# Articles from Cohorts 2/3 Yearbook

## Cohort One Enters Workforce with a Jumpstart

With the completion of the Scholars Program by our first cohort, it is important for us to look at some outcomes for our students to ensure we are doing all we can to help launch their careers. Of the 16 students in Cohort One, 12 graduated in 2016. Many of these graduates have chosen to start their careers with companies, including PWC, Wells Fargo, Georgia Pacific, JP Morgan, and EY.

In the case of one student, Daniela Carvajalino, she is following her ambitions and continues to pursue various entrepreneurial endeavors with her two sisters, including a company called Cookies and Cookies, which allows customers to customize their desserts on the spot. She (and her sisters) were one of 100 entrepreneurs selected for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in 2016, which took place in Silicon Valley and attended by prominent individuals including President Obama and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, among others.

The students of Cohort One who have not yet graduated are busy pursuing double majors and have already lined up positions with companies for after graduation. One of the students, David Richmond, is pursuing a dual degree in Economics and Mathematics. David, along with the dual degree effort also has plans to complete minors in statistics and Spanish to go with his Scholars minor and Honors thesis.

The success of the Scholars Program and the quality of the preparation being provided to the scholars is dependent on the support we receive from our business partners. Cohort One Scholars completed internships at Henssler Financial, Surgical Information Systems, Grant Thornton, Rosebud Technologies, Wells Fargo, VOYA Financial, and other prominent businesses. These career skills and resume building experiences are critical to students entering the workforce, and prepare the scholars to make a significant impact for their employers in the future.

## Scholars Embrace Opportunities to Interact with Business Leaders

One goal of the selection process for the Coles College of Business Scholars program is to project future business and community leaders. Upon acceptance to the program, the students begin an organized leadership development process. This process begins with various personal assessment tools, a course in Applied Leadership, and learning through observing and interacting with local business leaders.

In their first semester in the program, Cohort Two had several opportunities to listen and interact with business leaders via the Applied Leadership course and through guest speakers. The Applied Leadership course also provided hands-on experience through field trips to a variety of businesses. Students interviewed actual leaders on their own “turf” focusing on developing and applying concepts learned in class. In Fall 2015, Cohort Two visited with leaders at Childress-Klein Properties, Henssler Financial, Georgia Pacific, and Target giving the scholars a chance to experience different strategic goals and leadership styles across a variety of industries and company sizes.

In other scholars courses, Cohort Two visited eXploring, Inc. and North Highland to continue their exploration of leadership and to practice networking with business contacts.

## Cohort Two Ends Year One with Immersion Experience in Guatemala

A unique feature of the Coles College of Business Scholars program is a Maymester International Immersion experience designed to blend international business experiences and social service while being embedded with the citizens of the country. For the second time, the Coles College Scholars program partnered with Social Entrepreneurship Corps (SEC), which has many years of experience working in rural communities in Guatemala. While SEC ordinarily works with MBA and other graduate students, they have customized this two-week immersion experience especially for the Scholars Program.

During the trip, the students spent time in San Juan la Laguna and Panajachel primarily, with a stop in the historic city of Antigua. San Juan la Laguna and Panajachel border Lake Atitlan, a beautiful crater lake surrounded by mountains. In San Juan, the scholars enjoyed home stays with local families, where they learned the daily routine of Maya people, including home-cooked meals, socializing, and sleeping in local housing. There was even a group dinner by all of the host families where the female students, and one male, were outfitted with traditional Maya attire (pictured below). Much like Cohort One, one of the more difficult experiences reported by the scholars was leaving behind their host families when we moved on to Panajachel.

One of the scholars projects this year was to assist SEC with their micro-finance efforts in small Guatemalan communities. They are working to set up “credit unions”, cooperatively funded by the local citizens in order to assist their neighbors that have business loan needs or an emergency. The scholars split into three groups to consult for SEC on how to help this initiative succeed, given the complexities of the culture and the scarcity of disposable income. The three groups concluded their projects with exceptional bi-lingual presentations to the leaders of the SEC.

Scholars also worked on projects for three local businesses: a weaving cooperative storefront, a hostel start up, and a local beekeeper. The students were particularly excited for these projects due to the openness and interest of the participating business leaders. The students worked with the storefront on store design and record keeping, which was lacking controls given the cooperative setup. The hostel team worked on marketing materials and techniques to attract North American and Western European travelers, among other things. The beekeeper team helped the owner design an agri-tourism business plan culminating in his goal of opening a treehouse rental, and using AirBNB. These projects taught the scholars to balance the sophistication of their education with the needs of their clients as they dealt with the feeling of “where do we start” because of cultural differences.

Thanks to the relationship formed with a local primary school in Panajachel by Cohort One in 2015, Cohort Two was able to go to the school and deliver basketballs, soccer balls, and some other sports equipment that our group brought from the US to the local children. Like the previous year, the principal released the children to play games and enjoy their new equipment with our scholars! Once again, our scholars were rewarded by genuine enthusiasm and happiness from the children, creating an experience that no one will forget.

It was not all work for the scholars, however. Among the other activities crammed into the two weeks were a hike up a volcano, a long boat ride across Lake Atitlan with an impromptu dance party, a pre-sunrise hike up a local mountain self-organized by the students, numerous “tuk tuk” rides, braving street food, and zip lining. There were even a few cases where our travelers lived with the effects of contaminated water! In some cases, our students take the immersion efforts too seriously!

## Third Cohort for Coles College Scholars Program Chosen

The selection process for the third cohort of the Coles College of Business Scholars Program has concluded and resulted in 16 new scholars. This process completes the third cycle of selecting scholars that originated five years prior and included development of the mission and values of the program, design and approval of a specialized curriculum, specification of the application process, and screening of applicants.

Sophomores, with at least a 3.5 GPA and who expressed interest in the nine majors offered by the Coles College, were invited to apply for the third cohort of the Coles College Scholars Program starting in the Fall 2016. The application process included the minimum GPA threshold, two letters of reference, and an essay, which was used to narrow down the number of applicants for interviews with the Coles College Scholars Committee. After completing the series of interviews, the committee narrowed down the group of 30 interviewees to 16 invitations, yielding our third Scholars cohort. The third cohort has an overall GPA of 3.85 and a GPA in the Coles Lower Division Core of 3.82.

## Experiential Learning Awaits New Scholars Cohort

Students selected for the Coles College of Business Scholars Program must prepare for specialized, cross-curriculum courses, while developing their leadership and networking skills over the course of the two-year program. The program formally begins in August with a three-day, two-night retreat to the North Georgia Mountains, where the new scholars work in teams, begin leadership training, and bond during social activities. Taking these students away from campus provides an environment for them to focus on the new and exciting challenges that await. The retreat also features prominent business leaders as guest speakers and an engaging module on Creativity and Innovation.

The Scholars Committee identifies students that have potential for business and community leadership and has strategically built the academic components of the program to help the students achieve their goals. Beyond the classroom, scholars participate in professional development opportunities and special networking events with business leaders. Throughout this journey, scholars are expected to embrace the values of the Scholars Program: Accountability, Integrity, Stewardship, and Excellence.