

Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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Incoming Scholars bond on Thompson Island

Freshman Scholars begin their Boston College careers by taking part in an overnight ropes program run by Outward Bound on Thompson Island in Boston Harbor. After arriving on campus during the week before classes begin, and accompanied by Scholars from the upper classes, and the graduate assistant, they engage in a range of activities designed to promote a sense of camaraderie among the group, to encourage in them the habit of pushing themselves beyond the boundaries of their comfort zones, to help them realize that they are capable of achieving more than they think they are, and to emphasize that leadership can be done from within a group as well as at the head of one, all qualities that we seek to nurture in Presidential Scholars. Rachel Newmiller, a member of the Class of 2013, recalls her experience on Thompson Island.

By Rachel Newmiller, A&S '13

The view of Boston from the top of the alpine tower made my 64 foot climb well worth all the effort. During my ascent, shouts of encouragement, words of advice, and directions from a trustworthy belayer resonated through the windy sea air from the ground below. A few days before putting on a harness I never would have imagined that I could accomplish such a feat. Yet challenges like this characterized the Outward Bound Thompson Island experience, pushing the newest class of Presidential Scholars to tackle a slew of physical obstacles together, resulting in great team and personal triumphs. In a largely unfamiliar environment, surrounded by a group of people we hardly knew, we were presented with demanding tasks that most of us had never before faced. And it was exactly this element of unfamiliarity that made the weekend so incredibly successful. Far away from the comforts of campus, we opened up, more willing to share things about ourselves and to learn about others. Having barely unpacked all of our belongings into our dorm rooms, we found ourselves on an island where the boundaries of our comfort zones



Scholars pose on the dock at Thompson Island before their departure.

would be tested and new friendships would be forged.

Whether avoiding the “pit of ignorance” while traveling from the past into the future or building a raft out of barrels, bamboo poles, and rope, we were able to bond over the successes (and occasional failures) of our experiences. In order to overcome the vast majority of the challenges placed before us, we had to depend on one another and to work as a cohesive unit. It was apparent from our very first balancing exercise that this weekend was not going to be solely about individuals, but about the strength of teamwork and the value of camaraderie. Perhaps just as important,

it was going to breakdown personal barriers and make every one of us a little more transparent.

We began with games that had us share our favorite colors, current majors, and number of siblings, all things that are to some degree superficial, but helped introduce a group of relative strangers to one another. Then, after a day of activities, the “flying squirrel” gave us the chance to shout one thing that brought us pride. The following circle exercise probed further, permitting us to express some of our deepest regrets, biggest fears and uncertainties, and greatest hopes for the future. The last

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Summer Experiences

Freshmen experience service in the heart of Boston

By Elizabeth Fair, A&S '12

Fresh from their first year at Boston College, Scholars spend six-weeks of their summer completing two community service placements in Boston, an opportunity to witness firsthand the major problems facing society and pursue the Jesuit ideal of “men and women for others.”

For four days a week, Scholars commute to various areas in Boston to work in homeless shelters, correctional facilities, and other organizations devoted to caring for the less fortunate. On Friday mornings, students remain on campus to attend a class headed by Professor David McMenamin, director of the PULSE program at BC, an acclaimed course of study and service. Readings are assigned each week, which are then used to spark insightful discussions about societal inequity and the efficacy of responses to resolve such problems.

This year, the class of 2012 were assigned to placements at St. Francis House, Haley House, The Italian Home for Children, Project Bread, Suffolk County House of Correction, Rosie's Place, the Labouré Center, and Hampshire Educational Collaborative, locations addressing issues of homelessness and hunger, poverty, crime, and educational inequity.

At the conclusion of the intense six-week program, students emerged with a new sense of commitment to the community and a much deeper

understanding of the nature of service, having both hands-on and scholarly experience in reflecting on aspects of society not often considered by college students.

A Personal Reflection...

It's six-o'clock and my alarm clock goes off. I roll out of bed and shut it off. Stifling a yawn and realizing that I probably shouldn't have stayed up late the night before to eat fresh-baked chocolate-chip cookies and watch a movie with my fellow P-scholars, I get ready to hop on the T and travel to St. Francis House. I head into the kitchen just as it is time to serve breakfast, grab my apron, and stand behind the pan of warm bagels. As people begin to pass through the line at this homeless shelter, I recognize familiar faces from the weeks before. “Good morning,” we greet each other. Although the line moves rapidly, I snatch tidbits of conversation with some of the people, commenting on yesterday's baseball game or commiserating about the rain.

Meeting and getting to know people I probably would have just walked by on the street without a second glance was my favorite part of my placement. I learned firsthand that homeless people are not the homeless, but rather persons with histories, families, and feelings. I loved seeing their faces brighten when they were greeted in the morning with a smile, and in return many would offer

me simple words of advice that you can never hear enough: stay in school, be good to your family, and if you care for others and are a hard worker you can become president of the United States.

The next day I get to sleep a little later, but after riding the T all the way to Government Center, I find myself stiff and groggy in my seat. Nonetheless, I switch to the blue line, and then get off at Maverick to work at Project Bread. I greet the other workers in the phone room, and switch on my phone. Twisting back and forth in my rolling chair, I wait for the first phone call for the day.

Working at a hotline that screens callers for food stamps or makes referrals for people to go to food pantries is an interesting job. Talking with the callers and hearing their stories is my favorite part, but it is often a very sobering experience. I have talked to a pregnant teenage girl who is separated from her family, immigrants who could not make ends meet with their small salaries, and an elderly woman with many medical bills. Helping these people access emergency food resources is rewarding, especially when I hear tension and worry leave the caller's voice at the end of the call. Sometimes, though, when I check the database, I realize that a caller has been receiving assistance for years but is not yet above the poverty line. Listening to the callers' stories has made me much more aware of the issue of poverty, and, as in St. Francis House, it has put a human face on the people in poverty.

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day's reflections continued this pattern of increasing openness, pressing everyone in the group to ponder their best or breakthrough moment of the entire experience.

While carefully navigating the spider's web, telling ghost stories on the beach, and ascending the alpine tower, I gained a better understanding of myself and of those who surrounded me. Thompson Island and all of its challenges reminded me of the power of personal determination and of the benefits that come about when I choose to step outside of my own comfort zone. I hope that I can speak for all of the

freshmen Presidential Scholars when I say that such a weekend was a wonderful way to begin our college journey. Not only did we have the opportunity to get to know our upperclassmen leaders, but we were able to learn so much about each other, forming a firm foundation for our next four years at Boston College.



Photo: Kayte Giorgio

Scholars attempt to sail their raft around a buoy in Boston Harbor.

Summer Experiences

Sophomores gain international perspective in France

The Jesuit mission has always had a global perspective, with Jesuits living and working on virtually all continents as scholars, teachers, and missionaries. Plunged into unfamiliar cultures, they adopted the habit of beginning by observing closely and listening attentively to the voices of the societies and cultures in which they found themselves to better understand how best to serve them. Presidential Scholars, while not missionaries in the same sense, will inevitably find themselves exercising their professional skills in far-flung parts of the global village. As an initial step in learning how to analyze a society, in the summer following their freshman year, Presidential Scholars participate in a month-long interdisciplinary study trip to France.

By Brian Varian, CSOM '11

Late one afternoon, while watching the magnificent sunset from atop Montmartre, I unexpectedly happened upon Kelly McCartney, A&S '11, returning from a museum. On a different occasion, groups of Scholars bumped into each other at the Musée de l'Orangerie (there is no admission fee on the first Sunday of the month). In yet another instance of chance sightings, Dr. and Mrs. Sardella, who led our study trip, were seated one pew in front of us for the Vigil Mass at St. Gervais—"Quelle coincidence!" as we learned to say in our survival French class taught by Boston College doctoral student Ana Conboy. While on the plane returning to the United States, I pondered these frequent chance sightings and said to myself, "Either Paris is a very small city, or we were an extraordinarily active group of college students with voracious appetites for culture, aestheticism, knowledge, and, at times, reflection." I tend to think that the latter is true.

Indeed, the list of museums, churches, fortresses, parks, monuments, and government buildings visited and investigated by Scholars goes on and on. Furthermore, Scholars partook in equally as many lectures, seminars, and discussions (in both English and French) during the month-long trip to France—a veritable rite of passage for Presidential Scholars. Yet, if Scholars were to compare lists, no two lists would be exactly the same. Moreover, reducing the trip to a list of excursions and seminars would render the entire experience meaningless. Toward this end, Dr. and Mrs. Sardella vigorously encouraged each Scholar to keep a journal, which served as a lens for the trip.

My journal was both objective and reflective, as I will explain. Scholars were unanimous in their praise of a lecture given by Marie Boeton, a journalist who has written extensively on poverty issues in France. During this lecture, I noted



Photo: Marjorie Sardella

Along with many historic and beautiful sites, Scholars also visited the European Parliament to gain insight about how the governing body operates.

that, in France, it is difficult to obtain a property loan because monthly wages must be three times the mortgage payment. However, French citizens do possess the right to sue the state for failure to provide housing. Surely, such factual information, articulated by experts like Marie Boeton; Alan Potofsky, professor of history at the University of Paris; Malcolm Miller, the world-famous writer and guide at Chartres Cathedral; Dr. Jean-Marie Leparç, Professor at University of Paris Medical School and Chief of Rheumatology at Hôpital Ambroise Paré, one of the University of Paris teaching hospitals; Alice Jouve, certified Paris tour guide; Professor Michel Troper, French legal expert and former Director of the Centre du Théorie de Droit at the University of Paris; Sébastien Maillard, Brussels correspondent for the daily newspaper La Croix, Ulrich Bohner, Chief Executive of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; and Aysegul Uzun Marinkovic, European Court of Human Rights attorney, served as the foundation of the knowledge I acquired

during the trip.

Flipping to another section of my journal, I recall my trip to Amboise in the Loire Valley with five other Scholars, which occurred during the travel weekend when Scholars were encouraged to explore the richness of France beyond the city of Paris. My journal, written on the train back to Paris, reads:

The Loire was seemingly shallow, and in the water were remnants of broken dams.

Towering above was the Chateau d'Amboise, a 15th century, late medieval, flamboyant Gothic fortress, once home to royalty. After entering the castle grounds, there were extraordinary views of the Loire and the buildings below. There was a brass band playing in the village square. You could also see the moss covered rooftops of the buildings. And it was a misty day, which seemed perfect for viewing the medieval buildings and river.

It was no coincidence that I had learned the characteristic elements of flamboyant Gothic architecture just a few days earlier

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Summer Experiences

Hands-on service experience abroad

By Ana Mascagni, A&S '10

I spent my summer as a social work intern at Jesuit Refugee Service in Lisbon, Portugal. JRS is an international organization that works to accompany, serve, and defend refugees, forcibly displaced peoples, and immigrants worldwide. In Lisbon, I worked at the program's Centro Pedro Arrupe, a temporary homeless shelter that accommodates roughly 30 men, women, and children from Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia. This description, however, fails to do justice to the incredibly enriching experience I had.

From my first week at JRS, I was welcomed by the staff, my opinions were solicited, and my doubts and critiques were heard. I contributed to discussions about which candidates to accept into the shelter, about how to mediate conflicts between residents, and about much time residents should remain in the shelter. I

was impressed by how much weight was given to these decisions, as we assessed the costs and benefits of allowing a recovering drug addict who introduced many risks, into the shelter, but who also was in terrible need of our services. The opportunity to actively participate in major debates regarding the shelter and its residents challenged me, forcing me to carefully consider complex situations and to learn to live with the responsibility of making decisions that affect other people's lives.

It was an amazingly engaging and hands-on experience, as my unpredictable days included participating in the administrative decision-making process and addressing issues brought up directly by the residents. It was undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges I have had. I remember my anxiety as I attempted to mediate household conflicts between residents of diverse backgrounds and experiences, from the Chinese cook to the farmer from

Guinea-Bissau, and my hesitation as I tried to tactfully reproach a neglectful mother.

It was also one of the most rewarding experiences I have had, and I felt immense personal satisfaction when, after two months of negotiations, I received a birth certificate from Benin for one of our undocumented residents. The document was a necessary first step in his extraordinary asylum suit.

As I begin my career in Social Work, I am certain that my experience at JRS will prove invaluable, equipping me with necessary skills to working with people in similar settings and, perhaps more importantly, preparing me personally to deal with emotionally difficult situations. I will always remember hearing our executive director say, amid discussions about controversial residents, "We are the Jesuit Refugee Services- we must serve those who need us most. If we do not, no one else will."

Seniors share diverse internships with Scholars

By Hope Sullivan, A&S '11

As part of the summer experience constituting a major component of the Presidential Scholars Program, Scholars participate in professional internships sponsored by the Program during the summer before their senior year. Whether these internship experiences take Scholars around the world or just across town, they enrich students' overall academic experi-

ences and give them a better sense of what they can (or cannot) see themselves doing later in life. On September 22nd, select members from the class of 2010 presented their summer experiences, taking time to recount the challenges and rewards of their diverse internships and provide helpful advice to younger Scholars about the process of crafting and completing an internship.

Pat Passarelli, A&S '10, worked

at the University of Nebraska Medical Center lab over the summer as part of its Summer Undergraduate Research Program. He worked on a variety of projects in the laboratory, including research of bone marrow transplants graft vs. host disease, which occurs when recipients' bodies reject the foreign transplant tissue.

One of the most rewarding parts of his internship was the opportunity to shadow doctors and witness surgeries. "Never underestimate the importance of shadowing," said Passarelli. This provided him with valuable insight into a surgeon's daily activities, which, he assures, cannot be understood merely from watching hospital dramas on television. Caroline Beimford, A&S '10, put her English major to use in the education division of Pearson Publishing in Boston, which produces textbooks and other scholastic tools. Beimford interned as an editorial assistant, primarily working on economics textbooks. She soon discovered that her previous experience in the field of economics made her one of the most knowledgeable people on the subject within her department, where most of her coworkers had backgrounds in English and the humanities. In describing her overall internship experience, Beimford said she got "an appreciation for the whole process: idea, writing process, publication, marketing..."

Joe Zabinski, A&S '10, wanted to branch out from his academic experience in the humanities, primarily German



Photo: Marjorie Sardella

Senior pose together after presenting about each of their unique and enriching summer work experiences.

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Summer Experiences

Working for the White House

By Chris Scullin, A&S '10

As a political science major, I had always viewed the opportunity to work in the White House as the Holy Grail of internships. When I learned that I was actually accepted to join the first intern class of the presidency of Barack Obama, I was, to say the least, excited.

What I found past the Secret Service was a world where everyone was incredibly sharp, motivated, and dedicated to implementing a vision of social change. Day in and day out, I learned through osmosis, soaking in their thought processes and immersing myself in politics.

But we did not just slave away at unimportant tasks. Most notably, we had a speaker series that included all of the major members in the administration: Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary Arne Duncan, Rahm Emanuel, David Axelrod, Valerie Jarrett, Pete Rouse, Jon Favreau, and Robert Gibbs, to name a few. I bowled in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and played basketball in the Department of the Interior. I gave Rahm Emanuel a pep talk before he stepped into a dunk tank and hung out with Congress at the Congressional Luau on the South Lawn of the White House.

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and Physics, and use his summer to explore the world of finance. He worked at Locke Capital Investment, a hedge fund in Boston, delving into the unfamiliar financial sector by participating in one of its least understood and most challenging fields. During his internship, Zabinski says that he learned much about finance and economics – which he noted are not the same. Additionally, through his varied responsibilities, he was exposed to financial accounting, market psychology, and market research. As his senior year commences, and as he faces decisions about the future, he remarks, “now I have another post-graduate option.”

Choosing to spend her summer internship abroad, Ana Mascagni A&S '10 traveled to Lisbon, Portugal to work with the Jesuit Refugee Service, which operates in over 50 countries around the globe. This non-profit organization, founded by Father Pedro Arrupe, S.J. for whom Bos-

ton College's service immersion trips are named, aims at serving and defending the rights of refugees. Mascagni hoped that working with the JRS would coincide well with her sociology major and five-year Masters program in the School of Social Work. One of the biggest surprises of her summer internship was the extent of her responsibilities, which were much greater than she had anticipated. At one point in the summer, she was the only social worker at her site, leaving her to contend with everything from interviewing candidates for the homeless shelter to working to obtain documentation for a man displaced from his home in Benin.

Chris Scullin A&S '10 spent his summer in Washington, D.C. working as an intern at the White House's Office of Presidential Personnel. One of the highlights of his internship was a series of speakers specifically for the White House interns, which included talks by White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel,



Photo: Chris Scullin

Senior Chris Scullin poses in front of the White House press conference podium.

In helping me identify my niche, my experience at the White House ironically led me away from government for the short term, to forage for the business experiences that will maximize my portfolio. Yet I am confident that when I return, I will bring back the skills necessary to add to the everyday innovation within the walls of the White House.

First Lady Michelle Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden. Scullin cited the relationships he forged with his fellow interns as perhaps the most rewarding of his summer experience. The White House internship program, he said, attracts undergraduate and graduate students with an impressive array of international and government experience, and now he has expanded his network of colleagues to include this talented group of peers.

The senior Scholars utilized their summer internship opportunities to expand upon their academic backgrounds and challenge themselves with new experiences, providing members of the other classes with much to think about as they look ahead to their own internships. Lake Coreth A&S '11 says, “It was really interesting to hear how the upperclassmen spent their summer internships. It’s good to know that I can either explore something that is very much connected to my major or try something outside my comfort zone.”

Summer Experiences

Boston College's Advanced Study Grants program provides funding, primarily to students in the summer following their first or second year, to support independent research projects or to enable them to develop tools necessary for future research, such as advanced language skills. During the summer of 2009, eight first- and second-year Presidential Scholars were awarded Advanced Study Grants to support projects ranging from production of a film documenting the Conditions of Human Trafficking in New York and San Francisco, to intensive Arabic language study and conflict-resolution research in Lebanon. This brings to thirty-two the number of Advanced Study Grants won by Presidential Scholars over the past four years. The following article recounts the experiences of Ola Jachtorowicz, a biochemistry major and environmental studies minor from the Class of 2012.

Compost, Cacao, and Constellations: An Ecuadorian Experience

By Ola Jachtorowicz, A&S '12

The first task they gave me, on the first day I arrived, was turning the compost. Unfazed and undaunted, I had come to work at the Jatun Sacha Biological Station & Reserve, after all, and this certainly wasn't my first encounter with some decomposing leaves and food scraps. Unfortunately for poor, unsuspecting me, compost in the Amazon is not like compost in New England. Compost in New England does not have ten king vultures picking through it that must be scared away before you can turn it – vultures that continue to lurk in the canopy, anxiously waiting to descend on the fetid material you expose before their companion scavengers can. Compost in New England cannot be heard from five feet away, the squirming, wriggling sound of hundreds of pale, plump maggots writhing blindly in the dark. Compost in New England does not steam, a result of the extremely fast rate of nutrient turnover in tropical rainforest climates, as bacteria and other detritivores cycle decomposing organic material back into the ecosystem, radiating heat into your face as you dig your shovel into the moist heap. I won't even mention the stench.

My Advanced Study Grant took me to Ecuador, to investigate conservation work in the Napo Valley, on the western outskirts of the vast Amazon Basin. The Jatun Sacha Biological Reserve encompasses 2,500 hectares, 70% of which is primary forest. Tropical rainforests, due to the year-round solar energy and water available at the tropics, are the most biodiverse biomes on Earth. Jatun Sacha, which means “big forest” in Quichua, the native language of the local people, is an Alpha Biodiversity Hot Spot, which



Photo: Ola Jachtorowicz

Ola Jachtorowicz poses in front of the Jatun Sacha Reserve entrance, a rain forest preservation project in Ecuador where she spent part of her summer.

simply means extremely high species richness within a particular area, community, or ecosystem. Studies of the area have demonstrated that there are approximately 250 different species of trees and 1,500 species of plants per hectare.

Jatun Sacha has many goals, but one of them is to prevent slash-and-burn agriculture, one of the major causes of deforestation in South America. Despite the extraordinary productivity of the rainforest, the topsoil is very thin (about 3 cm, followed by clay and quartz) and nutrient-poor. All the nutrients are found in the biomass of the system – the trees, lianas, vines, insects, monkeys, and so on – and are quickly taken up again and

recycled once an organism dies (see compost, above). A small farmer will burn an acre of forest to the ground in order to obtain the nutrients locked in it, but the soil will only produce for 2-3 years, and then the farmer must move on and burn more forest in order to harvest crops and survive. The abandoned land is unlikely to recover, not only because the nutrients have been sapped by the growth and export of crops, but because rainforest soils are laterite, they become dry and bricklike if exposed to sunlight, as they are when the normally protective thick canopy is burned down by the farmer. To educate

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Summer Experiences

Scavenger hunt brings local youth to BC

By Jessica Seminelli, A&S '12

Service and a dedication to reaching out to the surrounding community are primary tenets of the Jesuit tradition, which is why following freshman year, Presidential Scholars remain in Boston to complete two local community service placements. In addition, the class of 2012 were joined by the McNair Scholars in leading a scavenger hunt for the peer leaders of the Watertown Youth Coalition. This marks the second time the event has been held, and once again, the evening was a great success.

Held on Wednesday, June 10th, the evening began with Scholars being assigned to five different teams. Each group was given a digital camera and a list composed of sites and actions with different point values. For example, students could trek down to visit Flutie's statue in front of Alumni Stadium, posing in his classic Heisman-winning stance, for a gain of six points. Captur-

ing pictures in front of each of the main academic buildings earned ten points; forming a pyramid in the Dustbowl was worth five. For forty-five minutes (arriving after the time limit would be grounds for disqualification), teams raced up and down the Heights while trying to teach all team members the first verse of the Boston College fight song--a task which would be worth ten bonus points if completed successfully.

Following the intense adventure, all students gathered back in Lawrence House to tally points and chow down on much-anticipated pizza along with an assortment of delicious desserts provided by the Watertown Youth Coalition. College and high school students intermingled while enjoying their hard-earned dinner, an opportunity for students from the WYC to gain insight into the college experience from Scholars, the ultimate purpose of the event.

The Scavenger Hunt was designed to introduce high school teens



to BC's campus, giving them a feel for university life while also offering them the chance to have a fun-filled, open dialogue with BC students. Hopefully this will continue to be an annual tradition and permanent component to the summer community service experience.

Though BC's endless stair cases and hills left students red-faced and winded, everyone ended the evening with a smile, particularly the victorious team #5, totaling 51 points and receiving Starbucks gift cards for their success.

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the native communities about alternative agricultural techniques, volunteers at Jatun Sacha run an Organic Garden, affectionately termed the OG. Besides various forms of composting, volunteers experiment with organic fertilizers, crop rotation, natural pesticides, and differential soil compositions.

Another project is the CCPA, or Centro de Conservación de Plantas Amazónicas, a botanical garden of species native to the Napo Valley region, many with medicinal uses known to the Quichua people. One study found that 80% percent of such plants were effective in their traditional use. College students from the University of Quito and tourists frequent the CCPA, where they are shown which plants can ease stomach cramps and which can be used as glue. The CCPA is also where reforestation efforts are organized—I can proudly say that at least 50 mahogany seedlings owe their germination to me.

It's not surprising how often the rainforest is compared to an Eden, an uncorrupted garden paradise. Waking up in my cabaña to the sound of raindrops on the tin roof (it rains 200 days a year!)

and sunlight streaming through the verdant canopy, an agouti scurrying across the path outside my window, I certainly would not have argued that sentiment. Even the prospect of the closest medical aid being the shaman in the nearby village couldn't ruin the deep appreciation of life that filled me. Two memories especially define my experience. One – the taste of cocoa. Much like compost, I thought I knew cocoa – it was a bitter bean that chocolate was made of. But these beans are found within a yellow-orange fruit resembling a gourd. The cocoa must be chopped from the tree by machete, and once sliced open, the dark beans covered by a thick, white goo are revealed. This white substance has quite possibly the most delicious flavor I have ever tasted. It is sweet and fruity, fresh and satisfying. The bitter cocoa beans are spit out onto the ground once the paste is sucked off, a useless nuisance (and the method the crafty cocoa plant has evolved to entice fructose-craving animals to transport its seeds). For me, this is a flavor of nostalgia, a sweet taste not found anywhere but in the green

foliage of the rainforest.

The second memory I have is an ironic one. A paved road bisects the Reserve, connecting the town of Tena with the town of Ahuano – a road that Jatun Sacha bitterly fought the inception of. Where roads lead, deforestation often follows, in the forms of squatters, farmers, and oil pipelines. Despite having lost the lawsuit Jatun Sacha filed, the mayor of Tena proceeded to build the road anyway, a frustrating example of the state of environmental enforcement in Ecuador. However, this asphalt road, warm from the long day's sun, provided the only break in the canopy for miles. I thought I had seen stars, thought I understood why the night sky had enchanted so many generations past, but once again, I was mistaken. Laying on that road with my fellow volunteers and gazing up the brilliance of the heavens from the depths of that un-lighted, un-wired, and un-conquered wilderness, I felt the childlike wonder our ancestors must have felt each time the sun set.

Scholars lend a hand to Campus School event



Photo: Kayte Giorgio

Freshmen proudly display a banner they made with campus school students and event participants.

By Kevin Morris & Colleen Sinnott, A&S '13

On Sunday, October 4, the Presidential Scholars joined with the Shaw House Leadership Program and other Boston College student volunteers in helping with the Campus School's annual Fun Run, Walk, and Roll fundraiser. Eager Boston College students, family members of Campus School students, and various faculty members paid an entrance fee to participate in a race that looped around the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. Proceeds from the event went to benefit the Boston College Campus School, a private, non-profit, publicly funded, special education

day school for students with multiple disabilities, many of whom also have complex healthcare needs.

Presidential Scholars helped participants create a banner for their classroom of their handprints while also entertaining the children with a face-painting booth. Scholars also worked as crossing guards for race participants and enjoyed engaging families of Campus School students in conversation. With upwards

of twenty Presidential Scholars in attendance, and some even running in the race (freshman Ben Martin broke the long-standing record and finished second with a time under thirteen minutes!), our presence was greatly felt and appreciated. It would seem, however, that the Scholars believed they gained more than they gave by volunteering at this event.

Strolling and conversing with a man involved with the Campus School program provided an inside look at the workings of this valuable asset to our university community. Currently, there are 43 students enrolled in the Campus School, ranging in age from 3 to 21 years. These

students have a wide array of physical and mental disabilities, all of which leave them unable to speak. Some of them, however, can communicate with their teachers through simple sign language.

Faculty members at the Campus School are some of the most dedicated and impassioned individuals in the Boston College community. Their days are filled by working with students who struggle with basic daily tasks, but must still be prepared to take the same Massachusetts state standardized tests required of all students. Though their jobs are often taxing and their days always long, the staff never lacks enthusiasm, excitement, or motivation. We heard stories about the ways in which they use creative and ingenious methods to reach and engage the students, whatever their level of ability. Despite the variety of handicaps experienced by students, the faculty strive to form meaningful relationships with each of them.

Participating in the Campus School Fun Run, Walk, and Roll allowed us to interact with and learn about a part of campus to which we usually have little exposure. Our day of service left us hoping that this would be only the beginning of a long relationship between the Presidential Scholars Program and the Campus School of Boston College and its inspirational teachers and staff.

France cont. from p. 3

with Madame Alice Jouve; for the lectures, seminars, and discussions contextualized and refined my observations immensely.

My journal also contained several personal reflections. Just as interesting as the reflections were the venues that prompted them, like a boat cruise along the Seine, a walk through Père Lachaise Cemetery, or, my favorite, a Vivaldi concert in the Church of St. Madeleine, which received rave reviews from all the Scholars in attendance.

There was ample time built into the schedule, usually in the afternoons, for personal exploration of the sights and sounds of both Paris and Strasbourg. However, in the mornings, Scholars worked fastidiously at mastering the French language under the tutelage of Ana Conboy and, at times, our classmate and accomplished French speaker Christopher

Griesedieck, A&S '11. The classes were quite informative, affording Scholars the opportunity to practice the complexities of French pronunciation, while at the same time, fostering discussion of the subtle connotations associated with certain French words. Leon Ratz, A&S '11 stated, "With the help of Ana's class, learning essential words and phrases enabled me to access French culture in ways I never thought I could."

Altogether, the trip to France was extraordinary, partly because of how well the seminars reinforced the almost daily outings, partly because of how well the assigned reading contextualized my astute observations, but mostly

because I was surrounded by Scholars who had, "...voracious appetites for culture, asceticism, knowledge, and, at times, reflection."



Photo: Marjorie Sardella

An ever iconic site, students capture the essence of Paris while posing at sunset in front of the brightly lit Eiffel Tower.

Welcome reception introduces new faces to PSP

To mark the beginning of another school year, the Program held its annual welcome reception on September 15, 2009. Current Scholars were joined by alumni and faculty for dinner followed by a slideshow presentation compiled by Marjorie Sardella to highlight last summer's France trip. Fr. Neenan, S.J. then addressed the audience, offering words of wisdom, along with some unusual bits of BC history. The reception also served as an opportunity to introduce the Presidential Scholars Class of 2013 to other members of the Program, while reacquainting returning Scholars.

The PSP Class of 2013



Photo: Marjorie Sardella

Joseph Baron
Medfield, MA

Kevin Morris
Portland, OR

Shannon Cook
Chagrin Falls, OH

Nadya Muchoney
Alexandria, VA

Helen Jiang
Southbury, CT

Rachel Newmiller
Dresher, PA

Brendan Kelly
Somers, NY

Sasha Savinkina
Minneapolis, MN

Marty Long
Marietta, GA

Colleen Sinnott
Mattapoisett, MA

Benjamin Martin
Tampa, FL

Kelsey Swift
Carlsbad, CA

Alumni in the News

Ari Shapiro (PSP '01, PhD, MIT-Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute) was profiled in a Chronicle of Higher Education interview article ("Academic to Radio Producer") in which he spoke of his shift from marine biological research to producing stories about science, which appear regularly on such media as Atlantic Public Media, NPR's The World and All Things Considered. You can listen and read Ari's blog at <http://aridanielshapiro.wordpress.com/>

Andrew Frey (PSP '01, JD Michigan Law School 2004), an associate in the Land Use Group at Akerman Senterfitt in Miami, is once again the organizer for "DawnTown Miami," the prestigious annual international architecture competition for Downtown Miami. This year's topic is a new station for Downtown Miami's elevated public transportation system, Metromover. Andrew proposed and initiated the competition in 2007 and has run it since then.

Gary Gabor (PSP '02), currently pursuing his doctorate in philosophy at Fordham University, has been awarded a J. William Fulbright Student Grant, enabling him to travel to Belgium to prepare a critically annotated translation of Boethius' "Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge," an influential early medieval text.

Will Dowd (PSP '06), is finishing his Master of Fine Arts degree at New York University supported by a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship. His short story, "The First Session," one of two runners-up in round two of National Public Radio's "Three Minute Fiction" contest, was a humorous piece dealing with a

frustrating marital counseling session in which the husband – a physicist – exhibited quantum behavior that made it impossible for there to be a definitive answer to any questions posed to him. Prior to attending NYU, Will earned a masters' degree in the MIT Graduate Program in Science Writing.

Marisa (Cochrane) Sullivan (PSP '07) took a leave from her position at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington, DC, to travel to Baghdad, where she served as Command Historian of Multi-National Force-Iraq. As the official and only MNF-I historian, she attended high-level briefings, conduct interviews, and interact with all areas of MNF-I (which is the highest echelon of command in Iraq and is currently led by General Odierno). She also wrote the MNF-I quarterly history report, which was sent to the US Central Command upon completion.

Patricia Noonan (PSP '07), who made her New York City stage debut soon after graduation in *Man of La Mancha* and *Ragtime*, and later toured with *Little House on the Prairie*, performed the role of Julie Jordan in last summer's production of *Carousel* at the Barrington Stage Company, an award-winning Equity theatre in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Pilar Landon (PSP '09) is a member of Teach For America. After attending the TFA Summer Institute ("Teacher Boot Camp") in Chicago, she obtained a position at Gary Comer College Prep, a charter school where she will teach mathematics to 9th graders. Pilar writes that, "Teaching has taught me to find joy in small successes, to take ownership over student achievement, to assume responsibility over student shortcomings, to look for ways to frame every negative as an asset, and to be flexible."



Bread for the Journey

The Contemplative in the City

[W]alking meditations are conventionally untaken by monks within the confines of cloistered grounds, and a city resembles a cloister in close to nothing ... [However, we], too, need to see our life not merely as some frantic machine of power but as an elegant vessel of striving, talent, grace, and occasionally transcendent purpose ... [W]hat matters to my understanding is the same thing that matters on the mountaintops of France or to the Trappists of Kentucky. The setting is immaterial. To be at rest is to observe the bones of God's work through man in the world laid bare. To be at rest is to see with clarified vision. And this vision forces me to contemplate not what I am meant to do with my days in this place on earth, but what I am meant to be ... To what, here and now, am I to be faithful?

-Kathleen Hirsch, *A Home in the Heart of a City*