

## College Scholars Program Continues to Thrive

The past year and a half have been busy and productive for the College Scholars Program (CSP). We have established an alumni advisory board to work with the director to strengthen the program. Our website has been redesigned and now includes an on-line alumni directory. We have admitted twenty-six new students since January 2015 and twenty-two have graduated. Students in the CSP continue to prove that they are arguably the most talented and interesting students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. As usual, there were some truly amazing senior projects both in 2015 and 2016.

Because of the generosity of our alumni and friends, we can provide financial support to the scholars to pursue their individual academic goals. Scholarships for tuition and other expenses are important, but we can also provide support for senior projects, to allow travel to conferences to present their research or to learn things that are not part of the UT curriculum. Every year, it seems, more and more students are requesting financial support for travel to professional meetings where they will be presenting their research. This is a positive development, but it is straining the budget.

Another development is that more students are seeking internships to gain more practical experience. Sometimes these are paid, but more often the students are volunteers. A summer internship away from home can be transforming, but it can also be expensive. Every effort is made to provide financial help from the College Scholars Program.

Because of these new developments, the Alumni Advisory Board and I, with the help of the Arts and Sciences Development Office staff, will be talking to alumni about the financial needs of the program. When I meet with CSP alumni, they usually say that the College Scholars Program was what set the stage for their future careers. In my years as director,

I have seen how the scholars mature both personally and academically and they progress through the program. In taking command of their education, these young men and women blossom. They also quickly become fiercely loyal to the program.

Dean Alvin Nielsen and the founding director, Harry Jacobson, had a vision for a unique honors program at UT. I think they knew they were creating something special, but I don't know that they knew how special the program would become. I am proud and humbled to have become part of this remarkable endeavor.

-JEFFREY KOVAC, Director  
College Scholars Program



2015 graduates; Kenna Rewcastle, Rebecca DiGiovanna, and R.J. Vogt, present Professor Kovac with a class gift at the end of the award ceremony.

# Student Profiles

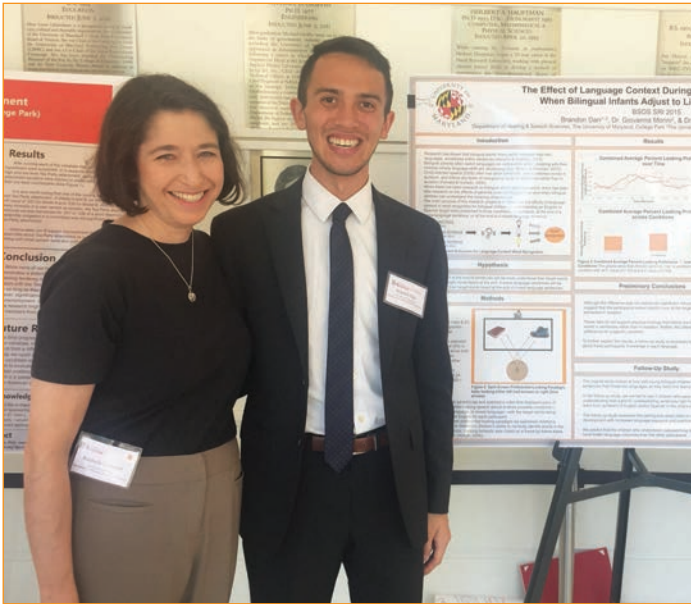
The College Scholars Program is a unique interdisciplinary honors program in the College of Arts and Sciences designed solely for highly motivated and academically talented students who have clear goals for their undergraduate education, and who cannot attain those goals within the traditional requirements structure of the college. The student profiles that follow showcase the breadth and scope of the talent, ingenuity, and creativity of these extraordinary students.



## DYLAN HAYWOOD

Graduating senior Dylan Haywood received the generous Dwight and Katie Wade Scholarship last spring to support her travel to Ireland during the summer of 2015. There, she worked as an intern for Le Chéile, a nonprofit organization developed in Ireland's criminal justice reform movement, offering mentoring and justice support services to youth offenders and their families. Dylan attended prison visitations, Young Persons Probation services meetings, and worked with the head manager of the only restorative justice project in Ireland. In addition, Dylan represented Le Chéile at the 2015 Annual Irish Criminal Justice Agencies Conference, where she spoke to members of Irish Parliament and the current Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald. She also had the opportunity to travel to the most serious conflict zones of Ireland, Germany, and Northern Ireland. Dylan has just completed her senior project on the linkages between mass incarceration and inequality in communities of color. In fall 2016 she will begin graduate studies in criminology at the University of Delaware.





## BRANDON DARR

At the University of Maryland (UMD), College Park, Brandon was a participant in the 2015 cohort of the Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS) Summer Research Initiative (SRI), a program that simulates graduate school research through an intensive eight-week research experience with multi-level mentoring and collaborating. He worked in UMD's Language Development and Perception Lab with Rochelle Newman, Chair of Hearing and Speech Sciences and Associate Director of the Language Science Center. Brandon was drawn to a study in Newman's lab focused on the effects of bilingual parents' codeswitching (alternating between two languages) with their infants, which have immediate implications for Brandon's larger research interest: how teachers can provide an inclusive classroom environment that simultaneously supports first language maintenance and English language acquisition. Through the SRI program, he analyzed preliminary data for the study and subsequently developed a follow-up assessment looking at language outcomes in bilingual children after more language exposure. In the future, Brandon hopes to apply what he learned about bilingual children to help teachers become more aware of language development differences in the classroom. In May Brandon moved to Bangkok, Thailand, to teach English to more than 250 fourth and fifth grade students at Mater Dei School, an all-girls Catholic school.

## ALINA CLAY

During the summer of 2015, Alina Clay was selected as a recipient of the 2015 Undergraduate Summer Research Internship funded by UT's Office of Research & Engagement to advance her senior project. Her research topic is a comparative analysis of subnational governments in Latin America and Eastern Europe to determine how decentralization affects women's political participation. She has devised three hypotheses that address issues of institutional political structure, representation, and participation. To refute or support these hypotheses, she will conduct an in-depth, over time country analysis of this topic in Peru and Russia.

This internship covered her stay in Lima, Peru for several weeks to acquire a more holistic understanding of Peru's complex social and political system, and to gain access to relevant data sources not available in the United States. She visited several universities and organizations that offered resources related to her senior project topic and made contacts with people experienced in her research interests.

Alina also had the opportunity to assist Jana Morgan, associate professor of political science at UT, with her field research on social inequality and political participation in Peru. Morgan's field research complements Alina's senior project, enriching her knowledge of her research interests and advancing research skills that are critical to her future academic and career goals. In addition to her research pursuits, Alina also had the opportunity to stay in a Spanish-speaking household and travel around Lima, both of which have solidified her Spanish proficiency and given her a more in-depth understanding of Peruvian culture.

During the summer of 2016 Alina will be a Pickering Undergraduate Foreign Affairs Fellow in Washington, DC.



# Student Profiles



## RJ VOGT

A College Scholars Program alumnus, RJ Vogt is the 2015 recipient of the Jeff Zaslow College Columnist Award of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists (NSNC) Education Foundation. RJ, writing for the campus newspaper *The Daily Beacon*, was chosen by best-selling novelist Michael Koryta, a former newspaper reporter.

"The best columnists are those who prioritize story over voice," Koryta writes in his judge's comments, "and RJ Vogt excels in this area. Vogt displays not only unusual writing talent, but also the ability to conceive of - and then execute - stories from a unique perspective. Rather than settle for the traditional point of view, he constantly seeks to find the best lens for the story, and then writes with subtle power."

Former NSNC President, Benjamin Pollock said of the winner: "Vogt takes the column craft seriously with appropriate reporting and finding unique angles. He blends a meditation on Martin Luther King Jr. with watching *Breaking Bad* star Bryan Cranston playing LBJ on stage, and meeting him afterward. Vogt in exploring a homeless camp sees residents burn a free weekly for fuel, noting the little newspaper just folded. He describes the house and routines of a disabled veteran so we come to know him, though Vogt doesn't name him."

RJ was unable to attend NSNC's annual conference—a perquisite of the first-place scholar with complementary registration, hotel and travel—because he moved to Yangon, Myanmar (Burma), to work as a reporter at the *Myanmar Times* as a Princeton in Asia Fellow for the 2015-2016 year. Vogt's main prize from the NSNC Education Foundation was \$1,000.

## TYLER HOUNSHELL

During the summer of 2015, Tyler Hounshell had the opportunity to research and study abroad in India through Columbia University's Summer Ecosystem Experiences for Undergraduates (SEE-U) Program. He was chiefly stationed in the state of Karnataka known for its natural beauty of the Western Ghats and its information technology sector located in Bangalore, its capital city. Through this program, Tyler studied poverty, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development in urban, rural, and remote mountainous locations – all with varying demographics.

For the first half of the trip, he took two classes: Conservation Biology of India and Field Methods in Ecology to satisfy the sustainable development portion of his major. The classes were taught in Bangalore with seminars given by researchers from the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), an environmental conservation non-governmental organization (NGO). For the second part of the program, Tyler traveled to Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve. There he studied local conservation initiatives in indigenous communities that share their backyards with wildlife and, yes, even Bengal Tigers.

The final part of the journey took place in Coorg, a rural area known for its coffee and ecotourism. Monsoon season was in full force by this time; it rained every day. While in Coorg, Tyler completed a research project in which he conducted a disaggregated cost-benefit analysis of Sai Sanctuary, a privately protected reserve, while incorporating its ecosystem services. He was able to produce an article and had the opportunity to present the results at ATREE.

Here are Tyler's reflections on his summer in India. "I can't really describe it, but the culture there is just different. This quote, from a friend I met, sums it up: "Happiness is not happy unless it's shared." I really miss the little things, too. For example, I'd be walking down the street and see a mosque on one block, a Hindu temple on the next, and a church on the next. Then I would see a Jain man tiptoeing on the sidewalk so not to step on the tiniest of insects. There, most people do not say "hey" every day like we do in America. They say it with their eyes, their smile, or a little shake of the head. There is just a vast amount of diversity and understanding and depth that I wish we possessed here in the United States. I felt like I only scratched the surface on my journey. Ultimately, I would like to go back to India before I graduate and continue my research in sustainable development."



“Happiness is not happy unless it's shared.”

-TYLER HOUNSHELL



# Student Profiles

*Two College Scholars share their life-changing experiences studying abroad in France and Jordan.*



**ALEX BRITO** *writes of her time in France during the summer of 2015.*

“ I could spend my entire life in Paris and not see all the City of Light has to offer. I made my third trip to Paris this summer – this time longer than the four weeks I had spent with my host family in high school – and made myself at home among the French. My purpose in Paris was two-fold. Firstly, I was there to participate in a summer program with Duke University, studying the neurohumanities, which I found to be one of the most interesting fields as it combines my love of French culture with my interest in the brain. Secondly, I was there to experience the language in an immersive context. My courses in Paris seamlessly wove aspects of French literature, art, and dance into complex neuroscience concepts. Taking a trip to the French countryside, we traced the footsteps of Van Gogh and Cezanne in two cities outside of Provence, examining their works of art and how they were represented

in the brain through the visual system. I even had the opportunity to present with my group at a conference in Paris on evidence of Marcel Proust’s neurological disorder as seen in pieces of his fiction writing. While I was able to see some amazing sites in Paris—the Catacombs, the Sacre Coeur, the Arc de Triomphe—my most cherished memories come from more intimate and habitual moments like getting to know the baker who sold me bread most mornings and staring out the window of the bus looking down the angular rows of grape vines as far as the eye can see. None of this would have been possible, however, without the funding I received from the College Scholars Program, and the encouragement to reach beyond traditional classroom experiences and to pinpoint my passion. ”

**JOSHUA BROWN** writes of his experience spending the summer of 2015 in Jordan which was supported by the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship.

“After departing the humid, temperate forests of Tennessee, I touched down in a distant land I had only studied through the accounts of others. My experiences in the country are best represented by a quote from King Hussein I who said, “Jordan has a strange, haunting beauty and a sense of timelessness. Dotted with the ruins of empires once great, it is the last resort of yesterday in the world of tomorrow.” While studying Arabic five hours a day, five days a week over nine weeks, the School for International Training (SIT) created an experience so each student could discover the country and its people. From the ruins of Petra, to the port of Aqaba, few words or pictures could illustrate the innate beauty that exists in Jordan; each face of her children bore an identity that was as ever changing as she. Because of this, SIT sought to ensure we experienced many opportunities and settings that would then reflect Jordan and her children.

Native Jordanian Bedouins, Syrian refugees, Palestinian nationalists, ex-patriots, and countless

more embodied what and who it was to be “a son or daughter of the state.”

We lived with Bedouins during Ramadan, celebrated Eid with our host families, and retraced the paths of the Silk Road atop the backs of camels like those that came before us. This was my Jordan.

My Jordan was found in the dishes prepared by our Bedouin families after hours of fasting during the height of Ramadan. My Jordan came to life in the conversations with taxi drivers as we crisscrossed Amman, going from home to class to downtown then back home (all to do it again the next day). My Jordan is one that is unique to my story, and one that I hope to add to the pages of our shared College Scholars Program book that houses our lineage, past and present. Now, looking back, it’s a bit easier to see the program’s success, especially atop an eight foot, Jordanian camel.”





# CollegeSCHOLARS Graduates



## 2015

**David Morse** was a recipient of both the Whitaker Fellowship and a Fulbright Scholarship to study at Cambridge University (in Homerton College) while completing a one-year Master of Philosophy degree in Engineering at the Nanoscience Centre. He will be working with Professors Mark Welland and Collin Watts on the tailoring of gold nanoparticles for cancer therapy.

**Kenna Rewcastle**, whose program of study within the College Scholars Program was entitled Ecosystem Ecology and Biogeochemistry, was named a Torchbearer. Kenna joins the list of at least thirty College Scholars Torchbearers. Kenna has received a Fulbright US Student Program grant to Sweden in Ecology from the US Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. She will be completing research at Lund University as part of a project to study the impacts of climate change on food sources for the reindeer herds controlled by the Sami indigenous people of Northern Sweden.

**Sarah O'Leary** will begin a six-month graphic design internship with the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in September 2016.

**Richard Prince** has entered graduate school in biomedical engineering at the University of California, Irvine.

## 2016

**Summer Ghasan Awad's** senior project, *Walls: A Play for Palestine*, has been accepted by the New York International Fringe Festival which will be held in August 12-28, 2016. Summer received the Artist of Change Award from Community Shares in April and was a finalist in the Henley Rose Playwriting Competition for Women.

**Ethan Roeder** has been accepted as an Acting Apprentice at the Great River Shakespeare Festival. He will spend thirteen weeks in Winona, Minnesota performing *Coriolanus*, as well as understudying in one of the other productions that summer and taking classes.

**Sahba Seddighi** has accepted an Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) Fellowship from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She will be working with Madhav Thambisetty, a neurologist who holds a Doctor of Medicine degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Johns Hopkins University. Thambisetty is Chief of the Clinical and Translational Neuroscience unit at the NIH/National Institute on Aging. His research focuses on Alzheimer's disease and incorporates both benchside and clinical research.

**Alana Stein** will be entering the graduate program in sociology at the University of California, Davis, in September 2016.





# Alumni Notes

**Mary Anne (Piene) Hitt ('97)**, along with her colleague, Bruce Niles, has been named to POLITICO 50 in 2015. POLITICO Magazine calls the list their "guide to the thinkers, doers and visionaries transforming American politics in 2015." Hitt and Niles were included for their leadership of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. Others on the list included Pope Francis, Joseph Stiglitz (Nobel laureate), Janet Yellen, Bernie Sanders, and Justice Anthony Kennedy. The honorees were recognized at a gala at the Kennedy Center

Profile link:  
[politico.com/magazine/politico50/2015/mary-anne-hitt-bruce-nilles](http://politico.com/magazine/politico50/2015/mary-anne-hitt-bruce-nilles).

You can learn more about the Beyond Clean Coal campaign at [content.sierraclub.org/coal/about-the-campaign](http://content.sierraclub.org/coal/about-the-campaign)

In April 2015, **John Rader ('08)** was appointed as Policy Analyst and Counsel on the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under Chairman Bob Corker (Republican, Tennessee). In this role, Rader's portfolio includes the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere policy, as well as advising the Chairman on terrorism and human rights issues, ambassadorial appointments, and judicial confirmations.

**Drew Holcomb ('03)** and his wife Ellie received the Alumni Promise Award in fall 2015. Drew Holcomb is the lead singer in the band, Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors.

**Kevin Burdette ('97)** has been nominated for a 2015 ArtImpulse Theater Award for his performance as Leporello in Mozart's Don Giovanni at the Boston Lyric Opera.

Garrison Keillor selected **Lisa Coffman's ('85)** poem "Everybody Made Soups" to read on *The Writer's Almanac* on Monday, January 18, 2016.

The audio can be found at [writersalmanac.org/episodes/20160118/](http://writersalmanac.org/episodes/20160118/)  
The poem was published in *Less Obvious Gods* (Iris Press, 2013)

**Clinton Elmore ('14)** received the Master of Science degree in communications in May 2016. His master's project, the documentary film, *Reaching Recovery*, was screened on WBIR on March 10, 2016.

The film can be viewed at [landgrantfilms.org/reaching/](http://landgrantfilms.org/reaching/)

Current Scholar **Hannah Marley** was one of the producers.

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## ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD

The College Scholars Program Alumni Advisory Board was formed in 2014. It has now met twice, in early December 2014 and 2015. The current members of the Board are:

**David Wilks Corban ('76)** Houston Texas  
**Clinton Elmore ('14)** Knoxville Tennessee  
**Paul Harrill ('94)** Knoxville, Tennessee  
**Kevin Jones ('95)** Richmond, Virginia  
**Suresh Karne ('88)** Huntsville, Alabama  
**Angela C. Kennedy ('85)** Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Board Chair)  
**Erin Schwie Langston ('00)** Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The board was formed to provide guidance to the director on ways to strengthen the College Scholars Program and to assist in development efforts. The first two meetings have been productive. Initiatives that have arisen from board discussions include: (1) development of the on-line alumni directory, (2) increased efforts to raise the profile of the College Scholars Program both on and off campus, (3) strengthened annual giving efforts, (4) increased use of social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), and (5) increased recognition of the efforts of faculty mentors. The next meeting of the Board will be in the fall of 2016.

# CollegeSCHOLARS

## On-line Alumni Directory and Social Media

The College Scholars Program website ([scholars.utk.edu](http://scholars.utk.edu)) has recently been updated and now includes an on-line alumni directory. Participants in this directory are able to search for information about other college scholars. The directory can be searched in a variety of ways including by name, by class year, and by profession. College Scholars Program alumni may provide information concerning ways they are willing to help the program.

For example, one can volunteer to serve as a mentor to a current scholar who might be interested in your particular profession.

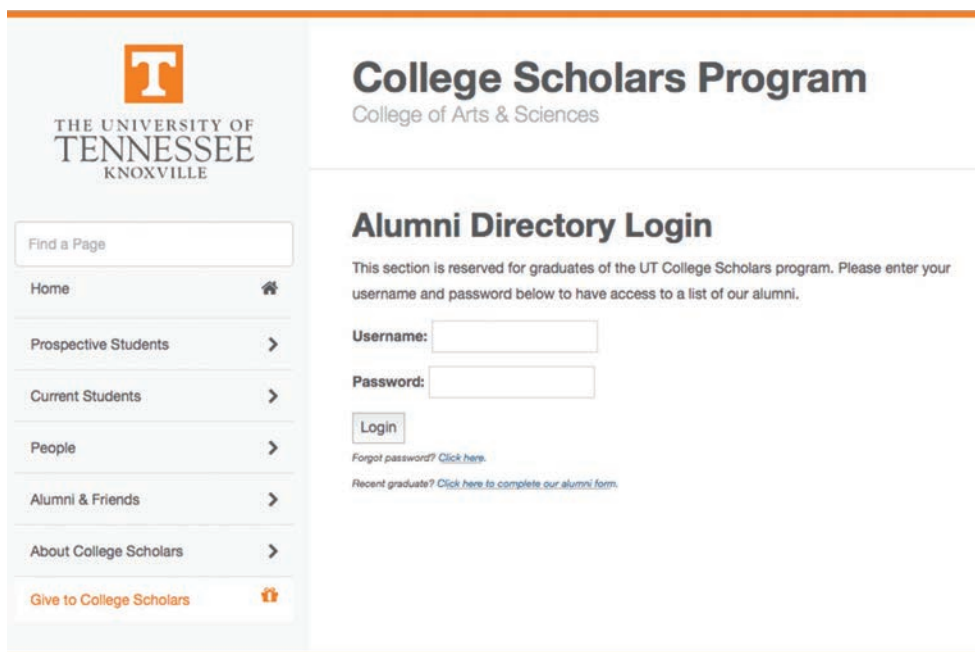
To participate, click on the “Alumni and Friends” link on the website. To register and enter your information, use the “Alumni Contact Information” link. Once registered, alumni and friends may use the directory by clicking on the “Alumni Directory” link.

The aim of this directory is to foster the development of a stronger community among alumni and to increase contact between alumni and students.

The College Scholars Program continues to expand its presence on social media. News about the activities of the program are regularly posted on our Facebook page which one can link to through our website.

We have maintained a closed LinkedIn group for several years. Anyone who is not part of this group and would like to join, may send an e-mail message to [scholars@utk.edu](mailto:scholars@utk.edu) to receive an invitation.

[scholars.utk.edu/login.php](http://scholars.utk.edu/login.php)



The screenshot shows the website interface for the College Scholars Program. On the left is a navigation menu with the University of Tennessee Knoxville logo and links for Home, Prospective Students, Current Students, People, Alumni & Friends, About College Scholars, and Give to College Scholars. The main content area is titled "College Scholars Program" and "College of Arts & Sciences". Below this is the "Alumni Directory Login" section, which includes a message: "This section is reserved for graduates of the UT College Scholars program. Please enter your username and password below to have access to a list of our alumni." There are input fields for "Username:" and "Password:", a "Login" button, and two links: "Forgot password? Click here." and "Recent graduate? Click here to complete our alumni form."



[facebook.com/University-of-Tennessee-College-Scholars-Program](https://facebook.com/University-of-Tennessee-College-Scholars-Program)

To receive a LinkedIn invitation, email: [scholars@utk.edu](mailto:scholars@utk.edu)





## Ensuring the Future of College Scholars

There are several ways to contribute financially to the College Scholars Program. Annual donations go into the College Scholars Excellence Fund, which is primarily used to support student projects. In recent years, funds from the Excellence Fund have been used to support student theatrical productions and art exhibitions, travel to conferences, and scientific research among other projects.



The easiest way to donate to the Excellence Fund is to visit our website, [scholars.utk.edu](https://scholars.utk.edu), and click on the “Give to College Scholars” link in the menu.

College Scholars Program alumni and friends have established several endowments over the years which are primarily used for student scholarships. As the cost of college increases, the need for scholarship funds also increases. There are other program needs and dreams that can benefit from the support of an endowment. For example, we would like to establish an endowment to support the annual visit of a distinguished interdisciplinary scholar who would interact with the scholars and also deliver a public lecture.

*If you have the means, consider establishing a new endowment, or contributing to an existing one.*

There are several ways to do this including an estate gift. For more information on how to establish an endowment, please contact: **Deloris Mabins, Director of Development**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
(865) 974-3816  
[dmabinsa@utfi.org](mailto:dmabinsa@utfi.org)



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[scholars.utk.edu](http://scholars.utk.edu)

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