

# Six on Track

By J. Kevin Cool

Colby's six new tenure-track faculty unanimously praise the College's research support and teaching ethos when describing why they accepted job offers here. Even those whose undergraduate experiences were at large institutions say they appreciate Colby's small class sizes and faculty-student rapport.



PHOTOS BY MARC GLASS

**Leo Livshits**, assistant professor of mathematics, says he has found Colby "to be nearly an ideal environment."

"I am as impressed with the mathematics faculty's level of scholarship and dedication to quality teaching as with the motivation and learning skills of our students," he said.

Livshits's research deals with operator theory, an area of pure mathematics that "lies at the intersection of linear algebra analysis and topology." He received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and "felt the need to seek employment in institutions with a personable feel."

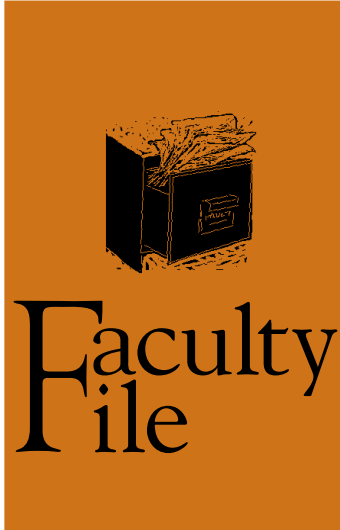
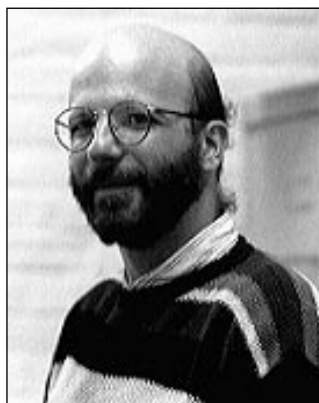
"Given all I've heard about Colby's commitment to high standards in both research and teaching it didn't take a lot of persuasion on Colby's behalf to have me join the faculty," Livshits said.

A squash player and canoeist, Livshits already counts himself "a dedicated Railroad Square film fanatic."

**Anindyo Roy**, assistant professor of English, specializes in colonial and post-colonial literature and theory, particularly literature of the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean. He says his passion is archival research—"mostly in dusty, obscure libraries in England and in India"—which recently has led him to track down obscure Victorian best sellers and travel books.

"Colby is ideal for me because there are very few distractions here, leaving me with ample time to do my writing," Roy said.

**Mariano Plotkin**, assistant professor of Latin American history, specializes in the culture and politics of Argentina. He currently is researching why Argentina has the highest percentage of psychoanalysts among its population of any country in the world.



Roy holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Arlington and comes to Colby from Southern Methodist University, where he lectured in the English department.



"Argentina is a country as well known for its shrinks as it is for the quality of its meat," he said.

A lecturer in the history department at Harvard before coming to Colby, Plotkin received his Ph.D. at the University of California-Berkeley in 1992. He has been impressed with the friendly environment among colleagues and students at Colby and with the freedom faculty are given within the curriculum. "I can teach almost whatever I want," he said. "The people in the History Department are extremely receptive. Colby is also very generous with the faculty in terms of the resources for teaching and research."



**Sandy Grande**, instructor of education and human development, is interested in how culture plays a role in education and in teaching about diversity. She established and was director of the office of Latino and Native American students and cultural affairs at Kent State, where she will receive her Ph.D. in 1996. Last year she worked at Navajo and Hopi schools in Arizona and New Mexico.

She returns to New England, she says, to be closer to her family—she grew up in Connecticut.

The time, commitment and concern Colby faculty afford their students is extraordinary, Grande says. And she welcomes the challenge that the teaching environment presents, noting that her senior seminar class has only six students.

Grande says members of the Education Department "seem to exemplify the kind of scholar I wish to become. I felt that this would be a good place to be mentored."

She says Colby's faculty mentoring program is "a lifesaver," and she credits Associate Professor of Religion Nikky Singh for easing her adjustment period. "She has made me look forward to the day that I might be a mentor to a new faculty member," Grande said.

**Tarja Raag**, assistant professor of psychology, strongly advocates bringing research into the classroom. Previously a visiting professor at Kenyon College—she received her Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1992—Raag believes students learn more if they see the subjects they are reading about. “By learning about psychology through actual hands-on lab experiences, students receive a better education than if they simply sit in a classroom,” she said.

The opportunity to work closely with students was one of the attractions of Colby, Raag says. “It is much more satisfying from the teacher’s perspective to have small classes and to teach students who have a wide range of educational interests and backgrounds,” she said.

Raag’s research interests include studying how infants and adults perceive and respond to different emotional tones of voice. She also is interested in studying what factors are involved in children’s preferences for toys and how they use those toys. “Colby is unique in that it offers a lot of support for research,” Raag said. “It was very important to me to find a school that provided plenty of research opportunities, and many liberal arts schools do not.”



**Elizabeth DeSombre**, instructor in environmental studies and government, comes to Colby from Harvard, where she will defend her Ph.D. dissertation in December. She has researched various aspects of international environmental law—particularly how U.S. environmental sanctions have influenced international relations—and she also has studied ozone depletion and attempts to



regulate open-ocean fishing.

DeSombre feels at home at a liberal arts college; she attended Oberlin as an undergraduate. “I wanted to be at a place where both teaching and research are

valued, where students are interested and excited about learning,” she said.

“So far the students seem willing to work hard and challenge the conventional wisdom, and they didn’t even complain too much about the ninety four-dollar course pack I made them buy,” DeSombre said.

DeSombre has lived most of her life in cities. “But the campus is so beautiful it almost makes me forget that I like cities so much,” she said.

## PUNDITS & PLAUDITS

### Power Ploy

*New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis and *Newsweek* syndicated columnist Jane Bryant Quinn each quoted President William Cotter in articles critical of recent attempts by a Louisiana congressman to link federal aid to private colleges with policies regarding single sex fraternities. Cotter was one of three college presidents—along with those from Middlebury and Bowdoin—who received letters from Rep. Bob Livingston, a nine-term Republican who hinted that colleges that ban fraternities outright may be deprived of federal research grants and federal student aid funds. Livingston, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, asked the three colleges for assurances that they would end their “discrimination” against fraternities.

Cotter told Lewis, “if one Congress can say you must have fraternities, the next one can say you can’t have them. Those decisions should be for private colleges.” Quinn, who quoted Cotter as saying, “Do you want Congress deciding on what kinds of groups are allowed on college campuses?”, said he was correct in upholding the colleges’ autonomy on the issue.

### Proof Positive

Associate Professor of Mathematics Fernando Gouvêa received the Lester R. Ford Award for exceptional expository excellence from the Mathematical Association of America.

Gouvêa’s article, “A Marvelous Proof,” which appeared in the *American Mathematical Monthly* in 1994, discusses the concepts behind mathematician Andrew Wiles’s proof of Fermat’s Last Theorem.

### Labor Pains

Assistant Professor of Economics Michael Donihue ’79 told the Associated Press that workers in Maine, like their counterparts nationwide, are not benefitting from recent corporate profits.

“Workers just aren’t getting the share of the pie that they should,” said Donihue, who last year worked for President Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisors.

“Not all of the news is bad, however,” Donihue said in the AP article, which was widely published in New England. “Stagnant wages are keeping inflation in check thus reducing the effects of less than robust earnings,” he said.

### The Price of Democracy

A study co-written by Associate Professor of Government Tony Corrado, paraphrased in articles by the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* and *Newsweek*, among many other media outlets, found that although U.S. campaign costs topped \$3 billion in 1992, they were not significantly higher than two years before after adjustment for inflation.

The study, conducted by Corrado and Herbert Alexander, a University of Southern California political scientist, pointed out that the \$3.2 billion spent on the presidential campaign was less than Americans spend annually on dog food and less than annual advertising budgets of Proctor and Gamble and Phillip Morris. The report, “Financing the 1992 Election,” was the ninth in a series issued every four years by the Citizens Research Foundation.