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## **Student Dynamo Accepts Challenge**

Beth Rogers Thompson

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# Student dynamo accepts challenge



Chipo Dendere '08 completed an internship at the Carter Center in Georgia last summer where she met former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn.

The Linfield College senior swallows a bite of yogurt and flashes a smile at an acquaintance in O'Riley's café. She admits she loves to sleep – 10 hours a night – and watches junk TV.

Typical college slacker? Here's how Chipo Dendere '08 spends her waking 14 hours: as president of the student body (Associated Students of Linfield College); forensics team member; International Club president; founder of the campus Global Action Club; and Sunday school teacher for McMinnville middle-schoolers.

Oh, yes, and she works 20 hours a week in Nicholson Library and the Observatory and does collaborative research with Linfield professors. All this, while maintaining a 3.6 GPA as a double-major in political science and psychology. And she will graduate in May after only three and one-half years.

Still, she insists, "I'm so lazy that I only do the things I really want to do at the time." And those 18-credit semesters? "I love to read, and I take courses I enjoy. When you enjoy it, it makes it easier to earn good grades."

Dendere grew up in Zimbabwe and attended boarding school with the same classmates from age 10 in Marondera, about an hour from her home in Harare.

Several friends chose East Coast schools; Dendere deliberately went where she would know no one. Besides, she and her classmates, unfamiliar with U.S. geography, thought they'd get together on weekends.

Despite bouts of homesickness and financial stress, Dendere blossomed. Political science professor Dawn Nowacki, whose research projects Dendere has worked on, witnessed a transformation from "this kind of tentative, confused and really lonely person when she got here. She has come so far in her intellectual development and had these incredible experiences."

One of those was Dendere's internship last summer at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga. She researched four nations: Palestine, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Ghana, and the African Union, for the Center's democracy program, which includes elections monitoring.

"I met people who talked about things I love to talk about – international relations and politics. We had intense conversations," Dendere says.

And yes, she met former President Jimmy Carter. She visited his home in Plains, Ga., and also met wife Rosalynn, whom she describes as surprisingly funny.

Dendere was one of two interns, out of 32 in the program, chosen to make a presentation before the Center's Board of Trustees. Later, during a photo session, Carter pointed her out, declaring: "She's going to be a president someday."

"I wouldn't put it past her," Nowacki says. "I remember thinking, when Chipo first told me, in our very first conversation, that she wanted to be president of Zimbabwe, that this was unrealistic and somewhat arrogant, and that perhaps she was not serious. She assured me that she was quite serious, and over the course of the next year, as I got to know her and observe her talents, I could see that this goal is actually quite realistic and attainable for her. I told her I want to be part of her government."

For now, Dendere has a more modest goal as student leader: "I want to get students on campus involved and really knowing what's going on." She also wants to increase the visibility of student government.

As for her future, Dendere is applying to graduate schools, hoping to pursue a Ph.D. in comparative politics.

Roommate Sharon Tan '07 admires Dendere's tenaciousness. "Chipo proves anything is possible if we are determined enough," she says.

Adds Nowacki, "Working with someone like Chipo is what makes it worthwhile to be a professor. Such students keep us going!"

– Beth Rogers Thompson