

Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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Spring 2017

The Graduating Class of 2017



Photographed with the Scholars above are: Jennie Thomas, Fr. Keenan, and new GPSP Co-Director Professor Kathy Bailey.

On April 17th, the senior GPSP Scholars, Co-Director Kathy Bailey, Co-Director Jim Keenan, S.J., and Associate Director Jennie Thomas traveled to New York City to attend the annual Alumni Reception at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The following night, April 18th, they attended the annual Wall Street Council Tribute Dinner at the Cipriani Wall Street. Joining the Scholars were Fr. Leahy, major donors, many alumni and this year's honoree General Electric Chairman and CEO Jeffrey R. Immelt, H '10.



Overlooked and Overdosed

By: Jaq Pyle MCAS '20

On April 4th, the sophomore class of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program presented the second part of their two-part Social Justice Project: “Overlooked and Overdosed: The Opioid Crisis in Boston.” The opioid epidemic that is currently devastating communities across the United States, and kills ninety-one people every day across the nation according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The spring event, titled “A Nation in Recovery: The Opioid Crisis Under the Trump Administration,” was intended to complement the sophomore’s fall event, which consisted of a photo exhibition featuring photos and stories of those embroiled within the crisis along with a presentation from a Brendan Little, the policy director at Boston’s Office of Recovery Services. To this end, the spring event was designed to offer attendees an even broader spectrum of perspectives on the opioid crisis. Along with a second exhibition of the image gallery, the spring event featured a panel of four individuals with a wide array of personal and professional experiences surrounding the opioid epidemic: Police Chief Fred Ryan of Arlington, Massachusetts; Allison Bauer, the director of the Commonwealth’s Bureau of Substance Abuse Services; Kaynaz Mehta, a mental health counselor with experience in dealing with substance abuse patients; and Neil Duggan, an outreach coordinator for Wicked Sober, an addiction recovery network in Massachusetts, that was founded by his son Michael Duggan.

With Shaan Bijwadia '19 as the moderator, the four panelists



responded to a variety of questions involving each individual’s experiences with the opioid crisis in both their personal and professional lives. While the panelists generally agreed on broader aspects of the epidemic, like the importance of reforming the practices surrounding the prescription of opioid painkillers, they did offer differing opinions on issues surrounding the public cultural view of opioid addiction. Mr. Duggan, who is a recovered alcoholic, and whose son was addicted to opioids before founding Wicked Sober, contended that a measure of shame should be attached to addiction in order to prevent new victims from falling into the trap of substance abuse. The other panelists countered by pointing out that the stigma surrounding substance abuse has actually proven in many cases to be detrimental to those affected by opioid abuse since it prevents them from seeking out the treatment necessary for escaping addiction. In addition to discussing aspects of the epidemic together, the panelists also gave illuminating accounts of their personal efforts to help the victims of the opioid epidemic. Chief Ryan explained his department’s progressive approach to

opioid addiction, explaining that the department’s “two-pronged approach” supports victims of the crisis in their road to recovery and works to reduce stigma surrounding opioid addiction. Both educating the public on the realities of the epidemic, while also supporting victims through house calls by a health care specialist, intended to connect the individual and their family to resources like counseling, detoxification programs, and support groups. The department’s strategy, which prioritizes care and recovery over discipline, has been proven effective in Arlington and therefore may serve as a blueprint for similar programs in other police departments in Massachusetts and other states.

Ms. Bauer offered her experience of working through governmental and healthcare-oriented channels to mitigate the opioid epidemic. She explained how she used her background in increasing accessibility of healthcare for marginalized communities to inform her current work on the opioid epidemic. The Bureau of Substance Abuse Services provides services such as licensing and working with care centers, detox programs, and other resources for victims of the crisis.

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The Junior Class in Bosnia

By Jake Ciafone MCAS '18

Nearly a year and a half ago, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program class of 2018 was bouncing down an uneven road leading away from the crater of a Nicaraguan volcano. When the pavement evened out, Fr. Keenan stood up in the aisle of our van and returned to a conversation initiated a few weeks before: the addition of a trip to the GPSP's junior year. Italy was an opportunity to explore the past, and Nicaragua a place to study development, but the Program still needed a trip that looked towards the future. Destinations began to fly back and forth. China, Turkey, and Jordan all found support. Once more in America, we continued to distill ideas on what the defining themes of the future might be. With the program's new Co-Director, Professor Kathy Bailey's guidance, an encounter with modern Islam emerged as the most feasible option. And so the class of 2018 began looking forward to a week in Amman, Jordan. At the last minute however, political developments in the region led to

a hurried search for a plan B. Only a few months before the end of the semester, the new decision was announced: The juniors were headed to Sarajevo.

It was unexpected, but Bosnia stood to expose us to many of the themes we had hoped to encounter in Jordan. The country has a significant and historical population of Muslims, who trace their roots the Ottoman Empire. They live alongside Bosnia's two other major demographics, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbians. Ancient border disputes and identity politics have repeatedly led to conflict, most infamously, the Bosnian war that erupted from the rubble of former Yugoslavia in 1992, and continued for three years. Even today, though the fighting has ceased, towns are still divided along ethnic lines and schools are intentionally segregated. But for all the pain, there are still many who dare to look towards a brighter future.

From Islam to peace and reconciliation, the country provides a wealth of opportunities to learn. We found ourselves humbled by

our ignorance of the region. Thankfully though, we made friends who graciously guided us through their country's difficult past. Tea, a PhD candidate in Catholic ethics, was our main guide. She brought us to meetings with religious leaders and academics, filling us in with historical context along the way. We were inspired by members of Youth for Peace, an interethnic, inter-religious, organization of people hardly older than ourselves, who work to heal the deep divisions. Sharing in meals and long bus rides, their openness to our interminable questions was invaluable.

Sarajevo's recent past is never far from the surface. Bullets have left chunks of stone missing from the cathedral, craters left over from the heavy shelling occasionally scar the sidewalks. Several sites in the city brought us closer to the tragedy of the war. We visited the Tunnel of Hope, a thin passage leading underneath the city, connecting the inhabitants with an area controlled by the United Nations. When Sarajevo was locked

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Photo courtesy of: Jennie Thomas

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Overlooked con't from page 2

This is to ensure that all people have access to, and feel safe pursuing, the resources they need to escape opioid addiction.

Ms. Mehta provided a more clinical and psychiatric perspective on the opioid crisis. Additionally, she contended that the recent legalization of marijuana would not help but perhaps would worsen the epidemic due to its properties as a gateway drug for those who are trying to remain sober.

Mr. Duggan shared his intimate personal understanding of the realities of addiction and discussed

the work that Wicked Sober does to connect victims of the opioid epidemic to treatment options and other support mechanisms. Using his personal knowledge and skill as an interventionist, Mr. Duggan both helps victims and their families see the practical steps they need to take in order to escape addiction and offers emotional support to those who have been hit the hardest by the epidemic.

The final installment of the class of 2019's Social Justice Project helped attendees grasp the seriousness of the opioid crisis, which can often seem far removed from

lives that remain unaffected by the epidemic. However, the panelists generally agreed that, despite the current presidential administration's controversial policies surrounding drug addiction, and despite the huge amount of work which must still be done to help those affected by the epidemic, there is hope that the opioid crisis will be curbed in the future through a concerted, coordinated effort by the government, nongovernmental organizations, and the victims and their families.

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in a multi-year siege, this tunnel was among the only arteries for food and supplies. Local museums provided a look at the human element of the suffering. We looked into vitrines of objects that were hastily fashioned into essential tools: stoves made from scrap metal, radios, books whose pages had been burnt as kindling. Testimonies from those who grew up in the war shed light on childhood in a place where tragedy visited nearly family. An exhibit on the genocide at Srebrenica documented the war's darkest chapter.

Just as important as learning about the war itself were our meetings with people and organizations dedicated to reconciliation and healing. After a day spent learning about the horrors of war, we closed the evening with the Choir Pontanima, a multiethnic

chorus whose repertoire pulls from the musical traditions of Bosnia's three faiths. Another heartening visit was at a local Catholic school. Despite its confessional affiliation, it was founded at the height of the war to serve as a school for all Bosnians.

For much of the class, Sarajevo was the first visit to a predominately Muslim city. Slender minarets rise up from the old city, filling the air five times daily with the call to prayer. The beautiful aesthetic tradition left by the Ottomans moved us all. Perhaps more important however were the conversations we shared with the faithful. Academics introduced us to modern Islamic theology and explained the role religion plays in Bosnian. We gained an appreciation for the diversity of Islamic thought: one morning brought us into the library of a prominent feminist

scholar, and another afternoon we chatted with two young Imams clad in jeans and t-shirts. In a single short week, we hardly had time to scratch the surface, but the trip doubtlessly sparked a curiosity that will lead to deeper learning.

Bosnia is a place of contradictions. Beautiful houses of worship speak of faiths that in one moment represent art and culture, and in the next a rallying point for nationalism. The green hills surrounding Sarajevo look surreal and beautiful in the morning fog, but once bristled with artillery. Hope and despair are spoken on the same breath. Though it remains undecided whether future juniors of the GPSP will soon return to the Balkans, for the class of 2018 at least, our experiences in Sarajevo will linger in our thoughts for years to come.

Jesse Mu Wins Churchill Scholarship

By Reed Piercey '19

Jesse Mu, of the recently graduated Class of 2017, has done it again. After being awarded the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship last year as a junior, he was announced this spring as a recipient of the coveted Churchill Scholarship, closing out his undergraduate career at BC in spectacular fashion. The Churchill Scholarship is so named for legendary British statesman Winston Churchill, who inspired the creation of the Churchill Foundation by his wish to promote the exchange of gifted American STEM students to Cambridge University in the UK. Thus, Mu and the other 14 other 2017-18 Churchill winners will pursue a year of study at Cambridge University under a chosen department and faculty member. In Mu's case, that will be Dr. Anna Korhonen of their Language Technology Laboratory. By the time he finishes his time in England in the spring of 2018, he will have earned a one-year Master's degree.

The Cambridge research that Mu will conduct thanks to the Churchill is right up his alley—he and his faculty mentor plan to study the issue of word embedding, which is key in the field of natural language processing (NLP). Mu describes NLP, his primary area of focus right now, as the study of “computers that can process, speak, and understand human language.” He was first drawn to it during his sophomore year, when he discovered that it would allow him to combine his initial intended major, psychology, with a developing passion for computer science and problem-solving through code. In Mu's vision, the power and potential of machine learning to reveal

the secrets behind human language is unparalleled, and language might just be the most direct window we have into how our minds work. Unlocking language with computing power is especially key due to the cutting-edge relevance of linguistic technology in our daily lives; as Mu says, “AI vocal and speech-based products are the next generation of how humans and computers will interact.”

Despite his interest in specializing in NLP, BC offered little to no coursework or resources that focus on that field. So, wanting to learn more, Mu took the advice of his faculty mentors to instead get in touch with MIT's computer science department. His search led to a partnership with Joshua Hartshorne, then a post-doctorate research fellow at MIT who worked with NLP. The two began collaborating on research around 2 years ago. Serendipitously, while Mu was working alongside him, Hartshorne accepted a position on BC's psychology faculty, and they suddenly found themselves much closer to another. This allowed them to more easily work together on studying one facet of NLP: the organization of verbs in language. The crux of Mu and Hartshorne's research endeavors to understand why some verbs can be used in some contexts but not in others. For example, it is considered correct to say, “Sally likes to read,” but not “Sally appreciates to read.” The mystery here, and the difficulty that computers face in trying to use language, is that although the words “like” and “appreciate” are near-synonyms according to the dictionary, these unwritten rules determine how they are employed in human speech patterns.

Mu and Hartshorne, however, can only do so much on their own—which is why Mu is immensely excited to leverage greater computing power to get to the bottom of these verbal complexities. Computational tools and databases like the ones possessed by Cambridge can examine language and linguistic samples “on a greater scale than ever before.” In this sense, he sees his greatest contributions right now as being part of psychology or linguistic theory, but hopes to take advantage of the resources at Cambridge and beyond to become more involved in the engineering and computer science side of his work. In the long term, Mu seeks to build his current research endeavors into a desire to engineer software and build products, potentially for computationally powerful companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon, or Apple. Fortunately for him, “the most exciting stuff in the industry is happening in AI and with language-based products,” an area in which his skills and academic experience are sorely needed. He says he could potentially see himself serving as a research scientist for such innovative and well-resourced corporations.

For the near future, though, Mu has his hands full. After he wraps up his yearlong Master's program at Cambridge, he will embark on a PhD in Computer Science at Stanford University. Stanford has allowed him to defer his admission by a year so he can take advantage of the Churchill Scholarship. A PhD is his next step towards being on the frontier of the technology industry, and he estimates that it might take him a minimum of five years to complete

Wall Street Alumni Event and Dinner



Jesse Mu con't from page 7

at such a rigorous institution. Then, Mu says, he will be at a crossroads: "Canonically, after a PhD, you choose between industry and academia." Although he describes

himself as leaning towards industry at the moment, it remains to be seen whether or not he discovers any new and captivating areas of study during his upcoming academic odyssey. Either way, we in the

GPSP look forward to following his achievements, and can't wait to print the next phases of Mu's journey in the Alumni News section.

Awards

University Honors

Order of the Cross & Crown

The Order of the Cross and Crown is the Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences honor society for seniors who, while achieving an average of at least A-, have established records of unusual service and leadership on the campus.

Russell Simons (Chief Marshal)

Dean's Scholars

Each year a select group of the brightest young scholars in the MCAS junior class are honored by the Dean of MCAS as Deans' Scholars. They are selected on the basis of their overall academic performance, the recommendations from their departmental faculty, their cocurricular initiatives, and the sense of purpose with which they approach their future.

Austin Bodetti

Jake Ciafone

John Knowles

Chris Reynolds

John Sipp

Sophomore Scholars

Each year the most academically distinguished members of the sophomore class are honored as Sophomore Scholars. The young scholars listed below have achieved an academic ranking that places them in the top three percent of their class of more than 1,500 and have also received the recognition and nomination of their major departments.

Sarya Baladi

Tommy Toghradjian

Advanced Study Grant Winners

Advanced Study Grants are for student designed projects and are awarded for summer "skill acquisition" projects that promise to accelerate dramatically the applicant's progress in the major field of study.

Austin Bodetti '18

Uncovering the Nature of Afghan-Emirati Relations

Christopher Yu '18

Ethnographic Fieldwork of Factory Worker Identity in Southern China

Sydney Apple '19

Beyond the Western Conception: Intensive Arabic Study in Amman

Sarya Baladi '19

Colloquial Arabic Language Acquisition to Study the Palestinian and Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

Thomas Toghradjian '19

Investigating the Impact of Armenia's Parliamentary Transition on Opposition Parties

Luke Murphy '20

Healthcare Access in Lima's Pueblos Jóvenes

Cole Tamburri '20

Investigating the Effects of Solar Activity on Paleoclimatological Trends and Short-Term Terrestrial Weather Patterns

Commencement Awards

Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

George F. and Jean W. Bemis Award

This award was established in memory of George Fisher Bemis (1899-1971) and Jean Wilmot Bemis (1903-1987) of Milton, Massachusetts, a devoted couple quietly of service to others and with whom it was a delight to work. The award seeks to single out a member of the senior class distinguished for service to others.

Mackenzie Arnold

Donald S. Carlisle Award

An award established by the Department of Political Science in memory of Donald S. Carlisle, Professor of Political Science at Boston College (1968-1997), given each year to a graduating senior for outstanding achievement in political science.

***Mackenzie Arnold
Hagop Toghramadjian***

Mary A. & Katherine G. Finneran Commencement Award

An award, the gift of Misses Elizabeth and Theresa Finneran, given to the student who has achieved outstanding success in studies, while also devoting time and talents to other activities for the enrichment of the College and student life.

Russell Simons

Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., Award

An award in honor of Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., President of Boston College (1907-1914), given to the graduating senior with a distinguished academic record over a four-year period.

Jesse Mu

General Excellence Award

An award, a gift of the Philomatheia Club, given to the student who has achieved general excellence in all branches of studies during their entire four years at Boston College.

Matthew Perryman

Giffuni Prize

An award sponsored by the Giffuni Family Fund in honor of Vincent Giffuni (BC '65), given to a senior who has written an outstanding thesis in economics.

Carrie Ruh

John McCarthy, S.J. Award for Social Sciences/Political Science

An award given to seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences for the most distinguished Scholar of the College projects.

Hagop Toghramadjian

Thomas H. O'Connor Award

An award established by the History Department in honor of the late Thomas H. O'Connor, who taught in the department from 1950 through 1999, and who also served as Boston College University Historian. It is given each year to a graduating senior in recognition of outstanding achievement in the study of American history.

Chrissy Lorica

Phi Beta Kappa

Phi Beta Kappa is the most prestigious academic honors society in the United States. Annually it elects to membership the most outstanding seniors (and a handful of truly exceptional juniors), based on superior scholarship and good character.

***Mackenzie Arnold
Mary Kate Cahill
Chrissy Lorica
Liza Magill
Jesse Mu
Matthew Perryman
Carrie Ruh
Hagop Toghramadjian***

Scholar of the College

Scholar of the College is a special designation conferred at Commencement on seniors who have successfully completed particularly creative, scholarly, and ambitious independent research projects while maintaining an overall cumulative grade point average of A- or better.

Chrissy Lorica
Liza Magill
Hagop Toghramadjian

Tully Theology Award

An award given in memory of the late Dennis H. Tully, given to the student who has written the best paper on a theological subject.

Mary Kate Cahill

Non-University Awards, Honor, Fellowships or Scholarships

Fulbright Award

The Fulbright Program, including the Fulbright–Hays Program, is an American scholarship program of competitive, merit-based grants for international educational exchange for students, scholars, teachers, professionals, scientists and artists, founded by United States Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946. Under the Fulbright Program, competitively selected American citizens may become eligible for scholarships to study, conduct research, or exercise their talents abroad.

Mackenzie Arnold
Hagop Toghramadjian

Winston Churchill Scholarship

The Churchill Scholarship provides funding to American students for a year of Master's study in science, mathematics, and engineering at the University of Cambridge, based at Churchill College. The Scholarship was set up at the request of Sir Winston Churchill in order to fulfill his vision of US-UK scientific exchange with the goal of advancing science and technology on both sides of the Atlantic, helping to ensure our future prosperity and security.

Jesse Mu

Awards won by GPSP Alumni

Nadya Muchoney '13 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

Andrew Steck '10 Ottis Green Fellowship, awarded by the Duke Graduate School for 2017-18

Matthew Alonsozana '14 National Association of Asian Pacifics in Politics and Public Affairs (NAAPPPA) Top 40 Political And Public Affairs Professionals Under 40

Marie Pellisser '15 McCluggage Award for best research paper (Loyola University)

Alexander Goldowsky '12 Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society inductee, Alpha Omega Alpha award for highest academic average over medical school

Alumni Announcements

Alexander Goldowsky '12 was recently inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society and received the Alpha Omega Alpha Award for highest academic ranking at NYU. He is doing his residency in internal medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess in Boston.

Abby Letak '12 recently earned her Masters in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she is continuing her studies to earn her PhD

Nick Ackerman '09 and his wife Laura welcomed baby Theodore James Ackerman, on April 9th 2017

Natalia (Bauer) Hudelson '08 and husband Phil welcomed son Nicholas on December 23rd, 2016

Allison Ramirez '07 and husband Jose Burgos welcomed daughter Isabel Mae on April 4th, 2017

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