

Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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Sophomore Social Justice Project: The Double Pandemic



Greg Estime '23 (bottom left) leads *The Double Pandemic*: a panel discussion on racial disparities in healthcare exposed by COVID-19, featuring Sasha DuBois (upper right), Nadia Abuelezam (upper left), and Josh Barocas (lower right)

By Chris Ficeto '24

This year's Sophomore Social Justice Project (SSJP), as was the case with most university activities this year, was very differently formatted from most other years, but was nonetheless remarkable. Seeing the wide disparities made apparent by the coronavirus, the GPSP Class of 2023 chose to explore the intersection of race and healthcare in the Boston Area in what they titled *The Double Pandemic*. The panel was hosted as a Zoom webinar, due to the number of increasing cases in the Boston area at the time of the event. They focused their project on how the pandemic overwhelmingly affected racial minorities in the Boston area and exacerbated the inequalities already rampant in American society before the pandemic.

"Planning the SSJP was a little daunting since we had free reign to do a project on

whatever issues mattered to us as a group and had to plan every detail from beginning to end," said Lauren Gillet, '23. "However, it was also extremely exciting because I've never had the opportunity to plan an event like this before that we could take complete ownership of and it also allowed our class to properly collaborate for the first time on something meaningful and influential."

With Gregori Estime '23, as moderator, the sophomore class hosted three health experts to discuss the causes, realities, and implications of the pandemic on minority groups in Boston: Professor Nadia Abuelezam, Sasha DuBois, M.S.N., R.N., and Professor Joshua Barocas. Professor Abuelezam teaches at the Connell School of Nursing as an epidemiologist, with an expertise in mitigating health inequities in vulnerable populations. Ms. DuBois is a nurse administrator, the President of the New England Regional Black Nurses As-

sociation, the Secretary of the National Black Nurses Association, and works as the Nurse Director of IV Therapy and Patient Care at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Professor Barocas is a Professor of Medicine at the Boston University School of Medicine and an Infectious Disease Physician at the Boston Medical Center.

Estime kicked off the discussion by asking panelists how they had become interested in racial disparities in healthcare. Abuelezam discussed how she was not fully satisfied working with HIV modeling, so instead pursued her interest in public health and healthcare concerning minorities, especially Arab-Americans, as she herself is a first-generation Arab-American. In her response, DuBois explained how she had witnessed racial disparities throughout her childhood and into the present, having attended Boston

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Class of 2022 Adapts to Virtual IPLP Summers

By Noah Kim '24

As a part of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program, rising juniors normally spend their summer abroad, immersing themselves in languages and cultures of their choice as part of the International Perspective and Language Program (IPLP). Even though this year's pandemic inevitably called off all travel plans for this summer, the scholars were still able to complete this rite of passage by working and studying remotely.

Lazaro Alvelaez, CSOM '22, enrolled in a Mandarin Chinese course through the University of California, Berkeley's East Asian Studies and Culture Program. The course aimed to develop beginning learners' linguistic competence, while also sensitizing them to the relationship between the language and Chinese culture. Classes took place over Zoom for twelve hours a week, with two additional weekly practicum sessions in which students could more

casually practice speaking the language.

He said, "Being a couple of months into the COVID-19 pandemic, it felt like the professors had more experience teaching in an online setting, and the class was taught very smoothly."

The intensive six-week course was demanding by nature, as it condensed a semester's worth of material into a short period of time. He said, "The structure and expectations of the program resembled those of most courses at BC in terms of assignments, exams, class participation, which meant that I could focus on the learning material with no surprises."

Having never been exposed to Mandarin in an academic setting, Alvelaez chose to take on the language because he views it as both interesting and useful. He said, "I wanted to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to really study something that would be practical and enjoyable. I defi-

nately see myself continuing to improve my mastery of it and making the most of what I started this past summer."

Other scholars pursued incredibly different languages. Robert Cerise, MCAS '22 attended an eight-week, online summer session offered by the Kathryn W. Davis School of Russian at Middlebury College. He enrolled in the school's Third-Year Russian program, which is designed to help students at the upper-intermediate level reach advanced proficiency (this is supposedly the hardest bridge to cross for Russian students).

In addition to attending small class meetings with an instructor, students interviewed guest speakers (in Russian) whose expertise covered the topic of the week—for example, a psychologist from Moscow was invited to discuss gender roles and the standard Russian familial structure—and

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Class of 2021 Continues Internships Amidst COVID-19

By Mercedes Hoyos '23

This past summer, the Class of 2021 navigated uncharted territory, with many internships quickly being moved to a remote setup or canceled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Still, the rising senior class managed to persevere and explore a wide range of career paths, from theatre education to public health research. Let's take a look at what some of them accomplished.

Jacob Kelleher '21, double majoring in Secondary Education and Mathematics and minoring in Theatre, interned at Bright Lights Theatre in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Bright Lights Theatre is a performing arts school that offers classes throughout the year in music, theatre, and dance to students of all ages and grade levels. Kelleher worked as Camp Director and Lead Educator for week-long summer camps, virtually teaching the fundamentals of musical theatre and acting. He completed ad-

ministrative work on a day-to-day basis, such as equipping the building to follow COVID-19 social distancing protocols and organizing costumes.

He said, "The Biggest take away I have is that I actually can be a theatre educator. Working with the students over the summer and teaching classes fully by myself, including designing curriculum, was a huge new challenge. But it ended up being really successful and I learned that not only can I do it but I really really enjoy it. It was a great way to get true hands on experience."

For the first time, Kelleher also had the opportunity to design a new theatre curriculum by himself. According to him, this internship was invaluable because he had to put his educational skills to the test and adapt effectively to give his students a creative

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Photo courtesy of Jacob Kelleher
Jacob Kelleher '21 works with kids as part of his summer internship

A Scholar's Perspective on COVID-19 in the Fall

By Paxton Decker '24

As a student of history, it always struck me as strange that, during times of enormous upheaval and chaos, people often went about their ordinary lives. When the Western Roman Empire finally collapsed in the fifth century, and the long crumbling Imperial superstructure imploded, many ordinary Romans couldn't care less. Sure, the Western Emperor was gone, but they were still Romans!

They had more important things to worry about: trade, love, food, poetry. I used to find it curious how people could possibly live through great epidemics, political upheavals, or crises and not be completely consumed by them every minute of every waking day. How weird and strange were they? And yet here I was. Masked, socially distanced, looking at the great barricades erected between me and the cafeteria food line, absent-mindedly thinking about my next assignment.

The pandemic has become the ever-present backdrop in my mind; rarely conscious, but always present. It's become mere second nature to mask-up before leaving my room, to stand on the obnoxiously bright strips of tape reminding me where each six feet is, and to unconsciously death-stare people whose masks sit below their nose, or God forbid, past their mouth to carefully



Photo by Paxton Decker '24

A group of GPSP freshmen adapt to the strict mask-wearing on Boston College's campus

protect their unshaved necks from Corona. When watching my Chinese textbook videos (just barely filmed in this millennium, by my estimation), I am routinely scandalized by the very idea of five people in one office room. How blatantly reckless!

The pandemic once again wacks me in the head, and I remember how strange this all is. It's a mark of my enormous privilege that a global pandemic's most in-

convenient thing for me so far has been a limit on room guests and one online class. Then I remember the fifth century Roman Aristocrat, who so leisurely waxed poetic about his favorite river villa, while the world burned around him. It's a little difficult not to worry about becoming that person, as I write my little article.

Those Roman aristocrats often benefited from the Empire's collapse, as there was no one left to demand taxes, and it's disturbing to see how directly that parallels today, with billionaires like Jeff Bezos gaining hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth during this pandemic while the majority of people are squeezed of whatever vestiges of economic dignity they had left. It's easy to feel like the entire fabric of our society is unraveling. The police have always been violent instruments of racism, American Capitalism has always been a broken game of vast economic exploitation, and power has always served the interests of the elites, but many of us have woken up to it. And it's all going to get worse.

Anyone who seriously wants to go "back to brunch" after a Biden victory has forgotten that these problems predate any individual, and the pandemic isn't going to stop disproportionality ravaging marginalized commu-



Photo by Paxton Decker '24

Members of the freshmen class live the COVID-19 life at BC, opting to go into Boston

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One Step Away: Class of 2021 Completes Final Internships

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outlet during a nation-wide lockdown. Moreover, he had worked at Bright Lights Theatre in his hometown since high school, so he found it highly rewarding to see how it had moved from the ground up since its first year when he served as an assistant.

Harry Shanmugam '21, a double major in Biology and Accounting for Finance and Consulting, was initially scheduled to intern at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in their Chicago office. In light

of the ongoing pandemic, the leading management consulting firm established its Social Impact Ambassadors program, which allowed Harry to work for a non-profit or public sector organization for the summer. He ended up at the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) in their Ryan White Services Division (RWSD). BPHC serves as the primary coordinator of health services for the City of Boston; within that, RWSD is the "grantee" for federal HIV funds under the Ryan White Part A act for the Boston eligible met-

ropolitan area. After confering with his team at RWSD, they all decided to construct a "Red Carpet Model" that uses rapid entry sites to remove operational barriers for newly diagnosed HIV patients to receive prompt medical care.

Shanmugam developed a work plan for this new venture, later sent for approval to HRSA and the CDC. He then spent the rest of his summer researching and conducting stakeholder interviews in preparation for the implementation. He also remained connected to BCG by networking with people of various tenure through affinity groups, social events, and case team meetings. Although his capacity to forge profoundly meaningful relationships felt somewhat restrained by the virtual environment, Shanmugam found it helpful to think within a "pandemic context." That is, he contemplated how to maximize his experience under the present circumstances by reaching out to new colleagues even without a real pretext for doing so. This human element and the social impact in his work made the summer

all the more memorable.

Jacob McErlean '21, majoring in Mathematics, interned remotely for ten weeks at the SMALL Undergraduate Research Project, supported in part by a National Science Foundation grant for Research Experiences for Undergraduates and the Bronfman Science Center of Williams College. In a group of seven undergraduate students advised by faculty member Colin Adams, McErlean investigated open research questions in mathematics. For example, he had the opportunity to explore the hyperbolic structure and geometry of knots.

He would regularly convene with his team to read relevant literature and find proofs for given problems successfully. From his internship experience, McErlean finally envisioned math research as a viable career path after college, given that his summer was so academically and professionally productive. Furthermore, he genuinely enjoyed the intellectual rigor and fast-paced, collaborative work environment that his job entailed.



Photo courtesy of Jacob Kelleher

Jacob Kelleher '21 leads theatre camp in Glen Ellyn, Illinois

A Scholar's Perspective on a COVID-19 Campus, Fall 2020

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-ities just because the President will no longer be an explicit racist. How could we possibly not be totally consumed by all of these problems?

Yet, many of us aren't. People still graduate, get married, retire, go grocery shopping, look at the moon, and smell flowers. Even during a pandemic. Human beings don't want to have to struggle against violent systems of oppression that force them down.

They want to live.

Privilege is getting to do that, when others can't. So I can easily waltz through Boston College, class to class, brunch to

brunch, thinking about the beautiful red tree I saw on the road, or the fantastic grilled cheese I had yesterday, and maybe even visit an art museum. Things are relatively normal. Strangely normal even. If you wanted to, you could forget anything was even happening. Play board games on the lawn, watch the Mandalorian in the lounge, study for that next big test.

But if you look at someone's face, and try to tell if they're smiling under that mask. If you realize you haven't been hugged in a while. If you see just how many homeless people there are in T-stations with benches built to make them uncomfortable. If you remember how many countries can't pay for basic health services during these times because Western banks demanded they cut their budgets to pay for

debts taken out under US-backed dictators. If you look a little closer, you know.

What is college during a pandemic like, you ask? It's almost exactly the same. You learn and read amazing new things. You form friendships. You have fun. Is it difficult to not be able to use your dorm for social hangouts? Sure. Is it worse having an online rather than an in-person class? Sure. But the hardest thing? Trying to mentally reconcile your right to enjoy and learn in college, and the fact that the world is burning around you. And unfortunately, that is almost exactly the same problem people have had for hundreds of years. Pandemics are not new. Injustice is not new.

Nothing about this is new.

SSJP 2020: The Double Pandemic

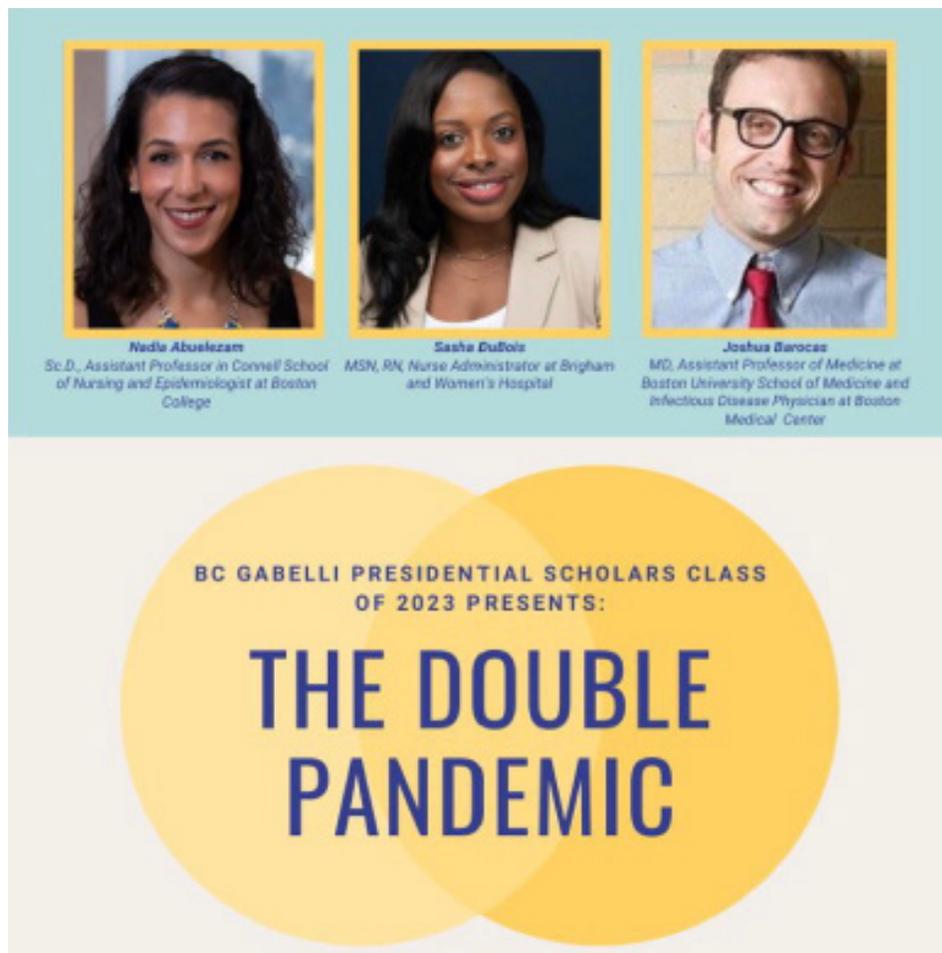
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Boston Public Schools and seeing how many of her friends had less access to supplies, to now, seeing how many minorities don't have access to adequate healthcare in the city. Barocas spoke of his revelation that he was a racist during his time at college, and his subsequent desire for action to try to combat racism in the United States. Each of the panelists gave heartfelt responses as to how they got into the work that they do today and gave some insight to the importance and significance of their work.

DuBois brought in the perspective of a hospital worker and talked about how she had seen the pandemic completely take over the hospital and change the lives of many frontline workers, which she called a frightening yet rewarding experience. She then spoke about how racial disparities were already present before the pandemic, but were definitely made worse because many poorer minorities could not afford to isolate themselves and did not have the same access to testing and preventative measures as wealthier communities.

Abuelezam spoke as a professor, an epidemiologist, and as herself, describing how she has been much more in contact with various media organizations about the spread of the virus and precautions people should take and how she, as a member of a tight knit ethnic immigrant community has seen the toll the pandemic has taken on the social structure and cohesion of not only her community but so many others like it. The conversation then moved to how the pandemic also expands existing inequalities by changing the very fabric of the lives of people who already have very little. DuBois pointed out how many poorer people, if laid off, will not be able to pay for things like rent, school tuition, food, etc. while wealthier people would still have a certain degree of security.

The first individual question went to Barocas about a recent article that he wrote on the other effects of COVID-19 that many do not pay attention to. He explained at length the statistics of the inadequacy of disadvantaged populations in cities across the nation when it came to protecting themselves against the coronavirus, pointing out that many of the homeless shelters in the



United States do not have enough space to accommodate their usual amount of people under new COVID-19 restrictions. He then explained that 20% of homes in the United States do not have enough space to adequately isolate the people that live there if someone were to get sick. These, he said, were all factors that contribute to the higher rates of coronavirus among disadvantaged communities. Both Abuelezam and DuBois expanded on the Barocas's answer by noting that many of these communities are disadvantaged in multiple ways, and that they are often forgotten by the mainstream media and the government when talking about the pandemic.

Estime's last question went to DuBois, who spoke about the role of implicit biases in healthcare. She explained that everyone has biases, and that knowing those biases and learning from them helps people to avoid mistakes when caring for their patients and carrying out their crucial work on a daily basis. She emphasized the need for discussion about biases, racial inequities, and systemic racism in

healthcare so nurses, physicians, and all healthcare workers alike would be able to give the most effective, efficient, and equitable care to all patients possible.

Reflecting on his experience of moderating the panel, Estime said, "Moderating the panel was a very eye-opening experience. It was great to hear an accumulation of many different ideas and have a progressive discussion on how to diminish racism in our healthcare system."

Overall, this year's SSJP facilitated an important and insightful conversation that allowed the audience to learn a lot of new information about racial disparities in healthcare and find out what really is happening behind the scenes of the pandemic. The questions were thorough, thoughtful, and elaborate to help give the audience a better overall understanding of the intersection between racism and healthcare; a topic which few talk about, but has a massive impact on millions of people around the country.

International Perspective and Language Program, From Home

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routinely completed oral, improvisational projects. “Our projects would require us to play different roles related to weekly topics,” said Cerise. “One week, I’d pretend to be a lawyer defending my client in criminal court; the next, I’d be a museum curator reflecting on the deeper meaning of select pieces of art in an exhibit.”

The course concluded with a series of final exams and an Oral Proficiency Interview, which served to measure the progress students made over the summer. Apart from these tasks, Cerise enjoyed taking advantage of the host of Russian-related co-curricular activities offered when classes were not in session. “I thought it was a kick to take yoga lessons in Russian,” he said.

He believes that this epiphany inspired by his time in Russia prepared him for the higher-level course that he took this summer: “I’m less concerned with saying the right thing perfectly and more focused on getting my point across in any way that I can, even if that means I’m sometimes speaking broken Russian and playing charades to make myself understood.”

Although it is customary for the scholars to focus on developing their command of another language during their sophomore summers, Jenna Mu, MCAS ’21, saw this time as an opportunity to take up an internship—which would normally be done after the scholars’ junior years—that suited her interests, and she instead intends to work toward language acquisition next summer. As a research intern in the lab of Dr. Jian Zuo at the Creighton University School of Medicine, she investigated hearing loss linked to cisplatin, a common cancer medication.

Mu conducted research on the weekdays through July and August, with additional meetings taking place over Zoom. “I conducted comprehensive literature searches, as well as summarized past and current studies in the field. I also conducted data analyses, with an emphasis on pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic data, which revolve around physiological and cellular pathways in the body,” she said. She also reported periodically to a chemist who served as her mentor, asking him questions and updating him on her research. At the end of the summer, she pre-

sented her findings to the entire lab—and to researchers from other labs—and received feedback from experts in the field.

Having performed research in high school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Mu appreciated the chance to explore a new subject with more experience under her belt. She said, “It was really neat to come back to research in Nebraska a few years later, after I had learned so much from classes at Boston College, and apply what I had learned. I view research as an exciting journey where there’s always more to learn—and experiences like this past summer allow me to constantly improve my skills.”

What made this experience all the more valuable was the fact that her work could better the lives of others. “Hearing loss is a widespread, yet underestimated, public health issue,” she said. “Boston College has really nurtured my desire to be a woman for others, and it was really gratifying to learn more about science while simultaneously making a positive difference in the field of public health.”

A Dover Retreat like None Other

By *Ben Siegel* ’23

At the heart of the Gabelli Presidential Scholar Program are the ideas of solidarity and community. Upon entering the new environment of Boston College, it can be difficult for the freshmen to feel a sense of camaraderie with the other members of the program, making the Dover Retreat an essential part of GPSP. This retreat serves as the starting point of an exciting four years filled with unforgettable opportunities and experiences.

Normally, the retreat begins with a bus ride to The Connors Center in Dover, Massachusetts, where the Scholars build upon their sense of community for the weekend. However, due to COVID-19, the majority of the retreat was moved to Boston College and Zoom. While the format may have changed, the impact was just as profound. The excitement continues to brew further as Maddie Bald and Austin Kim host a conversation about life after Boston College and the GPSP with alumni Ma-

rianna Marandola ’16 and Jesse Mu ’17.

Now that proper introductions have been made, the Scholars are broken up into small discussion groups led by the seniors. Here, the freshmen ask questions and listen as the upperclassmen share advice and relate their BC experiences. This year, conversations still revolve around similar topics, though with one notable addition: COVID-19.

Kenny Dao ’24 said, “Although the retreat wasn’t what I expected for this unprecedented year, seeing all the smiling, welcoming faces on Zoom reminded me why I chose the program and Boston College.”

In prior retreats, the focus of these small group conversations was geared toward the freshmen. This year, however, all of the Presidential Scholars benefit from listening to the perspectives and advice of their peers, regardless of class year, since the problems introduced by COVID-19 are new to everyone.

Sunday morning begins with an overview of the events and expectations to be had in the coming year. Half an hour later, the rest of the Scholars eagerly return to their dorms and join Zoom, awaiting the presentation. This year, the sophomore class focuses on the social inequalities in health care as exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this impressive presentation, scholars throughout the program pitch any and all clubs and opportunities they feel their fellow Scholars will enjoy.

Peter Pinto ’22 said, “I was so happy to still have our retreat online this year. Although it wasn’t what we are used to, obviously, we all really appreciated it. It’s an event that we all look forward to each year just to connect and catch up. Jennie, Sarah, and Kathy really are the best.”

Just before noon, another successful retreat wraps up as Kathy, Jennie, Sarah and Scholars alike share their excitement for what looks to shape out as another wonderful, yet unprecedented year.

The COVID-19 Life as a Presidential Scholar, Winter 2021

By Caroline Bald '23

Life on campus has changed a lot in the past year. The pandemic has taken a toll on many different aspects of student life, and activities normally experienced through the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program experienced change as well. Even though the pandemic unfortunately cancelled travel plans, including the sophomore class's Italy, Pulse, and Costa Rica trips and the junior class's language summer, BC life during COVID-19 has slowly started to show faint signs of normalcy.

Maddie Bald, MCAS '21, discussed finding an internship during the upheaval of last summer with the help of the GPSP. She mentioned that "it was definitely hard over the summer, but I was able to take an unpaid internship over the summer because of the Program which was really helpful." The internship was through Global Medical Aid Institution in which she developed a plan for a diabetes clinic in India and shadowed physicians in Costa Rica, which was



Photo by Neha Suneja
Neha Suneja '23 and Mercedes Hoyos '23
get some relief from BC's COVID Campus

"very feasible under the virtual setting."

As a senior, she also touched on the hardship of meeting younger classes in the program, especially when everything is virtual. She stated, "I think that's been the real issue. You don't really get to know [freshmen] at all, and even if you see them later you might not recognize them later because of masks... I don't know if I could say I know any of the freshmen, and that doesn't impact me all that much, but I know that if I were a freshman that would impact me."

Maddie also touched on how different her last two years of college have been from what she expected. She mentioned that "BC hasn't really done anything to make up for the lack of social experience this semester," but that through P-scholars, "seniors have still been able to do senior discernment which has been really nice. We've been able to have a really relaxed time together, mostly because of Professor Bailey who's been really great."

Mikayla Quintana, MCAS '24, talked about life as a freshman at BC and how the pandemic has "definitely impacted every aspect of college." She mentioned she is grateful for the connections she has made in her classes like Perspectives I, but acknowledged that "getting used to the pace of college, especially through a screen, has been hard" and that it "takes a lot more effort" to get to know people since everything feels disconnected.

She sees her class year of Scholars every week, has classes and rooms with some, and so is very close with her Scholar community. Mikayla brought up how nice it was to have "a small group of familiar faces [she] already knew coming into the school year," especially since the class of 2024 had a virtual orientation and have had limited opportunities to meet people.

She also mentioned how Freshman Conversations, an initiative started in the Fall of 2020 in which freshmen meet weekly with a group of upperclassmen Scholars to debrief, give advice, and foster relationships, has been a great outlet. She said, "It's been nice to have upperclassmen to reach out to for advice through GroupMe, but it is hard when we have not seen any of them in person."

Molly Binder, Lynch '23, talked about how she has taken advantage of her free time this year. Molly said, "Social life has changed a lot, but it has been good in forcing me to step outside the BC bubble more often by exploring the city and state more." She mentioned how it has been "harder with clubs and social organizations because that's a big part of who you meet at BC, now it feels more like an obligation." However, she has "been able to be involved in more things" since it is easier to parse out free time now, and being on campus has allowed her to have that social interaction of just running into people in the dining halls or on the way to classes.

Molly also mentioned how COVID has given her an opportunity to dive into self-care. She stated that she can "devote more time to relaxing and exercising as a stress reliever" the past two semesters. Although this year has been tough, she acknowledges that it has been better than being at home or than it was in quarantine.

In terms of the P-Scholars, Molly said that it "obviously is not the same as meeting in person because you don't get the same amount of banter or social interaction as normal." Although being virtual has been a challenge for the social part of GPSP, Molly mentioned that "Kathy, Jennie, and Sarah have been really good about making our Tuesday meetings exciting with trivia and engaging speakers." Additionally, having alumni networking sessions was a "silver lining" of the pandemic as there were two Tuesday meetings set aside for meeting past P-Scholars that doesn't normally happen in a regular semester.

Molly also touched on the closeness between grades, how "Zoom meetings are a challenge for the social part of the program and that the 2020 summer was a big opportunity for the sophomore grade to get to know each other, so that was definitely a challenge having everything cancelled." In terms of meeting other grades, Molly said that it has "definitely been harder to get close to freshmen" especially having that experience freshman year: "For me, it was really nice in the beginning to feel welcomed by other grades and I think it's just been hard for us to provide that for the freshmen."

A Virtual Take on Prospie Weekend 2021



Members of the GPSP program conduct a mock seminar with a group of prospective Presidential Scholars for the Class of 2025.

By Mikayla Quintana '24

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of the college selection process from touring schools, interacting with current students, visiting classes, and interviewing with college admissions officers. The Gabelli Presidential Scholar (GPSP) selection process this year was no exception. The entirely virtual event took place between Monday, March 15th and Friday, March 19th, consisting of Zoom interviews with faculty and admission officers, mock seminars, group conversations led by current upperclassmen Scholars, a trivia night, and an alumni panel.

Harry Shanmugam, CSOM '21, who has been heavily involved in the selection process in the past few years, led one of the group conversations this year. When asked about how the selection process went compared to previous years, Harry said the limited interactions among the prospies made it more challenging for them to bond. Normally, prospies would have many opportunities to interact with current scholars as well as each other to get a sense for the Presidential Scholar community. This year, Harry described how the group

conversations acted as a platform for casual conversations between the prospies: "I was able to get to know my group on a more personal level and hear about what they were passionate about intellectually."

Harry is going to serve as one of the co-leaders for a Zoom meeting series in April that aims to provide the prospies with a platform to ask questions and another chance for them to connect with current Scholars and each other. When asked about goals for getting in touch with the prospective students, Harry explained he hopes through the Zoom calls he can help "expose them to the social aspect of GPSP and Boston College" as much as possible before they make their college decisions.

These sentiments were echoed by Lazaro Alvelaez, CSOM '22, who also led one of the group conversations during the week. He enjoyed that current Scholars participated more in the process and were able to interact with prospies outside of the ones they hosted, but he also acknowledged that it was difficult for him to fully connect with his prospie as much as previous years. He said, "I normally form close relationships

with my prospies and was able to check in about how the selection process is going and find out what they are interested in, but the lack of a shared space definitely limited our interactions this year." Going forward, Lazaro plans to continue his relationships with his prospies to ensure they are still connected to the community when making their college decisions.

Caroline Bald, MCAS '23, helped plan the trivia night and virtually hosted a prospective Scholar. She explained that "it was definitely harder to incorporate the social aspect of the weekend because you usually can just casually form relationships, but now we had to take into consideration how to divide people up into breakout rooms and how to create community in a completely online platform." She still connected with her prospie and even sent her campus videos so she could virtually tour the school. She said, "Even though it was a different format this year, I still think it was a really good idea to pair up current presidential scholars and prospies. I texted my prospie the week leading up to the selection week, so I was still able to connect, even if it wasn't as strong as previous years."

Paxton Decker, MCAS '24, also spoke about his experience of being a host this year after just going through the process last year: "Having an online selection process was obviously less than ideal, and I was certainly worried that we would not be able to truly get a sense of prospective Scholars and give them a sense of BC and the program in that way. I think overall we were able to overcome these challenges as best as we could, and make the best out of the situation." Even though it was virtual this year, Paxton explained that he was still able to connect with his prospie by meeting over Zoom and talking about their interests. Even though his involvement this year was limited, he still enjoyed the process and is looking forward to hopefully hosting in the years to come.

Although this year's selection process was anything but normal, everyone in the Scholar community collectively came together to make the selection process a success. Going into April, scholars plan to reach out to the accepted students in order to continue connections and help the students with their college decision process.

Alumni Announcements

Sean Flahaven '95 received a Tony Award nomination for Best Musical as a producer of Jagged Little Pill; he won a Tony in 2019 as a producer of Best Musical, Hadestown. In November, he received a Grammy Award nomination for Best Musical Theater Album as producer of Amelie (Original London Cast Recording). This is his 13th nominated album; he won a Grammy in 2016 as a producer of the cast recording of Hamilton. This past April, he was named Chief Theatricals Executive of Concord, the fifth largest music company in the world

Sarah Pitlyk '99 was sworn in as a district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Mary Lou Bozza '03 and husband Gary Wang welcomed their son, Luke Hanyi-Bozza Wang on January 27th.

Marisol Orihuela '03 husband Mark Roland welcomed their daughter, Lorabela Sol Roland, on March 2nd.

James Pustejovsky '03 joined the faculty of UW Madison, where I am now a tenured, associate professor in the School of Education

Joe Halli '05 and his wife Kate Kreinbring welcomed their second son, William David Halli, into the world on September 30th. His big brother James is in love with the new addition

Jonathan Pike '10 is Senior Director of Business Development and one of the 6 founding employees of a new company called Earthrise Energy, a company that will own, operate, modernize and develop power generation assets across the US, with the long-term goal of accelerating the decarbonization of the power sector

Lindsey Hennawi '11 married Em Kianka on November 7th, 2020

Frank DiRenno '15 started his psychiatry residency at Montefiore Medical Center

Catherine Larrabee '16 received the Carol Van Scoyoc Fellowship for Local and State Government Law from the New York State Bar Association

Austin Bodetti '18 received a Fulbright grant to conduct research in Morocco

GPSP Alumni:



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