

## A PLACE IN THE SUN

Beginning next fall, several Exeter students will have the chance to spend their fall term living and studying at an environmental education school whose mission is to “develop citizens who maintain responsibility for themselves, larger communities and the biosphere.”

The Island School was founded in the Bahamas in 1999 by Chris and Pam Maxey, former teachers and administrators at the Lawrenceville School. Their goal was to take students out of traditional classrooms and “connect them to place, through continuous interaction with local culture and environment.” Today the Island School attracts students from more than 160 schools in the United States and the Bahamas, for semester-long programs at the school’s Cape Eleuthera campus. They study tropical marine biology, math, environmental art, the history of the Bahamas and the literature of the sea, but much of their learning literally takes place in and around the ocean.

“It is a rigorous experience and a life-changing one,” says Associate Dean of Faculty Ron Kim, who oversees Exeter’s off-campus programs. “Also, unlike Exeter’s other off-campus offerings, which are primarily for seniors, the Island School is open only to 10th and 11th graders who have completed one year of introductory biology. This will give returning students an opportunity to share what they have learned for a year or more with the rest of the Exeter community.”

In mid-February, Patrick Leslie '97, who served as Exeter’s environmental educational fellow from 2003 to 2005, returned to campus to share what he’s learned during the two years he’s spent working at the Island School and the neighboring Cape Eleuthera Institute, which seeks to research and promote sustainable programs in the developing world.

The Island School, said Leslie, offers an immersion experience in sustainability. Students help maintain many of the various systems that run the school, including the collection of rainwater for the school’s drinking water supply; the luxuriously verdant “wastewater garden” that doubles as the school’s sewage treatment system; the wind turbines and solar panels that supply 90 percent of the school’s energy; and aquaponic and aquaculture projects that provide a portion of its food. “Our whole philosophy,” said Leslie, “is that there’s no such thing as waste. Waste is just fuel for another process.”

Students also receive SCUBA training and participate in sea kayak expeditions. “Chris Maxey is a former Navy SEAL,” Leslie said, “and he places a special emphasis on developing students’ minds, bodies and spirits.” That includes training for and participating in either a half-marathon or a four-mile open ocean swim. Said Leslie: “You’ll be amazed at what you can do.”

—B.B.



*At the Island School, Exeter’s newest off-campus offering, students not only study sustainability, they live it as well. Overseen by Exeter’s former environmental education fellow Pat Leslie '97, Island School students build a solar-water heater (and take it for a test drive).*

To learn more about the Island School, go to [www.islandschool.org](http://www.islandschool.org)