

# Young Alumni Award

Sahan Dissanayake

Class of 2004

It is a pleasure to honor Sahan T.M. Dissanayake with this 2014 Young Alumni Award for his outstanding accomplishments since his graduation from Ohio Wesleyan ten years ago.

At Ohio Wesleyan, Sahan was a Trustees Scholar and member of Honors Program. The recipient of the Alice E. Batchelor Award, he was named Outstanding Economics Major, and was elected to Omicron Delta Epsilon Honorary. He was a participant in the Summer Science Research Program and was active in a variety of clubs and organizations including the Association of Computing Machines and the Mathematical Association of America.

Following his graduation, Sahan received an M.S. Applied Mathematics (2010) and a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics (2011) from the University of Illinois, where he was named *Outstanding PhD Student Award* by the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics. Today, he is an Assistant Professor in Economics at Colby College and an Assistant Professor in Economics (by courtesy) at Portland State University.

His main research centers on ecosystem services and land conservation, and uses choice experiment surveys to understand preferences and mathematical programming to model optimal resource allocation. His survey work analyzes preferences for grasslands in Illinois, the tree shade program to manage water quality in Oregon, payments to prevent deforestation in Nepal and Ethiopia, and improved stove adoption in Ethiopia; this work received the *Robert Ferber Dissertation Award for Excellence in Survey Research* from the University of Illinois Survey Research Lab.

His mathematical programming work has focused on optimal conservation land use within military installations and optimal school districting formulations. His research interests have expanded to studying preferences and spatial subsidies for renewable energy and externalities affecting hydropower generation.

Sahan's research has been presented at more than 30 venues including the World Congress on Resource and Environmental Economics, the Association for Environmental and Resource Economists summer conference, the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) annual meeting, and the Environment for Development annual meeting. He also has received multiple awards for teaching excellence including the Louis V. Logeman Graduate Student Teaching Award and the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Graduate Student Teaching Award. In October, 2013 Sahan spent two days at Ohio Wesleyan, lecturing to current OWU students and giving an Economics Department Lecture titled "The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity" that provided a series of examples of how and why economics plays a key role in protecting and restoring nature.

We are delighted to honor Sahan with one of Ohio Wesleyan's inaugural Young Alumni Awards and congratulate him on his significant achievements.

May 17, 2014

