

Chesick Scholars Program  
Summer Institute Director's Report  
November 11, 2014  
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The Chesick Scholars Program is in its third 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 (Career Development Office, Fellowships, Internships, Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, Center for Peace and Global Citizenship).

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, and will be covered in a report from the Office of Academic Resources, which is overseeing 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 31 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 summer program instructors met with potential Chesick students, to discuss the summer courses and answer any questions. A total of 2 students from this first round chose to attend Haverford and both also chose to be Chesick Scholars. For comparison, this first round yielded 8 students the year before, and 4 the year before that.
- 2) After May 1, we sent out a second round of 44 offers to apply for the remaining 13 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 29 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 14 students from this group, with an eye to balancing course choice and gender. One student who was selected ultimately declined the offer (this is a first in the three year history of the Chesick program). The resulting final cohort had 8 women and 7 men, 5 African-American, 6 Latino, 4 White, of which 11 had neither parent finishing college (one student had one parent who did not attend college). Chesick Scholars hailed from all over the US, including AR, PA, PR, OH, FL, MA, NY, IL, NJ, including six students from the New York City area. About half were intending to major in the natural sciences.

### **Summer Institute**

The summer program was 5 weeks in duration (June 29-August 2), 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 is 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 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, acted as Teaching Assistants for some of the courses, and were responsible for conducting 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.

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 Material Religion, taught by Prof. Ken Koltun-Fromm or Reproduction or Mobility, taught by Prof. Heather Curl) and one science/math course (either Material Chemistry, taught by Profs. Fran Blase and Karin Akerfeldt or Applied Linear Algebra taught by Prof. Jeff Tecosky-Feldman.) 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 Prof. 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.

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:

Ken Koltun-Fromm (3), Heather Curl (3), Fran Blase (2), Karin Akerfeldt (2), Jeff Tecosky-Feldman (3), Maud McInerney (2).

Faculty Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees individually for a minimum of 15 minutes each week, to attend a 2 hour training session, and to meet periodically as a group to discuss progress. Mentors are compensated \$500 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 he felt that doing so allowed him to reconnect with his personal mission at the College.

### **Summary**

Every student in this third 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 advanced freshman or sophomore-level 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. It seems that having 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 third iteration of this program. 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 2014 Course Descriptions

#### Course A: Material Religion, Kenneth Koltun-Fromm, Professor of Religion

This class will explore the ways in which Americans express their religious identities in and through material objects, rituals, and performances. Religion is not just a set of beliefs; it is also a collection of interactive practices that directly engage physical things, spaces, and persons. We will investigate various texts in literary studies, anthropology, sociology, film, and religion to better appreciate the diversity of religious expressions in America. A crucial component of this course will be to bring these theoretical accounts to bear on actual material practices. We will take advantage of the religious sites and architecture in surrounding neighborhoods of Haverford College, and work with primary materials that touch on the material lives of religious practitioners. Students will learn about material religion by visiting these sites in and around Philadelphia, and by working in the special collections archive at Haverford College. 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 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: New Materials and Nanotechnology: A Study of Molecules, Big and Small, Fran Blase, Associate Professor of Chemistry; Karin Åkerfeldt, Professor of Chemistry; Kelly Matz, Laboratory Instructor

Can networks of molecules be used as tiny filters to separate greenhouse gases? Can supramolecular structures deliver drugs to specific human target sites? Can molecules self-assemble to form large structures of a particular size and shape? How can organic molecules, like proteins, be used as natural adhesives or electrical conducting devices? This course will explore the fundamentals of molecular structure, bonding, and the three-dimensional configuration of molecules. It will then focus on how supramolecular frameworks and complex networks are assembled to produce materials that have a wide range of applications in solar cell design, gas filtration, drug delivery, electron transport and medicine. The course will include both lecture and extensive work in the lab. (1 credit)

Course D: Applied Linear Algebra, Jeff Tecosky-Feldman, Senior Lecturer in Mathematics

This course will focus on using the tools of Linear Algebra to solve problems in a wide variety of disciplines. Students will learn to use Mathematica, and other computer tools to complete weekly labs. Topics covered include: Solving Linear Systems, Matrix Algebra, Vectors, Linear Independence and Span, Least-Squares, Markov Chains, Eigenvectors and Eigenvalues, Discrete Dynamical Systems. In addition to the labs, there will be regular graded homework assignments, and a midterm and final exam. The course meets for 8 hours per week, including 2 hours in lab.

### Summer Field Trips/Destinations

Reading Terminal Market

The Mutter Museum  
Rafting on the Lehigh River  
King of Prussia Mall  
University of Pennsylvania Medical School  
Haverford House in West Phila  
Suburban Square in Ardmore  
Philadelphia Art Museum  
Old City in Philadelphia