

# Ex Libris

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

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## Dr. Ari Daniel Shapiro '01 Speaks at GPSP Selection Weekend



*By Cole Tamburri '20*

After a meal with friends and new faces, attendees of the Welcome Dinner during the GPSP selection process weekend were greeted with a voice that seemed familiar to many, even if the speaker himself was unrecognized. Dr. Ari Daniel Shapiro, GPSP '01 and Digital Producer and Independent Science Reporter at PBS NOVA, told a story which prospective, current, and former students saw reflected in their own memories. He reflected on the college visits which ultimately led him to apply to Boston College and the Presidential Scholars Program; told tales of an inspiring philosophy professor and a Blue Man Group show during his own discovery weekend; and enlightened the audience with his memory of the heart and intellect which he perceived at BC - the aspects of the school which ultimately led him to choose Chestnut Hill over an offer to enter the Ivy League. It was the Presidential Scholars Program which made his decision clear.

In the ensuing years, Dr. Daniel developed relationships with his professors and peers which the members of the audience could relate to - these mentors served as pa-

rental figures as well as professional aides, and provided guidance during the trials and tribulations of uprooting himself and finding a home at BC. He reflected on his time working at Haley House and Suffolk County, service placements which current scholars still fill during the PULSE program.

The lasting friendships he gained through trips to France and Costa Rica, the identity he gained through his leadership role in Hillel International, a Jewish student organization, and the discernment process associated with his Biology major and Mathematics minor all formed the man he was to become. This gave graduates of the program the opportunity to reflect on their own, similar experiences; provided current students with perspective into their own journeys; and allowed perspectives a glimpse into their future.

After a Fulbright, a Ph.D. at MIT, and a career shift into science communication and journalism, Dr. Daniel then continued to follow his circuitous route through freelance journalism and, finally, his position at NOVA. It is through this portion of his life that students (even those who rarely listen to the radio nowadays) might have remem-

bered his voice. It was enlightening and inspiring to discover how this high-profile public figure shared many of the same experiences as the students in the audience.

One rarely recognizes that one is listening to a great storyteller until, after the speaker has finished, it becomes obvious how the audience members have become rapt in his words, finding parallels in their own lives. A great storyteller is as inspiring as he is interesting and informative, and it would be difficult to find a member of the room that night who did not identify with some aspect of Dr. Daniel's unique, yet universally applicable, personal story. Gifted with the opportunity to do great things, Dr. Daniel followed his passion with the help of mentors, friends, and the Program at large.

For some, his words may have been comforting and empathetic in a trying time; for others, perhaps they invited nostalgia. For all, however, it was a delight to hear the tale of a man for others, one who embodies the very essence of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program.

# Class of 2022 Travels to Costa Rica

By Josh Fording '22  
&  
Dan Ulanovsky '22

In early January, the Class of 2022, along with Prof. Bailey and Fr. Keenan, began the new decade together in San José, Costa Rica, where they learned about the country's history, politics, and socioeconomic development. In the past, GPSP sophomores visited Nicaragua; starting last year, however, this became impossible due to the country's unstable political situation. GPSP therefore worked to develop a similar program in Costa Rica, which the Class of 2021 experienced first last year.

Costa Rica made sense as an alternate destination, both because it is a fascinating case study in development and because it has been a popular destination for Nicaraguan migrants since the days of the brutal Somoza dictatorship during the mid-20th century. In this way, we hoped to maintain our connection to Nicaragua in its time of crisis. Elisa "Eli" Vanegas, a Nicaraguan professor of political science, was the GPSP's guide in Nicaragua, and fortunately she was able to reprise her role and guide us in Costa Rica. She was joined by Montserrat López, a Costa Rican environmentalist, educator, and graphic designer. We arrived in San José on January 3 and were greeted at the airport by Eli and Montserrat.

Our first morning began with somber realities. First, we met with Madeline Caracas to learn about the crisis in Nicaragua. Caracas is a political refugee in Costa Rica; she was forced to leave Nicaragua because she was one of the university students at



Scholars take a moment to pose for a photo in front of the National Museum of Costa Rica

the root of the protests. Although she was able to leave in time, many of her friends were taken as political prisoners and tortured. Caracas told us about her personal experience as a protestor and, later, as a global advocate for the Nicaraguan people. Speaking to her illuminated the severity of the situation like nothing else could. After this meeting, Prof. Carmen Hutchinson, a historian, told us about the history of Afro-descendants in Costa Rica, which deepened our understanding of the history of race and racism in the wake of Spanish colonialism. That afternoon, Natalia Fernández, an artist and historian, gave us a guided tour of the historic district of San José, including the National Museum, the National Theatre, and a popular marketplace.

On Sunday, we enjoyed a more touristic day, visiting the Poás Volcano and the Doka Estate, a coffee plantation where all the coffee drinkers stocked up on their favorite roasts. On Monday, our learning resumed

with a lecture at the National University of Costa Rica from a political science and sociology professor, Prof. Cynthia Mora, about the state of migration to and through Costa Rica. Prof. Mora explained to us how, as a "bridge country," Costa Rica deals with the influx (and efflux) of Nicaraguan, Cuban, Haitian, and West African migrants. Next, we met with Johnny Rosales, an environmentalist who told us about issues of conservation and climate change in Costa Rica. Then, one of the leaders of the Women's Network for Development described the organization's work, which connects women in base communities across South America to help them communicate information and experience about small business ownership and economic empowerment. Finally, we received a hospitable tour of the Catholic University of Costa Rica, where we learned about their work creating a new sociological index to rate countries according to their compliance with ethical, social, and sustainability standards presented in Pope Francis's famous encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

On Tuesday, we learned more about the current political and economic situation of Costa Rica from José Rojas, a political scientist. Dr. Alejandro Madrigal of the Medical Association of Costa Rica then told us about the Costa Rican healthcare system, including how the public healthcare sector differs from the private one, making us think critically and comparatively about the American healthcare model. Finally, in one of the most memorable meetings of the trip, we travelled to the neighboring



Photo by Professor Bailey

Jack Manoog '22 gives a piggy-back ride to his new best friend

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# Congratulations to the GPSP Class of 2020!



Photo by Just9in Knight

**Seated (Left to Right): Trevor Jones, Shaye Carver, Jaq Pyle, Carly Sullivan, Sergio Farina, Leena Rijhwani, Luke Murphy**  
**Standing (Left to Right): Evey Satterfield, Cole Tamburri, Sarah Santoro, Kate Peaquin, Megan Reynolds, Kevin Xia, Tim Morrissey**

## Changes within GPSP



Photo courtesy of BC PR



Photo courtesy of BC PR

After the 2019-2020 school year, Jim Keenan decided to step down as Co-Director of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program. However, Jim has not left Boston College whatsoever, and he now serves Boston College as its Vice Provost for Global Engagement. Kathy Bailey, previously Co-Director of the program with Jim, is now the sole director of the Program. Jim's contributions to and formation of GPSP will not go unnoticed. Through countless hours of time and energy, his dedication to the Program and his generosity gave all Presidential Scholars the opportunity to succeed at Boston College and grow into loving and caring human beings in the process. The Program is forever indebted to him, and it will not be the same without him.

# SSJP 2022: Wrongfully Convicted. Rightfully Free.



The panelists of “Wrongfully Convicted. Rightfully Free.” discuss the issue of wrongful conviction as part of the SSJP Fall Event

By Aidan O’Neill ’23

One of the hallmarks of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program is the annual Sophomore Social Justice Project, in which sophomore scholars collaborate on a project that raises awareness for a particular social justice related cause. The project emphasizes the University’s Jesuit values and also reminds Scholars that a critical aspect of their role as Presidential Scholars is to use the privileges and opportunities they are afforded for the betterment of others. The Class of 2022, inspired by Bryan Stevenson’s bestseller *Just Mercy*, which they read during their PULSE placements last summer, has elected to work together to raise awareness for the ongoing plight of wrongful conviction in the criminal justice system in the United States.

After months of work and planning that began with a presentation to the scholars at the Dover Retreat in August 2019, the sophomores

presented the first phase of their social justice project on Tuesday, October 29. Students, faculty, and community stakeholders gathered to hear a panel discussion titled “Wrongfully Convicted. Rightfully Free.” The sophomores assembled an impressive group of panelists who represented diverse areas of interest and expertise in the field of law and criminal justice: Rashaan D. Hall, Director of Racial Justice at the ACLU of Massachusetts; Charlotte Whitmore, a professor at BC Law working within the Boston College Innocence Project; and Stephanie Hartung, a Northeastern University law professor and a member of the board at the New England Innocence Project. The discussion was moderated by Sharon Beckman, a professor at BC Law as well as the director of the Boston College Innocence Project.

The panel began with a visual demonstration led by Ellana Lawrence ’22 in which audience members were asked to stand up based on the cards they had been given before the

panel began, illustrating in a tangible way many statistics related to the exonerated community. Most strikingly, large proportions of the audience stood up to show that wrongful conviction disproportionately affects people of color, and that many cases of wrongful conviction actually involve a guilty plea by the defendant. In her introduction to the panel, Prof. Beckman highlighted statistics of the issue as well: 2,507 people have been exonerated from felonies, and they wrongfully served 22,094 years in prison. Additionally, Beckman highlighted that the issue of wrongful conviction intersects with other areas of oppression, as the majority of those exonerated are women and Black people being 17 times more likely to be wrongfully convicted of murder than their white counterparts.

Each of the panelists spent time describing their backstory and important work on the issue of wrongful conviction, but also chose to highlight different areas of the issue at hand. Prof. Hartung talked about her work in challenging the structure of the legal system as it stands. She discussed one of the most powerful limitations to exonerating the wrongfully convicted as “Finality in the law,” or, as she put it, the fact that “courts want to uphold what happened” over finding justice. Hartung discussed some of the ways she pushes back against this, including writing amicus briefs to courts in order to set (and in certain cases overturn) powerful precedents to help exonerate the wrongfully convicted and challenging the validity of eyewitness testimony. She also emphasized the immediacy of this issue, highlighting that it happens not just far away in the deep South, but also here in Massachusetts.

Prof. Whitmore, who was recently a leader in a high profile case spearheaded by the Boston College Innocence Project that resulted in the

see *SSJP 2020* page 6



The GPSP Class of 2022 gets together after their successful SSJP Fall Event

# Abroad Interrupted: Class of 2021 Sent Home Early

By Neha Suneja '23

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the lives of many, and several members of the GPSP Class of 2020 experienced its effects when they realized that they would have to abruptly return home from their semester abroad. The experience of studying abroad is one that many dream of, allowing students to step outside the comfort they developed at Boston College and to explore a new setting. That this experience was cut short, and the realization that one could not return to it the way many on-campus students would return to Boston College, was uniquely disheartening.

Anna-Maria Costantini '21, who was studying abroad at Oxford University's Mansfield College for the full year, described that she was walking with a friend after getting afternoon coffee when she truly realized she had to leave.

She said that she and her friend had "spent an hour convincing each other that—despite BC already emailing everyone requiring we return—we would spend the days before OIP's return deadline finding a way to stay. Whether it meant signing a waiver or faking flight bookings to trick OIP, we were committed to making it work. On my way to the college library, I received a news alert on my phone detailing Pence's announcement that the US was adding the UK to the list of countries it wouldn't accept travelers from."

Costantini's seemingly hectic experience nearly resembles everyone's thoughts at the time. Confused about the pandemic and confused about what the future holds. However, this confusion could not set in as



Photo Courtesy of Sara Samir '21

Sara Samir '21 admires the endless Australian coastline

Costantini had to be sure to not be trapped in a foreign country for the months-long quarantine that was about to take place.

She said, "A phone call from my parents soon revealed that my hometown airport was receiving its last flight from London the following day (and after that, the closest airport receiving American citizens coming from the UK was over a 5-hour drive away), and within an hour, I had a ticket to go home the next morning. It all happened so fast."

This sentiment was echoed by Sara Samir, who was studying at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. At the time Boston College announced that all study abroad programs would be canceled, the incidence of COVID-19 cases in Australia were relatively low, and she therefore did not find it terribly difficult to get home. However, the experience of such a far looming, abstract threat which caused such abrupt change was surreal.

She said, "The hardest part of the whole situation was definitely having to say goodbye to all of my roommates and new friends that I made there, especially because I was the first person to leave."

Furthermore, many missed out on many experiences that they were looking forward to. Costantini, for example, was eagerly anticipating an 8-week break during which she planned to travel Europe, but could not. Samir also couldn't go to the Great Barrier Reef or to New Zealand, which she had been looking forward to. However, both were deeply grateful for the time they did have in these unfamiliar places, and Samir wrote that while she wishes she had more time there, "I'll definitely be back."



Photo Courtesy of Anna Costantini '21

Anna Costantini '21 goes sightseeing in England before getting sent home

# Class of 2022's Costa Rican Adventures

*from Costa Rica page 2*

province of Cartago to meet Natalia Astuahaca, a feminist lesbian artist, former journalist, and advocate for the queer community in Costa Rica. We gathered in her living room, surrounded by enormous and colorful paintings, where she gave us her honest and passionate opinions about the state of human rights in Costa Rica.

We spent our last day in Costa Rica visiting La Carpio, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Costa Rica, where many Nicaraguan refugees have ended up over the last thirty to forty years. Humberto Meza and Alba Luz, both Nicaraguan émigrés and original residents of La Carpio, spoke

with us about the growth of their community from a modified refugee camp near a dumpster to a functioning neighborhood with an elementary school, water and electricity, and public transportation. We toured the facilities of an after-school program called SIFÁIS, where children of all ages in La Carpio can access music lessons, athletics, English and math help, as well as experience with computers.

Their facilities were newly built and beautiful: their classrooms are in a four-story wooden structure with gaps opening to the outside to let the air in, providing a view of the smaller residences that surround it, as well as of the cement plant, which together with the dumpster makes

the air in La Carpio a severe health hazard to its residents. Fortunately, the dumpster is set to shut down next year. After this tour, we returned to Humberto and Alba's home, where they fed us a delicious home-cooked Nicaraguan meal, thus finishing off our final day in San José.

On our last evening in the city, we went out to dinner with some Costa Rican artists at a vegan restaurant founded by the first and only legally married lesbian couple in Costa Rica; they were able to wed because one of their identification cards was erroneously labeled "male." Our guide Montserrat introduced us to a number of her artist and musician friends, who showed us their beautiful art and performed their music. Our trip to Costa Rica left us with perhaps more questions than answers, not only about the political and social issues facing Costa Rica and Nicaragua, but also about the role of the United States in these situations and about what we can learn from Costa Rica. We are all very grateful to Eli and Montse, who were warm and friendly and became more like friends than simply tour guides. Our knowledge about the development of Costa Rica and the crisis in Nicaragua gives us a new sense of perspective on both Central America and the United States, and it will influence our understanding of social, economic, and geopolitical issues for years to come.

Photo by Professor Bailey



Members of the Class of 2022 hang out in hard hats

# Class of 2022's Sophomore Social Justice Project

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the exoneration of Omar Martinez, spent time going in depth on the ways in which an exoneration case can be fought, stressing that it takes lots of patience as most of these cases take 5-7 years to be fully processed. She discussed the jubilant feeling of victory in being present for an innocent person's first steps after freedom, but also stressed the need to deal with disappointment and frustration in these cases.

Rashaan Hall discussed at length his fascinating work at the American Civil Liberties Union. He talked about wrongful conviction, and mass incarceration as a whole, as symptoms of a fatally flawed jus-

tice with deep biases against people of color. He pointed out links between genocide, slavery, and mass incarceration; he also encouraged the young people in the room to use their voices in the political system, encouraging everyone to vote, especially in traditionally overlooked races such as those for District Attorney, which he characterized as extremely important.

Overall, the event was a great success, as the audience left with a new understanding of the problem of wrongful conviction and ways in which they can fight it. The sophomore Scholars plan on continuing their social justice project with another event in the Spring that is sure to bring even more meaningful light to this important issue.



Photo by Grace Christenson '22

Jenna Mu '22 introduces the panelists

# GPSP Selection Weekend 2020: Behind the Scenes



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22



Photo by Gabi Prostko '22

# Welcome GPSP Class of 2024!



**Christopher Conyers**  
Basking Ridge, NJ



**Christopher Ficeto**  
Wolcott, CT



**Francis Hodgens**  
Hopedale, MA



**Srina Lacet**  
Frederick, MD



**Kenneth Dao**  
Randolph, MA



**Kathryn Gilmore**  
Memphis, TN



**Andrew Hoffman**  
Avon, OH



**Nicole Masuoka**  
Chestnut Hill, MA



**Paxton Decker**  
Aurora, CO



**Kenneth Heikes**  
Hilo, HI



**Noah Kim**  
Los Alamitos, CA



**Ashley McKnight**  
Somerset, NJ



**Mikayla Quintana**  
Agoura Hills, CA

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