

GABELLI  
PRESIDENTIAL  
SCHOLARS  
PROGRAM

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BOSTON COLLEGE



# *Lighting the fire*

**E**ach year, approximately 15 young men and women of outstanding talent and character come to Boston from all over the country to embark on an educational experience that embodies the very best of Boston College—a campus of rich diversity set in a city that is one of the cultural and intellectual capitals of the world.



**BOSTON COLLEGE**

# The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program

**C**hosen from among students who are academically in the top one to two percent of the national pool of freshman applicants, these students form a community of Scholars whose dedication to the pursuit of knowledge reflects the words of William Butler Yeats, who wrote, “Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.”

In the process of discovering that which ignites the intellectual passions, this community seeks to fulfill the highest ideals of the Jesuit educational tradition. That 450-year tradition casts the University not merely as a professional training ground, but as a starting point to begin the most fundamental and exciting human quest: the quest for individual meaning in relationship to the universe and the search for a path that expresses that meaning each day—in work, in avocations, and in leadership practiced not for self-aggrandizement but for the common good.

The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program offers this select group of students a strong framework for their exploration, including a sequence of three summer programs focusing on service, international experience and languages, and professional development.

Immersion programs give the young Scholars the opportunity to integrate course work with personal experience and offer real-world perspectives on social needs, international culture, and the work world.



## Celso Perez '09

**HOMETOWN:** Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

**MAJORS:** Biochemistry and Theology

**P**art of the purpose of a liberal arts education at Boston College is to expose students to perspectives they might not otherwise encounter, and to help them reflect upon their choices and aspirations. This is especially true of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, which—as Celso Perez says—raises “the right questions and guides you to answers that create a foundation and shape your direction.”

For him, one pivotal question was: How do my talents and plans connect with the needs of others? Perez grappled with this question partly as a result of the service component of the Scholars Program, which led him, in the summer after his freshman year, to two non-profit organizations in Boston. Those were Rosie’s Place, a haven for poor and homeless women, and Haley House, which offers a wide range of services. The work, which involved preparing meals and other hands-on efforts, turned his attention to social needs.

During his freshman Honors Seminar, Perez had already begun reflecting deeply upon his academic choices. At the time, his single intention was to major in biochemistry, but reading St. Augustine’s Confessions broadened his perspective: He continued with biochemistry, but added theology as a second major.

Meanwhile, the program’s international focus helped Perez acquire “a more global mind-set,” he says. He went to Geneva, where he interned at the United Nations agency UNAIDS, gathering research for several documents on HIV/AIDS prevention.

During the following summer, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program sponsored his internship with the Program on International Health and Human Rights at Harvard, where he helped officials of the organization prepare for the XVII International AIDS Conference held in Mexico City in August 2008.

Whether in Geneva or Chestnut Hill, he received guidance and support from the Scholars Program at every turn, Perez says. “The core group of students, who share common interests and outlooks, coupled with the key components of the Program, create a shared experience. And the strong mentoring relationships from upperclassmen and guidance of the directors ensure that you accomplish your goals,” he explains.

Since graduation, Perez has completed a master’s degree in theological ethics at Boston College. He volunteered for Rostro de Cristo (Face of Christ) in Duran, Ecuador, then attended Yale University Law School where he earned his J.D. in May 2014. Celso is an attorney for Human Rights Watch in New York City.

## Profiles

# Lindsey Hennawi '11

**HOMETOWN:** Melville, New York

**MAJOR:** International Studies

**MINOR:** Faith, Peace and Justice Studies

**W**hen Lindsey Hennawi was looking at colleges, she had three goals especially in mind. She was seeking out a college experience that would involve community service, an international perspective, and a challenging professional internship. She found that the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program combined all three of these components.

“This program encapsulated everything that was important to me, and I came in knowing I would accomplish all of my goals,” said Hennawi. “I felt that the Scholars Program would give me the opportunity to pursue a full range of experiences, in addition to academic excellence.”

The service began with her placement at the Italian Home for Children in Boston, where she worked as a teacher’s assistant with fifth and sixth graders who have special needs. That summer (after her freshman year), Hennawi also worked with inmates at the Suffolk County House of Correction, tutoring and preparing them to take their high school equivalency exams.

“I played a small role but helping one person is very important to me,” she says, referring to both of these service opportunities arranged through the Scholars Program.

Hennawi, whose father was born and raised in Jordan, also places a high value on international experience. The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program’s emphasis on language acquisition and international experiences led her to study Arabic for six weeks at Beirut’s Lebanese American University, supported by a Boston College Advanced Study Grant for student-designed projects. Hennawi gained further experience through a University-sponsored immersion trip to Ghana, where she worked at a computer literacy

camp run primarily by Boston College students each summer; and through a 10-day winter immersion in Israel and the West Bank as part of a sociology class, Social Justice in Israel/Palestine.

At the start of her junior year, Hennawi was looking forward to a professional internship during the following summer that would build on these international exposures. She was turning her attention in particular to possible internships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) abroad. She ended up traveling to Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine where she interned with the Right to Education campaign at Birzeit University.

Hennawi says Jesuit ideals have been no small part of her undergraduate education. “The core value—‘men and women for others’—encourages you not only to live life for yourself but also to do what you can to serve people, whatever your passion, and contribute in your own way,” she explains.

After Boston College, Hennawi worked for two years as a caseworker at the Immigrant Children’s Services Unit, Integration & Advancement of New Americans in Astoria, N.Y. She went on to become a program associate in the Health/Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for Public Interest in New York City. She is now pursuing a master’s degree in Social Work/Public Health at Columbia University.



*By encouraging and facilitating the integration of young Scholars' inner lives with their career plans, the program is a seedbed for leaders who will chart the future.*

During the school year, the Presidential Scholars are guided by senior faculty and alumni who share their own exemplary journeys. They are challenged by an academically rigorous Honors curriculum to make connections across academic disciplines, so as to see the world whole. Participation in activities and events is an integral part of the Boston College environment and provides students with the opportunity to discover friendships, colleagues, and influences everywhere. This community of Scholars is not set apart, because the capacity to mold the future is not developed in isolation but in constant interaction. The talent and desire to make a strong mark in both the world of ideas and the world of action are the hallmarks of the Presidential Scholar at Boston College, and of Presidential Scholars alumni everywhere.

## Challenge and Opportunity

### HONORS PROGRAM

THE BOSTON COLLEGE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM is designed to afford outstanding students with a comprehensive educational experience by offering a range of personal challenges and unique practical opportunities designed to complement the University's intellectually stimulating Honors Program. By encouraging and facilitating the integration of young Scholars' inner lives with their career plans, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program is a seedbed for leaders who will chart the future.

Presidential Scholars participate in the Honors Program of the undergraduate college appropriate to their major field. The Honors Programs of the University allow gifted students to pursue an integrated and comprehensive liberal arts curriculum in seminar format under the stimulating tutelage of the University's most gifted professors. Honors students complete a Junior Honors Seminar, where they explore in depth the important questions raised by the Honors course, Western Cultural Traditions. As seniors, they prepare an Honors thesis on a topic related to any academic discipline of the University.

### EVENING MEETINGS

ONE EVENING EACH WEEK DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, SCHOLARS MEET to discuss their areas of concentration (science and pre-med, or humanities, for example), and to share experiences and advice about applying for study grants, special programs, internships, and fellowships. They also take part in the cultural life of Boston, going together to the theater, the ballet, or the symphony.

### FOCUS ON SERVICE LEARNING

TO FULFILL THE JESUIT IDEAL OF MEN AND WOMEN IN SERVICE TO others, the Scholars explore the problems of hunger and homelessness in the Boston area during the summer following their freshman year through participation in a program modeled after PULSE, Boston College's nationally acclaimed course of study and service. This work challenges Presidential Scholars to see themselves in relation to acute national problems, think creatively about the roots of these problems, explore the nature and efficacy of society's response, and gauge the response that these problems elicit in their own personal and professional lives. Placements in recent years have included the Project Bread Hunger Hotline, Haley House, St. Francis House, and the Italian Home for Children, all of which provide food and services to the homeless and needy of Boston, as well as the Suffolk County House of Correction. In parallel with their service, Scholars read and reflect on a variety of texts—ranging from philosophy and theology to social science and public policy—pertinent to issues of poverty and homelessness. Weekly discussion sessions challenge students to integrate these readings with their field experiences and to reflect on the implications for their personal values and professional goals.

*The focus on community service challenges Presidential Scholars to see themselves in relation to acute national problems, think creatively about the roots of these problems, explore the nature and efficacy of society's response, and gauge the response that these problems elicit in their own personal and professional lives.*



STRIVING  
GOAL  
THESE DAYS  
TREAT YOURSELF

Dignity for everyone

Wellness  
SPIRIT  
BODY  
MIND  
LET US CONTRIBUTE  
TO EACH OTHER

FERRY

## Matt Hamilton '09

**HOMETOWN:** Wilmington, Delaware

**MAJOR:** Theology

**MINOR:** Economics

**M**att Hamilton was an economics major when he began working in a soup kitchen during the summer after his freshman year, as part of the service component of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program. He soon found that while the social sciences could illuminate many things, like the demographics of the soup kitchen clientele, there were some critical questions beyond the scope of these disciplines.

Questions of value—about, for example, his wider responsibilities toward those whom he served—led him in new directions. “I felt that the best way to understand it [the soup kitchen work] was through a deeper ethical reflection,” Hamilton recalls. “I discovered that there are many different ways of solving problems, and deciding trade-offs requires an ethical rubric that went beyond economics and public policy.”

His exposure to Haley House in Boston’s South End led him in particular toward a major in theology, with a focus on ethics. Hamilton says he was able to explore options in a supportive environment because of the “great freedom, security, and stability” afforded by the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program and Boston College in general.

At the same time, Hamilton’s explorations took him beyond the formal academic disciplines. His ethical reflections brought him back to Haley House through other Boston College service programs. The student used his freedom to entertain practical ideas for addressing a chronic problem at Haley House: thin budgets.

Ultimately, Hamilton arrived at a solution as successful as it was edible. He spearheaded the “BC Cookie,” baked by the people at Haley House’s satellite bakery and café in Roxbury, and sold in the University’s dining halls.

The support structure on campus was key. For example, Honors students at the Carroll School of Management drew up a business plan and became involved in marketing the chocolate chip cookies (which come with a message on the wrappers, “Cookie today ... Better tomorrow”). Within a semester, the dining halls were selling 1,800 packages of cookies a week.

Hamilton says his work with Haley House taught him that community service is about “the real experience of meeting people that society keeps separate.” And, his broader Boston College experience made him “mindful of my place in the world.”

Following graduation, Hamilton moved to Amman, Jordan to work as an intern with the Jesuit Center and Jesuit Refugee Services and was a teacher at Cambridge High in Amman. He became editor for Al-Faridah Publications in Amman and pursued freelance journalism opportunities before moving back to the United States in 2012.

He attended the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California, where he was a Dean’s Scholar and received a full scholarship. Hamilton graduated with a Master’s in Journalism in 2014, and he is now a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times*.

## Profiles

# Kat Wakeham '07

**HOMETOWN:** Aberdeen, New Jersey

**MAJOR:** Biology (Pre-Med)

**K**at Wakeham says the various offerings of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, together with Boston College's Jesuit ideals, "challenge students to become greatly aware of reality as it is." Her own awareness was heightened in the summer after her junior year, when she rode from village to village in Tanzania, taking stock of health hazards facing many in the East African nation.

Those risks included contaminated drinking water and a plague of worms—parasites—in children, as she learned while traveling with a group of physicians, medical students, and pre-med students. After recording the health needs in several villages, Wakeham, who attended Harvard Medical School, took part in treating those needs. For example, she helped administer antibiotics that functioned as "de-worming medicine."

Wakeham's work in Tanzania was part of her professional internship, sponsored by Boston College through the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program. Just before heading to Tanzania, she began her internship in Cape Town, South Africa, where she was able to observe clinical drug trials involving people with AIDS.

Explaining the importance of such experience, she says, "The problems of the world are not on a lab bench. The work I did in Africa has made me ready and poised to engage the material that I'm learning with the issues of the world."

For Wakeham, very often those issues are ethical. Her senior thesis at Boston College addressed a

question she encountered in South Africa: In what way can someone's participation in a drug trial be seen as truly "voluntary" if that person is impoverished and has no other way of securing the potentially life-saving treatment? Her conclusion was that experimental treatment is less likely to raise questions of coercion if communities have a decisive role in administering the trials.

She says that a Boston College education—emphasizing service and self-reflection within a broad liberal arts horizon—helps students discover what they are passionate about, and how to find meaning in work. "These ideals are not taken up by every university and expand what you could ever think could happen to yourself."

Becoming a Presidential Scholar was like "winning the lottery," Wakeham adds, explaining, "It's brought me to where I am today. I loved medical school, and I am backed by a firm foundation of programs and people who guided me at Boston College." Wakeham is currently a resident physician with the Group Health Cooperative in Seattle, Washington.



As they begin their sophomore year, they assume a leadership role within the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program by developing a project of consciousness-raising regarding the needs of others. The project is comprised of several events sponsored by them for the University throughout their sophomore year.

#### **FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND LANGUAGES**

EACH YEAR DURING SPRING SEMESTER, FRESHMEN PRESIDENTIAL Scholars each spend a week in a non-English-speaking European country, while sophomore Scholars travel to a country in Latin America. These trips are intended to be starting points in individual journeys to becoming “global citizens.”

In the summer between their sophomore and junior years, each Scholar is expected to plan and carry out an eight-week (or longer) language and cultural immersion that combines language study, service learning, and lab work or some other immersive activity.

#### **FOCUS ON PROFESSION**

IN PURSUIT OF THE BOSTON COLLEGE TRADITION OF EDUCATION AS an instrument for change, Presidential Scholars work as interns in high-level professional settings during the summer following their junior year. Designed to introduce them to the inner workings of the organizations that shape American society, placements include financial, government, corporate, and non-profit institutions, depending on Scholars’ individual preferences. This internship experience provides them with initial exposure to their potential career paths and the opportunity to reflect on themselves as emerging professionals and leaders. Scholars are expected to function as full-time employees. Supervisors are encouraged to assign creative and independent tasks that provide Scholars with a broad exposure to the work done in those internship settings.

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*This internship experience provides them with initial exposure to their potential career paths and the opportunity to reflect on themselves as emerging professionals and leaders.*

## The Selection Process

CHOSEN FROM AMONG THE TOP CANDIDATES WHO APPLY FOR EARLY action to Boston College, Presidential Scholars are selected on the basis of outstanding academic accomplishment, demonstrated leadership ability, and a significant involvement in service to the community. No separate application is necessary. Finalists are invited to visit Boston College for a weekend in early February to learn more about the University, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, and the city of Boston. Personal interviews with faculty members and administrative staff serve as the basis for the final choice of Presidential Scholars, who are generally notified in March.

## Scholarship Award

PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS RECEIVE A MERIT SCHOLARSHIP, IRRESPECTIVE of financial need. If the merit award does not meet their financial need, sufficient additional grant and aid resources are given to ensure that a student's full need is met. The cost of summer programs is fully covered by a separate award.

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