



GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM



BOSTON COLLEGE

# An opportunity for leaders of unusual promise

Each year, approximately 15 Presidential Scholars are chosen from among the top 2 percent of all applicants for Early Action admission to Boston College. These extraordinary students are selected on the basis of their superior academic achievement and promise, leadership potential, and demonstrated commitment to serving society.

The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program offers them both a merit scholarship equal to full tuition and the richest academic experience available at Boston College—a four-year honors program that encourages the pursuit of excellence within and outside University walls. Reflecting our mission as a Jesuit university, it provides a comprehensive liberal arts education with an emphasis on social justice in addition to specialized study in any academic discipline.

In the summers, Scholars apply what they have learned at Boston College to the world at large by participating in experiential learning programs focused on service learning, independent international study and travel, and professional internships.

By combining academic rigor and cocurricular opportunities and challenges, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program seeks to develop exceptional scholars and leaders for the common good.



## MERIT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Each Presidential Scholar receives a merit scholarship that covers all tuition and a separate award that covers summer program costs. Students needing additional resources to cover other charges (room, board, fees, etc.) are encouraged to apply for need-based financial aid.

[WWW.BC.EDU/FINANCIALAID](http://WWW.BC.EDU/FINANCIALAID)





### FACULTY MENTORS

The summer before their first year at Boston College, Scholars are matched with a faculty mentor in their academic area of interest. Over the next four years, they meet at least once a month to provide Scholars with a close connection within their academic department and to explore opportunities in and beyond Boston College. Mentors advise Scholars on a wide range of academic and professional matters, from applying to internships, graduate schools, and full-time positions to collaborating on research projects.



# The academic year

Presidential Scholars enroll in one of the University's several honors programs, all of which require writing an Honors Thesis. In addition, during the academic year they meet on Tuesday evenings to discuss their areas of study, to share their experiences with study grants, language programs, internships, and fellowships, or to attend the theater or symphony.

To complement the emphasis on ideas and ideals in their Honors Seminars and summer programs, Presidential Scholars also make presentations to their fellow Scholars about their experiences, including study abroad, advanced study grants, internships, and thesis writing.

### FELLOWSHIP ADVISEMENT

The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program has close links with the University Fellowships Committee and offers guidance on many fellowships available to undergraduate and graduate students. Scholars may attend a special workshop to learn about the proposal writing process and how to prepare applications for these opportunities. Select awards, fellowships, scholarships, and grants recent Scholars have won:

- Barry M. Goldwater Science Fellowship
- Boston College Advanced Study Grant
- British Marshall Scholarship
- Fulbright Grant
- Harry S. Truman Scholarship
- National Science Foundation Computer Science Fellowship
- National Science Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship
- Rhodes Scholarship
- State Department Critical Language Scholarship



## TURNER BUFORD '99

**Hometown:** New Orleans, Louisiana

**Major:** Political Science

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As a student at a Jesuit high school, Turner Buford was drawn to Boston College's commitment to a well-rounded, liberal arts education. The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, with its "back-to-back incredible summers" and emphasis on service, the humanities, and experiential learning, would enhance his academic ambitions, he believed. "Choosing Boston College," he says, "became an easy decision."

For his first summer, Buford volunteered at The Greater Boston Food Bank and the Suffolk County House of Corrections—experiences that revealed "a part of city life that students don't normally see," he recalls. After spending a "fantastic" four weeks in France his second summer, he traveled with fellow Scholars to Barcelona, Budapest, Prague, Vienna, the French Riviera, Florence, Venice, and Rome.

Heading into his third summer, Buford wasn't sure what to pursue for his professional internship. A political science major with a vague interest in law, he knew that he wanted to live in New York City. So he applied for a position at a Manhattan-based nonprofit legal services organization,

the Legal Aid Society—drawn in part by the job title "intern investigator," he says.

For three months, Buford took subways around New York City, gathering evidence to help build criminal defense cases on behalf of the Legal Aid Society's low-income clients. He located and talked to possible witnesses and snapped photos of street corners and building foyers where crimes like drug deals and assaults had allegedly taken place. In addition, Buford was able to sit in on three trials.

"The whole process fascinated me," he says. "I was applying the reasoning and debate skills from my political science classes to real-life practical problems."

After that summer, adds Buford, "I got excited about law." In 2003, he graduated from Harvard Law School with a J.D. He became a senior associate in the litigation department of the law firm Ropes & Gray, first in Boston and then New York City, where he now lives. For the last two years, Buford has prosecuted healthcare fraud cases as a trial attorney in the Fraud Section of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

"[At my professional internship] I was applying the reasoning and debate skills from my political science classes to real-life practical problems."

— TURNER BUFORD '99





“[At Boston College] there were so many discussions that made me think about my beliefs and values. They shaped how I see the world.”

— NICOLE WONG '09

## NICOLE WONG '09

**Hometown:** Santa Monica, California

**Major:** English

**Minor:** American Studies

Raised on the West Coast, Nicole Wong chose the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program “for an adventure,” she says. Wong traveled to many new places during her four years as a Scholar, both in the United States and abroad. However, she says it was the people she met at Boston College who most opened up her perspective. “There were so many discussions that made me think about my beliefs and values. They shaped how I see the world.”

For her summer of service, Wong volunteered at Haley House, a soup kitchen that serves mostly men who are homeless or in transition. As a kitchen assistant, she cracked eggs, peeled potatoes, and washed dishes. She also sat and chatted with the men, who taught her that “you can always find common ground.” Wong felt so connected to Haley House’s mission that she continued to volunteer there for the next three years. By senior year, she was mentoring other student volunteers.

An interest in social issues became “a huge part” of her education and extracurricular activities. In addition to participating in the program’s summer trip to France and a

semester abroad in Ecuador, Wong joined service trips to post-Katrina Louisiana and Mississippi, Appalachia, and the US-Mexico border. The arts and review associate editor on the college newspaper, she was also codirector of the African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American (AHANA) Leadership Council's Women of Color Caucus and focused her academic interests on depictions of culture, race, class, and gender in literature and film.

Her passion for writing and editing led her to New York City for her professional internship. At Phaidon Press, a publisher of visual art books, she worked on the marketing and sales team. She also volunteered on a film project at 826NYC, a nonprofit tutoring, writing, and support center that helps elementary and high school students with their creative and expository writing skills.

After graduation, Wong moved to San Francisco and applied her versatile background to managing and carrying out campaigns for a communications nonprofit that uses documentary films to promote awareness of social issues. In addition, she served as senior editor for *Hyphen*, an all-volunteer magazine focused on Asian-American arts, culture, and politics. Now back in New York City, she is an editor at Group SJR, a digital marketing and creative agency. In her roles, Wong observes, she aims to “use stories effectively to get across a point of view.”

# Service learning

During the summer following their freshman year, Scholars live together as a community for six weeks on campus. They explore the problems of hunger, homelessness, and educational inequality in the Boston area in a program that combines study, reflection, and work, fulfilling the Jesuit ideal of service to others. Each Scholar is placed for four days a week in two different Boston-area social service organizations, such as the Project Bread Hunger Hotline, Haley House, St. Francis House, the Italian Home for Children, and the Suffolk County House of Corrections, based on their interests.

Back on campus, Scholars read and reflect on a variety of texts in philosophy and theology, social science, and public policy that are concerned with poverty and homelessness. They gather at weekly discussion sessions, where they are challenged to integrate these readings with their field experiences and to consider the implications for their personal values and professional goals.



## SOPHOMORE SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

Sophomore Scholars develop a project that addresses a critical social need, which they present to the larger Boston College community. Sophomore Scholars in recent years have organized a panel discussion and published a book of interviews exploring how the Boston Marathon bombings affected marginalized communities, and they developed, produced, and presented a 30-minute documentary about disparities in access to mental health services.



## RICH ABERMAN '07

**Hometown:** Parkland, Florida

**Majors:** Economics, Philosophy, and Political Science

## BILL CLERICO '07

**Hometown:** Lincroft, New Jersey

**Major:** Computer Science

It was during their summer abroad after their sophomore year that Rich Aberman (pictured, left) and Bill Clerico first kicked around start-up ideas. Studying and traveling in Paris, recalls Aberman, “got us thinking about all the incredible things we could do in the world outside of a traditional career path.”

The conversations continued into the summer after their junior year, when Aberman and Clerico began their Scholars Program internships—Clerico at Goldman Sachs in New York City and Aberman at the telecommunications corporation PCCW in Hong Kong.

At the time, advertising on taxicabs was still in its infancy in Hong Kong, and Aberman spotted what he suspected was an untapped market. So he called Clerico—“the smartest, savviest guy I knew,” he says—and suggested that they launch a company to sell taxicab ads in Hong Kong. The roommates raised funds from family and friends, and for about eight months, they ran the business from their Boston College residence hall, doing a lot of work in the lounge of Vouté Hall. The experience laid the groundwork for

Aberman and Clerico to launch their next venture after graduation: WePay, a software application that grew out of their need for “an easier way to collect money from friends for ski trips and other outings,” says Clerico. Now seven years old, the Palo Alto-based outfit employs 100 people and processes payments for online platforms such as GoFundMe, MeetUp, and Care.com. According to Aberman, WePay recently expanded into Canada and will soon launch in Europe and Australia.

Both Aberman and Clerico say they chose the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program because they wanted to join a small, elite cohort of students—a group who, as Aberman put it, would receive “a significant level of access and resources from day one.” Clerico adds that they likely would not have been able to start a business straight out of college without the program scholarship, which entirely covered their tuition.

More than anything, though, the two friends emphasize the importance of the Scholars community. Not only did they receive close mentoring from faculty but they also benefited from the knowledge and camaraderie of other entrepreneurially inclined Scholars. With Jim Luo, a Scholar from the Class of 2009, Eric Hilberg '06, and Paul Santora '08, Clerico started the Boston College Venture Capital Competition, a University-wide contest still running today in which students pitch business plans to win cash prizes.

Clerico and Aberman remain in close contact with a circle of Scholar entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. Says Aberman, “It’s nearly impossible to separate what we’ve accomplished from the amazingly supportive environment at Boston College.”

“It’s nearly impossible to separate what we’ve accomplished from the amazingly supportive environment at Boston College.” — RICH ABERMAN '07





“The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program gave me the confidence to carve my own path. It made me believe that I can do almost anything.”

— MIKAELA BOYD '02

## MIKAELA BOYD '02

**Hometown:** Seattle, Washington

**Major:** Sociology

Mikaela Boyd came to the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, she says, to receive “a tailored education within a top university.” After volunteering at the Suffolk County House of Corrections and a Boston charter school her first summer in the program, and studying abroad in France her second, she found herself increasingly drawn to global social justice issues, particularly educational equality. So when the time came for Boyd to plan her summer professional internship, she took up the program’s challenge “to dream big and think differently,” she says.

Intrigued by countries undergoing political and cultural transformation, Boyd designed an internship at a social research organization in Ankara, Turkey. There, she interviewed Turkish and Kurdish women and families to learn how democratic reforms were affecting women’s social and cultural standing. Boyd describes the experience as “truly formative,” in that it confirmed her interest in international development work that “opens up access to education for all people.”

Back at Boston College, Boyd completed her Honors Program thesis on the effects of high-impact grantmaking on education. Named a Scholar of the College for excellence in academic and independent study, she also received the 2002 Edward

H. Finnegan, S.J., Award, the highest undergraduate honor, presented each year at commencement.

Yet the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program did more than shape her goals, explains Boyd; it also allowed her to pursue opportunities without the burden of student loan debt. After a post-graduate fellowship at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, Boyd was able to move to Johannesburg, South Africa, for three years to help build the international operation of City Year, a youth service organization, and run the Clinton Democracy Fellowship, a social entrepreneurship program. She went on to earn an M.B.A. at Harvard Business School and then served as an associate program officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, helping to develop the foundation’s US education strategy.

Boyd is now a principal at Bain & Company in New York City, where she advises Fortune 500 clients on corporate strategy and is part of the firm’s social sector practice. Her long-term goal is to combine her corporate and social sector experience to lead an organization focused on improving education. “The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program gave me the confidence to carve my own path,” she says. “It made me believe that I can do almost anything.”



## STUDY ABROAD

Some Scholars augment their summer immersion experiences and extend their time overseas by taking part in one of Boston College's study abroad programs during the first semester of their junior year. Scholars over the years have spent the semester in locations throughout the world, from Argentina, El Salvador, Australia, and China to Egypt, Nepal, the Netherlands, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, and Germany.

# International perspectives and languages

The Presidential Scholars' journey to global citizenship begins during the spring semester of their freshman and sophomore years. First-year students spend a week in Italy, where they are immersed in a different language and culture. In their sophomore year, they travel and learn firsthand the social and economic challenges in a Latin American country.

In the summer following sophomore year, each Scholar plans and carries out an eight-week (or longer) experience that combines language study and service learning or another activity that requires full immersion in a foreign-language culture.



## MARISOL ORIHUELA '03

**Hometowns:** Lima, Peru, and Miami, Florida

**Major:** International Studies

During her first summer with the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, Marisol Orihuela volunteered at a food bank hotline and Rosie's Place, a Boston shelter and soup kitchen for women. Back on campus, she also met with her Scholar classmates to discuss their assigned reading—philosophical novels such as Albert Camus's *The Plague* and topics related to socioeconomic disparity. Immersion in both worlds, says Orihuela, pushed her to examine the intersection of her personal and professional values.

She came away from the summer “wanting a career where I could make positive social change.”

Spending her second summer with the program in France further opened her eyes to different educational and political systems. A native of Lima, Peru, who moved to Miami, Florida, at age nine, Orihuela majored in international studies, doing interdisciplinary coursework in political science, theology, and sociology. Outside the classroom, she developed an interest in social justice that led her to leadership roles in the Global Justice Project, a campus social and political activism group, and the Boston College Women's Center.

After spending her junior year abroad in Amsterdam, Orihuela stayed on in the Dutch capital to complete her Presidential Scholars summer internship at a social and legal advocacy center for Latin American and other Spanish-speaking immigrants. Against a backdrop of growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the Netherlands, she helped immigrants from Central and South America to obtain housing and employment and to understand the Dutch legal system.

“It was an amazing experience to hear their stories and struggles,” says Orihuela. “I felt deeply connected to the work.”

The recipient of Boston College's William J. Kenealy, S.J., Award for Academics and Social Justice in 2003, Orihuela went on to graduate from Yale Law School in 2008. She became a staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, where she litigated civil rights lawsuits on behalf of detained immigrants who are suffering from mental illness.

Today she is a deputy federal public defender in the Central District of California in Los Angeles, where she handles federal felony cases involving fraud, drug trafficking, firearms, bank robbery, and immigration. Orihuela calls it her “dream job.”

“It was an amazing experience [working with immigrants in Amsterdam] to hear their stories and struggles. I felt deeply connected to the work.”

— MARISOL ORIHUELA '03





“If I had to do it all over again, I’d choose Boston College and the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program a million times over.”

— HEATHER SPELLER VESTAL '05

## HEATHER SPELLER VESTAL '05

**Hometown:** Belmont, Massachusetts

**Major:** Psychology

Intent on a career in medicine, Heather Speller Vestal believed that she’d receive advantages in the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program she wouldn’t find in most pre-med programs. For example, she points to the program’s emphasis on social justice and the humanities and its small community within a larger university. Now a psychiatrist with five years in the field, Vestal reports that she continues to benefit. “As much as I appreciated the program then,” she says, “I appreciate it even more today.”

In her first summer, Vestal volunteered at the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood. She taught classes in English as a second language and citizenship to elderly Haitian immigrants. In her second, she traveled to France and “absolutely fell in love with Paris,” she says. The trip emboldened her, she adds, to research a professional internship in another country.

The following summer, Vestal lived in rural Tanzania, working with a medical service group for four weeks, providing eye care to medically underserved residents. Then she climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. When Vestal returned to Boston, she began a student fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in the psychiatric

emergency unit. This opportunity, she says, clarified her desire to work with patients with severe mental illness. “It essentially launched my career,” says Vestal, who received the 2005 Joseph R. Stanton, M.D., ’42 Award for excellence in pre-med studies.

In 2010, after doing her psychiatric residency training at MGH and McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, Vestal earned her M.D. and M.H.S. in Health Science from Yale University School of Medicine. Shortly after she graduated, the MGH psychiatrist for whom she had worked as a Presidential Scholar hired her at McLean. She now splits her time there between providing care for patients with bipolar disorder and psychotic disorders and overseeing McLean’s residency program as its associate director. She also teaches and conducts research on medical education—interests that she traces, in part, to her summer teaching at the Haitian Multi-Service Center.

Yet perhaps most enduringly, says Vestal, “the program instilled in me the value of collaboration over competition,” and she praises the supportiveness of her fellow Scholars. Looking back, she adds, “If I had to do it all over again, I’d choose Boston College and the Scholars Program a million times over.”

# Professional internship

During the summer between junior and senior year, Presidential Scholars spend eight to 10 weeks working in demanding professional settings across the United States and around the world. Students research and arrange their own placements, drawing on relationships with Boston College alumni, faculty mentors, and the Boston College Career Center. These internships provide initial exposure to a potential career path, and the opportunity for Scholars to reflect on their development as emerging professionals and leaders.



## RECENT INTERNSHIP PLACEMENTS

- Boeing Learning Center, The National Archives, Washington, DC
- Community Action Network, Centre for Community Resource Development, Belize City, Belize
- Computational Biogeochemistry Group, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA
- Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Investment, Belfast, Northern Ireland
- Education Department, The Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA
- Global Banking and Markets Corporate Finance Group, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, New York, NY
- Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, Nairobi, Kenya
- Hertog Political Science Fellowship Program, Washington, DC
- Office of the Superintendent of Schools, Archdiocese of New York, New York, NY
- Public Relations, Marketing, and Public Affairs, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO
- United Nations, US Department of State, Washington, DC
- X-Ray Astronomy Section, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, Cambridge, MA

## A SAMPLE PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE

### FRESHMAN YEAR

- Kick-off retreat at the Connors Center, Boston College's conference center in Dover, Massachusetts\*
- Tuesday evening meetings
- Spring break trip to Italy
- Summer: Six-week service-learning experience in Boston

### SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Kick-off retreat at the Connors Center
- Tuesday evening meetings
- Winter break trip to Nicaragua
- Summer: Language/cultural immersion experience (8–10 weeks)

### JUNIOR YEAR

- Study abroad (for some)
- Kick-off retreat at the Connors Center
- Tuesday evening meetings
- Summer: Professional internship (8–10 weeks)

### SENIOR YEAR

- Kick-off retreat at the Connors Center
- Tuesday evening meetings
- Completion of Honors Thesis
- Participation in leadership events and mentoring of freshmen, sophomore, and junior Scholars
- April New York City trip: Presidential Scholars attend an alumni reception and the Wall Street Council Tribute Dinner (the fundraising event for the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program)
- Commencement reception for graduating Scholars and their families

\*Each year begins with the weekend retreat at Dover. All undergraduate Scholars attend, and sophomores, juniors, and seniors welcome freshmen into their community. Presidential Scholar alumni return to share their experiences and run breakout groups.



## THE SELECTION PROCESS

Presidential Scholars are chosen from among the top candidates who apply for Early Action to Boston College. They are selected on the basis of outstanding academic accomplishment, demonstrated leadership ability, and a significant involvement in service to the community. No separate application is necessary.

Finalists are invited to visit Boston College for a weekend in early February to learn more about the University, the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, and the city of Boston. Personal interviews with faculty members and administrative staff serve as the basis for the final choice of Presidential Scholars, who are generally notified in March.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.BC.EDU/GPSP](http://WWW.BC.EDU/GPSP) OR CALL 617-552-1360



## BOSTON COLLEGE

Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program | Lawrence House | 122 College Road | Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
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