

Chesick Scholars Program  
Summer Institute Director's Report  
August 19, 2015  
Jeff Tecosky-Feldman

The Chesick Scholars Program is in its fifth year of funding from the San Francisco Foundation. The Program's aim is to attract promising and talented underrepresented, under-resourced, or first-generation college students to Haverford, and then to support them through intensive faculty mentoring. Goals of the Chesick Scholars Program include

- academic accomplishment and satisfaction -- we want our Scholars to find disciplines/majors in which they can thrive, in the sense of inclusion and attainment. Scholars should feel both ownership and belonging at the College, while achieving high GPA and honors commensurate with potential.
- quality mentoring/academic advising -- we want Scholars to build a deep and productive working relationship with their faculty mentors; to develop trust and forge realistic goals for coursework and extracurriculars; to practice self-reflection and metacognition.
- maximum resource use -- we want Scholars to be actively seeking out and using College resources, both for course-related needs (Office of Academic Resources, Writing Center) and other academic opportunities (e.g. Center for Career and Professional Advising, Fellowships and Internships, Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, Center for Peace and Global Citizenship, Hurford Humanities Center).

This report concerns the initial part of the Program, the 5-week summer institute. The long-term faculty mentoring is the second, and most important part of the Program. The Office of Academic Resources oversees the mentoring implementation, and is charged with evaluation of both parts.

### **Recruiting the Chesick Scholars**

The budget is based on a cohort of 15 students. Selection proceeded in two phases:

1) After students were admitted to the College, but before the matriculation deadline of May 1, we sent offers to join the Chesick Scholars Program to 44 students, who were identified by Admissions as very high-achieving students who met the Chesick Scholars demographic. We also convened a breakfast during Admitted Students weekend, in which the Program Director and some of the current Scholars met with potential Chesick students, to discuss the summer courses and answer any questions. A total of 5 students from this first round chose to attend Haverford with 4 also choosing to be Chesick Scholars (the 5<sup>th</sup> had unchangeable summer plans). For comparison, this first round yielded 2 students the year before, 8 students the year before that, and 4 in the first year of the Scholars program.

2) After May 1, we sent out a second round of 34 offers to apply for the remaining 11 spaces in the cohort. These went out to matriculating students on financial aid whose academic ratings were among the highest of those in the Chesick demographic. The application asked for students' summer course choice, some indication of academic areas of interest, and for two short essays with the following prompts:

**In a paragraph or two, and in specific detail, please write about an academic experience that you found especially exciting, and explain why you found it inspiring. It could be a topic studied in a high school course, from some reading that you've done on your own, a project that you've worked on, an experience in a laboratory or summer research, etc.**

**Why do you want to be a Chesick Scholar? Which specific aspects of the Chesick Scholars Program do you think will be most important to you? Describe in a paragraph or two.**

We received 22 applications in this second phase, and a committee consisting of the Summer Program Director, the OAR Director, the Dean of Admission, and the Dean of Academic Affairs used a modified lottery to select 11 students from this group, with an eye to balancing course choice and gender. The resulting final cohort had 7 women and 8 men, 4 African-American, 7 Latino, 4 White, of which 13 had neither parent with a bachelor's. Chesick Scholars hailed from all over the US, including AZ, CA, CO, FL, ID, IL, NY, PA, PR, TN, TX. About half were intending to major in the natural sciences, with a strong interest in engineering.

### **Summer Institute**

The summer program was 5 weeks in duration (June 28-August 1), and students were housed in single dormitory rooms in Leeds Hall. All travel expenses were paid by the program, as well as expenses for room, board and textbooks/supplies. In addition, each Chesick Scholar received \$100 in cash at the beginning of the program, and a check for \$1900 at the end of the program, which approximates the summer earnings expectation for students on financial aid.

A graduate student lived in the dorm with the students and served as Residential Director. She supervised two Chesick Scholar upperclassmen who also lived in the dorm serving as Residential Assistants. Together the three of them conducted orientation activities, supervised study sessions in the evenings and weekends, and were responsible for conducting Friday and Saturday field trips and other extracurricular activities, as well as serving as role models.

The main focus of the summer program is the coursework, which takes up most of student participants' time. However, to model appropriate balance between work and leisure, many field trips were planned. Students went off-campus most Friday afternoons and Saturdays, to learn about resources in the surrounding area, or just to have fun. In addition to trips using College vans, students also learned to use Septa trains to access the city. Destinations/activities are listed at the end of this report.

As a further introduction to College resources, lunchtimes included guest appearances from students, staff and administrators, to talk about issues such as summer research opportunities,

campus life, and to introduce the Office of Academic Resources, Deans' Office, 8<sup>th</sup> Dimension, etc.

### **Summer Courses**

There were five courses offered, and each student signed up for three: two one-credit courses meeting 8 hours per week, and a non-credit writing course meeting 1 hour per week. The two credit-bearing courses were graded, with students obtaining prematriculation credit (similar to an Advanced Placement credit) if they received a final course grade of 2.0 or higher. Thus, students could earn a maximum of two course credits for their work in the summer institute. All 15 students in the program successfully earned both credits.

Courses were approved for inclusion in the summer program by the Chesick Scholars Committee, which designs and oversees the summer and mentoring parts of the program. The level of rigor and coursework required was commensurate with regular term-time courses, with graded assignments, exams, papers, labs, etc.

Each student signed up for one writing-intensive course (either Quaker Learning, taught by Prof. Emma Lapsansky or Reproduction or Mobility, taught by Prof. Heather Curl) and one other course (either Thinking Syntactically, taught by Prof. Shizhe Huang or Applied Statistics taught by Prof. Rob Manning.) Course descriptions are included at the end of this document.

The two writing-intensive Humanities courses culminated in a research paper and oral presentation in a symposium held at the end of the summer. The written assignments were supported by writing center staff member Barbara Hall, who in addition to meeting with the entire cohort in class once weekly to discuss general writing issues also met individually with each student for 30-45 minutes each week. Students also had mandatory meetings with peer writing tutors on Sundays and Wednesdays to help refine their submissions. There were, in addition, sessions with undergraduate course assistants which were integral to three of the summer courses.

Summer faculty held office hours, graded problem sets, exams and papers, just as during the term, and met regularly with the Program Director. Faculty teaching one-credit courses received \$10,000 in compensation; the writing instructor received \$7000; the Summer Program Director received \$10,000.

### **Faculty Mentors**

The summer program leads into the long-term mentoring aspect of the program. The list of mentors for this cohort, with the number of their mentees is:

Heather Curl (3), Barbara Hall (2), Shizhe Huang (3), Emma Lapsansky (2), Rob Manning (2), Jeff Tecosky-Feldman (3)

Faculty Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees individually for a minimum of 15 minutes each week during the term, to attend a 2-hour training session, and to meet periodically as a group to discuss progress. Mentors are compensated \$750 per mentee per year for the first two years; in addition, mentors have at their disposal \$250 per mentee for expenses related to meetings with mentees.

### **Evaluation**

Chesick Scholars completed a short midterm evaluation of the summer program at 2.5 weeks, and a more comprehensive evaluation at the end -- these are available from the Office of Academic Resources (OAR), which is charged with the evaluation of the program. From the students' perspective, the summer was a great success: they were challenged academically, gained important time-management skills, learned how to use important resources such as office hours and the writing center, formed partnerships with their fellow Scholars that will last during the term-time, and got familiar with the campus and the surrounding area.

Faculty who taught in the summer program have submitted evaluations as well, and these will be analyzed by the OAR as part of the ongoing evaluation process. Faculty participants uniformly enjoyed the opportunity to teach the Chesick Scholars over the summer, with one stating that she felt her students progressed faster and more deeply into the material than she's ever seen.

### **Summary**

Every student in this fourth cohort of Chesick Scholars showed amazing growth over the summer! All of them rose to the formidable academic challenges, as they faced full versions of freshman courses squeezed into five weeks, with the inevitable crunch of readings and assignments. Instructors were impressed by the engagement and talent of these students. The community was able to share in this appreciation at the research symposium, where the 15 Scholars showed poise and confidence, as well as intellectual passion and rigor.

Integrating the writing-intensive assignments into the Humanities courses has been very successful. Instructors noted significant jumps in style and quality of the writing assignments, in contrast to the first summer when the writing course was separate, with its own readings and topic. This only two courses to prepare for allowed for more focused effort.

In the student evaluations, many of the Scholars described the summer experience as building their confidence, as they engaged with more ideas in a deeper way than they had been used to, and survived reading and writing assignments that were intense. They uniformly look forward to building a strong working relationship with their faculty mentor. Many of the scholars affirmed that regular required use of writing partners was critical to making measurable progress in writing skills in such a short time, and as a side benefit removed any stigma related to asking for academic assistance from peers.

From both the Scholars and their instructors, then, an overwhelmingly positive appraisal of the fourth iteration of the Summer Institute. As the Scholars enter their first semester under the

guidance of their mentors, they seem fully prepared and ready to assert themselves to realize both great academic and personal promise.

### **Summer 2015 Course Descriptions**

Course A: Quaker Learning: A History of Social Justice, Emma Lapsansky, Emeritus Professor of History

Looking for the opportunity to read other peoples' mail? Curious about how families might pursue the task of passing on their values to the future generations? Quakers, and Quaker educational institutions like Haverford, have a reputation of a long tradition of social justice activism and racial-justice leadership. This course is built upon letters circulated within families as nineteenth-century Quaker individuals sought to stay connected across geographical space, and to hold onto their values of how to live a moral and ethical life. We'll be reading parents' exchanges with their children at Westtown, a Quaker boarding school, and studying Quakers' anti-slavery strategies, as well as the letters of an 1838 Haverford alum, reflecting his work with freed slaves during the Civil War era.

Through lectures, reading, and hands-on archival research, students will also explore how American Quakers viewed "education" and its goals, and how the Quaker community sought to maintain its cohesion through stressful times. Quaker theology and family life, as well as an exploration of the social/political backdrop of nineteenth century—including the tension between Quakers' commitment to abolishing slavery and their equally-strong proscriptions against war--will serve as the focus for examining questions of community identity, and methods of defining and remaining loyal to that identity. Enhanced library, writing, and collaborative research skills are among the primary goals of this course, which seeks also to introduce students to some elements of Quaker history and thought, as a model for studying any community that aims to develop and sustain unified values about the way a life should be lived. (1 credit)

Course B: Reproduction or Mobility: Analyzing Social Class Theory through Ethnographic and Empirical Research in Schools, Heather Curl, Lecturer in Education

Is the United States the land of opportunity or an unjust nation that reproduces inequality based on social class and race? Investigating the role that social class plays in society is a concern dominating studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology and education. Despite the persistent narrative of the American Dream and our commitment to education's role in mitigating inequality, qualitative research done in school settings has offered tremendous insight on how social class might be reproduced and the role that schools play in this process.

This course actively investigates theories of social class and reproduction through the lens of ethnographies of school sites. Looking through critical lenses throughout the semester, we discuss theoretical conceptions of education and social reproduction. Issues of culture and identity (race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, ability, family and community) are also considered through the ethnographies discussed and analyzed. We will also explore what qualitative research is and practice collecting qualitative data ourselves. Over the course of the

five week class, students will develop research projects that they will share in a symposium for the Haverford community. (1 credit)

Course C: Thinking Syntactically: Introduction to Linguistics, Shizhe Huang, Associate Professor of Chinese and Linguistics; C.V. Starr Professor of Asian Studies

In school, we all learned from our teachers the rules for writing properly in our language. But are there rules underpinning how sentences are formed that are not taught? Have you ever wondered why it is in English that one has to say *zero children*, not *zero child*? That is, why mark plurality on a noun when the modifier zero clearly indicates there is no plurality? You may be surprised to hear that *What type of English did he say did she speak?* is a well-formed sentence. Well, it is, at least in the English spoken in Belfast, Northern Ireland. As for words like *at* and *with*, which appear BEFORE the noun as in *at home* and *with a hammer*, their counterparts appear AFTER the noun in Japanese, so what is called pre-position in English is actually post-position in another language.

So should we assume that each language follows its own rules or do we have reason to believe that human languages share some fundamental principles, not just for communicative purposes, but principles applying at the level of sentence formation? These are the questions we will tackle in *Thinking Syntactically*, where we will examine raw data and build a syntactic theory, namely a theory on sentence structure, from the ground up. We will arrive at a fairly sophisticated theoretical model within which you will tackle a specific syntactic issue of your choosing, be it English or any language. (1 credit)

Course D: Applied Statistics, Rob Manning, Professor of Mathematics

The course will involve an introduction to statistics, with an emphasis on concepts (like bias and randomness) over algebra and formulas (though there will be a few formulas). The class will culminate with a project in which students choose a statistical question, design a data-collection process, do the actual data collection, and perform a hypothesis test to answer their question. This course is suitable for students with an interest in any field (Humanities, Social Science or Natural Science) who desire to have a basic understanding of statistical ideas without much mathematical formalism (so, for example, calculus is not used nor required). (1 credit)

#### Summer Field Trips/Destinations

July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert on the Parkway  
Magic Garden on South Street  
Rafting on the Lehigh River  
King of Prussia Mall  
University of Pennsylvania Medical School  
Haverford House in West Phila  
Philadelphia Art Museum  
Old City in Philadelphia