

Ex Libris

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The GPSP Selection Process at a Glance



Prospective scholars and former Director, Jim Keenan, S.J. (filling in for Director Kathy Bailey who was at a conference).

By Riley Coopwood '27

As I neared Devlin 110 at 4:45, the boisterous noise of 64 voices progressively got louder. Opening the doors and walking down the stairs, I got my first good look at the prospective Scholars. Nervous yet excited faces turned to look at us as we descended the stairs, and I saw variations of my past self staring back at me. Just over a year ago, I was sitting in their exact seats. This time, however, I was on the outside looking in.

The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program Selection Process brings top students from around the world to interview for a coveted position in the GPSP. Once accepted into the Program, students are introduced to a world of opportunities. The GPSP offers students an environment with like-minded, academically and socially driven people from all disciplines. From nursing to political science, premed to education, everyone can make a place for themselves within the GPSP and the Boston College community.

After meeting the prospective Scholars, or “prospies,” current Scholars migrated to the Admissions Office in Devlin for pizza and dessert. Bouncing from group to group, introductions and beginnings of companionship filled the room. Scholars mingled with the prospies, and immediately dove

into their interests and career aspirations. The prospies asked many questions, ranging from majors, to favorite Boston College dining meal, to niche study spaces. After the welcome event started winding down, Scholars staying on upper campus made the treacherous trek up the stairs.

Monday and Tuesday were filled with different collaborative and evaluative exercises. The prospies had interviews with admissions officers, lunches with faculty, mock seminars, and a brainstorming session centered around a social justice topic of their cohort’s choice. Each activity was designed to evaluate how the prospies worked in groups and in a classroom setting.

However, their time on campus was not limited to academics. On Monday night, the group journeyed into Boston for an entertaining night at Lucky Strikes. There, the students let loose and enjoyed getting to know each other in a more relaxed atmosphere with bowling lanes, dart boards, and pool tables. Later that night, the infamous trivia night was underway, and the competitive nature of the group shined through.

On Tuesday night, current and prospective Scholars joined together with alumni, faculty, and staff, for the GPSP Welcome Dinner in Yawkey Center with a speech from guest speaker, Meagan Gonzalez '17, Chief Financial & Technology Officer at Mission Critical Solutions.

She highlighted the importance of taking risks and accepting change, especially amidst the grand opportunities that college, especially Boston College, presents students. Wednesday morning, the prospies enjoyed a final brunch and wished each other farewell and good luck.

During my Selection Process, I was a ball of nerves. I was scared to interact with the others because I was intimidated by all the impressive people around me. As the days passed, I came out of my shell and formed connections with my fellow Scholars that last to this day. Being an observer this year, I have a greater appreciation for the time and effort put into the process. The sacrifices everyone involved makes, from giving up their dorms to taking time out of their schedule, cannot go without recognition and gratitude. Yet again, another successful Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program Selection Process in the books.



Class of 2027 Travels to Ireland

By Kendall Liesching '27

On Friday, March 1, Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program Class of 2027 embarked on their trip to Ireland. After landing in Dublin, the Scholars had some free time to regroup and explore the city. Walking through Grafton Street, the Scholars were welcomed with the sound of beautiful instrumental music and the sight of Irish architecture. That night everyone clapped along to traditional Irish music and dance at the Merry Ploughboy, while eating a delicious meal.

The next morning, Fiona, a guide from BC Ireland, led the Scholars on a walking tour of Dublin, during which she taught the Scholars about the Ireland Independence Movement and the conflict in Northern Ireland. After this insightful tour, the Scholars headed to the Guinness Storehouse, where they learned about the process of making Guinness, viewed advertisement campaigns, and even had pictures of themselves transposed onto the foam in a pint of Guinness.

Following this eventful day, the Scholars toured the EPIC: Irish Emigration Museum, where they had the opportunity to learn about Irish diaspora and emigration. After touring this museum and enjoying a lovely lunch at the Harbourmaster Restaurant, the Scholars toured the Irish Parliament, Dail Eireann. At Parliament, the Scholars learned about the Irish government, voting procedures, and a current referendum that was proposed to amend the Irish constitution. The stunning architecture of the Dail Eireann, paired with its rich history, made visiting it an incredible experience.

On Tuesday, Scholars traveled to Boston College Ireland where Professor Mike Cronin gave a fascinating lecture on Irish history which included the conflict in Northern Ireland and the complex legacy of Catholicism. After this enlightening presentation, the Scholars toured the Museum of Irish Literature, which highlighted prominent Irish authors and their literary achievements, including James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, and W.B. Yeats. That afternoon, Scholars had the opportunity to attend a high tea at the Westin Hotel, after which, they headed to the Abbey Theatre to watch the play, *Audrey or Sorrow*.

The next day, Scholars visited the US Embassy in Dublin, where they spoke



Photo Courtesy of Tracy Regan

The Scholars enjoying a nice walk in Dublin.

with a diplomat about his experiences working for the State Department. Following this visit, Scholars spent the afternoon at Powerscourt Estate and Garden, where they were able to walk through stunning gardens with lush green grasses and a mountainous backdrop. That evening, Scholars tested their knowledge of Irish trivia by competing in a pub quiz.

On Thursday, the Scholars traveled to Belfast. Upon arriving in Belfast, they attended three lectures at the Mitchell Center at Queen's University. The first lecture was presented by Professor Richard English, who discussed political violence in Northern Ireland. Then Dr. Cheryl Lawther presented on transgenerational trauma and dealing with the legacy of the conflict. Scholars were especially moved by this idea of transgenerational trauma and expressed an interest in learning more. Finally, Professor Cathal McCall lectured on border issues and Brexit. Following these lectures, Professor Dominic Bryan led an immersive city bus tour. This tour focused on the manner in which the Troubles of Northern Ireland are still visible in the infrastructure of Belfast. Professor Bryan highlighted how the murals showcased the deep divide between Catholics and Protestants.

The next day, Scholars received an economic briefing by Ciaran Higgins and then traveled to Belfast City Hall to meet the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Ryan Murphy. Over tea and coffee, Scholars had the opportunity to discuss Lord Mayor Murphy's experience with Irish

politics and his hopes for the remainder of his term. After this meeting, Scholars toured the Titanic Experience Museum. On the Scholars' final day in Ireland, they explored Hillsborough Castle, which featured ornate interior designs, historic paintings, and beautiful gardens.

As the Scholars prepared to return home to Boston College, they reflected on their memorable trip. Eden Cassidy McPherson remarked that she is "so excited for the next cohort of students to travel to Ireland and learn about a new culture and place." The Class of 2027 is extremely grateful to Kathy, Tracy, Jennie, Sarah, and the entire Boston College Ireland staff for all of the hard work they put into planning and executing this trip.



Photo Courtesy of Tracy Regan

Scholars pose for a group picture in front of BC Ireland.

GPSP Class of 2026 Trip to Costa Rica

By *Caroline Ahn '26*

To kick off the new year, the sophomore Scholars, accompanied by Director Kathleen Bailey, revisited Costa Rica for the first time in four years. The goal was to delve into the country's history and ongoing humanitarian concerns, including healthcare infrastructure, socio economic challenges, migration, and LGBTQ+ and human rights issues.

After six hours of traveling from Boston to San Jose, the Scholars met Elisa Vanegas, their tour guide from Augsburg University's Center for Global Education and Experience. They traveled to their hotel to get settled and ready for the events scheduled for the upcoming week. Many of the Scholars were excited to immerse themselves in a new culture and utilize their Spanish-speaking skills.

Monday began with a presentation with Andrey Pineda, a Costa Rican Sociologist and Professor at the Universidad a Distancia of Costa Rica to discuss the history and current social, political, and economic issues. Following lunch, Carmen Hutchinson Miller, an Afro-Costa Rican female historian, presented the racially diverse and multicultural structure of the country, deepening the Scholar's understanding of systemic racism in the Spanish colonialism period and how its framework has been threaded into Costa Rican history. That afternoon, the Scholars explored downtown San Jose, including the National Park and Jardín de Paz.

Tuesday morning began with an energetic hike on the Poás Volcano to learn more about the biodiversity and wildlife challenges Costa Rica faces. Following the breathtaking panorama of the volcano, the Scholars traveled to the Doka Estate in the province of Alajuela to learn about coffee production and processing. Scholars were afforded the chance to harvest coffee beans and showcase the intricacies of the coffee drying process.

On Wednesday, the Scholars traveled to La Carpio, a remote section of San Jose between two very polluted rivers and a massive landfill. The impoverished neighborhood is estimated to be home to 40,000 residents, many of whom are refugees from

Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Scholars were able to meet with community leaders, Humberto Meza and Alba Luz, to converse about La Carpio's history, challenges, and future goals. They discussed with the Scholars the realities of access to services such as education, healthcare, and job opportunities while touring La Carpio. After the tour, the Scholars returned to Humberto and Alba's home, where they were fed a delicious home-cooked Nicaraguan meal. Afterward, the Scholars visited Casa La Esperanza (Translation: House of Hope), an organization in efforts surrounding HIV/AIDS. Scholars had the opportunity to converse with the individuals running the organization and listen to the lived experiences and testimonies of individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

The following morning, Scholars met with a representative of the Costa Rican Coalition of Development Initiatives (CINDE, Coalición Costarricense de Iniciativas de Desarrollo). Scholars learned how the company contributes to the country's economic and sustainable development, as well as its economic impact and social progress by attracting foreign direct investments fostering its growth in modern, high-tech industries, and nurturing the right investment climate to do so. Scholars returned to their hotel to meet with Costa Rican LGBTQIA+ lawyer and former LGBTQIA+ representative of the Costa Rican government, Jota Vargas. Vargas discussed their reasons for going into law and personal experiences that led them to pursue their passion in LGBTQIA+ rights.

On Friday, the Scholars traveled to Longo Mai, a self-sustaining rural community initially settled by refugees who came from El Salvador and Nicaragua, fleeing the armed conflict in their home countries. Approximately 400 inhabitants work an estimated 2,200 acres of land, half of which is the protected rainforest. Scholars were welcomed by Edith Quijano at her home. In the afternoon, Scholars were given a tour through the rainforest, sugarcane, and coffee plantations. To cool off from the heat, the Scholars swam in a local river! Returning from the tour, Quijano taught the Scholars how to make Pupusas, a traditional Salvadoran dish. On top of the Pupusas,



Photo Courtesy of Amelia Gaffney

Class of 2026 at Parque Nacional Volcán Poás

the Scholars had a workshop to learn about how cocoa beans were grown in the community and make homemade chocolate.

Saturday morning, the Scholars returned to San Jose to meet with Veronika Martinez, a Nicaraguan doctor living in Costa Rica as a political refugee. She shared the somber realities of the heightened political crisis in Nicaragua during the 2018 protests, where the streets became a battleground for democracy, and voices clamored for a change against a backdrop of oppression. Her narrative was a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of politics and public welfare. It was a testament to the fragility of human rights in the face of authoritarian regimes and the resilience of those who dared to speak truth to power. That night, the Scholars dined out at a restaurant to meet with three Nicaraguan musicians who are living in Costa Rica as refugees. They performed songs reflecting on the current heightened political crisis in Nicaragua. To end the trip on a memorable note, the Scholars traveled to a local karaoke/dancing hotspot with Jared Aimone '26 and Courtney McDonald '26 singing a duet.

The excursion taken by the Class of 2026 raised numerous inquiries, extending beyond the present socio-political issues in Central America. It prompted reflection on the involvement of the United States and the broader lessons that derive from this global encounter. The insights acquired from this trip will persistently shape a comprehension of political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental matters in the foreseeable future.

Alumni Guest Speaker: Meagan Gonzalez '17

By Catherine May '27

This March, Boston College welcomed back Meagan Gonzalez, Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program Class of 2017, to speak at the Selection Process interview weekend. Traveling all the way from Tampa, Florida, Meagan was the keynote speaker at the final dinner in the selection process and addressed a combination of prospective Scholars, current Scholars, GPSP alumni, faculty, and admissions officers. Meagan was introduced by the former GPSP Director, James Keenan S.J., who spoke very highly of Meagan, and the pair laughed together over old travel stories.

When she took the podium, Meagan began by eloquently describing everything that a Jesuit education meant to her and her extended family. She voiced that her education at Boston College not only cultivated her intellectual capacities but also prepared her to thoughtfully participate within and uplift her community. This can be seen in Meagan's work today.

Meagan completed her MBA at the Wharton School of Business, where she was the vice president of the Wharton Women in Business group and graduated in the top 5%



Guest Speaker, Meagan Gonzalez, welcoming prospies to campus

of her class. She now serves as the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Technology Officer of Mission Critical Solutions. Meagan's abundant success within her career consists not only of her ability to personally thrive in leadership positions and assume responsibility, but also in her ability to encourage and empower those around her.

She also touched on the decision paralysis that high school seniors often experience when choosing a university to attend. Meagan described the white board sitting in her child-

hood kitchen on which she had drawn out a precise grid-like rating system as she deliberated on her college choice. On this white board, she systematically organized the pros and cons of every school, obsessing in a less than productive way. Her story of finally selecting Boston College and GPSP was equally humorous and relatable. The Prospective Scholars were highly engaged and laughed along as she described her indecision and ultimate conclusion that BC was the right place for her.

As she continued on to reflect over her four years at Boston College, Meagan also emphasized the importance of using an undergraduate education as an opportunity for self-discovery. Meagan described her personal journey of hopping from major to major, seeing each shift as a valuable exploration of possibility, in stark contrast with the pressure that many students feel to settle into a major or career path right away.

Meagan left the Prospies with wise words regarding the

state of change they will soon experience as they transition between high school and college. Ms. Gonzalez advised the students that while change is inevitable, a person can always choose their attitude and find opportunity within a dynamic state. Her words perfectly framed the next chapter of these student's lives, and gave an incredibly positive impression of Boston College and what it means to be a Presidential Scholar.

The GPSP extends a warm thank you to Meagan, and wishes her all the best in the years to come.



Prospies listening to Meagan Gonzalez speak

Alumni Announcements

Sean Patrick Flahaven '95 won the Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album for *Some Like It Hot* (Original Broadway Cast Recording). Flahaven served as executive producer of the album and label head of Concord Theatricals Recordings. This is his third Grammy: he previously won in this category for *Into the Woods* (2022 Broadway Cast Recording) and *Hamilton* (Original Broadway Cast Recording).

Andrew Frey '01 led the team at the City of Miami that just won a \$60M grant from federal DOT for a 30+ acre park in downtown.

Leah De Quattro '03 earned her PhD in Medical Humanities, awarded by the University of Manchester (UK).

Will Dowd '06 was selected as a 2024-2025 Fellow for the James Merrill House Writer-in-Residence Program.

Chris Scullin '10 is leaving Bain Capital to join Norwest Venture Partners on the Growth PE team based in Menlo Park, CA. He'll be investing in founder-backed businesses in the early stages of their journeys to help them accelerate growth and build for the future.

Marie Pellissier '15 finished her PhD in history at the College of William & Mary, and started a new job as a Program Officer at the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities.

Nick Denari '16 married Erica Papkee (also BC class of 2016) on July 29 2023.

Meg Loughman '19 is now working as a Content Strategist at Lyft

Kelli Rodrigues '22 has a new job as a Housing Case Manager and Special Initiatives for the City of Somerville.



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