OWU STUDENT AARA RAMESH ’14
MERRICK HALL RESTORATION REMARKS

Wednesday, June 26, 2013
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When I tell people I’m from India, the question I most often get is why Ohio Wesleyan. Most people would not expect a small college in the middle of Ohio to be known to someone from India. It is a valid question. After all, I am – and I “Googled” this figure last night – 8,610 miles away from home. When I came here in August 2010, it was the first time I’d been away from home, from my family, really. I have no family, nor friends here. So why OWU?

Well, I don’t know how much you know about the Indian education system, but we don’t really have “liberal arts colleges.” When students apply to institutions of higher education, they do so with a major in mind, and they stick to that field pretty strictly. I wasn’t and still am not a hundred percent sure what I want to do with my life, so the idea of committing to one discipline was oppressive.

During my research for colleges, there was one thing that jumped out at me that comforted both me and my mother: OWU’s large international community. The number stands somewhere at 11% today I believe, and for a college of our size, that is no small feat. But it wasn’t till I actually came here that I realized just how large and supportive this network is, from organizing to pick us up at the airport as freshmen, to taking us shopping for winter clothes (the importance of which I’m sure you understand), to organizing trips to New York and D.C. over Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, when international students may not have the means to go home nor somewhere to go. I have experienced all these things and I can tell you that it has certainly made my life at OWU more enjoyable and a lot easier.

But non-internals benefit, too. I have friends at large state schools and at other small private schools, but none of them talks about travel quite in the way an Ohio Wesleyan student does. What this college does, is not only encourage, but foster a thirst for travel among its students that stays with them long after they graduate.

Tragically, my own study abroad experience has been limited to being here, but I have friends who have studied abroad in China, Argentina, Spain, Morocco, India and Belgium. I know people who have been on Travel-Learning courses to exotic locations like Costa Rica, Brazil, Alaska, Mexico, London, Scotland, and Vietnam, and who have gotten TiPiT [Theory-to-Practice] grants to places like Nepal, Barcelona, and Dubai. Programs such as the OWU Course Connections allow students to approach global problems from an interdisciplinary and multidimensional angle. I do believe that an Ohio Wesleyan education prepares its students for being global citizens and global leaders.

Of course, none of these experiences would have been possible without the generous support of our alumni who want me and students like me to have a transformative college experience in the same way they did. I do believe that this new Merrick Hall initiative will broaden the scope of possibility for all of OWU’s students, including the freshmen gathered here today.

As a senior, I get asked a lot about what I want to do with my life. Honestly, at this point, I wish I knew. But I do know that no matter what challenges I face, I have been uniquely equipped by my Ohio Wesleyan education to face any challenge I might encounter. This initiative proves that Ohio Wesleyan has a bright future ahead of it, and I, for one, cannot wait to be a part of it.