

Newsletter for the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program of Mississippi State University

THE PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR

- HOPE AND HISTORY -

Issue 5 • Fall 2017



SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIALISM



ProjectCSGIRLS

ENGINEERING OUTREACH



GLOBAL IMPACT

Dear Friends,

This year's *The Presidential Scholar* is a special issue to me because it honors the 2017 graduating class of Scholars--the first that I carried to full term. By that I mean that I had the pleasure of recruiting these Scholars to Mississippi State; I read every application; I read their essays to the Honors College that laid out their dreams and aspirations; I interviewed them; I welcomed them to MSU at our retreat at Old Waverly in the fall before their classes even started; I mentored them during their entire time at the university, and I celebrated their accomplishments with family and friends at the Senior Banquet in April, over four years after these seniors told me that they had accepted the invitation to join the Presidential Endowed Scholars Program. It has been a remarkable journey to carry these graduating Scholars for a full term.

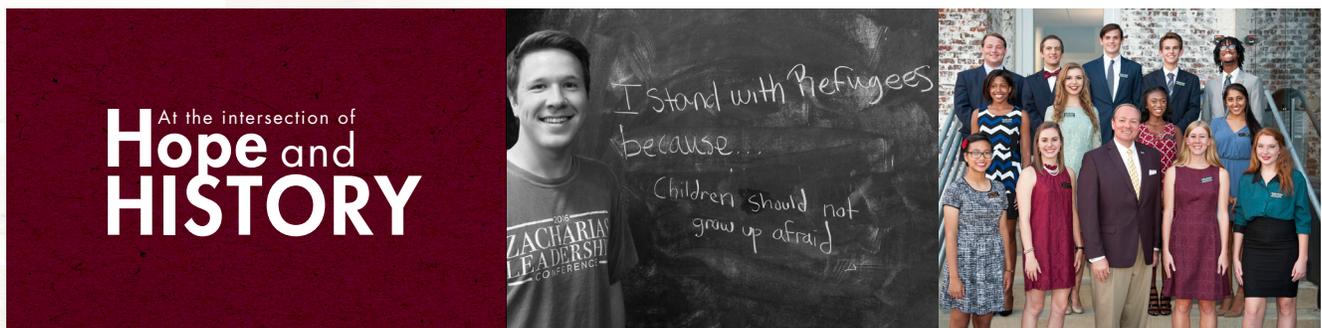
This year's graduating class has a Truman Scholar, two Rhodes Scholar Finalists, a student body President, published authors, and Scholars who have studied all over the world, including Oxford, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, and Peru. Haley Wilcutt has accepted a job as an educator at Busch Gardens in Tampa. Allie Brown, Max Moseley, and Karleigh Kimbrell will remain at Mississippi State, finishing up their courses of study or starting graduate programs in English or engineering. Kim Silverman (formerly Kelly) will move to Raleigh, NC to continue her work in youth ministry. Rodney Kipchumba, Aalaap Desai and Sallie Lin will begin medical school next fall at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Rodney enters UMMC as the Don Mitchell, MD, School of Medicine Scholar. Jack Bryan begins graduate work in public policy at the Gerald Ford School for Public Policy at the University of Michigan. Emily Damm begins graduate school too as a fully funded PhD student in political science at Texas A&M. Holly Travis returns to Peru for a year to teach English as a second language before applying to law school. Natalie Jones and Roxanne Raven will apply to law school next year. I have no doubt that they will live lives of perpetual engagement, making their communities stronger. As we say good-bye to these seniors, the program welcomes fourteen new scholars to the class of 2021!

In this issue of *The Presidential Scholar*, we share the stories of student researchers and leaders who are doing remarkable things. You will be introduced to Charles Boyd, Trey Wallace, and Sarah Darrow, who pursue engineering excellence with an eye toward bigger accomplishments. You will read about Laura Herring's leadership of No Lost Generation, a state department program that raises awareness of the children impacted by the Syrian Civil War. You will meet other Scholars engaged in international study who are charting a future of global impact. I hope you enjoy the images of the Scholars' snowy trip to New York City this year. Ten inches of snow and ice did not dampen our enthusiasm for what New York offers!

The Presidential Scholars are at the intersection of hope and history, committed to high expectations and as prepared as any of their generation to fulfill their promise. As their Mentor, I continue to be motivated by my belief that in these exceptional students hope and history can rhyme. As I have said before in these pages, the Presidential Scholars Program is one of those experiences that makes MSU special. The program changes over time—it may get a little bigger (53 Scholars this year!), its Mentor may change, and Scholars will come from new and faraway places—but it remains unchanged as a community that values commitment to academic excellence and service to the university, state, and nation.

Dr. Thomas Anderson

Mentor, Presidential Endowed Scholars



Presidential Scholars Engineering a Better Future



Charles Boyd



Sarah Darrow

"It is not difficult for an engineer to find a humanitarian application for their work."

- Trey Wallace



Trey Wallace

With internships in California, Massachusetts, and South Africa, three Presidential Scholars weave innovation, creativity and public service into their engineering majors. **Charles Boyd**, a senior software engineer, worked on automotive controls for MSU's EcoCAR team, television broadcasts with ESPN's SEC Network, and an alumni donation platform with the MSU Foundation, all of which reach beyond the parameters of software engineering. Recognized as an emerging star in the software development industry, Charles worked at the Google headquarters in California this summer, developing software that links artificial intelligence systems to business delivery platforms for consumers. Securing one of the nation's most competitive summer internships at Google, Charles views his engineering experience within a broad context of opportunities at Mississippi State. "The University and the Honors College," according to Charles, "present opportunities for leadership development, interdisciplinary collaboration, international travel, and discussions with national leaders. Each of these opportunities has shaped my understanding of how entrepreneurs can be change agents in the world."

Sarah Darrow, a junior computer engineer, worked her second summer as a Google intern, moving from the California headquarters this year to the company's Boston campus. According to Sarah, "the biggest myth about engineers is that they are geeky white men." She counters this myth directly in her remarkable engineering outreach. Sarah works for ProjectCSGIRLS, an organization that creates curriculum used to teach computer science to middle school girls. The state of Mississippi is benefitting from Sarah's commitment to increasing the numbers of women in engineering. She works with the Mississippi Alliance for Women in Computing, which hosts workshops at the University to encourage girls in the state to pursue their interests in computing. Commenting on the myth that engineering is for white men, Sarah says, "The truth is that engineers come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and I challenge the myth by teaching youth that no matter what they look like or where they come from, they can be engineers." In addition to her outreach that is changing the way society thinks about engineers, her research has significant social implications as well. She is creating a robotic therapy dog for PTSD patients who are not able to have a companion dog to help them cope with trauma. "It not only comforts and helps to heal its patients," says Sarah, "but it also provides an example of robots solving intractable problems that living beings can't."

Trey Wallace, a senior industrial engineer, sees no distinction between his creative work and the requirements of his engineering major. "Engineering is much more than a set of equations and methodologies," according to Trey. "It is a mindset of creativity and innovation that can, and should, be applied universally to solve complex problems." A research industrial engineer, Trey is also an accomplished photographer keenly interested in global international development. He has interned with Reclaimed Project in Lesotho, South Africa, and his photography documents the children of poverty and political indifference in the region. For Trey, engineering enables innovative ways to address problems that seem too large for traditional political and economic solutions. Working as a hospital intern last semester, Trey recognized the broader impact of his work making medical processes more efficient and effective. "I could see what I was doing was making a difference for patients and their families. It is not difficult for an engineer to find a humanitarian application for their work."



Spring in New York City?

Ten inches of snow did not dampen the spirit of the Presidential Scholars in New York City during the group's annual spring trip. This year, Columbia University hosted the Scholars, who were treated to an introduction to Columbia's University Core Curriculum and to graduate opportunities at the School for International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Mailman School for Public Health.

Partnering with the Stennis Center at Mississippi State University, the Scholars were able to tour the United Nations, participate in question and answer sessions with UN representatives, and visit the 9-11 Memorial and Museum. "Good Morning America" welcomed the Presidential Scholars as guests of its morning show too.

The group was able to see world-class theater off-Broadway at the Signature Theater Company. Their production of *Everybody*, a play by MacArthur Foundation Fellow Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, was based on the medieval morality play *Everyman*. The play inspired both reflection and laughter. Students also found time to go to the "Late Show" with Stephen Colbert, to have a delicious lunch in Chinatown, to visit the famous Stonewall Inn, and to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge at night. As the snow began to fall on Monday night, the Scholars were treated to a traditional Italian dinner with Truman and Rhodes Scholar Michelle Gavin, currently the managing director of the African Center in New York City and former ambassador to Botswana during President Obama's administration.

The Presidential Scholars want to recognize Bobby and Barbara Martin and Mike and Nan Sanders, whose support for high impact Scholar programming made this year's New York trip possible.

Women Leading the Way

In 2017, **Betty Thomas** and **Stephanie Durr** were elected to serve on the MSU Student Association. Betty, an agricultural economics and Spanish double major, was elected Treasurer, and Stephanie, a political science and sociology double major, was elected Secretary. In addition to being student leaders on campus, Betty and Stephanie are committed to causes beyond the University. As a Demmer Scholar, Betty has interned in Washington, D.C. with the Foreign Agricultural Service's Cochran Fellowship Program. She has also visited Cuba on a research project with Dr. Travis Wiseman, associate professor of business. She was selected as campus ambassador for Mississippi Votes, a nonpartisan, grassroots group working to register voters in Mississippi. As MSU's undergraduate recipient of the President's Commission on the Status of Women's leadership award in 2017, she also attended the American Association of University Women's national conference for women student leaders.

Stephanie founded the student organization Saving Silhouettes during her freshman year at Mississippi State. The group works to increase awareness about human trafficking in the south. She has interned with the Caddo Parish Juvenile Court, focusing on human trafficking, and has presented her research at the JuST (Juvenile Sex Trafficking) Conference. Stephanie spent the summer in Italy as one of three Shackouls Honors College students to participate in the Cornell-in-Turin study abroad program.

Stephanie and Betty are recent examples of women taking key leadership roles at Mississippi State. Presidential Scholar **Shelby Balius** was Student Association President in 2012-13, and **Roxanne Raven** served as Association President in 2016-17.

This summer, **Emily Turner** got the chance to travel the world, sketching architectural wonders and connecting with LGBTQ activists. After winning the Paul Grootkerk Travel Award, Emily traveled to São Paulo, Dublin, Paris, Barcelona, and Tokyo. She researched women in modern architecture. Emily was also able to visit LGBTQ centers in these cities to gather ideas for the student organization she is involved in at Mississippi State, LGBTQ+ Union. Emily, visiting an ancient castle in Rocque brue Cap Martin on the southern coast of France, is pictured here.

Other Scholars leading the way include **Joy Carino**, **Carly Bowers**, and **Alicia Brown**. All three were accepted into the annual NEW Leadership Conference, which is a national bi-partisan program developed by Rutgers University to address the under representation of women in American politics.

Gentry Burkes is a business leader with a social purpose. The record label that she founded, StarkVegas Productions, released its first single in 2016. This year she worked with the Sunflower County Freedom Project at the Delta Music Institute to record an original song written and performed by a group of young students learning to write about their world through lyric and song. The label's latest release with the Freedom Project is titled, "Dreams and Nightmares," and is available for download from www.starkvegasproductions.com.





Photo Credit: Trey Wallace, "Children of the Mountain Kingdom."

Local Leaders with a **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

Junior Presidential Scholars **Laura Herring** and **Trey Wallace** lead the organization No Lost Generation at Mississippi State. Focusing on the plight of the children of Syrian refugees, No Lost Generation is a State Department initiative. In 2016, Devin Edgar featured their NLG in *The Reflector*. The following is adapted from that article.

No Lost Generation, a student organization focused on raising awareness for the Syrian refugee crisis, just started a new chapter on the Mississippi State University campus. No Lost Generation was started a year ago when the pilot chapter began at George Washington University located in Washington, D.C.

Now, there are roughly 40 universities nationwide hosting a new NLG chapter, all with one common goal: to provide awareness and education about the children being impacted by the Syrian Refugee Crisis. "We are excited to support the students' efforts as they raise awareness for the suffering of refugees, particularly children," Melanie Loehwing, the group's faculty advisor, said.

NLG, an organization funded by the Department of State, has three main goals for MSU: fundraising, advocacy and volunteering. Advocacy was the main goal for the fall 2016 semester. Executive Director Laura Herring said her position in MSU's No Lost Generation chapter is also a part of her role

as an intern for the Virtual Student Foreign Service, which is a part of the Department of State. “I want students on our campus to understand the history and motives of this crisis,” Herring said, “and see it as the alarming emergency that it really is.” The ultimate goal is to change the social climate in surrounding areas towards refugee children and resettlement policies.

MSU’s No Lost Generation chapter hosted three main events on campus in hopes to educate more students on the crisis. The first event was a screening of *Salam Neighbor*, a documentary that follows two Americans who travel to a refugee camp and live there. A “hack-a-thon” was also held on campus, as students involved in the organization worked directly with the Rumie Initiative project. The Rumie Initiative works to send preloaded tablets to schools located in crisis zones, and during the hack-a-thon, students will be working to search the Internet for valuable educational material to upload on their cloud drive. That information will then be put on the tablets.

The third event was a United Nations Syrian Refugee Tent Simulation at the center of campus. “We were able to bridge the seemingly enormous distance between Mississippians and Syrian refugees with this final project,” said Laura. “Students at MSU were able to put aside politics and see the crisis as a humanitarian emergency that demands compassion.”

Assistant director for MSU’s chapter, Trey Wallace is responsible for the organization’s campus events and programs. “My hope is that students will realize that they have the resources available to them to make a difference for these children,” Wallace said. No Lost Generation said it is their goal as a student organization to show people their time and talent is an invaluable resource to the less fortunate. “The burden of responsibility falls on those capable of helping,” Wallace said, “and I believe the students of Mississippi State University are capable.”



“Students at MSU were able to put aside politics and see the crisis as a humanitarian emergency that demands compassion.”

- Laura Herring

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Welcome Professor Donald Shaffer: Interim Mentor

I am excited to serve as mentor for the Presidential Scholars. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to share my own experiences as a former student of an honors college with the young men and women of this program. I am excited about introducing students to undergraduate scholarship and research. My own research examines the social and historical construction of race in African American and Southern literature. I am particularly interested in 19th century legal discourse on race and racial categories. My most recent work is a collection that I co-edited with David Roediger and Stephen Middleton titled *The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the Meaning of a White Identity*. I look forward to encouraging and facilitating your work as scholars in the making. Let's get started.



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