

# Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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## PSP welcomes 65 prospective Scholars to campus

By Sarah Ganton, A&S '14

This year's Presidential Scholars Weekend, held from February 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, proved one the PSP will never forget. As a blizzard blanketed most of the country, 65 prospective Scholars scrambled to change their flights, arriving between Monday and Thursday of the week. Prospective Scholars arriving early in the week had the chance to meet with Father Keenan on Tuesday night, before the official weekend activities began. By Wednesday afternoon, the Weekend had officially begun as the students met their hosts and enjoyed a pizza dinner in the Admissions Office. The students then came together at Lawrence House for an Open House complete with dessert and plenty of games, where they began to get to know each other.

Game night was a success as always, with plenty of fun times had by all.

On Thursday morning, the students heard a presentation on the Presidential Scholars Program from Father Keenan, and then headed to faculty and admissions interviews or to class with their hosts. Thursday afternoon saw a Panel Discussion focusing on research opportunities for Presidential Scholars that included current Scholars and their faculty advisors. The students



Photo: Leon Ratz

Prospective Scholars, current Scholars, and Boston College administration & faculty enjoy brunch as the annual PSP Weekend comes to a close.

then joined current Scholars, BC faculty, and featured speaker Kat Wakeham, PSP '07, in the Yawkey Center for the Opening Dinner. Ms. Wakeham spoke about her own experience at Presidential Scholars Weekend, her time in Africa treating victims of AIDS, and her experiences working in a hospital, setting the stage for the wonderful opportunities the Presidential Scholars Program provides its Scholars.

On Friday morning, the students participated in mock honors seminars with Professors Hughes, Martin, and O'Connor from the Honors Program. The students had been given selections from Montaigne to read and discuss what they had read. After the seminars had ended and interviews

finished, the students attended Boston College's Undergraduate Research Symposium to hear presentations about undergraduate research that had been financed through grants such as BC's Advanced Study Grants.

On Friday night, buses met the students and took them for a night on the town. They ate dinner at the Hard Rock Café. They were then treated to a performance of the musical *Nine* at the Calderwood Pavilion, performed by the SpeakEasy Stage Company. The students were glad to relax after two days of interviews, and everyone had a wonderful time.

On Saturday, the students, some with their parents, attended Honors

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# Scholars share diverse study experiences

*By Alison Wawrzynek, A&S '14*

On the evening of November 16, 2010, four Presidential Scholars presented experiences of their past summer's Advanced Study Grants (ASG) which were used to directly pursue their intellectual passions. Advanced Study Grants provide the opportunity to focus on specific studies outside of the traditional academic context, and each Scholar reflected positively on their experiences.

Michael Cutler, A&S '12, completed fieldwork in Oceanography at the Institut de Ciències del Mar in Barcelona, Spain, where he worked alongside Dr. Pere Puign. Michael found

this to be an enriching experience because it combined his desires to live abroad and improve his Spanish skills while also conducting pertinent scientific research. While in Barcelona, Michael worked on a project dealing with the contemporary off-shelf sediment transportation on the Ebro Margin. His role involved lab testing and calibrating the actual instruments used in the study. Because of his plans to continue advanced study in Oceanography, this ASG was preparation that allowed him to see precise research techniques used in the field. Beyond the research aspect of his ASG, Michael also described the benefits of living abroad in Barcelona, living and traveling

by himself while being immersed in a Spanish-speaking environment. He was introduced to the local culture by meeting other Europeans and seeing Spain win the Soccer World Cup. Finally, he stressed the importance of mentor relationships in the Boston College community, as Professor Gail Kineke helped him with contacts that made his ASG possible.

Elizabeth Fair, A&S '12, conducted her ASG at Mitchell's Place, a center for children with Autism. There, Elizabeth worked with patients dealing with both Autism and Asperger's Syndrome, and she had the opportunity to communicate with those who have different experiences and challenges in their lives. A large component of her work at Mitchell's Place was the Early Learning Program, in which she worked with five children with Autism and five children without the condition. She observed the interactions of children with different social capacities as well as behavioral therapy sessions. She took a more independent role in working in a summer camp for Autistic children, allowing her to take direct initiative in an organizational role. Additionally, Elizabeth worked at the Sparks Clinic of the University of Alabama where she experienced the clinical psychology field through testing sessions and different forms of therapy. Her favorite parts of her work were the case discussions. Her summer resulted in improved communication skills and Elizabeth benefited from unforeseen opportunities that arose throughout her ASG.

Karen Kovaka's, A&S '12, ASG took her to Magadi, India, where she studied development agriculture through numerous outlets. Karen described her inspiration for her ASG work as stemming from her Environmental Geosciences background, as well as a connection to the poetry of Wendell Berry, which evoked further thoughts of global economics and the environment. Karen's work was conducted through the Resource Centers on Urban Agriculture and Food Security, which provided experience in



Photo: Jennie Thomas

Chris Sheridan, A&S '12, presents on his experience studying abroad at the Goethe Institute in Munich, Germany.

*see ASG page 4*

# Alumni reflect on benefits of PSP internships

By *Brendan Kelly, A&S '13*

Professional internships allow students to begin forging connections between their academic interests and career aspirations, as they discern how to preserve the passion they have for their chosen discipline in their post-graduation lives. Recognizing the value of such exploration, the Presidential Scholars Program assists rising senior Scholars in securing summer internships in a variety of fields. Several PSP alumni recently discussed their own internship experiences with the sophomore and junior classes, as part of the Program's Tuesday evening meetings. Their diverse stories all illustrate the importance of actively seeking opportunities, which will challenge one to consider whether one is genuinely drawn to that particular field of work.

Michelle Knight, PSP '98, and Director of Fixed Income at SilverBridge Advisors, urged Scholars not to limit themselves to internships directly related to their undergraduate major, reminding them that immersion in a totally unfamiliar environment can spark new passions that blossom into lifelong careers. Though an English major, Michelle was interested in the financial world, and with the help of the Program she found an internship during the academic year at a brokerage firm. She found the pace and dynamics of a trading environment very appealing—a realization that would not have been possible in the classroom, even if she had been studying finance or business management. Michelle also learned much of the unofficial but essential industry “lingo” in the field, hastening her assimilation into the financial world in a way textbooks could not have done. Attempting to combine her interests in writing and business, Michelle later obtained a summer internship at *Money Magazine* in New York, an experience which reassured her that the critical-thinking and writing skills, sharpened by her studies in English literature, were crucial ingredients for success in any career. Michelle also noted that reaching out to professionals in fields

of interest can open doors even after an internship has ended. Explaining that “the networks you make during your BC years will be with you for the rest of life,” Michelle encouraged Scholars to “be bold” and proactive in building professional relationships during the process of career discernment.

Heather Speller, PSP '05, a Psychology major and now a first-year resident in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital, highlighted the importance of thinking broadly about possible internships and being fully engaged in whatever one ultimately chooses as a career. Although Heather did not have any specific inclinations as she began her search, she desired to “do something different,” outside of her comfort zone. Heather noted that her participation in international immersion with the PSP during the previous summer had provided her with basic international travel experience that prompted her to seek out opportunities in Africa. She ultimately spent four weeks in Tanzania as part of a program that provided eye care to the impoverished and, in the process, was able to conduct some mental health research. Another rewarding internship through Massachusetts General Hospital affirmed her desire to study psychiatry. Heather also cautioned Scholars interested in science that the summer is a relatively small amount of time to conduct scientific research, and she encouraged them to partner with labs or programs that would allow them to continue their work for a longer period. In a similar vein, Heather explained that Scholars should interview with multiple labs and select the one where they feel they will be allowed to drive their own projects. Indeed, the ability to take initiative as an intern should be an important criterion for Scholars in all fields as they evaluate possible placements.

Jeremy Zipple, SJ, PSP '00, an Economics major and now filmmaker/producer for National Geographic, emphasized the benefits of using an internship to immerse oneself totally in a particular field. Interested in broadcasting, Jeremy interned with

WGBH, the Boston network responsible for PBS programming. Although his responsibilities included some relatively mindless tasks (e.g., copy-editing, making coffee), Jeremy explained that he actually learned much about how the industry works from simple observation and from conversation with his boss and other network employees. He encouraged Scholars not to underestimate the value of asking successful professionals “how they got where they got,” and he implored them to “exploit [their] professors” for help during the internship search. Echoing Michelle's support of networking, Jeremy pointed out that both alumni and professors not only offer sound advice on the overall process of finding an internship but can also connect Scholars with other helpful professionals and with specific opportunities.

Ari Daniel Shapiro, PSP '01, a Biology major and now radio producer, discussed the rewards to natural science majors of using the internship opportunity to participate in ongoing research projects. Ari assisted at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute through the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program of the National Science Foundation (NSF), which offers additional funding to NSF research scientists who invite undergraduates to participate in their projects. Before this internship, Ari had not found a particular research niche that truly energized him. Yet he thoroughly enjoyed participating in killer whale vocalization research at Woods Hole, as he closely examined the recorded data and identified a pattern that was later included in published research. Ari also noted that, for students considering graduate work in the sciences, previous field research experience distinguishes them as an applicant. Ari encouraged Scholars to contact scientists whose work interests them, explaining that not all eligible scientists know that they can receive funding to cover undergraduate research assistants. The dividends paid by persistence in the internship search—and the possibility of creating opportunities where it

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## ASG cont. from p. 2

microfinance and market linkage. She depicted her work at the Magadi field office as a family and cultural experience as well, as she developed strong bonds with those living and working alongside her. She expressed that although it was sometimes difficult to adapt to cultural norms, these diverse traditions presented unique learning experiences. Karen worked with nutritional gardens in Magadi in a hands-on organizational effort. Her efforts working with the nutritional gardens led to exploration into issues such as malnutrition, crop selection, and optimal plot design. She also studied the impact of wastewater on crops. After discovering that a map of the wastewater channels in Magadi did not exist, Karen then faced the challenge of mapping the channels herself to aid her study. Overall, Karen reflected on her ASG as an opportunity to understand both what Magadi needs and what she personally needs as she pursues her interests. Her experience was not without its challenges, but she advised other Scholars to look



Photo: Jennie Thomas

Elizabeth Fair and Michael Cuttler, both A&S '12, reflect on their ASG experiences.

at the ASG as a chance to evaluate true aspirations and personal impact.

Finally, Chris Sheridan, A&S '12, presented his ASG experience studying abroad at the Goethe Institute in Munich, Germany. German is essential for his study of philosophy because it allows him to read the words of philosophers directly, without translation



Photo: Jennie Thomas

that could interfere with the clear understanding of ideas. While in Munich, he took intensive German courses for ten hours each day to expedite mastering the language. Chris also developed connections with other classmates and professors. In working with renowned Professors Gode, Christof, and Ludwig, he had insightful discussions and worked with masters of the field firsthand. Chris's advice stressed the importance

of starting with an idea that stems from a strong interest and following through with it to create a unique experience.

The four Scholars who presented their Advanced Study Grant experiences reiterated a common idea about searching for passions from a different perspective. They stressed that those interested in pursuing an ASG should use it as a means to broaden horizons and gain firsthand experience in their chosen fields. While they remarked that their experiences were sometimes challenging, they presented them as invaluable learning experiences with the opportunity to examine studies through a different lens.

All stressed the importance of forming faculty relationships and being sure to develop a proposal that fits an individual's objectives. Overall, the presentations presented helpful advice and motivated underclassmen to consider their own future study goals. According to John Wang (A&S '14), "The ASG presentation was definitely inspiring. After seeing the wide variety of activities that Scholars undertook, I'm very inspired to apply for one as well!"

## PSP Weekend cont. from p. 1

Day with other students admitted into BC's Honors Program. They acquainted themselves with the Honors Program in general through attending lectures given by various departments and touring freshman honors housing in Medeiros, among other activities. Students then joined current Scholars for the second annual Off-the-Record dinner. Open and honest conversation flowed informally

over tables in Corcoran Commons, as students learned more about the ins and outs of the Presidential Scholars Program. Following dinner, students and Scholars joined together in the Heights Room for a performance by BC bOp! and a delicious ice cream buffet. The students danced the night away to the sounds of BC's top jazz ensemble.

On Sunday morning, the students, their families, and current Scholars attended mass in Saint Mary's

Chapel, celebrated by Father John Paris. The weekend closed with brunch in the Heights Room and remarks from Father Keenan and Susan Migliorisi, Associate Director of Admissions and co-planner of the Weekend with PSP Assistant Director, Jennie Thomas.

Presidential Scholars Weekend was, as always, a rousing success, and the students departed on Sunday excited about the Presidential Scholars Program and anxiously awaiting decisions.

# Mayor Menino addresses BC student body

By Alison Wawrzynek, A&S '14

As the introductory event in the “Revisiting Boston” series sponsored by the Sophomore Class of the Presidential Scholars Program, Boston mayor Thomas Menino spoke at Boston College on February 9, 2011. This year’s Sophomore Social Justice Project focuses on connecting the BC community with issues facing Boston’s youth, and the Mayor helped shed light on current programs designed to benefit the city’s children. As a 17-year veteran of the Mayor’s office, Menino stressed that the economy of the city is based on four components: higher education, healthcare, financial services, and tourism. He explained that the strength of the city is found in its diversity that comes from its 52% minority population, and he believes that young people living in the city are the future of Boston. Similarly, it is the Mayor’s opinion that the education of children is the most important issue of our society because a highly educated workforce leads to innovative and successful cities.

While Mayor Menino is proud to describe the Boston public school system as one of the best urban school districts in the nation, he stressed that the graduation rate out of high schools is still only 61%. His goal is to push this figure up to a 90% graduation rate in the next decade, and he sees this as a civil rights

issue because high school graduates live longer, healthier, and safer lives. Mayor Menino then went on to

describe some of the programs he has initiated to deal with educating youth, while also describing the challenges associated with urban public education. *Success Boston* is an initiative to help high school graduates transition to college, while literacy and resume writing programs aid students in finding jobs. Additionally, he spoke highly of after-school and summer camp programs to provide safe activities to younger teens, particularly those ages 11 to 14. According to the Mayor, one of the biggest challenges in education is the culture gap between students of immigrant families.

Also, he highlighted the importance and difficulty of educating all types of students, including those with special needs or learning disabilities.

When asked what BC students could do to help promote positive educational messages in the community, Menino expressed satisfaction that the University is doing more work in Boston than ever before. However, he indicated the need for continued educational reform and the expansion of programs to aid students of all backgrounds, providing a common goal for students and public officials alike.

This was an exciting event for the Presidential Scholars Program and Boston College community, as it allowed a prominent community leader to converse directly with students about the issues facing Boston’s youth. Kelsey Swift, A&S '13, who worked directly with the



Photo: Nadya Muchoney

Mayor Menino addresses Boston College Students in regard to the importance of education in the city of Boston.



Photo: Nadya Muchoney

Kevin Morris, A&S '13, introduces Mayor Menino as the first event in a series sponsored by the PSP Class of 2013.

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# Scholars venture downtown for cultural events

By Brian Varian, CSOM '11

The celebrated nineteenth-century poet Julia Ward Howe once referred to Boston as “an oasis in the desert.” And while the rest of New England can hardly be likened to a desert, Boston is an undisputed oasis of culture and the performing arts. Beginning in September of 2010, Presidential Scholars have been making the short trip into Boston in order to partake of its rich cultural offerings.

Early on in his tenure as Director of the Presidential Scholars Program, Father Keenan decided to incorporate cultural activities into the PSP schedule as part of his continual effort to cultivate well-rounded Scholars who are acquainted with the musical and theatrical milieu of this cosmopolitan city. As he puts it, “I want to make sure that students know what BSO means.” (It means Boston Symphony Orchestra.) Thus far, these cultural outings have garnered rave reviews from Scholars.

On September 28, 2010, the Class of 2013 attended a performance of the recently popular musical *Wicked* at the Boston Opera House. With an interesting plot, catchy tunes, and an impressive venue, Kevin Morris, A&S '13, commented that the entire production was “Wicked awesome!”

Amid job applications and thesis research, the Class of 2011 reconvened to enjoy a performance of the BSO, featuring selected works of Barber, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. According to Hope Sullivan, A&S '11, “For me, the BSO was definitely a highlight of the fall schedule. The quality of the performance and the opportunity to get off campus and gather as a class made it a night to remember.”

The Class of 2014 had its first experience of the cultural life of Boston on November 30, 2010 when they too attended the BSO—this time a performance of Schumann, Harbison, and Wagner. An impressed Francesca McCaffrey, A&S '14, stated, “The concert was incredibly enjoyable, placing very rich and tranquil music next to more modern pieces full of fast-paced inventiveness. I believe that all who went had a wonderful time listening to beautiful music and spending time together in Boston.”

Altogether, these cultural outings have not only aroused an interest in the performing arts, but have also provided yet another opportunity for Scholars to connect and engage as a class. Of course, there will be many such opportunities to follow. This semester, the Class of 2012 will attend a BSO performance of Mahler, the Class of 2014 will attend the play *Educating Rita*, and the Class of 2013 will flock to Symphony Hall to hear the sounds of Mozart and Haydn.



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initially seemed there was none—are noteworthy for Scholars of any discipline.

The presenting alumni arrived at their current careers through paths that were not necessarily predictable. All of them pursued internships in fields that genuinely interested them, even if that field did not precisely correlate with their major. After graduation, they followed

their evolving academic and professional passions even as they deviated somewhat from their undergraduate studies. An increased openness to growth and to new, perhaps initially uncomfortable intellectual experiences may be the lasting impact of an internship on a student's life, in addition to the effect on their career aspirations. The evening proved enjoyable and thought-provoking for all

in attendance. As Helen Jiang, A&S '13, said, “It made me appreciate how useful internships can be in figuring out what I want my career to be.” Based on the positive experiences of Scholars thus far, it seems that internships will prove to be a useful tool in career discernment for many PSP Scholars to come.

# Scholar Spotlight: Gavel Media



Photo: Kris Brewer

By Tue Tran, A&S '11

The Presidential Scholars Program has produced myriad alumni – and current students – who are vibrant citizens of the world and the Boston College community. I have especially learned from – and have been inspired by – those with whom I have had the fortune to cross paths, and this has helped me contribute to my little corner at Chestnut Hill.

For the past year and a half, I have had the privilege of being the founder and editor-in-chief of Gavel Media, the newest news organization on campus.

There was a need for more dialogue at BC because there was not a strong progressive voice to cover and discuss topics that students care about today.

“Progressive” to us neither means following the agenda of Democrats nor always trying to negate the arguments of Republicans. It is about having a constructive exchange of ideas that, hopefully, will further the discussion on a multitude of issues that will shape all of our lives.

While modern-day students are infamous for not being politically active, I have often found the opposite to be true. Our organization started with a small group of about 15 editors and writers and has grown to 30 editors and a countless number of writers and supporters. I have actually already had the honor of passing on the editor-in-chief position, and the new editorial board is excited and talented.

We have covered such things as the maintenance and grounds crews’ struggle with outside contractors and a new organization on campus that is bringing together professors from across the University to share concerns.

Our operations model is to focus on our website – [www.bcgavel.com](http://www.bcgavel.com) – updating as

constantly as possible and covering breaking news. Each month, we also have a print edition that is distributed across campus, and more recently, in businesses around Boston that help sponsor us. We have also begun providing video and are working to further that branch as well.

After only a year and a half, we are working on Gavel Media’s independence from BC and being officially recognized as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Because of this, the funding will come solely from our business sponsors, advertising, and donations.

As a senior, I am most aware of how PSP has impacted my fellow Scholars, who are leaders in their organizations, from service to publications to politics. Gavel Media was shaped by these connections and support within the PSP, and I cannot wait to see how it – along with the Program – will grow in years to come.



Menino cont. from 5

Mayor’s office in organizing the event, reflected, “It was wonderful to have Mayor Menino with us for the first night of the social justice series and I greatly appreciated both his enthusiasm and willingness to make the trek out to BC. I hope that BC students will be inspired by his speech to learn more about Boston and get involved with all the positive change occurring in the city.” Additional “Revisiting Boston” events in the coming months will allow Scholars and the Boston College community to continue exploring issues of youth and diversity in our city.

## *Revisiting Boston: its culture, diversity, and youth*

### Upcoming Events

**Wednesday, March 16 - Panel on Gang Violence**

7:30 p.m., Murray Room, 4th Floor, Yawkey Center

**Wednesday, March 23 - Prof. David Manzo, Philosophy Department & Scavenger Hunt Part I**

7:00 p.m., O’Connell House, Grand Hall

**Wednesday, March 30 - Prof. David Manzo, Philosophy Department & Scavenger Hunt Part II**

7:00 p.m., O’Connell House, Grand Hall

**Wednesday, April 13 - *And Still We Rise***

7:00 p.m., Cabaret Room, Vanderslice Hall

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