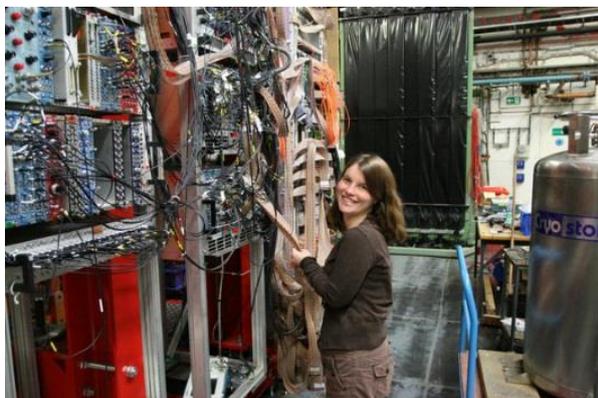




Former Pupil Profile



Former pupil Evangeline Downie (Class of 1997) tells us about her career as a Nuclear Physicist and from her time at Hamilton College.

Where are you now?

After studying for an MSci in Physics and a PhD in Physics at the University of Glasgow, and spending 3 years as a postdoctoral researcher in Germany, I am currently an Assistant Professor of Physics (Tenure Track)

at The George Washington University, Washington DC, USA.

Tell us about your career highlights

There have been many! Getting my crane driver's licence (I'm a nuclear physicist and our detectors weigh 12 tons). Reading on a recent grant review that I'm "well established in the field". Getting to take US undergraduate students to Germany every summer for research and introducing many of them to Europe for the first time. Becoming Technical Coordinator of the experiment in Mainz, Germany that I started out on as a PhD student, Recently becoming the first female voting member of the steering committee (the board that manages the collaboration's activities) - it's the physics equivalent of getting your first car keys - the people under whom you apprenticed now think you should be making the decisions with them. Last, but definitely not least, watching the PhD students I helped train, graduate and start training the new students, and seeing my postdoctoral research assistant hand in his notice as he got a fellowship - getting to train the next generation and watch them grow up and train others!

What did you learn at Hamilton College that you have taken into your career?

The School Shows were fantastic preparation for teaching Physics at University - now we are teaching in a "Flipped Classroom"- style, where there are only mini-lectures and we spend most of the time working through problems and doing mini-experiments and demonstrations. I learned so much from Mrs Duncanson and the, then, Miss Dick about laughing and just carrying on no matter what happens and working hard to prepare the Show - all of which comes in handy! Hamilton College was always a place where the teachers were intelligent, warm, friendly and human and we were all on the same team.

What advice would you give to current Hamilton College students?

Choose something you enjoy doing as your career. Whatever you pick, there will be aspects of your job which will make you mad or frustrated, and things that annoy you, but if you can find something you enjoy in general, it will go a long way to balance out the stress, hard work and politics you have to deal with! I helped look after summer students

from my current university when I was a PhD student in Glasgow and a postdoctoral researcher in Germany, little thinking I'd be taking the students there myself now. I learned a lot from those experiences which is really helpful now! So be friendly, and helpful, and talk to others in your field - make contacts, you never know when you might need to work with them later!

Any special memories from school?

Trying to get the School Newspaper out on time! Preparing for competitions with the debating team. Preparing the set and performers ready for the School Show. I only wish that we lived close enough to send our children there when the time comes!

Evangeline also visited the Physics department when she returned to the UK for a visit earlier this year.