

Newsletter for the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program

THE
PRESIDENTIAL
SCHOLAR

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— JUDY AND BOBBY —
SHACKOULS
HONORS COLLEGE

MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

FROM DISTINGUISHED TO PRESIDENTIAL: *A Rose by Any Other Name*

Dear Friends,

2012-13 was a year of transition for Mississippi State University's Distinguished Scholars. First, the Scholars' beloved mentor, Dr. John Marszalek, retired as mentor for the program. His departure meant, of course, that his wife Jeanne retired as well. They have been the backbone of the program for over 30 years. In April, the graduating seniors were able to pay tribute to their many contributions to the Shackouls Honors College over the years.

"The quality of Dr. and Mrs. Marszalek's many years of service to this program is unmatched. Their care, dedication, encouragement—and lasagna—will be missed by the students. We wish them the best of luck in retirement," said Shelby Balius, one of six graduating Presidential Scholars in 2013. The other graduating Scholars include Tommy Kirkpatrick, Lindsay Linhares, Kelsey LeSaicherre, Ryan Hoke, and Bailey Hansen.

Indeed, generations of Scholars—Schillig, Distinguished, and Presidential—have been influenced by the intellect, passion, and commitment of the Marszaleks. Dr. M remains the executive director of The Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State and continues to mentor students who make the journey to his office in the Mitchell Memorial Library.

Second, I became the program's mentor in August of 2012. My hope is to continue to push the Scholars to become leaders on the national level and to provide them every opportunity to become true scholars in their academic pursuits. As you will see from the newsletter, many



*MSU President Dr. Mark E. Keenum with the
2012/2013 Class of Presidential Scholars*

of the Scholars are already making a significant impact both academically and through their leadership.

The third transition in 2012-13 is one about which you may have already heard. Our Scholars are still distinguished, but we've changed the name of the program to the Presidential Endowed Scholarship Program. Our Scholars are now "Presidential Scholars." The new program name, we feel, better reflects the honor and responsibility that comes with being selected as a recipient of Mississippi State's most prestigious scholarship.

With this first annual issue of our newsletter, appropriately named "The Presidential Scholar" inspired by Phi Beta Kappa's journal ("The American Scholar"), the Shackouls Honors College hopes to highlight the accomplishments of our remarkable Scholars.

In this issue you will have the chance to meet Matthew Berk, our most recent Goldwater Scholar, and Emily Epps, a national scholarship winner in cyber security; you will read about the Scholars' trip to Berkeley and San Francisco; you will learn about their success as university leaders and about the national recognition that our Scholars have received for their undergraduate research. And finally, you will have the chance to catch up with Joe Turner, an alumnus of the program and a member of the very first class of Scholars in 1988. As you will see, it was a remarkable year for this distinguished group of Presidential Endowed Scholars.

Dr. Thomas Anderson
Mentor, Presidential Endowed Scholars

Go West, Young Scholars!

From the Delta to the Bay

By Jamie Aron • Presidential Scholar, Class of 2016

Each year, the Presidential Scholars make a journey to another world-class university in the U.S., where they can explore the variety of possibilities for graduate school and the different cultural opportunities offered in a global city. Over spring break, the Presidential Scholars traveled to the University of California, Berkeley and to San Francisco.

At Berkeley, we discovered graduate programs ranging from modern and classical languages to ethnic studies, from political science to engineering. After an informational tour of the university (with the San Francisco Bay visible in the distance at every corner), the students were able to speak with a Berkeley graduate student in political science. As the trip continued, the Scholars interacted with local business owners and experts on San Francisco politics, culture, and economy.

Over the five-day trip, students explored the city and enjoyed its international cuisine. They browsed in City Lights bookstore—the bookstore of choice for nostalgic beatniks and hippies—and climbed Lombard Street, San Francisco’s curviest avenue. Some students explored Fisherman’s Wharf, where shopping, delectable seafood, and sea lions entertained. As a group, the Scholars hiked across the Golden Gate Bridge and trekked through the giant



Presidential Scholars gathered at the University of California, Berkeley

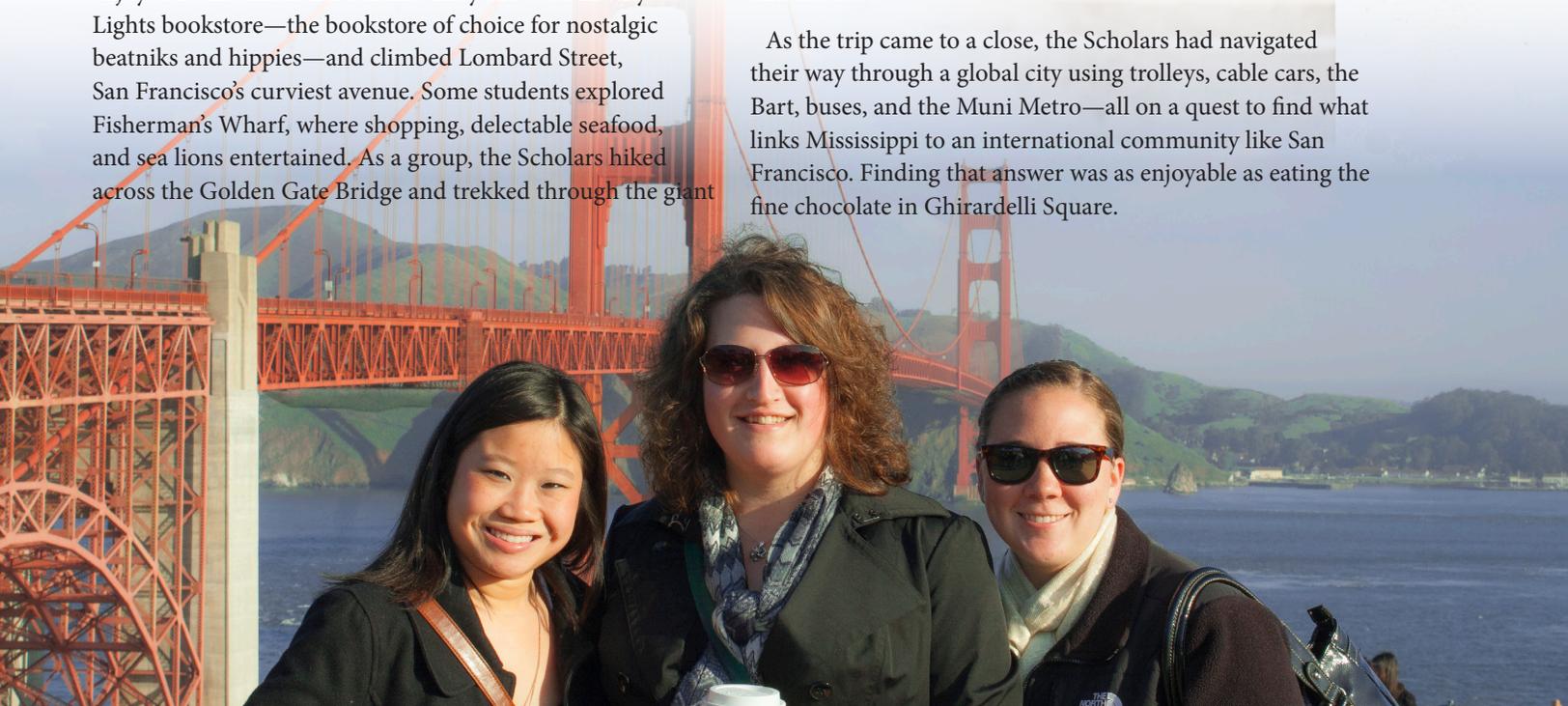
Redwoods in Muir Woods National Monument, both emphasizing and contrasting the natural and man-made beauty of California.

Of course, splashing in the cool Bay water seemed to be a favorite of the freshmen scholars. The multi-cultural foods broadened the taste palates of the students; from Italian to Indian to Mediterranean, the fortune cookies and fine espresso in Chinatown and the pupusas at Salvadorian

restaurant Platano rose to the top of the favorites list. Our trip would not have been complete without the scrumptious chocolate at Ghirardelli Square.

Students had the chance to see a play at the famous Berkeley Repertory Theater. *Fallaci*, the story of famed Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci directed by Oskar Eustis of *Angels in America* fame, raised complex questions about religion, democracy, and feminism, and inspired late night discussion and debates.

As the trip came to a close, the Scholars had navigated their way through a global city using trolleys, cable cars, the Bart, buses, and the Muni Metro—all on a quest to find what links Mississippi to an international community like San Francisco. Finding that answer was as enjoyable as eating the fine chocolate in Ghirardelli Square.



Undergraduate Research Across the Nation

The summer of 2013 has been one of discovery for two Presidential Scholars. *Kate Thompson* and *Matthew Blair* engaged in research projects open to only a select few undergraduates across the nation. Kate, a junior majoring in biological engineering, is part of a National Science Foundation funded Undergraduate Mentoring and Research Program (URM). She is working with Dr. Erdogan Memili in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences at Mississippi State University on male infertility in mammals.

Male infertility is increasing rapidly across mammalian species, a concern for human/veterinary medicine as well as agriculture. Demand for innovative research in reproduction continues to grow. Kate's research will hopefully answer some of this demand. Recent studies have shown that sperm deliver microRNAs into the egg at fertilization, contrary to the belief that the sperm only deliver the paternal genome. Kate's experiments focus on a select few of these miRNAs that have experimentally validated or predicted targets related to embryo/cell development. The effects of these miRNAs on bovine fibroblast cells will be thoroughly understood after complete genome sequencing and proteomic studies. The results from these studies can then be used to improve and predict mammalian fertility.

Kate intends to pursue graduate studies in conservational veterinary medicine. Describing her research as "incredibly demanding but magical," Kate says, "my findings now could be used in the future to save millions of dollars for commercial companies, improve fertility medicine, and even to promote reproduction in endangered animals." Kate's research was honored at the 2013 Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium held at the Shackouls Honors College.

Matthew Blair, a junior majoring in civil engineering, was selected to participate in a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) funded through the National Science Foundation at the University of California, Berkeley. With a finite supply of potable water, the growth of urban populations has significantly increased demand on already stressed water resources. Focusing on Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) systems, Matthew's summer research concentrated on understanding pathogenic virus removal from water ecosystems. In various studies, virus removal in MBR systems varies and is largely not understood.

Through his research, he hopes to quantify pathogenic removal in full-scale systems (utilizing the American Canyon Wastewater Treatment Facility as the primary sampling site – MBR site), examine virus removal contributions of membrane cake layer and suspended solids respectively, and explore the role of pathogenic virus decay present in the MBR system. Ideally, these research goals revolve around a future based in sustainable, potable reuse of wastewater.

"Beyond the obviously educational benefits, the REU program affords the opportunity to travel and see more of what the country has to offer," Matthew says. "Living in the greater San Francisco Bay Area offers valuable insight into west coast life, while International House—where I lived for the summer—provides the ability to live in and around students from Europe, Asia, and South America."



Kate Thompson



Matthew Blair

Presidential Scholars Being Presidential

By Sally White • Presidential Scholar, Class of 2016

Presidential Scholars have a long tradition of taking on active leadership roles in various aspects of campus life. The program both encourages and expects Scholars to become prominent figures on campus. Three Scholars have managed to do just that, while serving in presidential roles in three of Mississippi State University's most prestigious organizations.

Clint Pride, a senior majoring in kinesiology, currently serves as president of the MSU Roadrunners. The Roadrunners are the official welcoming committee to prospective students and are part of the Office of Admissions and Scholarships. "Our campus atmosphere is one of a kind, and it's a really great feeling to know that I have had a hand in ensuring that culture continues," said Pride, who will continue his tenure as president during the 2013-2014 academic year.

Vijay Kannuthurai, senior Alumni Delegate President, believes that the Presidential Scholars Program helped prepare him for the responsibilities of his prominent leadership role. "In my opinion," according to Kannuthurai, "no other organization helps you develop skills both within the classroom and without better than the Presidential Scholars." Alumni Delegates serve as the liaisons between Mississippi State University students and alumni. Delegates improve understanding of the role of the Alumni Association by educating and involving students in activities and events of the association.



Vijay Kannuthurai

Perhaps the most recognized organization on campus, the Student Association, strives to better student life at Mississippi State University by communicating student interests, ideas, and concerns to university administration. *Shelby Balius*, a member of the most recent group of graduating Presidential Scholars, had the honor of serving as SA President for the 2012-2013 term. "Serving as SA President was an incredibly humbling and very rewarding experience," tells Balius. "It pushed me beyond the limits of my comfort zone and introduced me to the true meaning of community. Without the lessons I learned from the variety of people whom I met and had the privilege to work alongside, I would not have been ready for my new career as a consultant."

These students are living up to the leadership expectations placed upon them, and with Scholar-leaders such as Faith Smith, 2013-2014 University Honors Council Chair, and Eddie Mac Huddleston, 2013-2014 Student Association Attorney General, the future for our university and of the Presidential Endowed Scholars looks bright.



2013 Graduating Class of Presidential Scholars

From left to right, Lindsay Linhares, Tommy Kirkpatrick, Ryan Hoke, Bailey Hansen, Kelsey LeSaicherre, and Shelby Balius

Other Scholar News

Berk Wins Prestigious Goldwater Scholarship

By Margaret Kovar • University Relations



Berk

Matthew Berk, a senior majoring in aeronautical engineering, is among this year's selections for a Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the premier undergraduate award for students in the science, mathematics and engineering fields. Competition for the award always is intense; this year, only 271 students were chosen from the 1,000 nominations received.

The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program was established by the United States Congress in 1986 to honor the former U.S. Republican senator from Arizona and 1964 presidential candidate. Its goal is to provide a continuing source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians and engineers by awarding scholarships to college students who will pursue careers in these fields.

"We're so proud of Matthew and the programs that have nurtured his intellect," said Tommy Anderson, associate professor of English and director of prestigious external scholarships. "It demonstrates the university's commitment to providing undergraduates the richest research experience possible nationally."

Berk said his love of airplanes and rockets started when he was about 11 years old. "I began participating in the MSU Soaring Club with remote-control airplanes," he said. "It was something I really enjoyed doing, and my interest just grew from there."

This summer, he completed an internship at Aurora Flight Sciences in Manassas, Va. He said he plans to work for a time in the private sector, then attend graduate school and pursue his ultimate goal of a doctoral degree in aerodynamics.

Epps Wins Computer Security Scholarship



Epps

Emily Epps, a junior majoring in computer science with minors in mathematics and Spanish, has won a prestigious CyberCorps Scholarship for Service (SFS). The SFS program grants scholarships to students who have chosen to pursue degrees in the information assurance fields and serve at an approved government agency. The scholarship covers the full cost of tuition, pays Emily a stipend for the duration of her academic career, and supports a year of graduate studies.

"This opportunity is huge," Emily says. "I've always known I wanted to pursue a career in computer security and eventually work in a federal agency and this is the most ideal path to getting there." As a CyberCorps Scholar, Emily will intern for a ten-week period in an information assurance-related agency during the summer.

"Emily is an outstanding scholar," says Dr. Thomas Anderson. "As a young woman in a STEM field, Emily is a role model for other female Presidential Scholars who are motivated to pursue academic and professional opportunities in the sciences yet still maintain an aspect of service in their careers."

Emily plans on graduating in five years from Mississippi State University with both a bachelor's and master's degree. Dr. Dave Dampier, professor of computer science and engineering and director of the Center for Computer Security Research and National Forensics Training Center, is Emily's mentor in the CyberCorps Scholarship for Service program.

Meet Joe Turner

Schillig-Presidential Scholar • Class of '92

By Jamie Aron • Presidential Scholar, Class of 2016

Like most Scholars who began their journey at Mississippi State University sitting in a big chair in a room full of “suits” answering questions about their interests, talents, and goals, Joe Turner, one of the four individuals to have the privilege of being in the first class of Schillig Scholars, remembers that chair and that feeling.

As one of the top students on campus, the university opened its doors wide to Joe. He was privileged to meet with Dr. Donald Zacharias regularly and to discuss controversial and important books such as Allan Bloom’s book *The Closing of the American Mind* or John W. Gardner’s *Leadership Papers* with the university’s 15th president. In these tight-knit groups, he connected with Mandi, Wade, and Judy, his fellow Scholars who have become his life-long friends.

Joe describes the Schillig Scholarship as like a master key. “It meant that when I arrived on campus at Mississippi State, I had an open door to essentially any resource or experience the university had to offer. They were investing in me as a person and as a leader not just with their financial resources, but with the whole force of the institution. To me personally, it meant that I had an opportunity to develop a relationship with the leaders of the university and to benefit from their teaching and mentorship. The scholarship also meant that there were high expectations.”

Although Joe never could have foreseen the life-changing impact from the program as a high school senior sitting in that interview chair, he took the opportunities and allowed them to mold him into an exceptional leader.

Building on the lessons he learned at Mississippi State, Joe has prospered. After years as a consultant and manager at Accenture and a vice president at Bank of America, Joe decided to focus on his real passion: change management, human performance improvement, communication, and training design and development. Currently, he performs nationally and internationally as a consultant and magician, training companies how to improve and develop their services, maintain clients, and effectively communicate. Joe has also maintained close ties with the university and the program by speaking to Honors classes and serving on the selection committee.

He understands the impact that the Presidential Scholarship can have on a young student: “I’m honored to help identify the students who are not just going to be the next wave of leaders at Mississippi State, but who are going to be the face of Mississippi State University in business and industry, science and engineering, arts and humanities, politics and law, and every other sphere of endeavor in the decades to come.”

Joe has been able to watch the Schillig Scholars expand from an intimate program to its current size (there are now 36 Presidential Scholars), and he understands the importance that MSU has played in his life. His hope is that the Presidential Endowed Scholarship Program continues to cultivate young interviewees sitting in big chairs into our future leaders.



Turner

We want to hear from you!

Joe’s profile is the first of what I hope is a regular feature in the Presidential Scholar.

We invite past scholars to send us news to share with our more than 100 alumni.

Please send professional and personal updates to Dr. Thomas Anderson at

tanderson@honors.msstate.edu or call him at 662-325-2252

A Note From the Dean



Dr. Christopher Snyder
Dean, Judy and Bobby
Shackouls Honors College

During the last two years, the Shackouls Honors College has developed a rich and unique Honors curriculum, which culminates in an Honors thesis or major research project. We have added four teacher-scholars to our Honors College staff: Dr. Seth Oppenheimer, our director of undergraduate research; Dr. Thomas Anderson, our mentor for the Presidential Scholars and director of prestigious external awards and scholarships; Dr. Donna Clevinger, Senior Faculty Fellow; and Dr. Joseph Trullinger, Faculty Fellow.

We have added North Hall in Zacharias Village to the Honors College, giving us both additional housing and classrooms. Our Study Abroad Program at Oxford University in England continues to enrich our students' educational experiences in immeasurable ways. In every facet, the Presidential Scholars are expected to be full participants and academic leaders in these Honors College experiences.

In 2012-13, generous support for the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program came from friends and alumni such as Judy and Bobby Shackouls, Bobby Martin, and John and Jeanne Marszalek. Their gifts support programming for the Presidential Scholars and make possible remarkable trips like the one to San Francisco this year.

Of course, our needs continue to grow. The Shackouls Honors College intends to continue to make the Presidential Scholars' experience at Mississippi State University second to none in the nation.

Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to support the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program or to contribute to the Scholars Fund initiated by the generous gift from John and Jeanne Marszalek in 2013. To do so, contact the Shackouls Honors College office at 325-2522 or honors@msstate.edu.

Shackouls Honors College
Mississippi State University
P.O. Box EH
210 Griffis Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762

honors.msstate.edu/

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