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Newsletter for the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program

THE
PRESIDENTIAL
SCHOLAR

Issue 4 • Fall 2016

Perpetual Engagement

Natalie Jones

Presidential Scholar, Class of 2017
Truman Scholar, 2016



Dear Friends,

The eight Scholars who graduated from Mississippi State in 2016 are special. This year's graduating class marks the first group of students who have been with me for their entire time as leaders at this university. The scholarship program's successful growth in large part is the fruit of their labor. Jamie Aron, Robert Buntyn, Annaleigh Coleman, Rachel Gaines, George Hilliard, Keri Jones, Eric Stallcup, and Sally White have set expectations high for future Scholars seeking to make a difference in their communities.

The graduating class of 2016 has at least four future medical doctors, three graduate students in science or engineering, a gifted computer engineering entrepreneur, and two nationally competitive scholarship recipients. Eric Stallcup was a 2016 SMART Scholar for his commitment to national defense related research, and Jamie Aron was the state of Mississippi's Truman Scholar for her commitment to public service.

My hope for this group of Presidential Scholar alums is that they live a life characterized by perpetual engagement. At its best, the Presidential Endowed Scholarship Program allows students to grow into student researchers, civic leaders and activists, and socially-responsible business leaders who weave their own growth and development with the abiding desire to improve the condition of their local, regional, and national communities. As I mentor the Presidential Scholars to live a life of perpetual engagement, my hope is that these future leaders realize that personal and community growth are inextricably connected. A vibrant democracy depends on this precarious balance between the personal and the collective.

In this issue of *The Presidential Scholar*, we share the stories of some amazing students who are in pursuit of this balance. You will meet Mississippi's most recent Truman Scholar, Natalie Jones, whose commitment to social justice is inspiring. You'll read about Laura Herring's transformative internship in Italy after a semester working in the United States Consulate. We catch up with three Scholars who found their way to California for research and internships this summer, and you will have the chance to hear from Stanley Blackmon, Esq., a Presidential Scholar who graduated in 2012, and who clerked for the Fifth Circuit Federal Court in Louisiana.

The Presidential Endowed Scholarship Program is successful because of students like the ones you will meet in this year's newsletter and because of the friends of Mississippi State University who are committed to helping students discover the value of perpetual engagement.

Dr. Thomas Anderson

Mentor, Presidential Endowed Scholars



Seniors in Seattle: George Hilliard, Sally White, Annaleigh Coleman, Jamie Aron, Rachel Gaines, and Eric Stallcup



Aalaap Desai, Mary Smith, and Rodney Kipchumba in Honduras with Global Medical Brigades.

Presidential Scholar Becomes **UNIVERSITY'S 18TH TRUMAN SCHOLAR**



MSU President Mark E. Keenum congratulates Natalie M. Jones on becoming the 18th MSU student to earn the Truman Scholarship, the nation's most prestigious scholarship for students dedicated to public service.

Presidential Scholar Natalie Jones, an English and sociology double major, was one of 54 students nationwide to be named a 2016 Harry S. Truman Scholar and the only one from Mississippi. Recipients of the Truman award receive a \$30,000 scholarship toward graduate school and the opportunity to participate in professional development programming to help prepare them for careers in public service leadership. This year, there were 775 candidates for the award nominated by 305 colleges and universities, a record number of applications and institutions.

Jones is the 18th MSU student to earn the Truman Scholarship, and she is the second Presidential Scholar to be honored in the last two years. "Natalie's journey through Mississippi State has been a real pleasure to observe," said MSU President Mark E. Keenum. "Natalie has a keen sense of confidence that is contagious among her fellow students. In all things during her MSU career, Natalie has exuded excellence and attaining this very impressive status as a Truman Scholar is a continuation of that amazing trajectory. Rhonda and I are extremely proud of her and offer our very sincere congratulations."

The inaugural recipient of the Dr. Brad Roderick Moore Memorial Presidential Endowed Scholarship at MSU and a member of the Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College, Jones is a member of the MSU Student Association's Executive Council, Roadrunners student recruiting group, a member of the Dean of Arts and Sciences Student Advisory Council and a leader in the Society of African American Studies. She also is a member of the Shackouls Diversity Task Force.

"I'm very proud of Natalie," said Chris Snyder, professor and dean for the honors college. "I first met her when she was in high school interviewing for a Presidential Scholarship. She has great charisma and great potential that was apparent even then."

Following her undergraduate studies, Jones said she will seek a law degree, as well as a master's in public policy. She plans to dedicate her career to helping dismantle institutional and systemic injustices in society.

She began this work in Columbus, Ohio this summer as a Fellow with the National Center for Urban Solutions. In addition to doing workforce preparation and placement for low-income individuals and ex-convicts, Natalie researched dropout recovery charter schools. She also collected data on the African American male mentorship program directed by the NCUS. As an NCUS Fellow, Natalie was able to support the Juvenile Justice Coalition, the People's Justice Project, and the Ohio Student Association in their efforts to promote initiatives that foster social and racial justice in the state.



Sophomore Gentry Burkes.



Sophomore Sarah Darrow.

California Dreamin': PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS GO WEST

Three Presidential Scholars spent the summer researching and interning in California. Sarah Darrow, Spencer Callicott, and Gentry Burkes were at Google, Inc., the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of California, Los Angeles.

Sarah Darrow spent the summer as an intern at Google, where she had access to new features and products Google was creating months before they were released to the public. She worked on Google+. On the Google campus, she had a conference on a seven-person bicycle, got to play soccer in a bubble, and learned ballroom and traditional dances from five different countries.

Spencer Callicott spent the summer at the University of California, Berkeley as a Sustainable Pathways Fellow with the Computational Research Division. His project was to ensure the scientific integrity of high performance applications using provenance data. He did data analytics on netflow data logs from inside the supercomputer at Berkeley. He is best friends with Edison, the 49th fastest computer in the world, and 17th fastest in the United States as of June 2016.

Gentry Burkes spent the summer in Los Angeles, California as an intern for Z Group LA and as a student in the Music Innovation Summer Institute at UCLA. At Z Group, she researched specific methods to market and promote new music and existing musical acts. At the Summer Institute, she studied the current state of the music industry and its major shift to electronic distribution and streaming services over the past five years. Gentry is the founder and president of StarkVegas Productions, an independent record label and MSU startup company, which plans to sign and record artists with ties to MSU. Her company was recently awarded a prototype development and key capital expenditure grant through the MSU Entrepreneurship Center.

IN DEFENSE OF STARTING EARLY



Many of the first-year Presidential Scholars studied abroad. Ryan Stallcup, David Sides, Elise Moore, Kristen Lacy, Trey Wallace and Shelby Adair studied in France and Germany, and King's College, London. Karleigh Kimbrell became an associate member of Christ Church College, Oxford. Flannery Voges-Haupt was selected to participate in the MS Water Security Institute at the University of Mississippi—a field experience that supplemented a ten-week undergraduate research position in MSU's Department of Chemistry. And Stephanie Durr worked with her state representative on the issue of human trafficking.



Sleepless in Seattle with the **BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION**

By Elise Moore and David Sides

The annual Presidential Scholar spring trip took the group to the stormy, but stimulating Seattle, WA to visit the University of Washington's top-ranked Evans School of Public Policy and Governance, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Bremerton Naval Base. The first night included a walk to the American Conservatory Theatre in downtown Seattle to watch Steven Sondheim's satirical musical *Assassins*, which told the story of America's fascination with presidential assassins from John Wilkes Booth to John Hinckley.

For many Scholars trying to connect their intellectual pursuits with public policy, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was the highlight of the trip. Before ever stepping foot on the property, we could hear the gasps from Scholars at the size and beauty of the campus. We met Lawrence Kent and his team of experts who spoke to us about the ground breaking work going on at the Gates Foundation, specifically in agricultural development and health care. Our whole day at the Gates Foundation left many people excited about the ongoing work there and thinking about how our future might intersect with Gates. For many in the group, visiting the Evans School at the University of Washington was another exciting opportunity to consider how a law degree, a degree in STEM, or a graduate degree in Public Affairs might enable transformative public engagement.

Partnering with Stennis Center at Mississippi State, Scholars got a special tour of Bremerton and Bangor Naval Bases, which included a rare look at a nuclear submarine and the nuclear aircraft carrier the USS NIMITZ. After battling claustrophobia and a fear of falling from many ladders in tight spaces, we were invited to the home of Rear Admiral Jeff Ruth, Commander, Navy Region Northwest.

From the Gates Foundation to Pike Place Market and from the Space Needle to the Puget Sound, the Presidential Scholars survived the rain and cold of the Northwest. It helped that many had a cup of coffee from the original Starbucks.

SCHOLARS IN WASHINGTON D.C.



Betty Thomas is interning for the Cochran Fellowship Program, a part of the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. CFP is responsible for bringing agricultural professionals from low and middle income countries to the United States for short-term technical training. Betty is specifically working for the Latin America & Caribbean Region programs and programs focusing on the WTO's agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary regulations and Technical Barriers to Trade.



This summer **Jack Bryan** had the opportunity to work in Senator Cochran's office as an intern on the Senate appropriations committee. In addition to the internship, he was nominated by Senator Cochran to be a part of the Stennis Center Program for Congressional Interns which brings in experienced staff members from many different facets in government to paint the true picture of how politics and policy coincide to prepare students to work in public service.



Rising sophomore **Ben Emmich** spent his summer investigating one of the most fundamental aspects of our universe—the proton. He began his summer at the Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (JLab) in Newport News, Virginia, a Department of Energy funded Laboratory that houses the most intense and energetic electron beam in the world. Guided by Dr. Dipangkar Dutta, professor of physics at MSU, Ben assisted in collecting data for PRAD, an experiment aimed at measuring the radius of the proton. Ben spent the remainder of his summer analyzing the collected data using Bayesian statistics. He will be the first to employ Bayesian fitting techniques to extrapolate the proton radius.

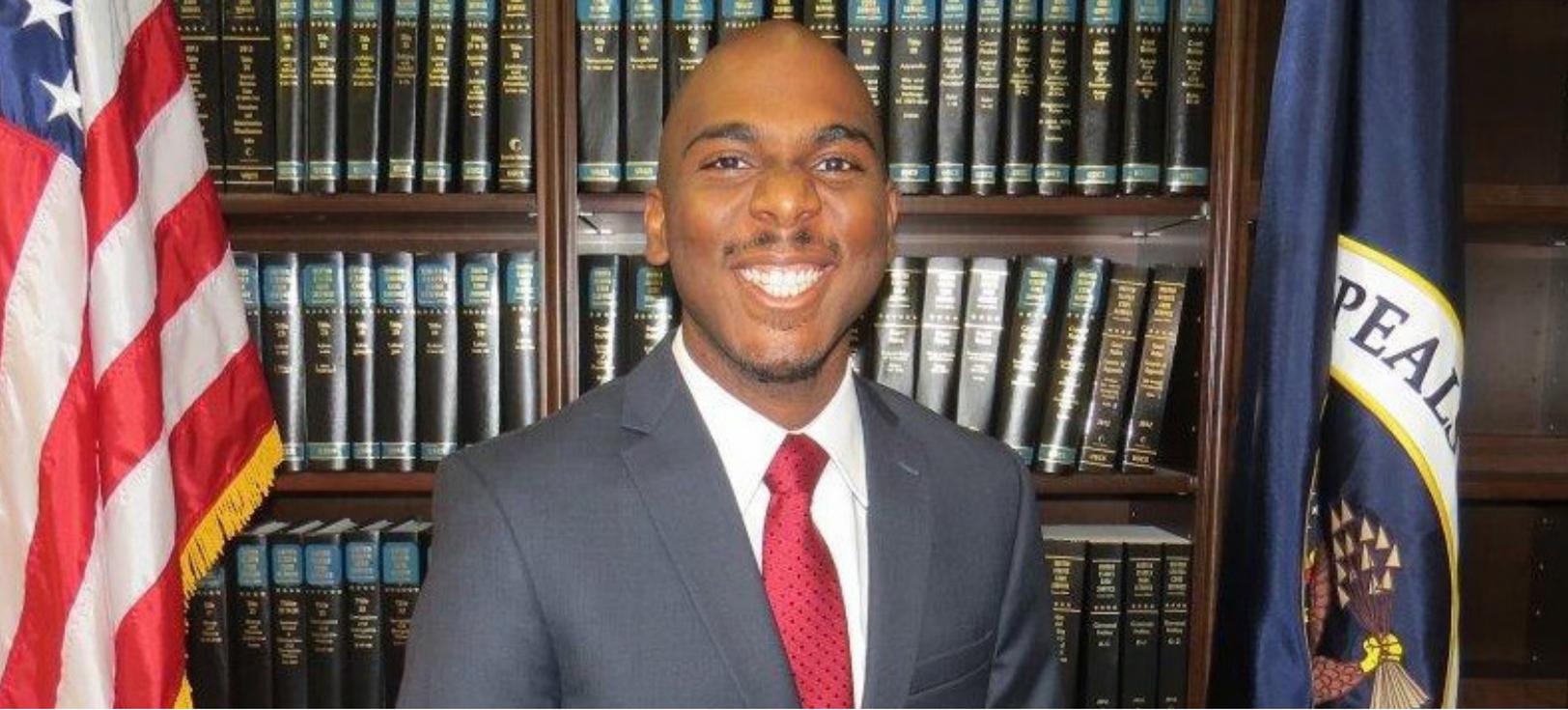
INTERNSHIPS AND PUBLIC SERVICE: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE



Laura Herring was an intern at Madri di Quartiere in Italy, where she focused on teaching English to immigrant women and children. Laura was able to sit in on the official interviews for asylum and witness the enormous obstacles that hinder effective immigration policy. Her organization helped to activate social assistance and pensions, to find shelter for the homeless, to process immigration documents, to find work contracts, and to serve as translators at the immigration office. Laura also organized an English class for the mothers in the project and other immigrants. Laura hopes to contribute to a book about the project.



Trey Wallace was an intern with Reclaimed Project in Lesotho, Africa, where he worked as a photographer and videographer. Reclaimed Project operates orphan care centers as well as various job creation projects for local women in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Lesotho. In addition to producing media for Reclaimed Project's fundraising efforts, Trey helped care for the orphans who attend the two centers. During his internship, he produced two short films, "Ntene's Story," a biopic detailing the life of a deaf and mute orphan, and "24 Hour Orphan," a documentary following the life of an orphan for twenty-four hours. Trey hopes to use this experience to help him pursue a career in nonprofit management or international development.



Alumni News: Stanley Blackmon, Esq. Presidential Scholar Class of 2012

Like many of you, my earliest memories of the Presidential Scholars Program involve a conference room table on the second floor of Griffis Hall. In the eight years since that interview day, Mississippi State University—and the Presidential Scholars Program, in particular—has influenced me personally, intellectually, and professionally. In fact, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the Presidential Scholars Program and the tremendous impact that it had on me and my undergraduate experience.

I am a 2012 alumnus of Mississippi State and the Presidential Scholars Program. Following my time at State, I attended the University of Alabama School of Law. After finishing my current term as a federal law clerk to a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, I will be moving to Birmingham, Alabama, to join a large law firm. At State, I majored in biological sciences with minors in English and mathematics. Admittedly, that's not an often-seen combination. But I was able to successfully navigate these varied fields due in large part to the numerous resources that come with the Presidential Scholars Program. This included an amazing group of fellow scholars—who, of course, became great friends—and inspiring mentors who always sought the best for each of us. In law school and continuing to today, I have found that my experiences at Mississippi State provide a unique and helpful perspective.

But the impact of the Presidential Scholars extends far beyond the classroom. I fondly remember my time with the other Scholars—both in and out of Starkville. Our annual Lake Tiak-O'Khata retreat and spring trips were always a highlight of the year: from the National Archives and the Speaker's Balcony in Washington, DC; to the CDC and Martin Luther King Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia; to a lengthy train ride to Chicago, Illinois, to watch both the Chicago Bulls and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Each trip was a fantastic, fun, and educational experience that brought each class of Scholars closer together.

Importantly, the Presidential Scholars Program encouraged active engagement in all aspects of university life. During my time as a Scholar, I was struck by the commitment that my fellow Scholars actively displayed. Our remarkable group included leaders in student government (including Student Association Presidents); outreach organizations (such as the Alumni Delegates); student academic engagement and research; community service; and so much more. As a senior Scholar said to me when I was a freshman, "Mississippi State has invested a lot in us. What are we doing to repay the favor?" I believe that question applies not only to those still attending the university but to alumni as well. For many of us, I believe our duty is as simple as promoting the university and the Presidential Scholars and being willing to give back in both time and resources. This type of perpetual engagement—in our professional, local, and university communities—is certainly one way to repay the favor.

Hail State,

Stanley Blackmon, Esq.

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