

# Haslam Scholars Program Spring Report

Spring 2015



## NEW LECTURE SERIES FEATURES FACULTY

By Louis Varriano  
Senior, Physics

The Haslam Scholars Program began its Friday Faculty lecture series in fall 2014 in addition to its existing Global Awareness Series.

In one of the first lectures of the year, Dr. Paul Armsworth from the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology inspired the scholars in attendance to use their technical education to change social situations and those in need—a strategy of “pointy heads and soft hearts,” as he put it.

Continuing with the theme of social responsibility, Knoxville Public Defender Mark Stephens spoke about the often-unjust application of the law to people of lower socioeconomic status in Knoxville. Other topics included the prospects of finding life on Mars, agricultural technology, and how UT supports Tennessee farmers as part of its mission as a land-grant institution.

The Global Awareness series continued to expand scholars’ minds and world perspectives with in-depth understanding of other countries and cultures.

Both series were important as part of the scholars’ education and shared experience. The lectures often served as a springboard for other discussions and allowed scholars to get a glimpse of disciplines outside their own majors and research. The two series were resounding successes this year, and all of the scholars are looking forward to next year and even more interesting topics.

## HSP GRADUATES LAUNCH VARIED FUTURES

By Colleen Ryan  
Sophomore, Global Studies

This spring, a group of remarkable scholars will graduate. Each of them has made a significant impact on the University of Tennessee, from undergraduate research to involvement in student organizations. Within and among their cohorts, they have built relationships centered on academic and personal excellence—and, in the process, they helped to grow and strengthen the Haslam Scholars Program.

**Will Barbour** (biosystems engineering) says, “During my four years at UT, I have enjoyed all the opportunities of a large research university and close academic setting through the Haslam Scholars Program. These have enabled me to work across multiple disciplines and prepare myself for graduate school.” He has also been able to travel for research, study abroad, and service leadership. In the fall, he will be pursuing his PhD in civil engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

**John Burnum** (computer science and physics) will be continuing his education, with plans to attend graduate school in education and ultimately become a teacher. He says he enjoyed learning with and from his fellow scholars, especially on his cohort’s trip to Costa Rica. “The Haslam Scholars Program has given me the opportunity to learn from far more people than I would without,” he said. “I have had opportunities to meet with ambitious students and faculty from other fields as well as ambitious and impactful people from

beyond the academic community.”

**Imani Chatman** (ecology and evolutionary biology) will be attending medical school in the fall to prepare for a career as an obstetrician and has received offers from UT Health Science Center, East Tennessee State University, and Georgetown University. Her college experience was marked by her time as an orientation leader, as well as serving on the executive board of the Food Recovery Network. “I loved welcoming new students to the university, and I love serving the homeless people of the Knoxville community,” she said. For Imani, some of the greatest benefits of the HSP include not only the opportunity to interact with the best and brightest students at the University of Tennessee and the chance to do research abroad in China, but also the self-awareness that her time in the program has helped her to gain.

**Marianela D’Aprile** (architecture) says, “The true challenge of the program came from the discourse with my peers, who both challenged and encouraged me to be and do my best and to see the world from their eyes.” Marianela has been extremely involved in the College of Architecture and Design, including study abroad with the Finland Summer Architecture Institute in 2013, as well as founding the publication and student organization IMPRINT. Marianela plans to complete a Master of Science in architecture at either UC Berkeley or Yale and then earn a PhD. She will ultimately pursue an academic career in architecture that will also include curatorial and editorial practices.

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## Seniors from p1

**Phoebe Fogelman** (mechanical engineering) will be joining Savannah River Remediation in Aiken, South Carolina, a Department of Energy facility that eliminates environmental hazards and secures tanks that currently contain radioactive materials from nuclear power plants and Cold War weapons programs. From her time at UT, Phoebe says she will most remember serving as a resident assistant for the Governor's School for Sciences and Engineering, integrating many aspects of her education into robotics design for her senior design project, and engaging with her fellow Haslam Scholars. "The Haslam Scholars Program has allowed me to maintain relationships with a group of peers that continuously challenges and encourages me to excel both academically and personally. I cannot imagine my college experience without having met them," she says.

**Shivani Goyal** (psychology and Spanish) is excited about her plans to help end education inequality by joining Teach for America as a 2015 corps member at a school in Indianapolis. She says her study abroad trips to Chile and Costa Rica provided her with unique experiences and helped her develop her Spanish speaking abilities. She also credits HSP as being a crucial part of her four years at UT. "The program has truly helped me to constantly challenge myself and achieve at my highest capacity in order to give back to the campus and the community," she said.

**Emma Hollmann** (chemical engineering) says, "I would not be where I am if Dr. Riedinger had not introduced me to Dr. Zawodzinski sophomore year." Through her work in Zawodzinski's lab, Emma spent a summer researching in Italy and won a Goldwater Scholarship, but she also learned how to take herself seriously as a researcher and how to have fun in the face of frustration. "I appreciate that UT provides experiences that help us grow into the people we want to be by making us a bit uncomfortable and out of our comfort zone." Emma will be heading to Vanderbilt University this fall to study targeted drug delivery in their chemical engineering PhD program.

**Chris Ludtka** (chemical engineering) says, "My favorite part of HSP has been getting close to and learning from my fellow scholars. My classmates are so successful and impressive, all in completely different and unique ways. Being around so many driven, intelligent peers helps open my eyes to possibilities and interconnections and makes me reflect on what I can do to become better as a person and scholar." Chris plans to pursue a research fellowship in Germany before attending medical school.

**Tyrel Prentiss** (College Scholars) took a unique path at UT. His research in applied film analysis has largely focused on Disney films and their corresponding rides at Disney parks, and he completed an internship at Disney World last year. He says experiences such as interning at RIVR Media with Dee Haslam and studying abroad in Urbino, Italy, were the most valuable for him. He also credits HSP for creating a community and allowing him to meet the best people UT has to offer. He plans to pursue an MFA in themed entertainment design at Savannah College of Art and Design and become an Imagineer for Disney, turning films into a theme park experience. Following graduation, he will take a position with Disney in Florida.

**Kenna Rewcastle** (College Scholars) will spend the first six months following graduation as a laboratory and field technician with UT's Classen Ecosystem Ecology Laboratory. She will then seek another laboratory technician position, after which she plans to enter a PhD program in the fall of 2016. She hopes to either begin a research career in academia as an ecosystem ecologist or take a more applied research approach and seek out science advisor jobs. She says she gained connections; colleagues who serve as a great sounding board for potential ideas; and endless mental, emotional, physical and financial support from HSP to make her successes possible.

**Julia Ross** (economics) will join the White House as an advance associate after graduation. "The community of scholars created by the program enhanced my education immensely, and the community provided much of the personal growth

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I sought during my college years," she said. Julia credits HSP faculty member Lee Riedinger for his role in encouraging and supporting her cohort during their time at UT. "We are all enormously grateful for the part he has played in our education."

**Fadi Saleh** (College Scholars) designed a unique major—social entrepreneurship—and hopes to use his experience to help people. Throughout his time at UT, he has been running the YouTube account Baracksdubs, as well as creating videos for MTV and a health care campaign in California. Following graduation, he plans to start his career and is choosing between media groups in California and New York.

**R. J. Vogt** (College Scholars) will be moving to Yangon, Myanmar, to work for an English-language newspaper as a Princeton in Asia Fellow. R. J. served as editor-in-chief of the Daily Beacon his junior year and considers his involvement there to be his most valuable UT experience: "Organizing and coordinating a daily newspaper is a beautiful, wild process; nothing has taught me more about myself and the world around me." R. J. says he has benefited from both the connections and challenges offered by the Haslam Scholars Program. "Everywhere I went, I had a foot in the door. People respected me because of the Haslam distinction. And my cohort—the successes and strengths of my classmates—challenged me to be better at everything I do."

It has been a great privilege learning from and with each of these outstanding scholars and leaders, and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.



## HSP ANNUAL RETREAT OFFERS SERIOUS FUN

By Tyler Hounshell  
Sophomore, International Relations and Development

Haslam Scholars work hard—really hard—but we also play hard. And that is what the 2015 Haslam Scholars Retreat was all about. It was a time for bonding, games, and sweet, sweet relaxation. The weekend was a blast.

When we arrived at the Clyde Austin 4-H Lodge in Greeneville, the first thing I saw was the breathtaking view of the snow-capped Smoky Mountains. It was a sign; I knew it. This weekend was going to be great.

Friday night included trivia night with the freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and faculty going head to head. It was a brutal matchup, and two competitors came out ahead of the others. The freshmen and the seniors were all tied up in the last inning ... I mean round. But the freshmen missed the last question and the seniors came out on top by one point.

The evening ended with renowned storyteller Dr. Bruce Wheeler sharing his experiences from high school, his undergraduate years, and his teaching career.

Saturday was filled with activities and sessions, including morning Zumba taught by Vonda Wright and baking by Laura Vaught. Dr. Sylvia Turner, Dr. Gladys Alexandre (Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology), Dr. Remus Nicoara (Math), Dr. Christopher Wright (Theory and Practice in Teacher Education), Dr. Adam Cureton (Philosophy), Matt Blaylock (Honors and Scholars Programs), and Nichole Fazio-Veigel (Office of National Scholarships and Fellowships) taught sessions as well. There was even a session on four-dimensional video games and the space-time continuum! It was a time for genuine learning without the pressures of a classroom setting.

And of course, the retreat wouldn't have been complete without the annual HSP football game. This year's captains

were Dr. Timothy Hulsey and Dr. Remus Nicoara.

Saturday night, all of the cohorts participated in karaoke. Seniors **Julia Ross** and **Kenna Rewcastle** nailed a number by John Mayer. Even Dr. Turner stole the stage with a soulful ballad by Destiny's Child. Our initial theme was the early 2000s, but as the night lingered on the cohorts crossed into all genres and eras, singing hits by Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Nicki Minaj. **Geoffrey Hervey** showcased his dancing throughout the evening.

An inspiring aspect of the retreat was that each of us had the chance to publicly share our dreams and aspirations with each other. It was a serious yet sincere moment that we all experienced together as scholars. We learned about each other in ways that we hadn't had the chance to before. It was breathtaking to hear how simple, complex, and ironically "unscholarly" some of our dreams are, and how they have been shaped by the college experience. After such an intense moment, most of us finished the night by the campfire, roasting marshmallows and sharing stories.

It was a weekend that I will never forget. A huge thank you to **Colleen Ryan** and **Chris Ludtka** for organizing the retreat this year, and to the faculty and staff who contributed to a successful retreat.



## Haslam Scholars Receive Torchbearer Award

This year the University of Tennessee recognized two Haslam Scholars for their exceptional academic achievement and service to others. **Kenna Rewcastle** and **Julia Ross** were named Torchbearers, the highest student honor conferred by the university.

Kenna, who is majoring in ecosystem ecology and biogeochemistry through the College Scholars program, is a member of SPEAK (Students Promoting Environmental Action in Knoxville) and a leader in the Undergraduate Research Student Association. She often assists with environmental and trail restoration, and co-organized the HSP's Running with Hope 5K and Fun Walk, which benefited Redeeming Hope Ministries. She has conducted environmental and ecological research in Denmark, China, and Switzerland. According to Nichole Fazio-Veigel, director of the Office of National Scholarships and Fellowships, "Ms. Rewcastle's strength as a Torchbearer ... is in her capacity to unite her exceptional intellectual capacity for success with a commitment to leadership and programmatic participation. With a leadership style that is bold, remarkably fearless, yet intuitive and sensitive, she has made terrific strides in raising awareness and advocating not only for undergraduate research, but also for other issues near to her heart."

Julia, an economics major, is the founding president of UT's chapter of the Roosevelt Institute, a national student initiative that promotes student activism and engagement in policy research and writing. An advocate for higher educational standards, she is an active member of the Baker Scholars, an honors program sponsored by the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy. Fazio-Veigel describes Julia as "a true change agent [who] has graciously and with profound commitment accepted the role of leading various efforts here at UT, but even more significantly has taken that leadership to the national level ... Ms. Ross was selected as a White House intern, a highly competitive national opportunity to serve the current administration. She brought everything learned in her leadership roles at UT to bear upon service to the highest office in this nation. She supported an exemplary team of individuals in Washington, DC, responsible for managing the complex and as significant travel schedule for President Obama. On two occasions, Ms. Ross traveled with that team accompanying the president back to her home region—first to Atlanta and second on his most recent visit to East Tennessee."

We are proud to have Kenna and Julia among the nine graduating seniors named Torchbearers this year.

# SCHOLARS RECEIVE NATIONAL HONORS

By Laura Vaught  
HSP Graduate Assistant

Several Haslam Scholars received national scholarships or fellowships this year.

Junior **Summer Awad** received the John Lewis Fellowship through Humanity in Action. She will spend the summer at the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta. The program hosts thirty European and American students for an “intensive program about diversity and civil rights in America.”

Junior **Ben Brock** was one of three students from the state of Tennessee to be named a 2015 Goldwater Scholar. The Goldwater Scholarship is awarded to science, math, and engineering students who intend to pursue research careers. Ben plans to use his award to conduct research in scientific computing and computer architecture and compiler design.

Freshman **Joshua Brown** will spend his summer in Amman, Jordan, as part of the Council on International Educational Exchange Study Abroad program. He will study Arabic and participate in Jordanian cultural activities.

Senior **Shivani Goyal** will be joining the 2015 Teach for America Corps at a school in Indianapolis. Teach for America is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate education inequity. Shivani will be using her HSP research on community inequality in Knoxville to inform her work in Indianapolis.

Freshman **David Marsh** received the National Diabetes Scholars Foundation Award, which recognizes high-performing students who “are actively involved in the diabetes community, participate in community and/or extracurricular activities, and who have demonstrated that they are successfully managing the challenges of living with diabetes.”

Senior **R. J. Vogt** received a fellowship through the Princeton in Asia program to work at an English-language newspaper (the *Myanmar Times*) in Yangon, Myanmar. The mission of Princeton in Asia is to “promote good will and understanding and to facilitate in every way the free interchange of the best ideals in the civilizations of both East and West.”



## REMEMBERING TINA RIEDINGER

By Brittany Vasquez, HSP alumna

When I first met Dr. Tina Riedinger, I was getting on her lake boat with hopes that the day would turn into a moment to remember. I had been invited, along with a previous Haslam Scholars class, by her husband, Dr. Lee Riedinger, to attend a lake day. It was a moment to catch up with one of our favorite professors, eat some wonderful food, and hopefully all learn to water ski—or, at the very least, enjoy a day of boating and tubing. I can remember Dr. Lee assuring us that he was the best water ski instructor on the lake, and Dr. Tina emphatically agreed. I held tight to my doubts until my third run of the day. I was standing on skis, looking ahead of me as Dr. Lee gave me the thumbs-up and, on the shore, Dr. Tina waved and smiled back at me.

In telling this story, I realized that the most distinct memory I hold of Tina is of the first time I met her. I can vividly remember her generosity and enthusiasm for the day, for the ability to share one of her and her husband’s passions with eager students. She related stories of her and Lee’s time studying abroad and their experience through Semester at Sea. Weaving beautiful details of the wonders their eyes had witnessed, her excitement for life bubbled through her veins and flowed from her heart. The experience was more than just her and Lee’s trip around the world on a boat for a semester, and her words expressed that. They had been lucky enough to be able to teach students throughout the trip, and this remained the most important aspect of the entire experience.

Reminiscing on this day remains emotional. When I heard of Tina’s illness, I was perusing Facebook and noticed the influx of comments on Lee’s wall. Being in medical school, I could see in the multitudes of photos that Tina’s health was declining without ever having to read a word written by the hundreds of friends. To this day, my Facebook feed remains populated with hopes, wishes, condolences, and memories for, of, and about Tina.

My fondness for the Riedingers may invariably be tied to my ability to water ski and my fondness for the water, but I like to think that this fondness runs deeper. It is a comment on the type of people that they both are. Tina was a generous individual who shared her husband with the UT family for multiple years. She was a teacher whose smile glistened and glimmered in the sun when I related to her my newest acquired skill of water skiing, an educated woman who knew the value of hard work, accomplishment, and a bit of luck as expressed in her memories of her Semester at Sea. I could not in a simple sentence sum up my own appreciation and admiration for Tina, and an inundation of electronics cannot accomplish this either. However, I can say that any time I stand on water skis and see the beautiful world speed past, I will fondly remember my time with Tina and Lee and all the lifelong lessons they have taught me as true educators of this vast, wondrous world.

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