THE CENTER FOR SCHOLAR DEVELOPMENT

2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT
THE CENTER FOR SCHOLAR DEVELOPMENT

The Center for Scholar Development supports Drexel students on the path to post-graduate success, especially when applying for competitive, merit-based opportunities. We provide information on available programs, support for strategic planning and reflection, and guidance for strengthening students’ candidacy for a range of opportunities. Through campus outreach, individual support, and collaboration with university partners, our team seeks to develop a campus culture that encourages motivated students to pursue these enriching educational opportunities.

WELCOME

The Drexel Center for Scholar Development is proud to bring you its annual report for 2017-18. Since our last annual report in 2014-15, a great deal has changed, including our name. Formerly the Drexel Fellowships Office, our evolved title conveys the office’s expanded mission and broad base of support we offer to students and alumni along their diverse paths to post-graduate success.

The academic year 2017-18 brought many exciting new developments and successes for students in the area of fellowships, including our first Gates-Cambridge fellow and an impressive number of honorees for the DAAD Research Internships in Science and Engineering (RISE) program, Fulbright US Student Program, and NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program. Reflecting on the fellowship application experience, our applicants found great value in the process itself, indicating that they strengthened relationships with their faculty mentors, enriched their college experience, and clarified long-term goals.

Beyond fellowships, our office engaged undergraduate students in programming around scholarly enrichment. Our second cohort of 14 Aspire Scholars spent the year developing and clarifying their professional goals with the help of alumni, bi-weekly meetings and other events. The 3rd annual Pennoni Honors College Design Your Drexel workshop, with the support of campus partners, brought together a group of 15 promising sophomores to think strategically and holistically about their college experience. These programs and others have helped us plant important seeds and think more broadly and creatively about how to support our students' personal, professional, and academic growth.

Our staff is immensely grateful for the hard work of former director Meredith Wooten, who left her position in August 2018. The office grew dramatically during her four years of leadership, and we plan to carry on her legacy of dedication to student development and success as we move forward in exciting new directions.

Kelly Weissberger
Interim Director, Center for Scholar Development
**Advising**

At the heart of our work is intensive individual advising. Students applying for nationally competitive scholarships and undergraduates interested in clarifying their path toward their educational and professional goals meet with our office to strategize and prepare for success.

**Individual Appointments**

In addition to individual advising, our office holds weekly drop-in hours to answer students’ quick questions about fellowships and other opportunities.

**Fellowships Advising Appointments**

Students applying for nationally competitive scholarships receive a range of support from our office including one-on-one advising and application support. This past year we held about **496** appointments.

**Scholar Development Advising Appointments**

Undergraduate students meet with our office to discuss academic preparation and goals, as well as specific opportunities to make the most of their time at Drexel. This past year we held about **66** appointments.
OUTREACH

We raise awareness of opportunities and celebrate student successes, with the goal of encouraging students to take more intentional, strategic steps to advance their goals. From award recipient announcements and student updates to upcoming events and open opportunities, join our network to stay up to date!

NEWSLETTERS
Opt-in newsletters for students, faculty and staff!
Sign up at bit.ly/CSDnewsletter

SOCIAL MEDIA
Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @DrexelScholarDev
and on Twitter @DrexelScholars

In 2017-18 we’ve continued to grow our network and communications efforts and have seen the following increases in digital engagement:

+41% NEWSLETTER CONTACTS
+23% FACEBOOK LIKES
+21% TWITTER FOLLOWERS

TOP TWO TWEETS OF 2017-18

ScholarDev @Drexel @DrexelScholars · Feb 16
A huge congrats to Drexel’s 2018 Gates Cambridge Scholar, Nicholas Barber (BS Geoscience ’18, Honors). Drexel’s second recipient since the award was established. Read the full announcement here: ow.ly/2KG33oC5mgG
@Drexel_CoAS @DrexelOUR @DrexelNow

ScholarDev @Drexel @DrexelScholars · Jun 4
Congratulations to @DrexelKline student Dylan O’Donoghue, who received the 2018 Teck-Kah Lim Award from the @DrexelGradColl! Dylan will spend next year researching human trafficking reforms in Taiwan through @FulbrightPrjrm and @BorenAwards grants. CONGRATS, Dylan!

Nicholas Barber (BS Geoscience ’18, Honors) has been awarded a 2018 Gates Cambridge Scholarship.

Congratulations, Nick!

The Gates Cambridge Scholarship is a prestigious, full-cost scholarship awarded to outstanding students from around the world to pursue a postgraduate degree at one of the universities in Cambridge.

Graduate Student

Drexel University
We work with partners across the University to provide workshops, resources, and drop-in advising designed to help students enhance their educational experiences, engage in self-directed and independent learning, and encourage informed decision-making. From sessions on goal setting to getting strong recommendations and personal statements, we help guide students through all stages of their academic career.

THE [CENTER FOR SCHOLAR DEVELOPMENT] HAS OFFERED ME SUPPORT THAT EXTENDS BEYOND STRICTLY FILLING OUT APPLICATIONS. I REALLY APPRECIATE THE ADVICE THAT I HAVE RECEIVED ABOUT NEGOTIATING THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AND ON HOW TO BUILD MY CV TO BE A COMPETITIVE CANDIDATE FOR FELLOWSHIPS AND GRAD SCHOOL.

-SURVEY RESPONDENT
This year we held 35 workshops and events attended by about 288 students, with the goal of empowering ambitious, high-achieving undergraduates to make more informed choices about their academic, professional, and personal paths.
We’ve held co-sponsored events and workshops with both external and internal partners to provide students with information on post-graduation opportunities.
A one day workshop for Sophomores, sponsored by the Pennoni Honors College, that helps students navigate these issues by providing the tools and opportunity to make deliberate, informed choices about how to integrate pieces of their Drexel education – curriculum, co-op, extracurricular activities – into a roadmap for making the most of their time at Drexel. Participants engage in group activities, workshops, facilitated discussions and guided reflection.
The Aspire Scholars program is designed to provide promising, curious, and motivated Drexel undergraduates an opportunity to develop and clarify their goals, within a small community of peers and with guidance from alumni in their field(s) of interest. In partnership with Drexel Alumni Relations, we connect Scholars with Drexel alumni and facilitate the creation of strong alumni-student mentoring relationships.
“IT DIDN'T JUST GIVE ME A SAFE PLACE TO TALK ABOUT MY STRUGGLES, SET GOALS, AND HAVE MY GOALS CHALLENGED... IT ALSO GAVE ME FRIENDS WHICH I PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE MADE HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THIS PROGRAM.”
- JUI HANAMSHET
The Center for Scholar Development supports students across the University in their applications for competitive, merit-based national and international fellowships. We raise campus-wide awareness of opportunities and directly help students create strong applications through intensive individual advising and support.

**Administered & Priority Awards**

Administered awards require University nomination or interview. We work closely with applicants throughout their entire application process – helping them decide if they want to apply, thinking through the elements of their application, providing feedback on essay drafts, convening faculty interview committees as necessary, and staying closely involved through to submission:

- Boren Awards
- CSPC Presidential Fellows
- Gaither Junior Fellows
- Goldwater Scholarship
- Fulbright U.S. Student Program
- Marshall Scholarship
- Mitchell Scholarship
- Rhodes Scholarship
- Schwarzman Scholars
- Truman Scholarship
- Udall Scholarship

In addition, we support the following high-priority awards:

- Critical Language Scholarship
- DOD Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship
- DAAD RISE
- Freeman-ASIA
- Gates-Cambridge Scholarship
- GEM Fellowship
- Gilman International Scholarship
- Hertz Foundation Graduate Fellowship
- National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship (NDSEG)
- National Institutes of Health Fellowships
- NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Scholarship
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)
- Tilman Scholar Program

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**Survey Respondent**

The fellowships application process helped me greatly in many ways...writing about myself and my experience helped me to organize my thoughts about my academic and career goals.

- Survey Respondent
**Survey Says...**

**Over 50%** of surveyed applicants revised their main essays 5+ times.

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**Top 5 Reasons They Applied**

- Good Experience/Training
- International Experience
- Unique Opportunity
- Career Advancement
- Prestige

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**Top 3 Benefits of Applying**

- I am more prepared and more likely to apply for competitive fellowships in the future.
- I feel like I’ve gotten more out of my time at Drexel because of this.
- I strengthened my relationships with faculty mentors or recommenders.

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**Most Important Benefit of Applying?**

I have a clearer vision for my future or long term goals.

Results from a survey of students who worked with our office applying for fellowships this past year.
7 DAAD RISE Honorees
65 NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP Honorees
9 NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP Program (GRFP) Honorees
6 Fulbright U.S. STUDENT PROGRAM Honorees
1 st PD SOROS Fellow
37 DIFFERENT NATIONAL AWARDS
$2.71M ESTIMATED TOTAL VALUE
2018 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Honorees
April 2018: Six Drexel students and alumni have been awarded the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and three are Honorable Mentions. Congrats to Anthony Abel, David Goodman, Sophia Lee, Valerie Niemann, Emily Ostrow, Neha Thomas, Jacqueline Tawney, Nicholas Barber, and Erfaun Noorani!

2018 Fulbright Honorees
May 2018: Five Drexel students were offered a prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Program Grant for 2018-19 and two were named alternates. Congrats to Nicholas Barber, Dalia Kirzner, Sergio Machaca, Ian Nichols, Valerie Niemann, Emily Ostrow and Dylan O’Donoghue!

2018 Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow
April 2018: Drexel alumna Jennifer Shin (BA Architecture ’13, Honors) has been named a 2018 Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow in recognition of her potential to make significant contributions to American society, culture, and her academic field. Jennifer is one of just 30 fellows selected from across the country and the first person from Drexel to receive the award.

2018 DAAD RISE Honorees
March 2018: Six students were selected to conduct research in Germany through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Research Internships for Science & Engineering (RISE) Program and one was selected as an alternate. Congrats to Yigit Alparslan, Tarita Roy Choudhury, Marina D’souza, Leah Friedman, Annette Kang, Yawei Li, and Adrian Mendonsa!

Left to right: (top) Yigit Can Alparslan, Tarita Roy Choudhury, Marina D’souza. (bottom) Leah Friedman, Annette Kang, Yawei Li, Adrian Mendonsa.
Annette Kang (BS Biological Sciences ’19) spent her summer studying bugs – specifically, diet preferences in ant-parasite communities. As the recipient of a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service’s Research in Science Engineering Program (DAAD RISE), she worked as a research assistant at Germany’s Technische Universität Darmstadt. “(I had) so many opportunities in Germany, not only in terms of academics and research but also for the many wonderful chances that I have had to experience the German culture in every possible way,” said Kang.

While there, she was honored with an invitation to present on behalf of Drexel at a USA Interns Program Orientation event in Frankfurt. It was hosted by the Steuben-Schurz-Gesellschaft Association, a supporter of the DAAD RISE program, and co-sponsored by the U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Addressing approximately 30 other interns and representatives of these organizations, Kang highlighted the connection between Frankfurt and Philadelphia, which have been officially designated as sister cities since 2015. They regularly exchange delegations of political and business leaders, arts and cultural representatives, educators, technical experts and students, helping to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.
As the oldest German-American Friendship Society, Steuben-Schurz-Gesellschaft furthers the sister city cooperation, promoting German-American relations and international understanding. Their USA Interns program facilitates dozens of bilateral professional exchanges each year, helping students on the job experience and international leadership skills. Networking is also an important benefit, as Kang explained, “I found it really great to be able to talk to students who have been involved in research in such different disciplines and as a result, have such unique experiences! It was wonderful sharing stories and connecting. At the end, we could all agree that living abroad, especially in a beautiful country that not only fosters creativity and innovation but also acceptance and diversity, has helped us grow in immeasurable ways.”
The Center for Scholar Development could not effectively help students achieve without strong and enthusiastic partners around the University. This year 66 faculty and professional staff from across the university volunteered their time, expertise, and insights as part of our campus interviews, serving as mentors, providing individual feedback, and supporting fellowships applicants. We thank them for their continued support:

Adam Zahn • Adrian Shieh • Amelia Hoover-Green • Ana Nye • Andres Kriete • Baris Taskin • Barry Furrow • Ben Barnett • Brenda Dyer • Brian Lee • Caroline Schauer • Chris Weyant • Chris Sales • Christian Hunold • Craig Newshaffer • Dagmar Niebhr • Dan Dougherty • Danuta Nitecki • David Velinsky • Doug Wright • Emily Zimmerman • Emily Kashka • Emmanuuel Koku • Eric Kennedy • Erica Zelinger • Erin Graham • Frank Lee • Greg Jewell • Gwen Ottinger • Jacob Russell • Jaya Mohan • Jennifer Quinlan • Jill Derstine • Joel Oestreich • John DiNardo • Julia Colwell • Julia Wisniewski • Kara Spiller • Katy Gonder • Kelly Joyce • Kevin Egan • Koren Bedeau • Kristene Mulhorn • Kristy Kelly • Lisa Shen • Lloyd Ackert • Lotte Buiting • Ludo Scheffer • Maggie Wheatley • Marcia Henisz • Mary Ebeling • Michelle Dolinski • Mimi Sheller • Mira Olson • Noreen Robertson • Paula Cohen • Peter Amato • Peter DeCarlo • Rachel Wenrick • Rick McCourt • Sean O'Donnell • Shivanthi Anandan • Stefanie Kroll

Ways Faculty & Staff Support Students

- Refer students
- Participate in the campus review process
- Mentor students
- Invite us to present/request a workshop
- Help revise applicants’ fellowships essays
- Share experience & offer insights
- Write letters of recommendation

90% of surveyed students who’ve worked with our office “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that they strengthened relationships with faculty mentors or recommenders through their fellowships application process.
Through his role as Program Director and professor in the Department of English and Philosophy, as well as his active involvement with our office, Dr. Peter Amato demonstrates a sincere interest in supporting student achievement and helping to foster a broader culture of fellowships and student success at Drexel.

Dr. Amato generously gives of his time to mentor and encourage students applying for fellowships and is a regular participant in campus nomination committees and interviews for several major awards – including Fulbright, Truman, and Udall scholarships. Dr. Amato understands the potential of fellowship opportunities can dramatically expand horizons and open doors to new research and career opportunities. “Fellowships can be transformative educational and life experiences,” says Dr. Amato. “They can advance a student’s research and professional projects in predictable and unpredictable ways—fueling a well-developed research interest, or illuminating a new and unanticipated path. But even when students apply for fellowships they don’t get, the process requires them to develop a focus and self-awareness that will serve them well in all educational, career and life pursuits.”

We are grateful for Dr. Amato’s contributions and look forward to working with him further.
Fellowships Events

This year, we offered 81 information sessions and events to approximately 498 attendees, in order to inform and support Drexel students interested in applying for nationally competitive scholarship and fellowship opportunities.

Fellowships 101

Each term we hold weekly Fellowships 101 sessions on a walk-in basis to provide students with basic information and advice on finding and applying for fellowships.

Interested in external grants and fellowships? Not sure where to start? Attend Fellowships 101!

Summer Term

Wednesdays, 12PM Noon, In Disque 109

Learn about how fellowships and competitive external opportunities can help you reach your goals - from international study and internships, to graduate school, and more!

Graduate Fellowships Power Hour

This summer we introduced new drop-in advising programming for graduate students working on fellowships applications to help them prepare a competitive application.

Introducing:

Graduate Fellowships Power Hour

Weekly drop-in hours to assist students applying for 2018-19 graduate fellowships!

Clarify goals, get feedback on drafts, and prepare a more competitive application!
30% of surveyed students who’ve worked with our office selected “Fellowships media and activities (website, newsletter, events, InfoNet ads, social media, etc.)” as the way they learned about fellowships opportunities, the number one answer.
As a member of the National Association of Fellowships Advisors (NAFA) and local conference committee chair, former CSD Director Meredith Wooten arranged for the conference to host a reception at the Academy of Natural Sciences for NAFA members. In recognition of the Center’s effort, Drexel was named as the sole university sponsor of the conference.
In July 2017, CSD hosted the Institute for International Education (IIE) for a daylong workshop on the Fulbright U.S. Student Program and Boren International Awards. More than 80 faculty and administrative staff from across the U.S. attended the workshop, which was held in conjunction with the NAFA biennial conference in Philadelphia.
One of the overarching goals of our office is to foster a broad culture of fellowships at Drexel. We work to expand our passion and commitment from our small office into nodes of enthusiasm and support around the University. We try to build capacity within each school to empower those already working closely with their students. This combination of inspiration and knowledge is especially important when it comes to helping students access the more discipline-specific awards that they (and we) are unlikely to know about.

Throughout the academic year, we partnered with multiple colleges and departments for a total of 37 co-sponsored events and information sessions. This year, we’ve worked with the following Drexel offices and organizations and would like to thank them for their continued support:

Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry • College of Arts and Sciences • College of Computing & Informatics Women in Computing (WIC) • College of Engineering • Dornsife School of Public Health • College of Medicine • Drexel’s Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers (IEEE) • Drexel’s Material Advantage • Drexel’s Society of Women Engineers (SWE) • The Graduate College • Lindy Center for Civic Engagement • Office of International Programs • Office of Undergraduate Research • Pennoni Honors College • Steinbright Creer Development Center • Study Abroad Office
FELLOWSHIPS LIAISONS

Each college at Drexel has designated a fellowships liaison who works closely with us and can help you understand fellowships; this person may be an excellent initial point of contact as students explore their options.

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<th>COLLEGE</th>
<th>LIAISON(S)</th>
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<tr>
<td>ARTS AND SCIENCES</td>
<td>ALEXANDER (SANDY) FRIEDLANDER, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education</td>
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<td>DAVID GOLDBERG, Associate Department Head for Undergraduate Studies, Physics</td>
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<td>BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING, SCIENCE</td>
<td>LAURIE LENZ, Associate Director of Student Services</td>
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<td>AND HEALTH SYSTEMS</td>
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<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>JACKIE McCURDY, Director of Undergraduate Student Services</td>
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<td>CARMITA CHAMP, Director of Graduate Student Services</td>
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<td>COMPUTING AND INFORMATICS</td>
<td>MICHELLE ROGERS, Associate Professor of Information Science</td>
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<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>DAVID APPLETON, Program Manager</td>
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<td>RAJASHI GHOSH, Program Director of PhD in Education</td>
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<td>ENGINEERING</td>
<td>ROSIE SULLIVAN, Associate Director of Academic Advising</td>
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<td>SHERRY LEVIN, Director of Graduate Programs</td>
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<td>ENTREPRENEURSHIP</td>
<td>RITA BERSON, Senior Academic Advisor</td>
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<td>PROFESSIONAL STUDIES</td>
<td>LAMONT WILSON, Director of Degree Completion Programs</td>
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<td>LAW</td>
<td>ELIZABETH DUNN, Director of Career and Professional Development</td>
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<td>NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS</td>
<td>VERONICA CAREY, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEDICINE</td>
<td>MARIE HARTMAN, Director of Career Development Center</td>
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<td>MELISSA RICHMAN, Director of Administrative Services,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies</td>
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<td>PUBLIC HEALTH</td>
<td>PHI NGUYEN, Assistant Dean of Students</td>
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<td>JAMEL LONG, Director of Academic Affairs</td>
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<td>MEDIA ARTS &amp; DESIGN</td>
<td>SANDRA STEWART, Associate Dean of Academics</td>
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2017-18 Fellowships Ambassadors

Fellowships Ambassadors are Drexel students or recent alums who have applied for one or more nationally competitive fellowships. Our Ambassadors understand the many challenges and benefits that come with applying for - and receiving - fellowships. They share their experiences through fellowships outreach, mentoring, and providing advice to new applicants.

Alexandra Pickens
BA Global Studies ’17, Honors

Amanda Pentecost
PhD Materials Science & Engineering ’18

Anthony Abel
BS/MS Chemical & Biological Engineering/Materials Science ’17, Honors

Ariana Levitt
PhD candidate Materials Science & Engineering

Ashleigh Jugan
BS Environmental Science ’18, Honors

Cali Chesterman
BS Animation & Visual Effects ’17

Carli Moorehead
BS/MS Biomedical Engineering/Materials Engineering ’17, Honors

Claudia Gutierrez
BS/MS Biomedical Engineering ’15, Honors

Emily Lurier
PhD candidate Biomedical Engineering

Emily Ostrow
BS/MS Environmental Science ’18, Honors

Emily Ballantyne
BS Mechanical Engineering ’17

Jessica Weaver
PhD student Materials Science and Engineering
EVERYONE ON CAMPUS HAS THEIR MAIN REASONS TO BE HERE AND IS CONSTANTLY WORKING QUICKLY TOWARD THEIR GOALS. AS A RESULT, IT’S DIFFICULT TO FIND TIME FOR WHAT COULD BE THOUGHT AS ‘EXTRA WORK’ ON TOP OF THE NORMAL GRIND. MY ONLY ADVICE IS TO THINK ABOUT YOUR CORE GOALS ROUTINELY AND EVALUATE WHAT OPPORTUNITIES MAY OPEN UP FROM THAT ‘EXTRA WORK’.

- PACO SANGAIAH, AMBASSADOR SINCE 2015
The Center for Scholar Development encourages and supports students who seek to expand their horizons and reach for something bigger. We hope students will reflect on why they do the things they do, about the choices that they make and the things that matter to them. The Fellowships Graduation Award recognizes a graduating Honors Program student who has contributed to this way of thinking and the broader fellowships culture at Drexel. This year, we presented the award to Vincent O’Leary.

Vincent O’Leary (BS Environmental Science '18, Honors) has an impressive track record of academic and research success. In addition to his research at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Vince has engaged with the Pennoni Honors College as a Fellowships Ambassador, STAR Scholar, and through the Honors Program. He has also gained opportunities to work on science policy and research as a NOAA Hollings and Truman Scholar. In addition to his many achievements, Vince has demonstrated strong personal character and commitment to supporting others. When he received disappointing results, he never gave up or lost sight of what is important: his passion for using data to help promote public understanding of and appreciation for the world around us. Despite a demanding schedule of coursework, research, and outreach, Vince has been an incredible advocate for fellowships at Drexel. We are incredibly happy for him.

This is the first time in my life I did not prepare for a new school year this fall. I graduated in June and am working with Americorps VISTA for the next year. Looking back on my time at Drexel, the Center for Scholar Development stands out for the profound impact on my professional goals and was critical in forming me into a student worth celebrating during graduation.

I am often asked what's the point in spending time on applications, when you might not receive one after months of work. Especially at Drexel, where your life runs on a 10-week cycle, who has that kind of time to spare? To be successful, you must spend time reflecting about yourself and asking hard questions about your future goals. What does success look like? How do you want to get there? Questioning yourself repeatedly is an integral part of the application process.
Truly answering these questions takes time, and it takes vulnerability to submit them for critique by the Center for Scholar Development. Spending every year writing, listening to feedback, and writing even more helped me to make sure my classes were the right choice, that my co-op made sense for my career, and that I was building a set of values I wanted my future life to reflect.

The next question people always ask is if getting rejected hurts. And of course, it does. Taking time to absorb rejection is important, but I soon realized any one award could never define me or my achievements. Those rejections weren’t the end, and eventually, I was the first student in Drexel’s history to be named a Truman Scholar.

The Truman Scholarship provides funding for graduate school, but it is also a community of public servants that excitedly welcomed me and continues to support me. That first year, I spent a week in Independence, MO meeting my fellow 2017 scholars from around the country and working on policy challenges posed by older alumni.

After graduation, I spent 10 weeks in DC working on climate change analysis for the White House along with most of my fellow Truman Scholars thanks to housing sponsored by the award. Those experiences and discussions with the other students pushed me out of my traditional academic scientist trajectory and made me explore opportunities in government and public service. Because of this I did not matriculate directly into a graduate school program after Drexel and am spending a year with Americorps VISTA working on mentoring programs for underserved youth in Pittsburgh, PA. I also found lifelong friends in the Truman community, and some will even be at my wedding this fall who I didn’t know just 18 months ago. The Center for Scholar Development made this possible, and I am forever grateful for the opportunities they opened for me while at Drexel.

"TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU MUST SPEND TIME REFLECTING ABOUT YOURSELF AND ASKING HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE GOALS. WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE? HOW DO YOU WANT TO GET THERE?"
My lab here in the Netherlands is populated with international students. We are able to discuss cultural differences in academic research, PhD programs, and anything from politics to what’s going on in the world. Every day my perspective on science and other aspects of my life changes, which has been very educational and exciting.
MD/PhD student, Shawn Joshi, was awarded the ultracompetitive Fulbright UK Open Award, affording him the opportunity to conduct his research in the UK, exploring the clinical use of portable medical neuroimaging devices on physical therapies for children with motor learning disabilities. Despite the competitive nature of the Fulbright award, Shawn is happy he applied, and encourages others to do so:

“...I received probably one of the most difficult Fulbright awards, when so many encouraged me to look into other sources. You really never know what will happen, so apply, work your hardest, and hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised like I was. Also, use the staff at Drexel and the Fulbright Commission.”

2017 environmental science graduate, Vaughn Shirey’s Fulbright was spent doing research at the Finnish Museum of Natural History where they have a database of about 28 million records of plants and animals from all around Finland. Combining sociology, education, and ecology, his research asked about how these records inform us about biodiversity in Finland and looked into potential biases. In regards to preparing for a research-based Fulbright grant, Vaughn advises you:

“...start early. If you want to really narrow down your focus on the project and your host country engagement, you really do need to do a lot of research of the host country, and also contact the host early.”
Nicholas Barber: A Fellowships Journey

Nick Barber (BS Geoscience ’18, Honors) has worked with the Center for Scholar Development for many years applying for and supporting students with fellowships. Having recently graduated, he is now pursuing a PhD in Earth Science at the University of Cambridge, funded by the prestigious Gates-Cambridge Scholarship.

I am no stranger to fellowships, having applied for two undergraduate and four post-graduate awards, and advised countless students on their value as a vehicle for personal and professional discovery. However, my path was nonlinear. Over my time at Drexel, I worked in no less than four labs, exploring careers from planetary science to groundwater hydrology. It was not until 2016 that I decided to pursue a career researching volcanoes. Through fellowships, I was able to set myself on a course to what was previously just a dream: attending graduate school at the University of Cambridge.

I came to Drexel focused on geoscience. My dream then was to work for NASA, researching the formation and evolution of planetary bodies. Through the STAR program, I took part in a summer 2014 project on sea level rise, experiencing scientific research for the first time. A co-op at the Academy of Natural Science followed, where I studied insect metabolism. Despite my successes, including presenting at a discipline-specific conference, I felt blown off course by early 2016, when my closest faculty advisors left Drexel.

My engagement with the Center for Scholar Development began in late 2015. Wrapping up a semester abroad at the University of Sydney, I arranged to meet with Dr. Meredith Wooten, former director of the CSD. Dr. Wooten seemed intrigued by my very clear career interest and pursuit of my goals. She recommended I apply for Goldwater as well as the NOAA Hollings Scholarship. Both awards required lengthy essays detailing my research interests, career goals, and motivations for pursuing geoscience.

I found fellowships to be unique from my previous challenges. Condensing my motivation and personal story into two pages was very difficult! I especially struggled with describing my research interests, eventually coming to the realization that Earth is the most complex and fascinating planetary body of all. I had somehow overlooked this simple fact. Working through this revelation, I developed strong applications, and in April 2016, learned I had received both awards. I was proud of this confirmation of my research abilities, as well as my success in conveying my research’s importance. More importantly, it gave me a
chance to explore new avenues in my career: understanding the evolution of our planet through volcanism and plate tectonics.

The notification of these awards coincided with my first forays into volcano research with Drexel professor Dr. Loïc Vanderkluysen in the Drexel LAVA Lab. Capable of creating, sustaining, and destroying life, volcanoes are crucial to our understanding of both the Earth’s formation and people’s relationship with Earth; I valued this combination of my scientific and humanitarian interests. My newfound goal blossomed in spring 2017, when I began applying for the Marshall Scholarship, a Fulbright Study/Research Grant to Indonesia, the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF GRFP) and the Gates Cambridge Scholarship; all four feature extensive applications with deadlines in October 2017. Meanwhile, I also planned to apply to five PhD programs.

Needless to say, August-November of 2017 was one of the most stressful periods in my life. The constant support of Dr. Wooten, Kelly, Martha, and Emily helped me through this challenge. I found these applications both personally and professionally beneficial, especially due to their individual formats. I designed distinct research plans tailored to the individual goals of each award. This required substantial literature review and frequent and lengthy reflection.

The long road was worth it. I was offered an interview at Cambridge followed by admission to their PhD program. With the Gates Cambridge fellowship interview looming, the CSD arranged mock interviews, which proved just as challenging as writing an essay. Afterward, I spent weeks preparing, writing, and coaching myself for my official interview at the Bill and Melinda Gates Headquarters. After a pleasant discussion with the judges, I received the best email of my life on February 1, 2018; I was offered the Gates-Cambridge Scholarship.

I am excited to begin the next chapter of my life at Cambridge, but I know it would go unwritten if not for the CSD staff. My experience at Drexel has been defined by fellowships. Thanks to these awards, I have explored the ocean’s depths and monitored gas emissions at Yellowstone. More importantly, I learned what kind of scholar I wanted to be, and how to communicate my interests, formulate a research plan, and understand my own motivations. The lessons learned through the fellowships process will serve me well as I begin my PhD, and I’m happy to admit I already have my eye on several other postgraduate fellowships.