

Ex Libris

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PSP Alumni Attend First Program Reunion



Photo: Andrea Gatti



Photo Courtesy of: Marjorie Sardella



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Photo Courtesy of: Marjorie Sardella



Photo: Andrea Gatti

PSP'10 alumni at Friday evening reception (top left), PSP alumni at formal dinner (top right), PSP alumni and Scholars discussing careers at lunch (bottom left), Cece McDonald, PSP'10 & Nick Akerman, PSP'09 enjoying dinner (middle), Brian Veprek, PSP'99 looking at photos from his years in the PSP.

By Andrea Gatti & Ryan Polischuk, A&S '15

This past fall, the Presidential Scholars Program welcomed back PSP alumni for the first ever PSP alumni reunion. The weekend in early November consisted of a variety of events that allowed PSP alumni to reconnect with one another and learn more about the program and

its developments. Not only did alumni enjoy this opportunity to see one another again, but they had the chance to connect with current Scholars who were eager and excited to meet PSP alumni and talk about their experiences in the program and beyond.

Over the years, there had been much talk of a reunion for the PSP, as the program now has over 225 alumni, living across the country and abroad. The formal planning of the reunion began in July 2012, as PSP alumni helped to come up with ideas of what the reunion might look like. The

alumni were integral in spreading the word, as there was much discussion about the reunion via e-mails between alumni and on the Presidential Scholars Program Facebook group.

The festivities began on Friday, November 4th, with an alumni cocktail reception at Fr. Keenan's residence. The PSP was delighted to welcome back more than forty former Scholars, who took advantage of the casual setting to reconnect and network with former acquaintances in a familial setting.

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PSP Weekend Offers Glance at Class of 2016



The winning trivia team with current Scholar, Stephen Buell, A&S'15.

By Andrew Skaras, A&S '15

This year's Presidential Scholar's Weekend brought 64

gifted high school seniors to Boston College for five days in the first weekend of February. Hailing from 29 different states and two

foreign countries, these prospective scholars were selected from a pool of 6,580 Early Action applicants. In stark contrast to the mess that the snowstorms caused during last year's weekend, everyone arrived in a timely fashion on Wednesday afternoon and evening.

The weather was unseasonably warm on Wednesday when the scholars arrived on campus. Those who arrived early were given a tour of the campus by several current Scholars before being briefed about the upcoming weekend. Joined by several members of the Admissions staff, including Director of Admissions John Mahoney, the current Scholars serving as hosts met the prospective Scholars over a casual

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Immediately following the reception came a formal dinner hosted on Boston College's Brighton Campus, with more than fifty alumni and their spouses/partners in attendance. A variety of classes were represented, including an alumnus from 1996, the second graduating class of the PSP. Alumni thoroughly enjoyed the dinner, as it was an opportunity for folks to catch up with one another and reminisce about their time at Boston College and in the PSP. Dr. Sardella, the founding director of the PSP, and his wife, Marjorie, were thrilled to see familiar faces of former Scholars at the reception, the dinner, and the lunch the next day.

The next morning, a handful of PSP alumni attended a "Conversation with Fr. Leahy," a

unique opportunity to personally address their concerns to the University's president. Fr. Leahy spoke about the current state of Boston College, as well as plans for the future.

From the perspective of the current Scholars, the highlight of the weekend came during a casual luncheon, which immediately followed the morning conversation and served to cap off the reunion. It was a remarkable opportunity for current Scholars to sit and chat with the PSP alumni, many of whom were none-too-far removed from their time on the Heights.

The luncheon was structured so that current Scholars could network and connect with PSP alumni in relation to their career field. Scholars and alumni were broken up into tables representing different career fields (law, business, media, education,

grad. school, etc.), where they talked about a variety of issues concerning each field. Ryan Polischuk, A&S'15, noted that he "was struck by the remarkable accessibility of the PSP alumni." In speaking with a PSP alumnus, Ryan said, "our conversation quickly turned from the particulars of and opportunities in a field to one of interests matching career choice, work-life balance, and personal vision."

The PSP alumni reunion was a wonderful opportunity for alumni to reconnect with their former classmates, the current Scholars and the program. The PSP looks forward to providing more opportunities for reconnections and networking in the coming years and truly value the time and efforts that so many alumni have invested in keeping these connections strong.

Nicaragua: A Life-Changing Experience for PSP '14

By Victoria Luu, A&S '14

Nicaragua. Beautiful beaches, inexpensive hotels, and a hot new vacation spot. This is the image that many people have of this small, developing Central American country. While it is true that vacations to Nicaragua have become more popular because of their low cost in comparison to other Central American tourist locations like Costa Rica, there is always an interesting question to pose to new trends: why?

To begin understanding the many facets of development, economics, and politics in a developing country, the sophomore class of the Presidential Scholars Program set out on a weeklong visit to Managua, Nicaragua's capital city. Our goal was to look at development from a number of different perspectives in order to gain as complete a picture of Nicaragua as possible.

While in Nicaragua we met with a number of people and groups, from economists to women's rights advocates to political activists opposing the current party's regime, each with different views to offer. Among them were the Nitlapán Research Center, a microfinance organization supporting a number of farmers and artisans to facilitate the incorporation of their products at the international market; el Centro de Mujeres Acahual, a women's center that works with one of the poorest neighborhoods of Managua on HIV/AIDS prevention, self-esteem workshops, and family violence; ProNicaragua, a non-profit, public-private institution whose mission is to generate economic growth



Sophomore Scholars pose with Fr. Keenan and Fr. Villagran at Managua Lake.

and job creation in Nicaragua by attracting high-quality foreign direct investment; and many more. Meetings with these groups helped us to see a completely different side of the country than the typical paradise an average vacationer would see.

It was a brilliant, inspiring, and breath-taking experience to hear the dedication in the voices of these speakers. But it was also a very emotionally-taxing one.

Walking through the streets—no, not streets, the narrow dirt roads—of Barrio Granada with volunteers from Un Techo Para Mi País (similar to Habitat for Humanity), we were greeted on all sides by the curious eyes of smiling children and the questioning looks of the adults. We were a novelty there; American tourists don't frequent the slums of the capital city. "It was like being in a fishbowl," commented Maggie Scollan, 2014. Some of the children ran up to us and asked where we were from, while many shied away from us

and gave inquisitive looks from a safe distance. "Quiero ser doctora," one of the girls said shyly when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up. I want to be a doctor. The mixture of feelings that filled our hearts in hearing this response lingered with us for long after the visit. What were the chances, in reality, that this little girl now full of hopes and dreams could grow up to become a doctor? Does she sell goods or snacks on the street corners like the dozens of other children we saw at each stoplight? Will she always continue to smile as she does now? Or will unfortunate circumstances inevitably wear her down over time?

We met with political leaders, economists, activists and non-profit development groups, and in the voices of these adults, we could hear the passion and love they had for their country in every word they uttered. Some had to fight for the ideals of democracy, shouting that the freedom to vote and

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Scholars Share Unique International Experiences

By Nick Moffa, A&S '14

“The world is vast and varied, but at the same time, it is paradoxically small and people are the same everywhere.” Marty Long’s (CSOM ‘13) statement seemed to resonate with each of the four students who made presentations on their respective projects they had completed the previous summer, two of which were made possible through funding provided by an Advanced Study Grant (ASG) and two of which were part of the Presidential Scholars Program’s newly instituted International Perspective and Language Program. Specifically provided for original research or skill acquisition projects, ASG’s are meant to give top undergraduates at Boston College the opportunities to engage in increasingly sophisticated research and study during their time as undergraduates. BC touts its ASG recipients as strong future candidates for internationally recognized fellowships such as the Fulbright, Truman, and Marshall Fellowships, and Matthew Alonzoana, A&S ’14, and Brooke Loughrin, A&S ’14, fit this mold in their own unique ways. Marty Long and Helen Jiang, A&S ’13, presented on their experiences in the International Perspective and Language Program, both of which were unique and fascinating opportunities that gave them life-altering experiences they will never forget.

Marty spent eight weeks last summer in Argentina. He explained that he was able to set up his experience simply by conducting research on an organization called Road2Argentina, which helped him find a host family and even set up an internship. His host family,

particularly his host mother, was fantastic. They bonded over a shared interest in the culinary arts and became close right from the start. Overall, he loved his experience, and gladly recalled the rich Argentinean culture and the



Photo: Jennie Thomas

Helen Jiang, A&S ’13, talks about her experience in Japan.

delicious food. Although he had long days as an intern and didn’t get a lot of sleep, his experience will be one he will never forget. His advice to future Scholars planning on studying abroad was incredibly valuable: challenge yourself, talk to as many people as you can, don’t be scared to make mistakes, and explore as much as possible. Most importantly, however, he reminded all of us that the most important aspect of any experience abroad is to keep an open mind and an open heart.

Helen, who has been taking Japanese classes here at Boston College and has always been interested in Japanese culture, discovered her ideal program with the help of her Japanese professor.

However, her first option became an impossibility due to the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in March. She then went to her backup plan, in which she traveled to Mitaka in Tokyo, Japan to take classes for 3.5 to 5 hours Monday through Friday, which equaled one semester of Japanese in only six weeks. It also included a culture program in which she learned about martial arts, flower arranging, and Japanese theatre. Although it was her first time living on her own in a foreign country, she became much more confident in her Japanese during her time there and became increasingly familiar with the routine of daily life. Her insightful advice was short and simple, yet incredibly important: have a backup plan.

“You don’t know where you’re going until you know where you come from.” For Matthew Alonzoana, a Filipino by heritage, his work in the Philippines last summer proved his statement to be perfectly true. Although he initially wanted to do economic research, the Ateneo de Manila University had no economic researchers and instead offered him the opportunity to serve as a research associate in the sociology department. He swiftly accepted and proceeded to do that in addition to serving as a teacher and guest lecturer in medical sociology and public policy. During his time in the Philippines, he assisted in compiling the World Bank Report on the Response to the 2009 Typhoon and visiting prisons through BALIKLAYA, a prison outreach program in the Philippines. He also conducted twenty interviews across twelve districts with local politicians and leaders about

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Summer Experiences

My Time In Russia

By *Sasha Savinkina, A&S '13*

Last summer, for part of my international language immersion experience, I went to Western Siberia to work as a part of a team of Russian archaeologists on a dig. Archaeology was something that had interested me in an abstract kind of way ever since I was eight years old and first fell in love with Indiana Jones. It seemed like such an adventure, travelling around, digging in the ground, finding bones and ancient artifacts. And, while it wasn't exactly as I had pictured it, it was definitely all of the above.

For two weeks, I lived in a tent at a campsite, bathed in the (cold!) Tartas River, and cooked over a fire (not easy when your team consists of over 30 people!).

Every day (except Monday) we went out to the dig site at 9, came back for lunch, and then went out again until 7. Learning about the archaeology was interesting. I learned mostly that, while parts of it are definitely exciting, a lot of the work is tedious and requires massive amounts of patience. You can dig for a day and find just an empty hole, which you still have to draw, measure and photograph. But my favorite part of the dig wasn't really the archaeology. The other big reason why I went on this dig was to improve my Russian. I was born in Russia and have spoken the language my entire life, but not in a formal or technical way, and generally only with family. This experience helped to improve my grammar and vocabulary by leaps and bounds because I was forced

to speak to people about topics I had never had to converse about in Russian before (or, sometimes, English), with people who wouldn't understand my Americanizations. I learned a lot more formal Russian by communicating with world-renowned archaeologists in the field. Even better (I think), I also got to learn a lot about the student culture in Russia from the other interns there, and learned quite a bit of Russian slang, most of which was learned at night around the campfire as we shared stories and sang songs.

I had an absolutely amazing summer experience that I wouldn't trade for anything. I got to do something I'd always dreamed about, learned a lot about an area I hadn't known much about before, and drastically improved my language ability. It was great!



Photo Courtesy of: Sasha Savinkina

Sasha Savinkina, PSP '13, at the archaeological dig in Western Siberia.

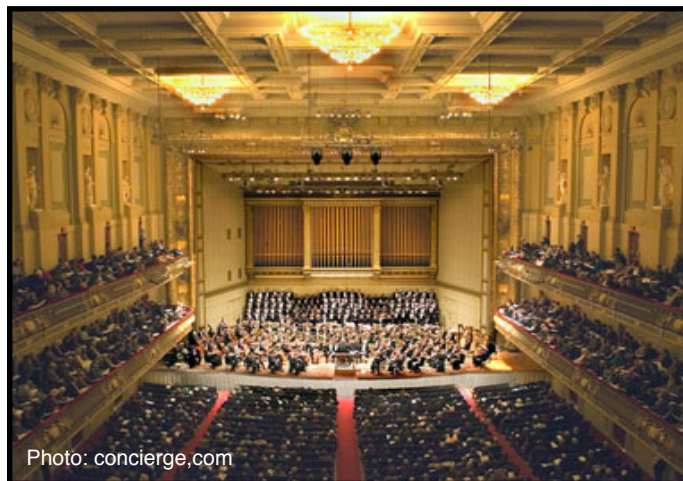
A Night at the Boston Symphony Orchestra

By Marie Pellissier, A&S '15

On the night of Tuesday, November 29th, the freshman class was treated to their first cultural event with the Presidential Scholars program: A night at the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The night's program, conducted by Ludovic Morlot, included a selection of works both modern and historical. But before the music even began, the Scholars were able to explore the historic Symphony Hall. Many of the Scholars particularly enjoyed the array of replica Greek and Roman statues placed around the Hall, playing a guessing game of sorts while trying to identify the figures. Scholars were also able to see the various displays in the foyer area detailing the history of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the musicians who have performed there.

The concert consisted of works by three different

composers, in the form of two symphonies and a ballet. For Paul Davey, A&S '15, this trip was an opportunity "to spend time together with other freshmen and see music performed that we don't often encounter in a live setting." First off was Harbison's *Symphony No. 4* (2003), which was part of the BSO's survey of his symphonies. Though the music was performed very well, this did not strike a chord with all of the Scholars, as many of them disliked the dissonance within the piece. Following Harbison's symphony was Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé*, a ballet which tells the story of two lovers brought together with the help of the god Pan. After intermission, the concert closed



with Mahler's *Symphony No. 1 in D*, a traditional symphony in form but not necessarily in content. The music of Mahler was both engaging and exciting, and emerged as the favorite piece of many of the Scholars.

The trip to the Boston Symphony Orchestra was a great way for the freshmen to begin to get to know each other better as well as the city and culture available to them in Boston.

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medical sociology. One of his greatest accomplishments while there, however, was his Information Nexus-Outreach and Urban Teaching Model, a model with the main premise that better social networking was closely affiliated with better health outcomes, a model that was accepted by many leaders across the Philippines. His advice to the Presidential Scholars was short and concise: be prepared, don't be timid, and don't be tardy.

Finally, Brooke spoke about her decision-making process and how she ended up in Istanbul, Turkey last summer. Having received both an Advanced Study Grant and the Islamic Civilizations and Societies

Department's Travel and Research Grant, she received significant funding to continue her research on the women's movement across the Middle East and other Muslim majority countries, a passion she developed in April of 2010 when she traveled to Iran and studied the impact of Iranian female poets on the Iranian women's movement. In Istanbul, she conducted most of her research in the Women's Library and Information Center and took language classes while there. Although it was a challenge to establish a language base, she had a terrific summer, experiencing Ramadan for the first time, living in an apartment with several European students, and conversing with other scholars studying at the library. Her

advice was simply to encourage everyone to appreciate every day they have while abroad, to be adventurous, and to interact with as many people as possible.

Overall, the presentations by Marty, Helen, Matthew, and Brooke were impressive and inspiring to all of the other Presidential Scholars. They gave each of us the faith and hope that we can also have once-in-a-lifetime experiences while abroad, and that our experiences will mold and shape us in unexpected and exciting ways. Although they all had different interests, they were able to inspire each of us with their stories and I know that all of us are now looking forward even more intensely to our own study abroad experiences!



Photo Courtesy of: Gonzalo Villagran

The Class of 2014 Scholars pose with Fr. Keenan & Fr. Villagran at a lookout in Managua, Nicaragua.



Photo: Gonzalo Villagran

Scholars enjoy a hearty lunch at the Casa San Juan.



Photo: Gonzalo Villagran

Scholars pose with Fr. Fernando Cardinal.

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make their own governmental decisions was the most important foundation for a successful country. Others saw opportunity in foreign investment, showing us PowerPoint presentations of the improving trends of the Nicaraguan economy. Many believed that human development and achieving basic human rights were keys to the prosperity of the people of the nation as a whole, and walked us through their lives' journeys of

volunteer work, demonstrations, and research projects. Some of these views were very different from one another, but all reflected a true dedication to the well-being of Nicaragua and its people.

John Wang, A&S '14, speaks for all of us when he says, "The opportunity to explore and learn about its development by looking at the problems of the country from all different perspectives was unlike anything I've encountered in a classroom

setting. I realized after the trip how far Nicaragua has come as a nation and how much more it has to go to address the issues plaguing its people today." Nicaragua has so many more layers than any of us had expected when we first landed and stepped off the plane. And as the Presidential Scholars Program sends its Scholars back to Nicaragua in the years to come, we will all be keeping an eye out for the progress of the country we have grown to love.

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pizza dinner in the Admissions Office.

That evening, everyone reconvened in Lawrence House for desserts, good conversation, and board games. The Scholars got a chance to meet more of the prospective Scholars and the visitors got a chance to get to know each other better. By the end of the night, the desserts had been devoured and all had a good time.

Thursday morning began with a presentation by Fr. Keenan on all of the opportunities that the program offers. The prospective Scholars got to hear about the international travel seminars, service experiences, and the internship opportunities in which they would get to take part. Fr. Keenan was joined by 4 current Scholars who also shared their personal perspectives about the opportunities offered by the PSP.

Most of the Scholars then went to interviews with either faculty members or a member of the admissions staff. For those who did not have interviews on Thursday, prospective Scholars could explore the campus or go to class with their hosts. At 4 p.m. in Devlin, the guests attended a Research Discussion Panel that highlighted some of the research done by current Scholars.

In the evening, the prospective and current Scholars, faculty, staff, and alumni attended the Welcome Dinner in the Murray Function Room where PSP alumnus Richard Aberman '07 spoke about his company, WePay.com. He talked about his experience in the program, as well as the path he took after he left that led to him to co-founding the company with fellow

P Scholar alumnus Bill Clerico '07. In answering questions, he gave advice to current and prospective Scholars about making the most of their experience here and the resources that are available.

On Friday, the prospective Scholars participated in mock honors seminars with professors



Photo: Andrea Gatti

Rich Aberman, PSP'07, addresses the prospective Scholars, current Scholars and faculty & administration at the Welcome Dinner.

from the Honors Program to see how they interacted in an academic environment. They were given Montaigne to read beforehand and came to the seminars ready to engage the material alongside their peers. This year, for the first time, there was a special seminar for the seven CSOM prospective Scholars, who were given Milton Friedman to read.

In the evening, current Scholars joined the guests to go into the city, where they dined and saw a dance show. They ate dinner at the Hard Rock Café, before heading to the Paramount Theater. There they saw the Inbal Pinto & Avshalom

Pollak Dance Company in the show, "Oyster." "I was absolutely impressed with the dance routines, strange as they seemed, and actually enjoyed several of them for their musical components, which added a lot of depth and interpretive meaning," said Daniel Cattolica, A&S'15. After returning to campus, the prospective Scholars had a chance to relax with their peers and their hosts.

Saturday was Honors Day and the prospective Scholars participated in that program from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It included presentations on majors, classes, and different programs available on campus. In the evening, they had the chance to participate in an "Off the Record" dinner with current Scholars. Everyone gathered on the second floor of Corcoran Commons for a casual dinner and informal conversation. They heard more about the ins and outs of the program from a student's view and asked any and all questions they had. This year, following dinner, the current Scholars organized a trivia night that saw current Scholars teaming up with the prospective Scholars. With Kevin Morris, A&S'13 as host, all had an enjoyable and entertaining night.

The weekend ended with Mass and brunch on Sunday morning, as parents joined the guests for the final day. Mass was held in St. Mary's chapel, which was a nice, intimate environment for the gathering. Everyone then joined up in the Heights Room for a delicious catered brunch where parents had the opportunity to meet and chat with current Scholars. Everyone seemed to have a good time over the course of the weekend.

Alumni Announcements

Emily Cersonsky, PSP '07, will marry Erik Hayman, BC '07, in June 2012.

Allison (Foley) Shenk, PSP '03, is a volunteer for the Foundation for Prader-Willi Research, and maintains a blog about her 3 boys, one of whom has Prader-Willi Syndrome: www.divingintothewaves.com.

Emily Gruber, PSP '07, will marry Sean Keck, BC '07, in August 2012.

Rebecca Kraus, PSP '07, will marry Jarret Izzo, BC '07, in August 2012.

Ana Mascagni, PSP '10, is engaged to John Archibald and will be getting married in 2013.

Kelly McCartney, PSP '11, will be joining the 2011-2012 Teach for America corps in Chicago next year.

Kevin Meme, PSP '03, and his wife, Erica, welcomed their first child, Jonathan Robert Meme, on February 1st, 2012. Kevin was accepted to the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he will begin MBA studies this fall.

Patricia Noonan, PSP '07, just finished up a production of *The Secret Garden* in Palo Alto, CA and is currently playing Meg in the revised - James Lapine directed *Merrily We Roll Along* by Sondheim in NYC. She will also be heading out to Chicago in the spring to play Mabel in *Pirates of Penzance*.

Cathleen Phelan, PSP '01, and her husband, JP Jarczyk, welcomed their beautiful daughter, Abigail Grace Phelan Jarczyk on December 2nd, 2011.

Teige Sheehan, PSP '95, has joined the intellectual property law firm of Heslin Rothenberg Farley & Mesiti, P.C. as an associate patent attorney, where he will work on issues ranging from patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. Visit the firm's website at <http://www.hrfmlaw.com>.

Matthew Tilghman-Havens, PSP '98, recently joined the Estate Planning Team at the Seattle law firm of Graham & Dunn. His practice focuses on estate planning, tax planning, charitable giving, probate, and trust administration.

Charles Vernon, PSP '98, graduated from the University of Arizona Rogers College of Law. In November 2011 he married Cindy Schlosser. In January 2012, he began a job as "Legal Representative" at the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (<http://firrp.org>) in Florence, AZ.

Kat Wakeham, PSP '07, is engaged to Tim Barnes and will be getting married on August 4th, 2012 in Massachusetts.

Jeremy Zipple, PSP '00, directed, wrote and produced a National Geographic documentary that will premiere nationally on PBS March 28th. The documentary is called *Quest for the Lost Maya* and features interesting new archaeology on the origins and demise of the ancient Maya. Jeremy was down in Jackson, Mississippi, in mid-February for a premiere event for the film which attracted about 500 people. A trailer for the film can be viewed at this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTuLllvq7pU>.

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