

The Presidential Scholars Program: An Examination of the Program's Mission and Its Fidelity to that Mission

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The Presidential Scholars Program

An Examination of the Program's Mission and Its Fidelity to that Mission

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Prologue

The Presidential Scholars Program is a full tuition, merit-based Scholarship program at Boston College. The Boston College website describes the Program in the following way:

Each year since 1991, a select group of young men and women of outstanding talent and character have come to Boston College to embark on an integrated honors educational experience designed to embody the best of the University and its Jesuit heritage of educational excellence in service to society - the Boston College Presidential Scholars Program... The Presidential Scholars Program provides this select group of students from across the University with a strong framework for their exploration, starting with a sequence of three summer programs focusing on service, internationalism and profession. These give the Scholars the opportunity to integrate course work with personal experience, and weave the University experience into a seamless whole.

When I entered Boston College in the fall of 2003 as an incoming Presidential Scholar this statement describes rather eloquently how I would have described the Program. Three years later, as I prepared to begin my senior year at The Heights, I realized that the PSP was the one unifying theme in my college career yet, after three years I still did not really know what the Program was. This is almost contradictory because I had lived the Program for many years, and it had acted as the foundation for my whole college experience but I still felt that I did not really know what role the Program played in the larger university. Yes, I knew what the Program was and what it entailed, but I could not really articulate its mission or its vision. I did not know who came up with the idea for the Program or how it was funded. I felt that these questions needed addressing, they needed exploration. What was needed was a history of the early years of the Program that outlined who the key players were, what their motivation was, and how

they turned these ambitions into a reality. Additionally, this suggested that an examination and analysis of the Program thus far needed to be done. There needed to be an analysis of how the Program was realized and whether it lived up to the original ambitions of the key players and whether it was meeting the goals that had been set out for it. Hence, the topic for my senior thesis was born.

Introduction

When Ignatius of Loyola and nine other men founded the Society of Jesus in 1540, there did not seem to be anything distinguishable about this new order. The order valued flexibility, mobility, and shared a vision of God's direct presence in all things. The Society's mission statement was anything but clear: it was simply to serve God in all ways. Drawing on his life experiences, Ignatius shaped his order into a very broad-minded and dedicated Company. Although it may be somewhat presumptuous to compare the beginning of the Presidential Scholars Program to that of the Society of Jesus, the comparison is in many ways appropriate. Of course there is the obvious connection that the PSP is centered in the very tradition that Ignatius and his followers founded, but on a deeper level, the two Companies began in a very similar fashion. The Presidential Scholars Program commenced with a clear sense of purpose: to elevate the academic standards of the University by educating, training, and forming leaders. However, this purpose was not articulated clearly in a mission statement. In fact, the Program lacked a formal mission statement altogether. What was clear was that the small group of individuals who initiated the Program was confident that the promises of the Program would be met and add value to the University.

Now, more than 15 years old, the Presidential Scholars Program has successfully established itself as a significant part of the academic landscape at Boston College. With over 10 years of graduated Presidential Scholars, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the mission of the Program and to take a good look at whether it has lived up to its potential.

The objective of this paper is to evaluate the Program's fidelity to its mission. This objective is met with two major challenges. First, despite the lack of a formal mission statement a mission must be inferred and articulated out of the vague promise of the Program. Second, that mission must be analyzed and evaluated in relation to the Program.

In order to infer and articulate a mission it is necessary to begin with a look at the Ignatian tradition. Because the Presidential Scholars Program is part of a Jesuit University, its mission must be, in some way, connected to the history, philosophy, and culture of the Society of Jesus. The next step in this process is to look at the very beginning of the Program itself. Examining what the Program grew out of, how it was conceived and implemented, and what were the initial goals, visions, and expectations for the Program should give a good indication of its mission.

Evaluating the Presidential Scholars Program is a difficult task because it cannot be done quantitatively. Although an effective quantitative analysis is beneficial in an examination of a program like this, it falls far short of a true evaluation. The reason being is that a program like the Presidential Scholars cannot be reduced down to numbers, facts, and figures. So much of what the Program produces is intangible, unquantifiable, thus only a qualitative analysis can gauge the Program's progress. Moreover, the Scholars themselves must be qualitatively analyzed. In essence this Program is centered on the people in it, and how the members of the Program affect the greater community at Boston College. Furthermore, the Scholars of the past, present, and future are who what make-up the totality of the Program and so all these individuals contribute to the overall mission of the Program.

This paper examines the history of the Program from that history articulates a mission statement of the Presidential Scholars. It then looks at who is offered admission to the Program, how current Scholars feel about the Program as well as what they contribute to Boston College at large, and what kind of alumni the Program produces. Ultimately, the Scholars are the ones who must uphold the mission of the Program, and so it is the examination of the Scholars that reveals the Program's fidelity to its mission.

Chapter 1

The Ignatian Heritage: Finding a Mission in a 450 year old Tradition

As a Jesuit University, Boston College's identity is largely defined by its Catholic heritage and the Ignatian tradition. Presidential Scholars Program, as a part of Boston College, is inextricably linked to this Catholic identity and Ignatian tradition. The PSP is an exemplification of Ignatian ideals of leadership and education in their highest forms through a Scholarship program. But what exactly are these Ignatian ideals surrounding education and leadership? A Jesuit education, like most other forms of education, is a training process. There is an acquisition of knowledge that takes place that results in the learning of technical and analytical skills. A Jesuit education distinguishes itself from other educational models in its emphasis on formation. A Jesuit education is meant to form the entirety of the individual. This wholistic process is meant to equip the individual not only with core knowledge, but also a keen self-awareness and an ability to be a thinking, feeling, and effective human being. Out of this formation process grows the Ignatian ideal of leadership. The Jesuits turn to their greatest leader for inspiration: Jesus. The Jesuits see Jesus as the epitome of whole formation. He was virtuosic, loving, heroic, daring, innovative, self-aware, and most of all serving. Jesus was a strong leader because he completely embodied these characteristics. In a word, he was a servant-leader. The Presidential Scholars Program mission is founded on these ideals of formation and servant-leadership.

Like most other educational models, a Jesuit education seeks to prepare its pupils for the “real world.” This includes preparation for career life and enabling them to be economically successful. The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, in its document *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of a Jesuit Education*, explains “While it respects the integrity of academic disciplines, the concern of Jesuit education is preparation for life” (20). One of the cornerstones in Jesuit education is the belief that an education serves a life, and that an education is a preparation for that life. Although academic pursuits are respected and encouraged, these pursuits are a means and not an end. The emphasis is on equipping students with the technical and analytical knowledge to be successful professionally. The education is therefore a vehicle to a good life.

A Jesuit education begins to distinguish itself in its commitment to provide its students with the best possible life. This excellence goes far beyond the classroom and into all aspects of the pupil’s personal life. Mitchell states that “(Jesuit education) is person-centered. No matter how large or complex the institution, the individual is important and given as much personal attention as humanly possible.” (2) This idea is also captured in the mantra *cura personalis* meaning “personal care.” Perhaps a better translation however, is care of the person. This formation is concerned with the development of the person; the professional and technical development is located within the overarching personal development. There is a keen awareness that pupils are not simply people to be trained, they are humans that need to be developed.

The Apostolate states that, “God is especially revealed in the mystery of the human person, ‘created in the image and likeness of God’; Jesuit education, therefore,

probes the meaning of human life and is concerned with the total formation of each student as an individual” (*Characteristics of Jesuit Education* 17). This model of viewing each individual as a reflection of the Divine informs all aspects of the Jesuit educational experience. All aspects of the individual are nurtured and loved; all talents are developed to their fullest potential; and all gifts are appreciated and utilized. The Apostolate summarizes this sentiment saying “In Jesuit education, the criterion of excellence is applied to all areas of school life: the aim is the fullest possible development of every dimension of the person” (38).

One reason for this overarching goal of Jesuit education is the belief that full development enables a kind of personal freedom. When the individual is given the opportunity to fully explore and fulfill his full potential he is essential free to be himself. This freedom is important because, as John O’Malley says in his article *How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education*, “...it is of the utmost importance for every human being to attain personal, inward freedom, so as to be able to follow the movements toward light and life ...to allow us to live our lives in ways that satisfy the deepest yearnings of our hearts” (4). Developing the person liberates the individual to live a meaningful life. Thus, a Jesuit education not only provides the technical training to be successful, it provides a development of the person that makes that success meaningful. It teaches the individual how to derive joy from that success.

Jesuit education also seeks to infuse a sense of spirituality throughout the personal development of the individual. Because of its Catholic roots, this infusion of Spirituality is often referred to in terms of Catholic spirituality. However, Jesuit education is not so

much concerned with Catholic catechism as it is with acknowledging the presence of a greater spiritual force. The Apostolate states the first characteristic of Jesuit education as:

World-Affirming

Jesuit education acknowledges God as the Author of all reality, all truth and knowledge. God is present and working in all creation: in nature, in history and in persons. Jesuit education, therefore, affirms the radical goodness of the world “charged with the grandeur of God.” And it regards every element of creation as worthy of study and contemplation, capable of endless exploration (17).

The development of the individual within the Ignatian heritage does not end with the individual, but continues until all things are recognized as an extension of the divine through the acknowledgement that God is in all things. The Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Boston College stresses this point stating, “This wisdom centers on the conviction that God deals directly with any man or woman who seriously seeks meaning and direction in life and that God can be found everywhere.” This recognition of the Spirit in all aspects of life is both the most important goal and the pinnacle of Jesuit education.

Jesuit education is both formative and uniquely transformative. The physical training, personal development, and spiritual recognition create within the individual a dramatic change. Jesuit education is not simply meant to enhance the individual in these specific ways, but to bring all of these enhancements together to create within the individual something greater than the sum of the parts.

The transformation of the individual through Jesuit education is not an end point, indeed it is but the beginning. It is from this beginning, this transformation that the individual engages the world. Implicit within this engagement is the commencement of

leadership training. The entire Jesuit educational process is a means of creating good leaders. However, a good leader has certain characteristics. In his work *Heroic Leadership* Chris Lowney describes four basic qualities of Jesuit leadership as:

Self-awareness
Ingenuity
Love
Heroism (9)

Lowney argues that these are the “four pillars of success” and have been the foundation to the Society’s 450 year history and to its great accomplishments during that time. Moreover, these pillars of success are instilled in every member of the Order. Lowney comments, “Jesuits trained every recruit to lead, convinced that all leadership begins with *self*-leadership” (9). Lowney italicizes the word “self” in this passage because he wants to stress that leadership begins with an internal examination. The individual must first fully understand who he is, what he stands for, and what he believes. Only through having a strong sense of self can a person effectively and rightly lead others. It is no wonder then that self-awareness is at the top of Lowney’s list of the pillars of success. It is also why a Jesuit education that transforms the individual into a greater self is tantamount in the formation of leaders.

The above is but a brief sketch of a servant leader but this sketch accurately depicts what should come from a Jesuit education and what a servant-leader should be. A Jesuit education should be formative and transformative. The pupils should both expand and change in who they are in a physical/technical sense, a personal sense, and a spiritual sense. They should strive for excellence in all things. This formation and transformation

of the whole human being should create a servant-leader who is self-aware, ingenuous, loving, heroic, and daring. This is the beginning of the Mission of the Presidential Scholars Program. The Program must educate its Scholars in a way that forms and transforms them into servant-leaders.

The Ignatian heritage is a crucial part of the Mission of the Presidential Scholars Program, but it is only a starting point for this Mission. To go beyond this starting point requires a look at the Program's beginnings. What made the Program possible and who conceived the Program are two important questions that need addressing. The answers to these two questions establish a clearer vision of the Program and hence clarify its mission.

Chapter 2

The Wall Street Council: The Presidential Scholars Funding

Although Boston College had a large presence on Wall Street during the 1980's, there was no actual database or organization that kept track of this presence. In 1988, Father J. Donald Monan S.J., the President of Boston College at that time, spearheaded an effort to get a clearer view of exactly how many connections BC had on Wall Street. Working with Geoffrey Boisi, a member of the class of 1969 and senior partner at Goldman Sachs and William Voute, whose children had gone to BC and who was the Executive Vice President at Salomon Brothers produced a list of over 1,000 names that were either BC alumni, had family connections to BC, or were friends of the University. From this list Monan, Boisi and Voute created an organization that connected the friends and alumni of BC from across the Street and named it the Wall Street Council. Its purpose was to get people excited about their connection to Boston College and to strengthen this connection. It also organized and assisted BC alumni as they progressed in their careers. A third function was to act as a fundraiser for the University. Shortly after the Council was formed, it hosted the first annual Wall Street Council Tribute Dinner to Boston College. This enormously successful fundraiser, which today raises over 1.5 million dollars annually, became the source of funding for the Presidential Scholars Program.

With over a thousand financiers connected to BC in the New York area, it is easy to see why Monan, Boisi, and Voute founded the Wall Street Council. Figuring out the structure and logistics of the Council however, took leadership initiative. Monan credits

Boisi and Voute as the key leaders saying, “The two people who started the Council were Jeff Boisi and Bill Voute. Boisi was a General Partner at Goldman Sachs in charge of Mergers and Acquisitions and Voute was with Solomon Brothers. Each of them had a person who helped them organize the Council: Pat Kelly was with Salomon and John Powers with Goldman Sachs.” These four men formed a nucleus that was the driving force in the formation and the success of the Council and the Tribute Dinner.

The Wall Street Council had two primary goals. According to Patrick Kelly the Council strove to “elevate the presence of Boston College on Wall Street”. Second, it wanted to get alumni to recommit and reconnect to the University. During the conception of the Council, these two goals helped to shape and determine most of the Programming elements that eventually developed.

The Council developed a strategy that achieved both goals. The very existence of the Council was a primary step in this strategy because the Council created a forum in where Boston College alumni already on the Street could meet, network, and exchange ideas. A speaker series program was initiated to encourage intellectual dialogue and provide advice and assistance to younger members as well. Boisi commented that, “Our strategy was to identify senior leaders who had connections to BC, and then we tried to identify young and upcoming stars. They became the founding members of the Council.” The Council was a way of helping BC alumni become standout professionals at their respective firms. The hope was that as more BC alumni were identified as prominent and successful, the BC name would increase in value across the Street.

The concept of mentoring and advising younger members was important from the very beginning of the Council. It was even evident in the structure of the early leadership

of the Council. When the Council was being formed, Voute and Boisi took on most of the responsibilities of leadership, while Kelly and Powers observed and learned. Patrick Kelly explained that, “No one had specific roles but my role was to listen and learn and try to help form what we were trying to create.” Each member of the Council worked together to take steps towards creating a Boston College community on Wall Street, whether as an active leader, an observant participant, or a member who was learning as much as possible.

The Council also took steps to aid the University itself. Council members provided guidance to students in the Carroll School of Management as well as Economics majors (or other undergrads who showed an interest in financial services). The Council assisted in jobs placement for BC grads through interview training and teaching students about the different opportunities on Wall Street. The Council also worked with faculty on the academic curriculum and on how to better prepare students for work in financial services.

Like all relationships, an alumnus’s relationship to his *alma mater* changes with time. In the case of Boston College, it was observed that during the first few years out, a BC grad feels a strong connection through social and athletic activities. However, as time passes, this connection shifts away from the social/athletic and to the professional. Therefore, the Wall Street Council became not only an organization to elevate the name of Boston College on Wall Street; it became a conduit through which alumni in financial services could reconnect to their *alma mater*. All the networking, advisement, and dialogue that occurred through the Council were also a reflection back onto the members themselves, thus strengthening their identification with BC.

It is not surprising then, that the major by-product of the Wall Street Council was the funds it raised for the University. In many ways the Wall Street Council is a physical manifestation of everything that Boston College stands for. It embodies the mantra “Ever to excel” in its efforts to constantly elevate BC and its members in the financial services industry, it has a keen sense of community, and it is active in giving back. One of the first things the Council did was organize a fund raising dinner. After the first few dinners were very successful, it became clear that the Council would be able to significantly help Boston College in a financial manner.

Led by Geoff Boisi, the Council decided to create a merit based Scholarship program that would be supported by the fundraising efforts of the Wall Street Council. When the Wall Street Council was first being formed, Boston College had recently stepped onto the national stage as an athletic powerhouse. The Council recognized that the athletic Scholarships had significantly helped build the athletic program. Geoff Boisi commented that, “the strategy committee of the Wall Street Council saw that (BC) was attracting great athletes, but we wanted to help focus on raising the bar in terms of the academic profile of the school. If we could give athletic Scholarships, why not go and find X number of star academic ‘athletes’ so to speak.” The Council hoped to help build the academic program of the University using a similar model that the athletic program had used. An athletic Scholarship is, essentially, a merit-based Scholarship for sports. The Council wanted to support a merit-based Scholarship for intellectuals.

Many colleges offer merit-based academic Scholarships, but the Council recognized that simply paying tuition would not accomplish what it wanted to achieve. In the same way that an athletic program offers its athletes coaching, trainers, strength

training opportunities, and all the necessary equipment to succeed, the Council wanted to establish a program that would fully support the intellectual development of its members. The Council borrowed from an already existing model: the Morehead Scholars Program of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The Morehead Scholars covers the cost of tuition, room, board, and living expenses as well as four summer programs. Geoff Boisi was familiar with the Morehead Scholars Program, and he believed that that model was an excellent platform from which to begin. The Boston College Presidential Scholars Program would include a financial aid award, summer programs, and a speaker series.

In 1991, after a few years of successful fundraising and about a year's worth of planning, the first class of Presidential Scholars entered the gates of Boston College. Upon reflection the creation of the Presidential Scholars Program is a classic story of the spirit of Boston College. Boston College is always looking for ways to improve and better itself as well as ways to give back. The Wall Street Council ended up doing both. It was initially created to support the BC financial services community in New York and ended up becoming the financial backer of one of Boston College's most important academic programs. Not only did the Council make possible this program, it made it possible in only a few years. Essentially, the Wall Street Council created a program for the University that was outside the scope of its primary function, but because of its importance to the University became a significant aspect of the Council.

The Presidential Scholars Program was made financially possible by the generosity of the Wall Street Council. However, it is important to keep in mind that the

Council did not put money into the Program to get something out of it: this was not seen as a feeder program to Wall Street. The Council wanted to raise the academic bar, across all disciplines, at The Heights. This is extremely important in relation to the Program's mission because raising the bar intellectually was the first motivational push in creating the Program. Therefore, the Program's mission is built on the Ignatian tradition but it is more specifically involved in elevating Boston College's academic profile. This is one step closer to the mission of the Program but it too is very general and requires a deeper look at how the Program was conceived and what steps were taken to actually implement the Program.

Chapter 3

The Conception of a Merit Scholarship

Throughout the 20th century Boston College made great strides as an educational institution. By the early 1990's it had transformed itself into a nationally recognized school, thanks in a large part to its growth as a research university. Despite BC's success, it was having difficulty recruiting the very top high school graduates nationally. Previously in Boston College's history, school officials had traveled across the country offering merit Scholarships to promising high school graduates in order to attract better applicants to The Heights. As the College continued its ascendance through the 1980's and into the 1990's the need to recruit better and brighter high school graduates turned many to the idea of merit Scholarships. The opportunity to actually create a merit Scholarship came not from the University itself, but from the Wall Street Council. It was the fundraising of the Wall Street Council and the leadership from within the Council that catalyzed the creation of the Presidential Scholars Program and helped to define its initial character. However, the Council created the Program for the University. The implementation of the Program and its structure and function within the context of the greater university further define the Program and help to reveal its mission.

It is important to clarify that the Council was dedicated first and foremost to the University in its fundraising efforts. Father Monan explains "They really wanted to be supportive of high quality education at Boston College. They themselves proposed that it would be something for students." Rather than creating a general donation to Boston

College, the Council wanted their efforts and generosity to have a direct effect on the student body at BC. Thus, the idea of a merit Scholarship emerged as a means of creating an opportunity to bring exceptional students to The Heights and thus have a direct effect on improving the academic profile of the school. The Program not only offered the very best students an attractive financial package, it also helped fill the student body with motivated, intellectually curious students.

At this time in the University's history, it had gained national recognition but was still looking to improve and become a more competitive institution. Father Monan explains that, "We did not feel that we were getting enough of the very top students in the country." Although BC was well known, it could not compete with many other elite American universities. Convincing the top 2% of graduating high school seniors to come to Boston College was often a difficult argument to win when contending with the likes of Harvard, Yale, or even Georgetown. Often a financial aid package that included paying for tuition helped to make this argument convincing. As Monan says, "A lot of universities were doing this through merit Scholarship programs." UNC's Morehead Scholars Program often attracted the best and the brightest to Chapel Hill. If the MSP could bring the best to Chapel Hill, a PSP could surely do the same for The Heights.

Boston College already had a well known Honors program. It therefore made sense that the Presidential Scholars Program would be an outgrowth of this already academically selective body. Father Monan commented that "The Honors Program was a component from the beginning. A lot of the matrix of an academic program already existed. We wanted (the Presidential Scholars Program) to be across all schools, to use the honors program as a base, but to have its own head." Opening the merit Scholarship

to all the undergraduate schools was a clear indication that the Council was not just concerned with turning out future employees of Wall Street. Boisi commented that, “We thought that a (small) percentage would be interested in finance... But we were looking for scientists, teachers, nurses. It was not just the financial community we were trying to serve. The original purpose was to raise the academic profile of the University overall. We were looking for the best people, not just business people.” The Council was dedicated to enhancing the overall academic standard at Boston College, and they saw this Scholarship program as a way of attracting and educating some of the best young minds across the nation.

Those who conceived the Presidential Scholars Program, namely Boisi, Voute and Monan, were expecting to bring the best and brightest to The Heights, but they did not simply want narrow minded academics. When asked what kind of Scholars the Program was trying to attract, Monan replied, “We were hoping to find people with broader interests and broader leadership capabilities, than in narrowly intellectual interests.” What the Council envisioned were potential leaders. Boisi also commented that academic knowledge needed to be balanced with “functional knowledge that will prepare you to be effective out in the world.” They wanted the Presidential Scholars to be very intelligent, but they also wanted to attract a group with a wide range of interests, who was charismatic, passionate, well-spoken, and interesting.

Given this desired profile, it was obvious that a financial aid package that only included tuition assistance would not be enough to draw in these potential Scholars. Hence, the summer programs became an integral part of the Program. Largely inspired by the Morehead Scholars, the three summer programs would include a summer of

service, of international dimensions, and of career development. Furthermore, these programs would all be part of the PSP package. The summer programs also served a dual purpose, first to attract Scholars with a broad range of interests and also to create multiple opportunities for exploration of those interests.

The first summer program, which takes place after freshman year, was devoted to service. Aligned with the Ignatian tradition of service to others the summer of service was intended to expose the Scholars to social ills and allow them to explore how issues such as poverty, homelessness, and crime, exist within our society. The already established PULSE program of Boston College would facilitate the service summer program. This connection to the PULSE program provided a successful structure to the service summer, but also plugged the Scholars into a network devoted to service that would be with the Scholars for the rest of their time at The Heights. This created the opportunity for continued service throughout the scholar's college career. Also, rather than sending the Scholars to third world countries where these issues are often extreme, the PULSE Program kept the Scholars in Boston. In this way, the Scholars would learn that social ills are not a foreign, removed problem; these social issues are imbedded very close to home.

The second summer program would be devoted to International dimensions. As the idea for the Presidential Scholars was taking shape, this summer program was rather vague in both structure and content. Although it was eventually decided that the International Summer would be an exploration of the History, Culture, and Politics of France, from the beginning there was a definite goal of instilling a sense of globalism in the Scholars. With the emergence of globalism as such a strong and almost dominant

force in the 20th and 21st century, it was clear that future leaders would need to have a set of tools and experiences within the international arena. The International summer program was aimed at immersing the Scholars in a foreign culture and country and providing the tools to really explore an international climate.

The final summer program was to be one that was based on career development. The Internship Program, as it was eventually named, began as a summer internship with different financial firms on Wall Street. Eventually, the PSP expanded the Internship Program into more of a grant writing competition. Because the Scholars had such diverse interests, the Internship Program would allow the Scholars to write a proposal for an internship anywhere in the world and the Program would provide funding for it. Although the Internship Program did develop into something quite different than just a summer on Wall Street, the focus of this summer program was to develop some sense of what the Scholars wanted to do for a career and give them a kind of springboard experience into that field.

Obviously with such an attractive financial aid package and the opportunities from the summer programs there are certain expectations of the Scholars themselves. The academic performance of the Scholars is monitored and a GPA of 3.6 or above must be maintained. Also, the Program expects its Scholars to behave in a manner that always reflects positively on the Program and on Boston College. However, when the Program was first being conceived there was an effort made to allow the Scholars as much freedom as possible. There were only these basic and broad expectations. This lack of direction was deliberate. Monan said, “(The Program) was principally aimed at benefiting the Scholars.” The program was meant to attract motivated, intelligent,

successful young people to Boston College and then support them in their broad interests throughout their college careers. The program was meant to nurture a variety of dreams and ambitions and to present the Scholars with multiple opportunities that would eventually help them become successful academics, professionals, or civil servants.

By 1990, the idea for the Presidential Scholars Program was solidifying into a concrete program that was realized with the first incoming class of Presidential Scholars in 1991. With 10 Scholars, the Program had the promise of becoming a substantial presence of campus. The success and generosity of the Wall Street Council created an amazing opportunity that fulfilled a crucial need within the University but ultimately it was the Scholars themselves who benefited most from this integrated merit Scholarship. With the conception fully realized with the incoming freshman Scholars in '91 the Presidential Scholars Program had taken a huge step.

The conception and implementation of the Program helps to clarify the mission of the Program even further. The Program would enhance the academic profile of the University and it would do this through attracting the very best and brightest of high school graduates from across the nation. The Program's attractiveness would come from its integrated summer programs, speaker series, and the promise of a close community of fellow Scholars. In effect this would allow BC to compete with the most elite colleges across the nation. These Scholars however would not be one-dimensional intellectuals; they would have many interests, and many dimensions to their personality.

Chapter 4

The Vision of the Presidential Scholars Program

As the Presidential Scholars Program developed from an idea into a reality, the vision of the Program developed with it. The initial vision of the Program was to bring some of the best high school graduates to The Heights. It then became clearer that this program would revolve around not just bringing bright students to BC, but well-rounded individuals with high potential for future leadership. The vision crystallized into a program that would recruit the top students, provide them with an exceptional and integrated education coupled with numerous opportunities, and ultimately create leaders that would engage and serve the world. Although the vision of the PSP began as a recruiting tool, it extended well beyond just a means of recruiting. The vision also was imbedded in the notions and ideals of Jesuit education and leadership within the Ignatian tradition. Ultimately, the vision is the driving force in the Program.

The initial vision of the Program revolved around recruiting. Over the years, the admissions office tracked the numbers (both in terms of quantity and competitive quality) of students who applied, who were accepted and who eventually came to Boston College. With the rise in influence from reports such as *Top Colleges* by US News and World Report during the past few decades it became more and more important to Boston College to increase the competitive quality of its undergraduate student body. The

Program was meant to act as a catalyst for this increase; jump-starting the effort to attract better and brighter high school graduates.

This vision in many ways explains and clarifies the early development of the Program. Although it was started and funded as a way of helping to increase the academic profile of the undergraduate schools, the Program developed as an academic experience that was extremely attractive to high school graduates. With not only a financial aid package, but also integrated summer programs, and special recognition as a member of an elite program within the University, the Presidential Scholars Program had everything that would attract an especially bright and promising individual.

The Presidential Scholars Program did not just want to be an attractive option; it wanted to be the most attractive. One way of benchmarking whether this initial vision was being fulfilled was seeing what opportunities Presidential Scholars were turning down. Patrick Kelly commented that, “The vision from my perspective was let’s try to go out and get X number of students a year who would have gone to Harvard or Princeton and bring them to BC.” If Scholars were turning down the most competitive undergraduate programs in the nation and enrolling at Boston College, this would be a clear sign that the Presidential Scholars Program was doing the right thing in terms of attracting the most competitive applicants.

This sentiment of attracting the best applicants was tempered by the Ignatian tradition of the University. Just because Harvard or Princeton believes an applicant is desirable does not necessarily mean that the same would apply at Boston College. As Geoff Boisi said, “When we talk about the Jesuit nature of (the Program), we are talking about excellence and rigor, but we are also talking about service to mankind.” This

service component was an important aspect of the PSP vision from the beginning. The Presidential Scholars wanted the best minds, but the Program wanted Scholars with minds and souls.

Intrinsic within the vision of the Presidential Scholars Program is its connection to the University as a Jesuit University. Although this connection is taken into account when recruiting Scholars, it is arguably more important once the Scholars arrive at The Heights. Because Boston College provides a Jesuit education to its students, the Presidential Scholars Program seeks to provide an enriched Jesuit education to its Scholars. For example, the summer of service is derived from the Ignatian concept of service to others, and the Jesuit mantra “men and women for others.” The Jesuit aspect of the PSP vision was articulated very succinctly in the *Presidential Scholars Program Highlights of the 2005-2006 Academic Year*:

Since its beginning, Jesuit education has recognized the important of identifying and nurturing young people of exceptional promise, seeing them as potential leaders destined to shape the future of society, as Jesuits themselves have done throughout their history. The Boston College Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1990 to continue this legacy in a unique way, by offering a select company of the most highly accomplished students an integrated, four year educational experience designed to inoculate in them the Jesuit ethic of servant leadership. (2)

The passage points out two very important parts of the PSP vision. It touches on the idea of Jesuit education, but it also draws the direct connection between education and leadership. The Program envisions its Scholars not just as educated elite, but as future leaders in service to others. The Scholars are meant to be the movers and shapers of the future world. There are many merit Scholarships and leadership programs, but

what distinguishes the Presidential Scholars is this component of Jesuit education and Jesuit leadership. The Ignatian heritage is the mode through which the Scholars come to understand not only their gifts and abilities, but their role in society and how they can help to change and better the world they live in. The director of the Presidential Scholars Program, Dr. Dennis J. Sardella went into further detail concerning the Jesuit nature of the Program in a speech he gave in 1997 entitled *The Boston College Presidential Scholars Program: An Ignatian Vision*:

(The Presidential Scholars Program) was created to embody the Ignatian vision in a program directed to the best and brightest students—the ones who often get siphoned away by the great research universities, where they never have the opportunity to encounter the full educational experience. The Program is structured as it is to encourage and facilitate your growth in both academic and spiritual areas.

The Ignatian vision is infused into the overall vision of the Presidential Scholars Program. The ideals of service, love, excellence, risk taking, and adapting to new environments and challenges are all part of the Presidential Scholars Program vision.

These ideals and this vision have heavily informed the Program and they can be seen both in how the Program was structured but also in the aspirations of the Program. In the same speech, Dr. Sardella outlines his expectations for the academic progress of the Scholars. He builds a framework around the four years of college. Freshman year is a time of skill building and honing talents already developed during high school. Sophomore year should include the beginning of some sort of research or development of a plan towards career development. Sardella says junior year “ought to mark your serious entry into independent research.” Finally, senior year should culminate with the

production of a senior thesis that somehow incorporates the skills developed and build off of previous work.

Sardella is less clear concerning the spiritual expectations of the Scholars because it is almost impossible to create a “formula” for spiritual development. Sardella stresses that spiritual development is based on the constant process of self-discovery and building self awareness. He offered these words:

“What happens ...is not so much that we speak to God, telling him all about ourselves- which He already knows anyway- but that God speaks to us. The desert experience is one of revelation, an epiphany. What then does God reveal to us in the desert? Not so much things about himself...God reveals to us our true identity.”

The spiritual development within the Presidential Scholars program is a search for self-identity. The program has a vision of creating leaders within the Ignatian heritage and a large part of this heritage involves self-knowledge. The Jesuit leader knows himself better than anyone else. Thus the Program seeks to provide opportunities for the Scholars to deepen this understanding. For example, the summer program are based on a framework of getting to know the world (i.e. through service, international immersion, and career development) but equally important in the summer programs is the spiritual development that takes place and the self-identity that is gained from these experiences. These programs are structured in a way that allows the Scholars to reflect back on themselves. The Scholars are asked to consider how they are part of poverty and other social ills during their summer of service. Likewise, in learning about a foreign culture and history the Scholars also learn about their own culture and history through comparison. Sardella summarizes this spiritual development saying, “Each experience

encourages you to construct a coherent picture of yourself, so that all your commitments and actions are based on inner convictions, like spokes of a wheel, transmitting power from a single hub to the points at which it touches the world.” The Presidential Scholars program is built to instill a sense of self-identity and self-awareness in each of the Scholars. This self-knowledge is a source of strength which, when coupled with the technical virtuosity developed within the academic setting, can have a global impact. It then becomes clear that the Program’s vision of self-aware, virtuous leaderships is organically informed by the Jesuit nature of education and leadership.

Although Dr. Sardella says that it is both academic and spiritual, the PSP vision includes also the social. Like the Ignatian vision, the PSP vision is a wholistic one: it strives to incorporate all aspects of the person. The social aspect of the Program is much less tangible because it evades the structure of the Program and lives organically within the lives of the Scholars.

The Scholars are not just peers and classmates, these relationships develop into deep bonds of friendship and have even developed into bonds of marriage. The Presidential Scholars Program takes on a very personal role in the lives of the Scholars. Bonds are formed and relationships are built that last a lifetime. Through the personal interactions the network goes far beyond the professional, and the Program becomes almost like a second family.

When asked to articulate his vision of the Presidential Scholars Program Father Monan said, “Boston College wants to produce leaders who are endowed with great intelligence, practical wisdom, and depth of understanding. (The Presidential Scholars

Program) was a way of attracting such people and to form them into such leaders.” This statement is as close as anyone came to truly articulating in a succinct manner the vision of the Presidential Scholars Program. At its very core this is what the Program is all about. This statement however, is a distilled version of the Program’s vision; it is not its mission.

Essentially, the mission of the Program is the role that it plays in making this vision a reality. How will the Program produce leaders endowed with great intelligence, practical wisdom, and depth of understanding? How will the Jesuit ideal of service be infused into the education and leadership of the Program? What will the Program do to attract and form these future leaders? The mission of the Program answers these questions. The first chapters of this paper present the mission of the Program in a broad and somewhat inexplicit way. By pulling together all the conclusions made thus far, one creates an explicit mission. At its very core, the mission of the Presidential Scholars Program can be found in the following five statements:

- Attract the best and brightest high school graduates who also demonstrate a capacity for deep compassion and great leadership potential.
- Provide Scholars with a premier Jesuit education that demands not only a development of virtuosic skill, but an application of those skills through servant-leadership.
- Challenge Scholars to shift from a self-centered world view to an other-centered world view through the interaction with a wide range of peoples and experiences
- Add value to the greater Boston College community so that the privileges and opportunities derived from the Program propagate beyond the limits of the Program
- Create a community of Scholars dedicated to carrying out the mission of the Presidential Scholars Program

These mission statements describe in a very broad sense how the Presidential Scholars Program makes its vision a reality and fulfills its potential. The entire structure of the Program is designed to fulfill these mission statements. Looking at the structure of the Program alone is the very first step in assessing whether the Program is fulfilling its mission. It is clear that the three summer Programs, the integration of the Boston College Honors Program with the PSP, the evening speaker series, and the encouragement for Scholars to get involved on Campus all demonstrate a fidelity to the PSP mission. Examining the Scholars themselves is far more important than looking at the structure of the Program when examining the Program's fidelity to its mission. Do the Scholars actively take part in the mission of the Program? To answer this question requires a critical examination of what kind of Scholars are being accepted into the Program, what the current Scholars are doing, and what the alumni Scholars have done since graduating.

Chapter 5

Future Scholars: The Selection Process

On the Boston College Webpage the Presidential Scholars Program is described as “the premier Scholarship program of its kind.” This program is composed of the very best and brightest graduating high school seniors coming from the top half percent of the national and international applicant pool. But what does it mean to be a “premier Scholarship program” and what does it take to be in the top half percent of the applicant pool? This question can be approached from two perspectives: from the perspective of who the Program produces and/or from who the Program accepts into its fold. If the Program is indeed a premier program with the very best and brightest, it should be producing leaders and Scholars of exceptional caliber. This perspective is explored more in the following chapters. This chapter focuses on the latter perspective: who the Program accepts. But even this perspective is double sided because not only must the Program accept its Scholars; the potential Scholars must accept the Program. In other words, it is not only important to look at the potential Scholars, it is equally important to look at how competitive the Presidential Scholars Program is in relation to its peers.

Because of its expertise in recruiting students, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Program have a very close working relationship. The Admissions office and the Program work together on a long and in depth process of attracting, screening, and ultimately choosing future Scholars. Out of the approximate 30,000

applicants that apply to Boston College each year, the Program has a target of 15 Scholars.

Fifteen out of 30,000; it almost seems like an impossible task. This is exactly one of the reasons why the admissions office needs to be involved in the process. They are not only well equipped to deal with situations like this; they are extremely good at dealing with them. Susan Migliorisi, the Admissions liaison to the Presidential Scholars Program, has been instrumental in coordinating efforts between Admissions and the Program for the past eight years. Although Ms. Migliorisi is the liaison to the Program, she pointed out that all admissions officers contribute to the processing of potential Presidential Scholars Program. It is a process that Admissions takes very seriously and in which it invests a lot of time and energy.

The first stipulation of being considered for the Program is that an applicant must apply for Early Action to Boston College. Although this stipulation has been met with some criticism over the years, the Admissions Office and the Program defend the position to consider only Early Action applicants. The process of attracting and screening potential Scholars is so in-depth that logistically it would be impossible to recruit from the entire applicant pool. This position is both reasonable and logical. First, with BC's policy of Early Action, early acceptance is not binding and therefore an applicant has nothing to lose by applying early. Second, it would be impossible to do the recruiting process justice between April, when regular applications are due and May, when choosing schools are due.

During the reading of the Early Action applications each admissions officer chooses his/her best few applicants. These top applicants are then brought to a committee format where there are usually a total of 150 applicants being considered. Even this number is too large for a single committee, so the admissions officers split into two committees, each committee taking one half of the applicant pool. These two committees then commence a three day discussion comparing the applicants.

Ultimately, the two committees decide which applicants should be invited to Boston College for the PSP Prospective Weekend. From the 150 applicants who are initially brought to committee, the admissions office targets about 50 applicants to be prospective Scholars.

The Prospective Weekend is very much the heart of the recruiting process and it is where the Program really gets involved. This five day experience is an opportunity for the Program/Admissions to get to know the applicants and vice versa. The prospective Scholars learn about the financial package, the summer programs, and the many other opportunities the Program offers. During the weekend the Admissions Office and the Program interview the potential Scholars. This allows the potential Scholars to demonstrate their personality, interests, and talents. The potential Scholars are also required to write an essay, usually in the format of a persuasive essay, to show their writing and analytical skills. These formal aspects, although significant, are only a part of the weekend. The five days is also filled with making friends, getting to know Boston College as well as the city of Boston, going to dinners, hearing speakers, and going to shows like Blue Man Group or the Lion King. A large part of the weekend is seeing how the potential Scholars act informally. The way that they communicate, what kind of spirit

they bring to a group and how they connect with their peers are all important aspects of the recruiting process. Moreover, the Program looks for continuity between the formal and informal. The weekend is an integrated opportunity for the Program to show off what it can offer the potential Scholars for an undergraduate experience while trying to determine who deserves to be part of the Program and who fits with the vision of the Program.

After the Prospective weekend, the committee reconvenes, this time including the Director and the Assistant Director of the PSP. Again, the committee discusses the candidates for several days and finally Scholarships are offered. The Program offers usually somewhere between 20-25 Scholarships in an attempt to end up with a group of 15. It should be noted that over the past few years, less and less Scholarships have been offered as more and more recipients accept their offer.

With such a long and in depth process a very important question remains: What kind of person makes it through such a process? Susan Migliorisi again was instrumental in revealing what the Admissions Office and the Program look for throughout the recruiting process.

The first and most fundamental step is to determine exceptional students. The Admissions Office relies on standard test scores and grades for this step. Obviously very high test scores and very good grades are required. Although there is no official cut off in these two categories, the vast majority of Scholars come from the top national 1% percent in the SAT and get top grades in the best classes their high schools offer (whether that is honors, APs or IB).

These grades and test scores are important, but they are only one step in a long process. The next and perhaps more important thing the admissions looks for is some sort of “spark” to an application. The applicant must communicate a passion and have demonstrated that passion thoroughly. The Program is looking not just for good students, but people with broad interests. That is not to say that the passion cannot be an academic one, often it is, but it must be something above and beyond the applicant’s school work. Susan Migliorisi commented that, “Having passion is definitely something that we end up talking about a lot in committee.” There must be something that clearly sets him/her apart from the pack. When an Admissions Officer is going through thousands of applications, it is that “spark” that will make the officer stop and want to get to know the applicant better. Susan Migliorisi offers this comment:

(It is) that little unique, extra thing that comes through in so many different parts of the application. Essays, recommendations, activities; those are the subjective, intangible things that you cannot quantify. When people ask, “Why was not I invited?” It is very hard to quantify for them, you didn’t have that spark, that extra thing that makes my hair stand on end, and make me say, “I am so intrigued by you.”

It is not enough to simply have great grades and great test scores; a Presidential Scholar must have something more. This plays directly into the Jesuit ideal of magis. Even if an applicant had never heard of the Jesuits or their mantras, the Program is looking to recruit Scholars who have already demonstrated some form of this Jesuit ideal.

The other major component that the committee looks for is, as Migliorisi says, “a generosity of spirit.” This piece also connects to the Jesuit ideal of Scholarship and leadership. This spirit often comes in the form of a dedication to service, but it is not limited to “typical volunteer work.” It could be demonstrated through an interest in

social justice, global issues, or any form of activism. Basically, the committee chooses potential Scholars that care about other human beings and are interested in giving back to humanity.

Once the committee has made its decisions concerning inviting applicants to the PSP weekend, the next step in the recruiting process is crucial. The 50 or so potential Scholars have been thoroughly screened and represent the very best of the applicant pool. The Admissions Office is extremely good at reading applications, but getting to know a potential scholar from a paper application has its limits. The PSP weekend is therefore a crucial part of distinguishing who of the elite 50 applicants should be invited into the Program. There are applicants who do all the “right things” but do them to fill out the resume and be competitive on paper. This doing the right thing for the wrong reason comes out quite clearly in person. Migliorisi said, “You can tell when you meet students. You can tell if they fit with BC and the mission of the Program.” It is through the personal interaction that admissions and the Program are able to really zero in on which potential Scholars are best fit for the Program.

With the final step of the recruiting process completed, those offered a Scholarship must decide whether to accept the offer, or chose another undergraduate experience. At this point, the applicants are no longer competing for a spot with BC and the PSP; the PSP is competing for acceptance of its candidates.

For the most part the Presidential Scholars Program is very competitive and has historically been very good at attracting students away from the very best Universities in the nation. Migliorisi commented that she does not have specific information on the

competitiveness, but anecdotally she has often been surprised to see what schools the Presidential Scholars turn down to come to BC.

To fill in this anecdotal evidence the schools the Scholars of the class of 2010 and the class of 2007 turned down is included in chart form in Appendix A. It should be noted that this comparable chart is not complete and does not show every school at which the Scholars were accepted. The Universities are listed in order of competitiveness according to the US News and World Report rankings as of 2007. The top 25 large universities are included along with the top three small liberal arts schools. This chart helps to illustrate visually how competitive the Program has been in the past few years.

Although this chart is a good indicator of the competitiveness of the Program, it actually understates its competitiveness. First, the chart only includes the top American schools and does not include prestigious international schools such as Oxford or Cambridge, which Scholars have turned down in the past. Second, many Scholars have turned down prestigious niche schools such as Music and Art schools. Some Scholars turned down places at the New England Conservatory, Tisch at NYU, and Eastman School of Music. Third, because of the timeline of when the Program sends out its final decisions (usually sometime in late February to early March) many Scholars accepted before hearing back from other schools. Some of them did not hear back from any of their regular decision schools because of this timetable.

Despite the shortcomings of the comparable chart, it still reveals a good deal of the Program's success at competing with the very best undergraduate educations. Of the Scholars surveyed fully **40%** turned down a top 10 school and **26%** turned down Ivy League Universities. These Scholars were given the option of going to the most

prestigious institutions in the country, but decided to come to Boston College instead. What this indicates is that the Program can compete successfully with the very best universities in the United States. The Scholars view the Presidential Scholars Program and Boston College as a better opportunity and a better educational experience than such name-brand universities as Harvard and Yale.

The comparable chart also shows that **48%** of the Scholars surveyed turned down other Scholarship programs. This helps to further support the claim that the BC webpage makes that the PSP is a premier Scholarship program. If almost half of the Scholars have options of Scholarship programs and they are choosing the PSP, then it is clearly a premier Scholarship program.

It is one thing to be among the elite few, but it is another to be the best within that group. In the spirit of Boston College and “Ever to Excel” simply being among the best is not enough; BC and the PSP must always strive to be the best, not just a premier program, but *the* premier program. However, this raises a number of questions and issues, especially when being compared to its peers.

Whenever a comparison is made that comparison must exist under the same paradigm. Even in the case of the US World and News Report of the top universities in the nation, they have specific parameters and ways of evaluating schools; they have a paradigm. However, the Boston College and therefore the Presidential Scholars Program paradigm is not exactly the same as many of its peers. We exist within the paradigm established by the Ignatian tradition: we are a Jesuit, Catholic college. Therefore the definition of success, of premier, of the best, is different from other schools. In her comment about how the Admissions Office chooses potential Scholars, Susan Migliorisi

made an excellent point that the deciding factor with PSP candidates is often an intangible something that cannot be quantified. The selection process of Scholars is extremely subjective and much of the decision making process is determined by judgment calls from the Admissions Office. This is because putting quantities on competitiveness only goes so far with applicants. This holds true for programs as well. At a certain point, the paradigms of the Programs diverge and the deciding factors become intangible. At that point the success or failure of a program or institute can only be determined by those within the Program. It is the members who must ultimately determine whether the Program is competitive, the best it could be, whether it is a success.

It is truly impossible to say what future Presidential Scholars will be like. What is clear and definite is that there is a working mechanism to attract the very best candidates for the Program. The Admissions Office along with the Program has certainly fulfilled the mission statement to, “Attract the best and brightest high school graduates who also demonstrate a capacity for deep compassion and great leadership potential.” The long and involved process of choosing Scholars ensures that not only do the very best high school graduates come to BC, but they are also the best in terms of the Ignatian tradition. They are the ones with deep compassion, a dedication to serve the greater good, and an enormous potential to lead in the future.

Chapter 6

Presidential Scholars of Today

Once an individual has been offered admission into the Presidential Scholars Program and has accepted this offer, the responsibility for fulfilling the mission of the Program shifts largely onto the Scholars themselves. Examining what the current Scholars are doing with the opportunities that the Program provides and what they are producing both for the Program and the wider Boston College community is a good place to begin. This examination can be broken down into three sub-categories: academics, leadership-initiatives, and other value added activities. As a merit Scholarship based on academics, the Presidential Scholars are expected to perform and produce academically. As a leadership training program, the Presidential Scholars are expected to contribute to the University as leaders who take initiative. As multi-faceted individuals with broad interests, the Presidential Scholars should be involved in other activities that add value to the University. Although this examination is certainly a critical one, it is quite clear that the Presidential Scholars exceed all these expectations. They are, as a group so accomplished that it would be cumbersome and ineffective to report what each and every scholar contributes to the Program and University at large. Rather, examples that highlight these accomplishments and contributions are included to establish a general sense of how the Presidential Scholars are currently fulfilling the mission of the Program.

When analyzing the academic success of any individual or group one of the first metrics used is Grade Point Average. Although it is a rather crude and somewhat one-dimensional measurement of success, it nevertheless is a good first indicator.

The Presidential Scholars are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.6 or higher. Although this is well above the University average, most Presidential Scholars far exceed this GPA. (See table below) It is not surprising that the average GPA's of Scholars are so high considering the rigorous screening process that they are put through. This is an indication that the Scholars are indeed dedicated to performing academically.

	Average GPA
Class 2006	3.912 ± 0.078
Class 2007	3.823 ± 0.16
Class 2008	3.767 ± 0.231
Class 2009	3.83 ± 0.125

Also, it is interesting to see what kind of majors the Presidential Scholars choose. It must be again stated that the PSP is meant to raise the academic profile of the University across the board, and not just in one College or one concentration. The Scholars not only excel academically they do it across many majors, concentrations, and schools. Scholars have majored in diverse pursuits such as physics, nursing, English, international studies, economics, Romance languages, Slavic Studies, finance, and chemistry among others. The Scholars are spread across the academic landscape of the University and in each of their respective majors they perform above expectations.

The academic success of the Presidential Scholars can also be seen in the number of awards and fellowships won by the current Scholars. These include a number of advanced study grants awarded by Boston College. These grants provide financial support to freshmen and sophomores (and some juniors) to pursue research interests. Scholars have won grants to study Folklore in Iceland, the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa,

Immigration policy, Slavic culture in Prague, and much more. Not only do these advanced study grants show the academic success of the Scholars they further highlight the diverse academic pursuits that the Scholars have undertaken.

The Scholars have also been successful in winning fellowships outside of the University. Three of the current senior Presidential Scholars have won Fulbright Fellowships. These three seniors will spend a year studying abroad in Germany, El Salvador, and Nepal during the year after graduation.

These academic successes of the current Presidential Scholars underscores in a very quantitative way of how the Program contributes to Boston College. However, the Scholars go far beyond just adding accolades to Boston College. Almost more importantly than the academic success that the Scholars bring to The Heights is the leadership initiative that they infuse into the University. Perhaps more than being great students, the Scholars are great leaders. Again it would be nearly impossible to mention all the ways in which Scholars lead: they are athletic captains, retreat leaders, and club officers to name just a few. The Scholars are leaders both within the Program and within the context of the larger university. There are two examples of leadership that are worth mentioning in detail because they epitomize the kind of the leaders the Presidential Scholars are.

The first example is an initiative taken by an underclass Scholar to start a winter service trip for the Presidential Scholars. The idea began two years ago after Hurricane Katrina. Scholars took time out of their winter break and flew down to Louisiana to help rebuild and reinvigorate the communities affected by the Hurricane. This initiative was

then continued as an annual service trip and the Scholars traveled to Arizona to perform service during this past winter break.

This initiative to start an annual Presidential Scholars Service trip shows how the Presidential Scholars are dedicated to service and are ingenious in their approach to serving. Scholars tend to be very busy individuals who are highly involved in a variety of co-curricular activities. Time constraint is far and away the number one explanation cited by Scholars who do not take part in regular service. The service trip allows those individuals who do not have time during the busy semester to stay involved in service. Furthermore, it creates another opportunity to get involved and to serve.

The second example is the beginning of the undergraduate research journal, *Elements*. This journal began a year ago under the leadership of a Presidential Scholar who graduated in 2006 and it is currently being run by a senior Presidential Scholar. Although this research journal was created by a number of individuals, departments, and programs from across the University, it was two Presidential Scholars who took on leadership roles and are greatly responsible for the journal's success. The journal is a way for undergraduates from across the University to publish their research and share their findings with the academic community at large. This journal has created numerous opportunities for undergraduate students to get published, which is a cornerstone of academic success. This is a perfect example of how the leadership of Presidential Scholars has impacted the academic profile of the University and has contributed to Boston College's continued success.

Both the above examples show very clearly how the Presidential Scholars are taking on leadership roles that have a significant impact. They are illuminating examples

of the servant-leadership that comes out of the Program. Servant-leadership is briefly mentioned in the Introduction of this paper and it is based on the model of Christian leadership that values excellence, self-awareness, courage, risk-taking, innovation, and service to others. This ideal of servant-leadership is central to the Program as a fundamental part of its mission. It is clear that the Scholars are servant-leaders, but also what needs to be examined is whether the Program is actively cultivating servant-leaders. The PSP Class of 2007 was surveyed along with several randomly selected underclassmen to get a sense of how they felt the Program was affecting their development. On average, the Scholars felt that the Program did contribute to their self-awareness and also valued excellence both inside and outside the classroom. However, the Scholars felt that the Program was conservative in its attempts to innovate and also relatively risk averse. These findings seem to create a contradiction because there are clear examples of Scholars taking risks, and driving innovation both within the Program and at Boston College. Based on further investigation and interviews with the Scholars, the Program acts much like a conservative base or a starting block. The Scholars often rely on the resources of the larger university to drive change and take risks. The Program therefore may be viewed as conservative by some, but it provides Scholars with the opportunities to take risks and innovate.

The Scholars are not just students and leaders; they are multi-dimensional, interesting, dynamic individuals. Creating a group of people with broad interests is also an important part of the Program's mission. The current Scholars not only have academic interests, they are involved in athletics, the arts, and a variety of other

organizations on campus. The athletic endeavors of the current Scholars range from being part of the cheerleading squad to being a member of the swimming and diving team, to being on the club volleyball team. These Scholars have not only been able to excel in the classroom they have excelled in the gym and on the field. Scholars are also very involved in the Arts. They are principal members of the Boston College Symphony Orchestra, members of the University Wind Ensemble, accomplished jazz musicians, and stars in the theatre department. The Scholars are not only members of these organizations, they are very significant players. Scholars hold principal positions in both the BC band and orchestra and have played the leads in numerous productions by the BC theatre department. Scholars also hold leadership positions in the undergraduate government and other organizations such as the Hillel and The Buddhism Club. Two current Scholars are also entrepreneurs and have begun their own international businesses.

The above are but a few of the many interests that the Presidential Scholars pursue and are involved in. Even from this list it is clear that the Scholars have a number of diverse interests. Moreover, the Scholars even in their interests take on leadership positions.

The current Presidential Scholars have lived up to the potential and promise that the Admissions Office and the Program saw in them when they were offered membership to the Program. They are very successful students whose academic excellence is evident in their coursework and in winning prestigious fellowships. They are leaders who are

actively involved in a range of activities that add value both to the Program and to the larger Boston College community.

Chapter 7

Alumni of the Presidential Scholars Program

Although it is important to look at what Scholars are currently doing to fulfill the mission of the Program it is equally important to look at what Scholars do after they graduate. Because the Program is dedicated to educating and forming future leaders, the success of the Program is much more evident in what kind of leadership roles Scholars take on once they leave The Heights. Examining whether Scholars are servant-leaders in their professional life, what kind of diverse professions they seek, and how successful they are not just professionally but in a wholistic sense reveals to what extent the Program is fulfilling its mission. Many of the alumni also have the perspective to look back on the Program and their experience at Boston College and see how it formed them and prepared them for life.

When the alumni of the Presidential Scholars Program are examined as a group it becomes clear that they have added a huge amount of value both to the Program and to Boston College through their many accomplishments. Just as important as winning prestigious awards and adding value to the University is the fact that the Program forms leaders infused with notions of the Jesuit ideal of service. From the various paths that Scholars have taken after graduation and what they have accomplished it is clear that they

are successful servant-leaders. It is important to stress that the Scholars went on not only to be successful in their professional and personal lives, but they also incorporated the notion of service into this success. Although many of the Scholars are just beginning their lives after college, it is evident that both service and leadership is an integral part of those lives.

At the present moment, there are approximately 150 Presidential Scholar alumni. What these PSP alumni have accomplished is quite astounding. To begin with, the Presidential Scholars have won a number of prestigious post-graduate academic fellowships including Truman Scholarships, Fulbright Fellowships, and most noteworthy, two Rhodes Scholarships, the only two in Boston College history. These fellowships are by no means the only way that the Program measures its success, but they are definitely a standard benchmark. Winning awards like Fulbrights and Rhodes Scholarships are a common denominator that all major universities strive for. The Rhodes is especially prized, considered the most prestigious of all fellowships, and it is very significant that both Rhodes Scholars that came out of BC were Presidential Scholars.

While these fellowships are very important these awards are but a starting place for analyzing the success of the Program. As Dr. Dennis Sardella, the Director of the Presidential Scholars Program notes, fellowships are usually geared towards academic pursuits. The scope of the Scholars' pursuits is far wider than just academics. For example, many are interested in going into business or medicine both of which are not supported by most fellowships. For this reason, fellowships are a good benchmark of success but it does not tell the whole story.

In order to get the whole story one needs to take a macro look at the Presidential Scholars alumni. There is a directory of Scholars that lists all current Scholars, alumni, and administrators in the Program. This directory provides some very basic information on the alumni such as hometown, current residence, current employer and profession. Although the directory only provides this very basic information, from a macro point of view it is very helpful. Reading through the directory shows the diverse paths that Scholars have chosen. Scholars have become surgeons, veterinarians, investment bankers, Jesuits, thespians, lawyers, psychologists, non-profit employees, academics, artists, and medical researchers; engage in a full range of vocations. It also becomes evident from the directory that the Scholars are accepted to prestigious graduate programs. Scholars have received graduate degrees from such schools as Harvard, Yale, MIT, and Georgetown to name a few. They have also been accepted to Medical schools all over the nation. The directory makes it clear that Presidential Scholars have gone on to diverse, prestigious programs and are successful in pursuing diverse careers.

Although the directory provides a short overview of what the Scholars go on to do professionally, it is bare bones in terms of the information it provides. In order to fill in this information a survey of the PSP alumni was conducted that asked about their experience with the Program and at Boston College. Before the results of the survey are presented it must be noted how the survey was conducted. Due to the large number of alumni, the survey was distributed via email and participation was voluntarily. Because this procedure was used and because only about 15% of the alumni responded to the survey, the quantitative results cannot be considered completely accurate. The survey was not conducted randomly, so there could be bias because alumni who had a positive

experience may be more likely to respond. This bias may also be significant because of such a small percentage of the alumni responded. However, those who did respond were from many different years; only 1998 and 2000 were not represented in this survey. Because those surveyed virtually span the entire history of the Program, the responses give a good overall view of the Program's alumni. The real benefit and value of this survey was not to get hard facts and figures about what alumni in the Program are doing. Rather it gives a good qualitative sense of how the Program affected their development and what kind of leaders the alumni have become.

A significant recurring theme in the survey is that the Program develops the whole person. Many of the alumni point to the summer programs as their favorite and most memorable parts of the PSP experience. Although the alumni point to the great times that they had during the summer programs, they also realize in retrospect that the cumulative effect of the summer Program's structure had a lasting and significant impact on their development. The fact that one summer was spent doing service, one summer spent in international travel, and one summer in career development allowed for an overall development of all aspects of the individual. The involvement in these various summer programs kept the Scholars from getting deeply involved in one specific area, but what the Program lacked in depth it made up for in breadth. This sentiment is most acute in the summer programs but is felt throughout the entire Program. One alumnus writes, "During college, I sometimes found the PSP frustrating because it kept me from being more involved in other things that I cared about. Looking at the Program as a whole however, it provided me opportunities I would have otherwise never had and I might not be where I am today if it wasn't for my involvement in the Program." In many

ways the Presidential Scholars are passionate and determined. They want to delve deep into their field of study or interest. However, what the Program seeks to do is provide a well-balanced experience that ensures a wholistic development. This wholistic approach does take away from developing further expertise, but it makes for much more aware individuals. As a focused and determined undergraduate this wholistic approach may seem like it is “getting in the way” but over time it becomes clear that the wholistic development of the Program is extremely beneficial to the Scholars. As one of the first graduating Scholars writes, “I think the PSP prepares you well to live a worthwhile life, one in which you are informed, active and concerned for the future—and one in which you plan to do your part to help the world become a better place.” The alumni not only recognize that the Program is dedicated to a wholistic development of its Scholars; there is recognition that this development has served them well in their future lives.

It is important to note that a Program like the Presidential Scholars Program with a mission to develop the whole person must constantly be on guard against becoming too single-minded. With such passionate Scholars who are very hard workers and focused on succeeding, it is easy to neglect certain aspects of development. One scholar wrote about his experience, “I found that the emphasis in my years was more on success (academic, professional) rather than on service and becoming a better person.” A comment like this is extremely distressing because it shows that at one time, either the Program deviated from its mission or that mission was communicated ineffectively. The Program must not only maintain a dedication to developing the whole person it must also make sure that this dedication is communicated and demonstrated to all the Scholars in the Program. The same scholar also commented that, “I think that the Program has already vastly

improved since my time at BC, and I am very pleased with the growth and evolution of the Program.” In this instance, the Program may have faltered but it has already amended its ways. However, this anecdote underscores the importance of a continued dedication to and examination of the Program’s fidelity to its mission. Despite its occasional faltering, the overall dedication to forming whole human beings has remained at the center of the PSP experience.

The growth and development opportunities that the Program creates are largely based in the summer Programs. Although the summer programs are mentioned frequently as the best part of the Program, interestingly enough the community of Scholars that exists both during the undergraduate years and after is mentioned just as much in the survey. In many ways, it was this community of peers, colleagues, and close friends that drove the development of the Scholars. The Program is structured in a certain way to elicit wholistic development, but some Scholars feel that the structured aspects of the Program pale in comparison to the unstructured social elements. One writes, “I don’t think the Program’s life skills component was very good. On the other hand, the Program did help me maintain my ambition/elitism- I felt certain expectations were placed on my and I looked to the examples of my classmates. That sense that I was supposed to do great things has helped me through two tough times finding jobs.” The Program builds a community of Scholars around which its individual members can rally. During difficult times, this community inspires its members to work hard and strive for excellence. There is definitely a dedication to excellence within the Program itself, but again, these structured elements of striving for excellence are supported and reinforced

by the community. One Scholar very clearly writes, “I think that one of the most important things that the PSP provided me with was a cohort of lifelong friends.” The Program for many became so much more than just a Scholarship; it became a fully integrated network of friends.

Through this wholistic development and the strong sense of community, the Program creates leaders. Although many of the PSP alumni are still early in their careers and lives, they show an astounding aptitude to lead. This leadership is evident in many places and professions. The Scholars lead medical teams on surgeries, meetings at non-profits, animal-care as veterinarians, projects at consulting firms, presentations at Investment Banks, three children as a mother, cases at law firms, and similar endeavors. Presidential Scholars are highly engaged individuals. Moreover, the PSP alumni are leaders who are also involved in service. Many of them are involved in volunteerism, but their service is often infused into their very professions and vocations. Of those surveyed more than 80% identified as being involved in some form of service. Often this service related to their profession and involved their professional skills. This kind of service included providing pro bono work and volunteering medical advice and service to free clinics. What this clearly shows is that the PSP alumni are not just leaders, they are servant leaders. They lead out of a drive to create value for society and a desire to serve.

What is clear about the Presidential Scholars alumni is that they are extremely successful in a wholistic sense. Many of them did go on to top graduate programs, or extremely successful careers. But this is only one aspect of the success that Scholars

have attained. Many feel that their experience at BC and with the PSP prepared them to live worthwhile lives. Rather than managing a mutual fund, some Scholars are managing a household and three children: this is arguably the most important job but it does not fall neatly into professional success. A common denominator among the Scholars is that they are all leaders in their own right, whether it is as a surgeon, investment banker, or parent. And what is infused in the vast majority of these leaders is a strong sense of service. The alumni are a diverse group of leaders who have a sense of obligation to give back. In short, they are the manifestation of the PSP mission fulfilled.

Conclusion

The Presidential Scholars Program is fulfilling its mission. Going back to the five mission statements of the Program that were generated, let us take a moment to reflect more explicitly on how the Program is fulfilling each one.

Attract the best and brightest high school graduates who also demonstrate a capacity for deep compassion and great leadership potential.

Working with the Admissions office the Program has developed a successful mechanism of attracting and choosing future Scholars that show a keen generosity of spirit as well as leadership potential. The long and involved process of selecting Scholars is a key success factor in the Program's continued success as well as substantial evidence that the Program is being faithful to its mission.

Provide Scholars with a premier Jesuit education that demands not only a development of virtuosic skill, but an application of those skills through servant-leadership.

The education the Scholars receive both at Boston College and through the Honors Program is one of the best in the country. However, not only are the Scholars provided with a great education, they are challenged to use this education to serve the greater good. The examples of leadership that the current Scholars have shown through such initiatives as *Elements* and the winter service trip underscore how this education is

being harnessed to serve and lead both the Program and the wider Boston College Community.

Challenge Scholars to shift from a self-centered world view to an other-centered world view through the interaction with a wide range of peoples and experiences

Through the summer programs the Scholars engage people from a range of socio-economic situations as well as national backgrounds. This engagement and interaction challenges the Scholars to think outside of themselves. This other-centered view point shift is evident in the service that Scholars take part in and also many of the vocations that Scholars chose to pursue.

Add value to the greater Boston College community so that the privileges and opportunities derived from the Program propagate beyond the limits of the Program

The Program is by no means an insular group. It is fully incorporated into the larger University and the Scholars often contribute more to the University than they do to the Program. This value-add is evident in a number of places. In the recruiting sense, the PSP brings 15 exceptional individuals to The Heights each year. Scholars win prestigious awards that reflect positively on the University. They go on to be successes in their careers and their lives and help build the legacy of Boston College. There is also a residual effect that the Scholars have on the rest of the student body as well as their home towns. When high school students see the best graduating high school seniors

choosing to go to Boston College, it adds value to the BC name and elevates it in the eyes of younger high school students. Also, when Scholars arrive at The Heights, they enhance the intellectual profile of the school and make it more appealing to other bright students. The Program does not just benefit the current 60 Scholars; it serves the entire Boston College community.

Create a community of Scholars dedicated to carrying out the mission of the Presidential Scholars Program

The Scholars form a tight knit group. This group is not exclusive, but there is a special bond that Scholars share with one another. Of course this does not hold true for every year and every scholar, but on the whole the Presidential Scholars form a community that actively motivates and supports one another to strive for excellence.

Although the end result of this paper is really no more than an affirmation that the Presidential Scholars Program is continuing to fulfill its mission, the process of coming to that conclusion is extremely important. It is, in essence, a reflection on what the Program has done in its first 15 years, what sort of people it has formed, and what kind of leaders those people are. This reflection process is necessary for the Program to continue to succeed, to continue to grow and change, and improve. It provides an analysis of all the ideals of the Program and provides a critical look at what the Program is actively doing to live up to those ideals. This critical examination not only illustrates how the Program is fulfilling its mission, but it also reveals some of the ways in which the Program is falling short. More importantly, it shows where the Program can improve. This is definitely the

case with this paper. The evidence clearly concludes that the Program is succeeding in its mission and it is making the vision of the Program a reality. But by really reflecting on everything that the Program has done and is doing, ways in which the Program could be even better become evident. All five mission statements are fulfilled as stated above, but in the spirit of “Ever to Excel” the Program can also do more, it can always expand and improve. The final part of this paper is an action plan: a proposal of things that can be done to improve the Program.

Action Plan

Although the Presidential Scholars Program is living out its missions, this mission can always be improved upon. Based on the reflection of its mission and the analysis that followed the following are areas where the Program can and should improve:

The fact that the Program lacks a formal mission statement is one of the first and most obvious areas for improvement. The formulation of a mission statement for the Program had been an ongoing challenge for the Program, but it is a necessary step in creating coherence within the Program. This mission statement needs to be written as a collaborative effort between the current Scholars, the alumni of the Program, and the administration. Although this collaboration will require a great amount of effort and coordination, it is a necessary step to making sure that everyone involved with the Program is aligned in a sense of purpose.

Scholars need to be more involved in the recruiting process. They not only need to be active in the PSPS potential weekend, they should proactively recruit at their high schools, and they all should proactively be involved in some form of stewardship to the funders of the Program.

There is a clear connection that Scholars form, but this sense of community is often confined to Scholars in the same year. Connection between the years needs to be built.

Finally, the Scholars need to take on more accountability for the Program. The Presidential Scholars Program, at its core, is the Scholars. It is up to the members of the

Program to maintain a sense of the Program's mission and to continue to remain faithful to it.

In order for these improvements and adjustments to the Program occur there must be both structural and informal changes made to the Program. The easy part should be changing the structure because that can be done through the organizational body of the Program. The informal changes however will require the Scholars to take personal responsibility for making sure these changes occur.

Writing a mission statement for the Presidential Scholars Program is a task that the Program has been struggling with for some time. Dr. Sardella has commented that he has spent years trying to come up with a formal statement. He even organized a retreat based on finding a mission statement. The challenge that the Program faces in writing a mission statement is that, like the Jesuits, the Program values flexibility, mobility, and adaptability. The Program has goals, expectations, and a vision, but historically it has been hesitant to crystallize those into an official statement. This is a troubling situation for the Program because although it claims to have a clear sense of purpose, it is not able to articulate that purpose.

Despite the challenges associated with writing a mission statement, it is crucial that the Program come up with an official one. To do this requires a lot of work and collaboration amongst the Scholars. (The mission statements that were inferred in this paper could be a springboard for writing a formally accepted mission statement.) A committee may need to be formed to accomplish this task. The leadership will most likely need to delegate responsibility. Writing a mission statement will certainly require

time and effort but, this should be a priority for the Program. Because the Program lacks a formal mission statement many of the Scholars do not know what is expected of them. Over 80% of the graduating class of 2007 was surveyed and of those surveyed only 23% said that the expectations of the Program were communicated clearly. When asked about the expectations and the vision of the Program, the senior Scholars did not identify the same key elements. There were some common themes such as getting good grades, or winning awards for Boston College, but overall the seniors did not seem to have a congruent idea as to what the vision and expectations were. It is the vision and expectations that are placed on the Scholars that show the Scholars what their role is in the Program's mission. The Scholars had a vague notion of the mission of the Program, but this notion was never communicated effectively.

The Scholars need a clear communication as to the mission of the Program and their role in helping to fulfill the mission. The most effective way to do this is through an official mission statement. Each scholar should be familiar with this statement and have a clear sense of how he/she is contributing to it.

One of the major aspects of the Presidential Scholars Program is its ability to attract the best and the brightest to Boston College. However, once the Scholars have come to The Heights, they have a responsibility to contribute to that recruiting process. Many Scholars are involved in the PSP Potential Weekend and the Potential Scholars are hosted by current Scholars, however the responsibility of recruiting should extend beyond this. The Program should always strive to add as much value to Boston College as

possible. Having a proactive role in recruitment and elevating the name of Boston College is one specific way that Scholars can individually add value.

When high school students see the best and brightest from their high schools choosing to attend Boston College as Presidential Scholars, the name of BC is elevated in many of their minds. This perception can be reinforced if Scholars go back to their high schools and reaffirm BC as a great choice. In this way, Boston College becomes a school that great students regardless of whether they become Scholars want to attend. Not only will Scholars attract future Scholars, they will directly raise the value of the Boston College name. There should be some sort of mechanism for Scholars to go back to their high schools to talk about Boston College and about the Presidential Scholars Program. Scholars should maintain a relationship with guidance councilors from their high school and should also stay in contact with younger students who they think would be good candidates both for the Program and for Boston College. This personal interaction is extremely powerful and could really help BC distinguish itself from many other universities. This is especially true in Jesuit high Schools. Father William B. Neenan S.J., Vice President and Special Assistant to the President of Boston College, commented that one of the problems Jesuit higher education faces is a brain-drain from Jesuit high schools. In many parts of the country the Jesuit High Schools are the premier secondary educational institutes and often the best students at these Jesuit High Schools do not go on to Jesuit Colleges. The Presidential Scholars Program helps to attract Jesuit High School graduates to Jesuit colleges. Having Scholars stay in touch and active at the high school level further enhances this attraction.

Scholars need to be involved in the recruiting process but they also need to be involved in stewardship to the funders of the Program. Many Scholars have identified that they do write thank you notes to donors, but this stewardship is not consistent across the board. The first step in addressing this issue would definitely be to organize a methodology within the Program that addresses stewardship. Of course the development office would need to be involved with this organization and would help to coordinate efforts among donors, Scholar alumni, and current Scholars. This organization could bridge many gaps and connect Scholars to donors. This is important because awareness about donors and where the funding for the Program comes from needs to be raised. In the survey of the senior Presidential Scholars only 38% said that they felt like they had a solid idea as to where funding comes from. It is impossible to properly thank the donors of the Program if the Scholars do not know where funds are coming from. Moreover, there is a serious opportunity being missed when the connection between Scholars and donors breaks down. Scholars represent the best that are coming out of BC and the donors represent some of the best alumni BC can offer. Networking and connecting the emerging leaders of BC with some already established leaders would be beneficial for both parties. Therefore, a strong effort needs to be made to build a relationship between Scholars and donors. This relationship begins with Stewardship.

One of the Program's greatest strengths is its sense of community. It is the reason why many Scholars decide to be part of the Program, it was identified as one of the best parts of the Program by current Scholars, and it is one of the things that stays with Scholars once they graduate. Although community is one of the Program's strengths,

because of the way much of the Program is structured, the community aspect of the Program is severely limited. Much of the bonding time that Scholars spend together is during the summer Programs. Thus, Scholars within each year become close but often there are divides between the years. One of the ways that the Program has tried to address this divide is through the evening speakers series. It was seen as a way to maintain a sense of community throughout the year and between classes. When Scholars were surveyed about the speakers series they responded that it was a way to stay connected but only 4% said that they met other Scholars. Furthermore, when asked how well the Scholars knew Scholars in their own year the average was 4.6 out of 5. When asked how well they knew Scholars in other years, the average was only 2.2. These findings clearly indicate that Scholars are not meeting younger and older Scholars and the community is severely limited. A better effort needs to be made to bridge this divide and there need to be more opportunities for Scholars to interact.

Bridging this divide can both be accomplished through structural and informal changes to the Program. In addition to the speaker series, there could be other more interactive forums for the Scholars to meet and exchange ideas. Scholars have been receptive to the idea of adding forums such as books groups or issue discussions to enhance the speaker series. Also, such forums that allow Scholars to share ideas and dialogue will enhance the sense of community and build a tighter group of Scholars.

As well as including structural changes, the Scholars themselves should take on more responsibility in bridging the gap. Many Scholars have suggested more social events for Scholars to meet and network. These social events can and should be led by Scholars. The Program is extremely receptive to supporting social events and they have

financially supported them in the past. The responsibility lies on the Scholars and especially the upperclassmen to initiate these social events and to help make them successful. In the past, events such as class dinners were organized where an older class of Scholars hosted a younger class in order to give Scholars a chance to interact informally. These events could be reinstated, or there could be other events initiated. The senior Scholars have begun hosting wine nights where Scholars get together to exchange ideas and plans in a very informal setting. Other such activities such as day trips to museums or other cultural destinations would allow Scholars to expand their horizons while interacting in an informal way. These are ideas that should be pursued and implemented to bring Scholars closer together. The ultimate goal of all these activities is for all the Scholars to know one another. With only 60 Scholars, it is completely reasonable to think that they should all be at least familiar with one another.

The importance of bonding between Scholars cannot be emphasized enough. Some alumni have pointed out that this issue needs addressing. One alumnus writes, “I think the Program does very little to foster the connections of the students within it... and just hopes the students I each class click. If not, there are few attempts at connection-fostering.” The Program needs to be more proactive in its creation of a community. Another scholar said that often there are “pockets” of close friends that form within the Program but there is a lack of a sense of greater community. These issues do not necessarily deny the fact that the Program has a strong community, they simply point out some of the weaknesses within the community that need reinforcement. The Program should strive to build an ever stronger community through initiatives to connect the

different classes and open up those “pockets” that exist. Only then can the Program really begin to create a cohesive and complete community.

One of the best ways to ensure that these previous improvements are made is to hold the Scholars more accountable for the Program. Creating accountability is one of the most difficult things to do in an organization because it creates the risk of failure. If the Scholars are held more accountable for the Program, inevitably there will be times when the Scholars fall short, but that is a risk that the Program should take. The Program needs to rely more on its Scholars and it needs to demand more of its Scholars. Only through challenging the Scholars beyond perhaps what is even possible will the Program grow to its fullest potential.

One very effective way of creating accountability and challenging the Scholars is making them all stakeholders in the Program. A Board of Directors should be created and it should be made up of Scholars both past and present. This would be a mechanism in which the alumni could also stay connected and invested in the Program. The alumni who were surveyed ranked their connection to the Program, on average, a 5 out of 10. Besides keeping alumni invested in the Program and giving them a chance to really stay connected, a Board would give ownership to the members of the Program. It would create a channel through which the Scholars could voice concerns, ask for advice, and be part of the decision making process. The Board would also give the Scholars a more prominent voice in the direction that the Program takes in the future as well as make them more responsible for that future.

The Board could have any number of responsibilities, but most importantly it would make the Scholars directly responsible for the mission of the Program. It would be a vehicle to regularly reflect on how the Program was fulfilling its mission. It could continue to ask how the Program could improve. It could be in charge of creating committees to oversee the development of a mission statement, or improving recruiting and stewardship efforts. It could be involved in enhancing the community of Scholars and it would certainly be a way of creating accountability. It could help to remind Scholars about the vision of the Program and it could be instrumental in making that vision a reality.

This action plan is but a start. The Presidential Scholars Program is still very young and has an extremely bright future. There is so much that the Program could be; it has so much potential and such amazing people involved with it. As with any organization the Program must be willing to grow and change and this plan outlines some of the places where that growth and change can and should occur. The mission of the Program is being fulfilled, but that is not enough; not enough for a Program that should always strive for excellence. There is always something else, something more, something better that the Program can be doing. The real challenge is not fulfilling the mission of the Program; it is reflecting on what that something more is and expanding the Program to be that something more. “Ever to excel” implies a restlessness and a constant drive to be better. The Program not only needs to be faithful to its mission, but it needs to remain faithful to that restlessness of excellence.

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