Yale University offers several graduate degrees in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. The Master of Forestry (MF), the oldest forestry program in the western hemisphere, is “designed for individuals who want to be at the forefront of forest resource management and policy.” The Master of Environmental Management (MEM) “provides students with scientific understanding of ecological and social systems that can be applied in policy or management context.” And the Master of Forest Science (MFS), and Master of Environmental Science (MESc) are designed for students pursuing scientific research in forest related or non-forest related topics.

There are also several opportunities to pursue joint-degrees in Management (MBA), Law (JD), Architecture (MArch), International and Development Economics (MA), International Relations (MA), Divinity (MDiv or MAR), and Public Health (MPH). See the school’s website at http://environment.yale.edu/ for more information.