

Anderson Bears the Torch for Public Health

College Scholars Young Alumni Spotlight: **ASHLYN ANDERSON** ('22), UT Torchbearer

As a public health nutrition advocate, the College Scholars Program at the University of Tennessee greatly enhanced my educational, professional, and personal journey to be where I am today. Thus, I am honored to share my story and contribute to the College Scholars newsletter as an alumna.

I graduated from UT Knoxville in May 2022 with a bachelor's degree in College Scholars with an emphasis in food security and public health nutrition. Now in graduate school, I often get the question of my background and what I studied during my undergraduate degree. While I quickly assess how much time a person has to listen while I craft my response, I don't believe I can ever sufficiently encapsulate the true power of interdisciplinary curriculum through the College Scholars Program.

My particular major allowed me to weave together my passions for food systems, nutrition, and public health. While I started my freshman year with a major in nutrition, I was quickly disillusioned by the siloed approach to food and wanted to think more systematically about the access, utilization, and consumption of food within systems of power locally and globally.

This is what led me to design my interdisciplinary major in food security and public health nutrition. My program sought to examine the intersection of nutrition-related disease and health disparities, within which systems of privilege and oppression interact to influence the ways people access, afford, and consume food. Through courses in sociology, food policy, anthropology, and public

health across the disciplines at UT, I studied the plethora of factors that influence food choices and health outcomes in human nutrition, while supplementing my program with minors in Spanish and international agriculture and natural resources.

Faculty mentorship and completion of the senior project is an integral component of the College Scholars Program that attracted me to take my learning to the next level. I was privileged to receive strong support, guidance, and encouragement from Betsy Anderson Steeves, who was an associate professor in the Department of Nutrition. With the support of my mentor and faculty members on my thesis defense committee, I conducted independent research using qualitative methods on the lived experience of food insecurity for UT students.

My College Scholars thesis gave me invaluable skills in qualitative research methods and culminated in presentations at conferences on the local, state, and national level; providing evidence and advocacy for the opening of a food pantry on campus; and the publication of a manuscript titled "Navigating Hidden Hunger: An Exploratory Analysis of the Lived Experience of Food Insecurity among College Students."

After graduation, I wanted to continue my passion for international engagement and leverage my Spanish speaking skills, so I lived in central Mexico as a Fulbright Scholar with the Fulbright-García Robles (COMEXUS) program. I was selected as a Fulbright English teaching assistant in Puebla City, Mexico, where I taught at Centro de



Capacitacion para el Trabajo Industrial Number 08. At this polytechnical school, I taught students aged 15 to over 50, all of whom were passionate about learning English and highly engaged in binational cultural exchange.

I found myself learning more from my students than teaching, as I immersed myself fully in the celebratory culture of Puebla that is rich in gastronomic heritage, indigenous traditions, and holidays like *Día de los Muertos*.

Outside of the classroom, I was active in planning sustainability events and teaching art lessons to children at a local community theatre, and I even painted a mural to commemorate my institution's 60th anniversary. My interest in international food policy and using research and advocacy to promote sustainable food environments in Latin America was informed by my experiences in Mexico, a place and people that will forever be imprinted on my heart.

MESSAGE FROM THE **DIRECTOR**

I hope this newsletter finds alumni, family, and friends of the College Scholars Program doing well. I write this as I am coming to the end of my fourth year as director. Even though the first couple years of my directorship were impacted by the pandemic, this position is still the best job at the University of Tennessee, as former directors Jeff Kovac and Chris Craig had indicated.

Without further ado, we have a lot to report in this issue.

It is very nice to be back to face-to-face interviews of applicants to the College Scholars Program! It is also great to be able to recruit in person again. We've tabled at Hodges Library (see photo on back) and have begun meeting with advisors from different colleges at the university.

We celebrated the 50th anniversary of the College Scholars Program 2023—the oldest honors program at UT Knoxville! We held a celebration at the UT Conference Center in spring. Former director of the program, Jeffrey Kovac, was a key organizer for the 50th celebration and he wrote an overview, which is published online at scholars.utk.edu.

My main way of interacting regularly with individual college scholars is through our weekly seminar. Over the past few years, these seminars have shifted over largely to professional development. We did this shift primarily to increase the sense of community and networking among College Scholars students and various units within the university that are highly relevant to college scholars (such as College Scholars advisor Ali Brewer—see online edition—and staff from Undergraduate Research and Fellowships and from the Center for Career Development).

Based upon an idea of college scholar Amara Pappas, this academic year we started to open the first 15 minutes of each seminar with a college scholar talking about their program or study or plans for their senior projects. Borrowing a phrase from Andy Warhol, we've been calling these segments of each seminar our "15 Minutes of Fame."

This spring we had our program's first invited speaker through the Jeffrey and Susan Kovac Visiting Scholar Endowment. Our speaker was alumna and Alumni Advisory Board member Mary Anne Hitt. She gave a wonderful and uplifting talk about her work leading climate and environmental organizations and campaigns. We look forward to holding these Kovac Lectures regularly and would love to get to the point where we could have at least one such lecture each semester.

In this newsletter we catch up with three alumni of the program: Ashlyn Anderson, Anne Buckle, and Jay Raman. We also welcome our newest Alumni Advisory Board member, Joshua Maine—see online edition. We thank Jay St. Clair, who stepped down from the board last spring, for all his help over the years!

Because college scholars themselves are the *raison d'être* for the program, we once again allot them plenty of pages in this newsletter!

Finally, although I am preaching to the choir here, College Scholars students are among the very best at UT, as you will see from reading here about the amazing work of many of the current students in the program. This statement is backed up by the fact that, despite our program's small size, College Scholars graduating seniors regularly are selected as Torchbearers—the highest honor UT bestows. In just the past three years, six college scholars have been Torchbearers: Ashlyn Anderson and Taylor Dempsey, 2022; Diego Lourenco, Emily Morgan, and Diba Seddighi, 2023; Sarah Lange, 2024.

We would love to hear from you! Please keep in touch via email at scholars@utk.edu or tfreeber@utk.edu, or call me at **865-974-3975**.

The Universal Language



Mark Twain said that history doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. If so, that might explain how two musically inclined college scholars more than a decade apart ended up collaborating on a cultural diplomacy project in Colombia.

Jay Raman ('97) and **Anne Buckle** ('11) only met a few years ago, but they followed strikingly similar paths. As college scholars, they both designed programs blending international relations with music and spent semesters abroad in Europe. Raman continued his studies at Harvard Law School, while Buckle pursued a master's degree in arts advocacy from Harvard's School of Education.

Raman joined the Foreign Service after two years as a lawyer. His work has focused on cultural exchange, including programs that bring US artists overseas to engage with foreign audiences.

Buckle was a two-time State Department intern, and she came very close to joining the diplomatic corps herself before opting to move to Nashville to pursue a career in music.



These parallel paths finally intersected when Raman came across an article about Buckle in the *w* magazine that described her Three Chords project, which helps young refugees express themselves through music. Raman was posted to the US Embassy in Colombia, a country that is still emerging from decades of internal conflict. When Raman learned about Buckle's work with vulnerable communities, he reached out to see if she might be willing to share her talents with Colombian youth.

She immediately agreed and was matched with the embassy's Youth Ambassadors program, which provides skills training to young social leaders from under-served populations.

One afternoon, Buckle logged onto a Zoom platform with 18 Youth Ambassadors and two mentors. After a brief ice-breaking session, they began to write. Over the course of three hours, she coaxed them into expressing thoughts and ideas that slowly coalesced into music. By the end of the session, they had written a brand-new song from start to finish, emphasizing their role as global changemakers.

Buckle's method opens up a world of possibilities for cultural exchange. Instead of just performing for an audience, she engages with them to help them discover something new and original. This is an incredible resource for diplomats like Raman, who work to communicate US culture and values to foreign audiences.

Another great American writer, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote that "Music is the universal language of mankind." Buckle and Raman's project shows that music isn't just a way to communicate. It is also one of the most effective tools we have to build cross-cultural understanding.

In this section, we feature the variety of projects our students work on during their time as a college scholar in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Ryan Beatty

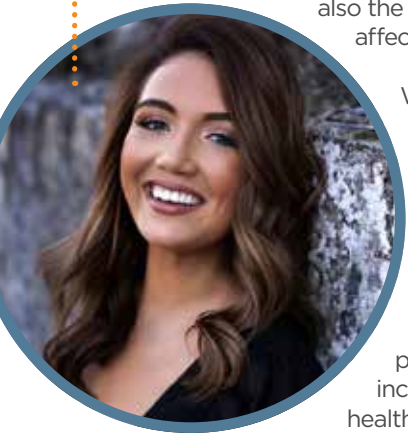
I'm a senior Haslam Leadership Scholar (formerly called the Haslam Scholars Program) and College Scholar studying "Narrative and Comparative Border Studies." My program blends perspectives and methodologies across political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, and journalism to ponder questions like: What is a border? What are the implications of narratives on immigration and border policy decisions? How do different populations perceive and understand borders?



My senior project engages with these questions through qualitative research, where I have chosen images and videos from stories tagged with "border" or "immigration" from the top two most-viewed news sources in the United States—Fox News and MSNBC. Then, I will conduct qualitative interviews with Latino immigrants, an interview before showing the visuals, and an interview after showing the visuals. I hope to learn more about immigrant attitudes towards prevailing narratives surrounding immigration, the perceived differences across news sources, and even the research process.

Bailey Cavner

My program of study is "Preventative Medicine in Rural Women's Healthcare." Women's healthcare comprises two major portions, the scientific side and the social side. My program offers an amalgamation of these two perspectives by studying preventative medicine strategies via the physiological process of the human body, but also the healthcare policies and laws affecting the women of our society.



Women in rural communities are an underserved group of individuals. Due to a lack of resources, they face higher morbidity rates than their urban counterparts. I plan to explore the different roles of women in society: as mothers, leaders, athletes, and patients. Preventative medicine includes mental and physical health. This is why my program blends psychological evaluation with physiological evaluation. Both aspects aim to inform the patient on how to live the healthiest life from birth. It is imperative to understand how the human body ages and the health problems an individual will face at all stages of life.

Raghav Chari

My program of study is "The Philosophy of Physics." In the evolving world of scientific discovery and theoretical exploration, the intersection of physics and philosophy has been an increasingly growing field, and multiple universities in the US and around the world have been adding it to their schools. Furthermore, the *Journal of the Philosophy of Physics* was founded last year, and each year more undergraduate institutions and now even some graduate institutions are offering degrees in the philosophy of physics as a program.



My program aims to bridge the gap between these two disciplines in a way that neither a major in physics nor a minor or second major in philosophy can fully achieve, with hopes that this could be a blueprint for the physics and philosophy departments at UT to join forces and offer a program in the Philosophy of Physics that many schools around the country are offering.

Leah Cleland

My program is entitled "Adaptation Studies with an Emphasis on Writing and Directing for the Screen and Stage." It's a mouthful, but it essentially means I look at the translation of stories across media: book to film, book to stage, stage to film, etc. I love storytelling and discovering more about all the ways in which a story can be told. I do a lot of creative writing, especially screenplays, and I am currently working on a futuristic adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* as my senior project.



I have also done some work with the Clarence Brown Theatre. Last semester, I acted as an assistant stage manager for their production of Ken Ludwig's *Murder on the Orient Express*, a stage adaptation of Agatha Christie's novel of the same name.

Soriya Cooper

I am a senior college scholar with a program titled "Humanitarian I/O Psychology" (HI/OP). HI/OP delves into workplace dynamics through a lens that extends far beyond the office walls. While traditional industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology focuses on optimizing productivity and employee well-being within businesses, HI/OP broadens this scope to examine the wider socio-spatial and environmental impacts of organizations on the communities they operate in.



My current focus with this program revolves around understanding the experiences of individuals facing homelessness. Specifically, I'm exploring how their interactions with service providers influence their decision-making during extreme weather conditions. By collecting and analyzing interview data, my aim is to offer valuable insights to local organizations working with this population. These insights can then inform strategies for improvement, benefiting not only the individuals served but also the employees and the organization as a whole.

Julia Craven

My program of study is "Engineering for Sustainability." The objective of my major is to connect the technical aspects of engineering with the humanities with an environmentally focused lens. I originally started as a civil engineering student with a deep interest in the environment, and wanted to curate a major that would specifically target the environmental aspects of civil engineering. Like most college scholars, my interests have evolved through my time at UT, and I am eternally grateful for my opportunity to integrate multiple disciplines into one major. This has led me to explore environmental topics in sociology, geography, philosophy, geology, economics, engineering, and more.



My senior project for College Scholars is a "Mercury Magazine" that explores the legacy of elemental mercury in the Y-12/Oak Ridge region. It integrates disciplines like ecology, art, sociology, engineering, policy, and history.

Ash DeRegis

My program of study in College Scholars is titled "Conservation and Animal Behavior"; I am also pursuing a second major in chemistry. My goal is to create an interdisciplinary course of study that connects the science of chemistry with ecosystem restoration efforts to invoke novel ways of conserving the natural world and its resources and to explore the relationship between humans and the environment.



The idea for my senior project is to enhance designs of bioretention by implementing applications of chemical adhesion properties during the design process. Bioretention consists of any landscaped areas that are designed to treat storm-water runoff in a controlled and efficient way.

These designs are critical especially in the growing industrialized areas to maintain a healthy environment for humans and animals to coexist. This new lens of green-infrastructure design crossed with chemical research will mitigate issues such as maintenance costs, geological erosion, biohazards, and flooding.

Sarah Lange

After witnessing a pressing need for addiction advocacy while scribing in rural emergency rooms around Knoxville, I created the "Addiction and Behavioral Neuroscience" major through the College Scholars Program. I noticed that, despite the opioid crisis disproportionately affecting East Tennesseans, stigmas prevailed in our region that discouraged at-risk individuals from seeking care. Determined to address this health disparity, I now study the biological and socioeconomic basis of addiction and its best course of treatment, combining sociology, genetics, biochemistry, philosophy, neuroscience, and public health courses to evaluate how we can treat addiction not only at an individual level, but as an entire system.



My program examines the therapeutic and pharmaceutical strategies for addiction treatment with a complex understanding of an addiction's behavioral and neurobiological effects on the brain. My effort to merge scientific with psychological and philosophical perspectives focuses on treating patients as people rather than diseases. My effort to apply scientific coursework to community initiatives highlights my holistic approach to healthcare and underscores my humanist perspective on patient care.

Perri Mahfouz

My program of study is called "Medical anthropology and Global Healthcare." It is the study of how health and illness are shaped, experienced, and comprehended in relation to cultural, historical, and political forces.

Medical anthropology, a branch of social and cultural anthropology, is concerned with the study of disease, recovery, medical procedures, the provision of healthcare, and biotechnologies in various communities. The term "global health" refers to population health in a global setting and is described as the field of study, research, and practice that prioritizes equity in health and the improvement of health for all people worldwide, particularly those in at-risk populations.



continued on page 6...

DeShala McDuffie

My program title is "Racial Disparities in Public Health." I am also on a pre-medicine track, so the goal of my project is to view the healthcare system from a social science perspective.



Most of the time, pre-medicine focuses on hard science in terms of health and the details that are involved in human life. However, my program serves to combine the hard sciences with coursework that heavily speaks to social and psychological determinants of health.

My senior project is titled "Influence of Marital Status on Physical Activity among Stroke Survivors." Approximately 795,000 people in the United States suffer from a stroke each year. One of the most critical aspects of recovery is returning to physical activity as it strongly improves the quality of life for stroke survivors.

Sophia Milen

My program of study is "Social Media and Political Science." When I was graduating high school, one of the questionnaires that my school asked me to fill out was titled "Your Future." The final question asked me: What is your dream job?

I remember sitting in my English class staring at this question.

After some time, I wrote down "Social Media Specialist in the White House Office."

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the intersection of social media and politics has fascinated me. I was destined for a Model UN conference in high school, only for it to be delayed for a week due to a sickness, then for it to be postponed until further notice due to an epidemic, and finally canceled, due to a pandemic. Guess how I found out that it was canceled? Through an Instagram post, published by the host organization.

Then, for the following eight months, I was pushed to learn online, communicate online, and watch politics online. In becoming intimate with the political landscape on social media, I saw that these two were inextricably connected and were begging to be understood. Thus, with the ever-increasing number of people online combined with the rising percentage of politically active citizens, I knew I had to study this combination of subjects.

Raylee Mitchell

My program of study is called "Genetics and Globalization." Through this program, I hope to examine the way that genetic sciences and people's

perceptions of them have contributed to racism, sexism, and other types of prejudice throughout history from the time of Gregor Mendel (the father of genetics) to the current day.

I want to compare reactions to genetic knowledge and discoveries and other outcroppings of activity over time and attempt to identify how the processes of globalization have changed the ways in which people express and hold prejudiced beliefs (as they relate to genetic concepts), as well as the way globalization might have had a positive impact on how people view those who present phenotypically as different than themselves.

Amara Pappas

My program is called "Arts Entrepreneurship," which dives into the world of vocal performance, arts administration, the business of live performing arts, and the nonprofit sector. I take classes primarily in the College of Music and the Haslam College of Business and focus on finding connections between the two disciplines while asking the question, "How is performing arts culture changing, and how can we innovate within it?"



I joined the College Scholars Program during my sophomore year because I wanted a major that reflected and encouraged the interdisciplinarity that I was hoping to get out of my time in college. I wanted to be in multiple places at once, not studying just music or just business but a unique combination of all my interests, and College Scholars allowed me to do that.

Olivia Roberts

Growing up in the Appalachian Mountains within the Eastern Tennessee region, I have been vastly aware of the negative stereotypes many Appalachians have faced throughout time. My program is "Interdisciplinary Appalachian Studies." It focuses on the varied cultural identities of the region and its influences on society. My major centers on studying the diversity of the people and their land.



I plan to take courses in a variety of disciplines. One primary focus is the historical effects of stereotyping on this region. I strive to challenge misconceptions through preserving cultural heritage to promote healthy regional identities of Appalachians. Through observing hundreds of years of stereotyping, I expect to learn more about the complex connections to modern-day socioeconomic inequality this area faces. I want to understand how Appalachian traditions in art and culture can survive in the modern world and influence and enhance pride in regional identities. I continue to research how social constructs such as stereotypes perpetuate reduced

opportunities and prejudice that continue to define Appalachia.

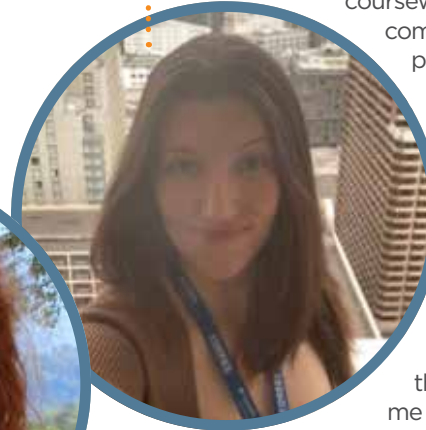
Meghan Scott

My program is "Histochemistry and Forensic Anthropology." It explores the study of the identification of injury and disease through examination of evidence gathered by forensic anthropological and histochemical techniques. The program also emphasizes the underlying physical and chemical processes at the foundation of anatomy and physiology and stresses a cellular approach to pathology.

After obtaining an undergraduate degree, I plan to pursue a medical degree through either an accelerated three-year program or a traditional four-year path and complete a residency in pathology. I wish to become a certified forensic pathologist and handle obscure autopsies, second autopsies, and exhumation autopsies where traditional medical examination does not yield results.

Lana Shea

I created my College Scholars Program in "Health Equity" initially to remedy the lack of an undergraduate degree option in public health at UT. Completing most of the classes that have been offered through the university's public health minor, I have gained much background knowledge that comes from this field. However, the interdisciplinary coursework I have been privileged to complete has largely shaped my program, thinking, and the trajectory of my career.



I am interested in the physical and mental health of those most affected by these structures, including people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+, and disabled populations. Being in College Scholars has enabled me to view health and healthcare through various lenses and has made me question why social justice is often excluded from conversations involving public health, despite the very nature of public health being inextricably tied to social justice.

Matthew Tarnoff

I'm honored to be working with the College Scholars Program. My program is titled "Creative Storytelling in User Experience Design." Essentially, it's a combination of an English major with a concentration in creative fiction writing and an information sciences major with a concentration in user experience design.

My intention for this program and my project is to use proper design and powerful storytelling to work in video game design. As such, my project involves writing



the first act of a novel and beginning to develop some basic assets for use in a game. This also involves learning 3D modeling software and game engines.

Bella Thomas-Wilson

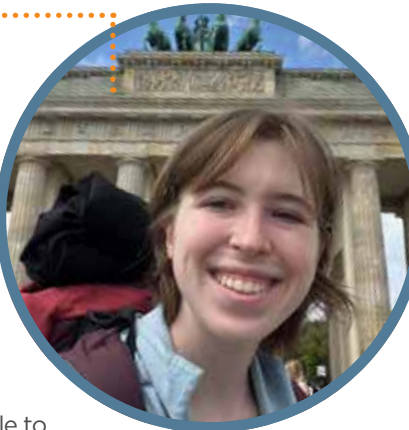
I am a sophomore in the College Scholars program with a program titled "The Experiences and Representations of Women in American Art."

I am examining the intersections and complexities of art, liberation, and gender. Through my studies, I intend to further my knowledge on how to be an art curator who actively listens to the desires and needs of artists. It is important to me to learn how to properly increase accessibility, visibility, and inclusivity so that underrepresented people can have a space to show their work to the greater community. I hope to represent women from different cultural backgrounds in exhibitions, highlighting the importance of equal and accurate representation. I have a passion for studying the historical artworks that are created by and associated with women—some of which have been burned, demolished, hidden, or forgotten.

**Keeley Wade**

My program of study is called "Legal and Social History" and is an interdisciplinary approach to the history of law and society. While most history programs focus almost exclusively on the content of the past, my program aims to be more forward in focus. By including the social sciences and other humanities in my study of the past, I hope to have a better grasp of the modern implications of the topics I study and to be able to include a greater variety of methodologies and perspectives.

Ultimately, my goal is to be a historian, but by crafting my own program of study through the College Scholars Program, I have been given the opportunity to view history through a greater number of perspectives.



Visit scholars.utk.edu to read each spotlight in full as well as other stories, updates, and news from the College Scholars Program.



College Scholars

Austin Peay Building 211
1404 Circle Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-1600

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 481
The Univ. of Tenn.
Knoxville, TN

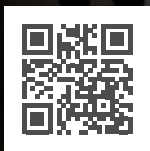
 scholars.utk.edu

 scholars@utk.edu

  FOLLOW US!

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status. A project for the College Scholars Program with assistance from the Office of Communications in the UT College of Arts and Sciences. E01-1002-012-003-24 JOB 24-100

Visit scholars.utk.edu to read our full newsletter including stories about a new board member, academic advising, a fresh lecture, and how we celebrated our 50th anniversary of the College Scholars Program at the University of Tennessee.



SUMMER / 2024

College **SCHOLARS**
newsletter