

Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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Class of 2020 Takes in the Sites of Florence, Italy



Photo: Jennie Thomas

By Trevor Jones '20

From March 3rd to March 10th the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program's freshmen class dove into the Italian culture. This study tour in Florence exposed the Scholars to the art, architecture and history of Renaissance Italy, while establishing a foundation for being comfortable in foreign language environments.

In Florence, we stayed in

a convent, which during World War Two hid Italian Jews from the Germans and Italian fascists. The rich history of the convents only served to amplify the rich history of the city of Florence, which we had the pleasure of calling home for a week.

We arrived Saturday afternoon, and after checking in at the convent, we hit the ground running—touring the city with Fr. Keenan. This first day consisted of settling in and adjusting to the new time zone, but the night culminated in a fantastic dinner at a small restaurant across the Arno river from our accommodations. This dinner, like every other, was characterized

by seemingly endless amounts of amazing food and fantastic conversation.

Sunday revolved around the Duomo, the largest cathedral in all of Florence and the best known building in the city. The dome on the top of the cathedral was the masterpiece of Brunelleschi, who was the first architect since Roman times to build a dome on top of a building. Throughout the afternoon, aided by Fr. Keenan's knowledge of Renaissance history and art, we toured the Duomo complex, including the baptistery, the cathedral itself, and the accompanying museum. This culminated in a long

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climb to the top of the Campanile, where we saw an unobstructed view of Florence from one of the tallest buildings in the city. After exploring the Duomo complex, we were free to explore the city on our own and took time to walk around the narrow roads of Florence, finding new places like outdoor markets and small gelato shops.

The next day, we traveled outside of Florence, across the Tuscan countryside and into Umbria to visit the hilltop town of Assisi, the medieval home of St. Francis. This included touring the Portiuncula—the ancient church that, according to the legend, St. Francis rebuilt upon the order of God. This was followed with a tour around the Basilica of St. Francis led by Fr. Keenan. After a late lunch, we were able to shop around the stores of Assisi by ourselves taking in the medieval architecture of this small city.

Tuesday brought us to the Academia, where we were able to see the David, Michelangelo's masterpiece and the most famous sculpture in the world. We sat around the David for an hour, taking in the detail and beauty of this masterpiece. After this we traveled to the Bargello, a Renaissance prison which has since been transformed into a museum, and Santa Croce, a church that houses the tombs of famous Florentines like Michelangelo and Machiavelli. This was followed by free time, where we traveled around Florence—shopping and haggling at local markets.

Wednesday involved a tour of the Uffizi. During the reign of the Medici, the Uffizi served as the



center of Florentine political power, but it was transformed into a world class museum in the late 1700's. At the Uffizi, we saw a rich variety

of Renaissance art, including the Birth of Venus by Botticelli. The rest of the day was free for us to explore. Some Scholars returned



Photo: Jennie Thomas

to see sights we had already seen, some took a cooking class on Tuscan cuisine, while others relaxed and ate a peaceful outdoor lunch in one of Florence's many town squares.

Thursday was our last day in Italy. Early in the afternoon, we visited the Medici tombs and palace. Following this, we split up to get in last minute shopping and sightseeing. Later in the evening, we all met up with Father Keenan and Jennie to climb to the Piazza di Michelangelo—a small medieval chapel that provided a hilltop view of the sunset over Florence. Here we toasted to a fantastic trip and reminisced about the journey we had almost completed. After one last Florentine dinner, we retired to our hotel.

By Friday morning, as we left the convent for the airport, we thanked Fr Keenan and Jennie for taking us on this journey, and now wish to express our thanks to the donors who have aided in funding such an enlightening trip. A full week of art, architecture, sculpture, and of course cuisine, had brought a new level of understanding to each of us. As we parted the



Photo Courtesy of: Carly Sullivan

city on the bus, looking back at the buildings we had toured, we couldn't help but marvel at the memories we had made together.

GPSP Selection Process Week

By Cole Tamburri '20

Much to the excitement of past, present, and future Scholars alike, the first four days of February welcomed a new group of faces to Boston College, as 55 of the high school class of 2017's best and brightest traveled to the Heights to be considered for the GPSP Class of 2021. Over the course of four days, prospective Scholars remained busy with interviews, group conversations, mock seminars, and social events designed not only to provide insight regarding the character of the visitors themselves, but also to show the future Class of 2021 the opportunities awaiting them in the world of higher education at Boston College.

On Wednesday, February 1st, the prospective Scholars arrived on campus, greeted by their eager hosts, who would spend the next few days supporting their guests in any way necessary. That night, the visitors were given the opportunity to socialize with their peers, sharing conversation over dessert and enjoying their first experience in the ever-welcoming Lawrence House.

The next morning, the more official side of the selection process began, as prospective Scholars spoke with professors, admissions officials, GPSP staff, and each other as part of the experience. That night, they were once again given the opportunity to relax and become familiar with the GPSP at the Welcome Dinner in Yawkey Center, featuring keynote speaker Celso Perez '09, who gave a personal and inspiring address to those in attendance. The night was



Photo: Meg Loughman

as impressive as it was unifying, and provided an excellent snapshot of the talent and opportunities associated with the Program.

The next day, following more interviews, seminars, and classes, prospective Scholars wrapped up the official portion of their visit, and were given the chance to unwind and experience firsthand what the city of Boston has to offer. After dinner at Uno's Chicago Grill, the group made their way to the Museum of Fine Arts for a cultured evening among new friends. Upon returning to campus, prospective and current Scholars enjoyed trivia and ice cream in Gasson Hall before heading back to their respective rooms for one more night.

The next morning, prospective Scholars returned home, now familiar with the community and academic potential provided by the GPSP, to await news regarding their acceptance, which would come a few weeks later.



Photo: Meg Loughman

The selection process provided all those involved with an exciting introduction to the Spring semester at Boston College. For the first time, freshmen eagerly observed and participated in the selection process from the other side, while the veteran sophomores, juniors, and seniors once again enjoyed the whirlwind of unfamiliar faces, and a reminder of the exceptional opportunities and social interconnection provided by the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program. The weekend as a whole was a welcome reminder of the past, present, and future potential of the GPSP.

Alumni Spotlight, GPSP Selection Week Dinner: Celso Perez '09



Photo: Meg Loughman

By Tim Morrissey '20

It's the second night of the GPSP selection process for the class of 2021. At the formal dinner in the Murray Function Room, Celso Perez '09 stands behind a podium, looking down at the mix of prospective, current, and past Presidential Scholars. His voice is mellow. In the first of many candid statements, he tells the crowd that, for a while, he did not know if he would be able to make it to this dinner to speak. His job as an immigration lawyer in Miami had recently taken on new clients as a result of 2017's presidential politics and, consequently, he was constantly on the move. In this state he began to narrate his story, one that impressed every listener. During his time at BC, his interest in human ethics and morality dramatically grew leading him to the office of James Keenan, S.J., who at that time was not

affiliated with the GPSP. He found a mentor in Father Keenan and in turn introduced him to the Program. Perez's passion for ethics eventually led him to complete a graduate degree on the subject at Boston College and receive his JD from Yale Law School.

After attending Boston College for Graduate School, Perez went on to work as a law student intern at the Yale Law School Worker and Immigrant Rights Watch. Perez made a name for himself in arguing for immigrant's rights in the Supreme Court of Connecticut and for his continued efforts to work for justice in the Dominican Republic. In line with his values and dedication to human rights, Perez coauthored a report on Haiti's 2010 cholera outbreak and its link to the misjudgment of the United Nations.

From this stemmed his partnership with Human Rights

Watch. Some years ago Perez conducted a project to bring light to the wrongdoings of the Dominican government against its own citizens, specifically those of Haitian descent. In a short video presented at the dinner, Perez explained the faults in the Dominican citizenship process, which stripped at least 100,000 of its own citizens, particularly of Haitian descent of citizenship against the authority of its own constitution and against international law. Through a lack of documentation, the Dominican government has been able to discriminate against those of minority descent. Perez's project worked to shed light on the faults of both the problem at hand and the Dominican Republic's solution, which mostly failed in practice.

When asked if the project had achieved any change in the Dominican Republic, Perez spoke honestly about the country's situation, explaining the difficulty of effecting even the slightest change. Perez noted that his dedication to creating change influenced his decision to become a lawyer, to advocate for the rights of immigrants and hopefully, to return to the Dominican Republic to work in the courts of his own country. With the same candidness as before, however, he reveals how unsure he is of his own future. He does not know if he truly wishes to remain a lawyer. He believes his passions lie in humanitarian work rather than with a law firm. He considers all his possibilities.

Sophomore Class becomes Men and Women for Others on trip to Nicaragua



Photo Courtesy of: Kathy Bailey

By Tommy Toghramadjian '19

This year's sophomore class trip to Nicaragua was threatened by a number of weather-induced flight delays, but thanks to a heroic logistical effort from Associate Director Jennie Thomas and travel agent Tami Dickinson, the class of 2019 arrived in Managua only one day behind schedule.

Our arrival coincided with Daniel Ortega's inauguration for his fourth consecutive term as President of Nicaragua. His grip on the country was immediately apparent, from the many billboards celebrating his victory, and the hundreds of garish lighted metal trees lining the streets of the capital — a pet project of Rosario Murillo, Ortega's wife and Vice President. One of the trip's most important themes was understanding the process by which the democratic government established by the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1978-79 ultimately gave way to the current regime, whose hold on power is

sustained by suppression of free speech and of oppositional political parties.

Our first stop was at the Center for Global Education, where co-director Mark Lester delivered a brief political history of Nicaragua and a highly critical assessment of 20th-century American foreign policy in the country. This capped off our pre-trip reading, and provided context for our many direct encounters with Nicaraguans over the coming week.

The first days of the trip were defined by encounters with the nonprofit sector, represented by Pro Mujer, an organization which provides loans and primary health services to women throughout Latin America, and the Acahual Women's Center, which provides shelter for victims of domestic violence, as well as medical resources. Pro Mujer employs a unique microfinance model, under which women join in small groups to take collective responsibility for

one another's loans. We had the opportunity to witness a meeting of one such group in one of Managua's poorer neighborhoods, where we heard success stories from female entrepreneurs who took clear pride in providing for their families and vindicating the trust of their co-borrowers and their creditors. At the Acahual Women's Center, we heard from nurse Silvia Cisneros, who was a spirited and humorous lecturer even as she related harrowing first- and second-hand accounts of the suffering inflicted by Nicaragua's machismo culture.

We spent a memorable morning and afternoon visiting a clothing factory in one of Nicaragua's free trade zones. After a talk with two managers, we were able to tour the factory floor and witness the conditions firsthand. We had the opportunity to hear from union leader Damarys Meza about the difficulties he and his fellow workers face, including

Presidential Scholars Celebrate Program's 25th Anniversary





On Tuesday February 28th, The Gabelli Presidential Scholarship Program met to celebrate 25 years of commitment to its mission. Current Scholars, faculty, administrators, and alumni met to honor Founding Director Dennis Sardella, and five alumni from the program who in their time since Boston College have best exemplified the four cornerstones of the Program: Hospitality, Fidelity to our Collaborative Partners, Global Leadership, and Promoting the Common Good.

Photos taken by Lee Pellegrini

employer blacklisting for union membership, and the frequency of respiratory disease as a result of lint inhalation. The factory visit raised difficult questions about the relative advantages and disadvantages of globalized industrial competition, which animated many of our later discussions.

An especially impactful pair of talks came from María Josefina “Pinita” Gurdián Mántica, who with her husband left behind a privileged lifestyle to join the Sandinista revolution, and from her daughter Silvia Nadine, who is a leader of the opposition party Movement for Sandinista Reform (MRS). Nadine described the many barriers to political action, and the remarkable trajectory of her own political career in the face of gender biases and government repression. The next day, Pinita told the story of her religious awakening under the influence of Father Fernando Cardenal S.J., which grew into a lifetime of struggle for social justice in Nicaragua. Her talk ended with a stirring invocation to put our educations and talents to use in the service of others.

There were many more memorable encounters during the trip, all of which deserve more detailed descriptions than can be included here. At the Batahol Youth Center, we had the chance to test our Spanish in direct conversation with high school-aged students committed to resisting gang membership and machismo culture in their daily lives. At the Café de Sonrisas, a restaurant and hammock shop dedicated

to employment of the deaf, we heard the story of founder Antonio Prieto, and met some of the staff. We also toured a children’s hospital in order to gain a better understanding of Nicaragua’s publicly funded health care system, and met with Martha Sanchez, a former television journalist who shed light on barriers to free speech in Nicaragua. Finally, we spent an evening in conversation with three Nicaraguan Boston College alumni, and had the opportunity to visit historic sites, monuments, and marketplaces in the cities of Managua and Granada.

Possibly the greatest highlight of the trip was the presence of Elisa Vanegas, our guide and translator from the Center for Global Education. More than merely translating for the many individuals listed above, she connected on a personal level with almost every one of them, drawing out their characters and

candid reflections for our benefit. Her clear love for her country, her passion for political freedom and social justice, and her enthusiasm at our presence were infectious, and our group grew very close to her over the course of the week. Our class is also indebted to Father Keenan for his thoughtful leadership during our group conversations and daily excursions, and to Professor Kathleen Bailey, whose contributions during our nightly reflections and frequent recommendations for further reading added greatly to our experience.

The Nicaragua trip was an enjoyable and highly meaningful interlude in the academic year, which left the class of 2019 with an intimate perspective of Latin America, and a new resolve to take the fullest possible advantage of our remaining years at Boston College to become men and women for others.



Photo: Kathleen Bailey

Alumni Announcement

Mark Noferi '96 recently wrote an article for the American Bar Association about the Immigration Law Division within the Department of Homeland Security.

Sarah (Martin) Pitlyk '99 and her husband Mark belatedly announce the arrival of their fourth child, Stephen Ignatius, on December 1, 2015, in St. Louis, MO. Stephen is both adored and tormented by older siblings Tommy, 7, Jack, 5, and Rosie, 3. More recently, in January 2017, Sarah left her job at a small civil litigation boutique to

join the Thomas More Society, a national pro-life public interest law firm, as Special Counsel.

Chris Scullin '10 married Nicole Barefoot in June, and graduated from Harvard Business School. He spent the summer studying with HBS Professor Clay Christensen, and has returned to Bain Capital Private Equity with a promotion to Vice President.

Marty Long '13 will be leaving Deloitte in the next month to start a dual-degree MBA/MA

in International Studies at The Wharton School / The Lauder Institute at the The University of Pennsylvania.

Nadya Muchoney '13 was recently awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (GRFP), which will support her research and outreach initiatives as she continues to progress through her doctorate program in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Isra Hussain '17 and Jesse Mu '17 Present their Research at Meeting of the Minds



Photo courtesy of Isra Hussain

Senior Scholars Isra Hussain and Jesse Mu presented their research at the 12th Annual ACC Meeting of the Minds event, hosted this year at Duke University. Funded in part by revenue from athletic events, the annual conference focuses on undergraduate research and scholarship at the 15 ACC member schools and represents the power and synergy that can exist between athletics and academics. Undergraduate students across all 15 ACC universities are involved in a variety of projects that provide unique contributions to research and creativity across a broad spectrum of fields.



Photo courtesy of Jesse Mu



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