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## Students Explore a Range of Interests Through College Arts Scholars Awards

October 19, 2011 — Working on an off-Broadway play, having your own large-format camera, enjoying a stint at a music academy and peeking at the behind-the-scenes functions of a famous dance festival were dreams come true this summer for four University of Virginia arts students.

The rising fourth-year students, chosen from among the ranks of the [College Arts Scholars](#) program, received grants that allowed them to pursue a summer experience in their fields of study.

The College Arts Scholars Program was recently expanded through a gift from Evelyn McGee Colbert, a 1985 graduate of the [College of Arts & Sciences](#), and her husband, comedian Stephen T. Colbert. The students received up to \$3,000 to expand their study by exploring real-life projects and facilitating network-building.

A committee of arts faculty in the College selected the students, who represented the [drama](#), [dance](#), [music](#) and [studio art](#) programs.

Upon their return, each wrote an essay describing their experiences. The essays, with accompanying photos, are posted on the [College Arts Scholars website](#).

"The College Arts Scholars program is really beginning to evolve," said director Michael Rasbury, an associate professor of sound design in the Department of Drama.

"Along with these fourth-year students, we admitted 17 first-year students to the program last spring and provided them with a new course called the College Arts Scholars Seminar. This seminar presents a variety of philosophies and methods for creating art. A discussion course will be offered in the spring for College Arts Scholars in all years of study so that each student will have an opportunity to bring their developing knowledge and skills to the entire cohort of students."

Drama major Max Krembs traveled to New York to provide sound design for the off-Broadway Transport Group's adaptation of "The Patsy."

He said he was confident to embrace the task because of his U.Va. experience with both sound design – crafting sound effects and selecting accompanying music – and engineering the technical aspects, including making decisions related to the sound system. At Transport Group, Krembs worked with Rasbury, the group's resident sound designer, constantly comparing his experience there to the artistic process he was accustomed to at U.Va.

He used part of his grant to purchase a professional-quality still camera and accessories to document his work on future productions.

A major benefit of the experience was networking, Krembs wrote in his essay. "The experience from this summer was instrumental in establishing a more solid network in New York that I will most certainly be utilizing once I graduate from the University this spring.

The College Arts Scholars grant helped studio art major and photographer Elisabeth Hogeman prepare for her upcoming fourth-year thesis show. She used the funds to purchase a large-format camera to aid her fieldwork.

"I am interested in how the camera functions as a research tool – how studio art functions as an academic subject," she said.

Over the summer, Hogeman traveled around Virginia and Tennessee making a series of photographs investigating loss and recovery. She was inspired by a fellow student's loss of her mother two years ago.

"There is an innately haunting quality to photographic images as an index of what 'was,'" Hogeman wrote in her essay. "Fascinated by labor of memory and the work memory performs to aestheticize experience, I am interested in how the camera similarly invests in a process of mechanical hyper-remembering."

She plans to continue her photographic investigation as she prepares for her Distinguished Scholars thesis and a spring exhibit in Ruffin Hall.

For Trenley Anderson, the grant provided time for intense clarinet study.

"In music, counterpoint is the relationship between two or more voices that function independently from each other, but sound harmonious when played together." Anderson wrote in her essay. "Just as a single melody joins a diversity of others

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in the counterpoint of musical fugue, so I joined a diversity of other music students to form a vibrant artistic community at the Orford Arts Academy in Quebec, Canada."

At the academy, Anderson took private lessons and attended master classes on technique and creative approaches to performing. The experience also included working with composers, producers and managers and learning to work with recording technology.

"I learned that the practice of making music is less the work of individuals and more the result of community and dialogue," Anderson said.

She said she found new "musical vigor" for her fourth-year Distinguished Major project.

At Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, Mass., Jessica Smith strengthened her commitment to dance. As an intern working on development, education and post-production efforts for the community, she was exposed to numerous aspects of the dance experience.

"The summer was an unparalleled experience in arts administration and in the dance world, as well as an opportunity to witness an unimaginable amount of incredible dance in one place." Smith said. "In addition to all of this invaluable experience, working, interacting and aiding in presenting this festival, I was able to spend the summer 'living' dance."

Smith said the behind-the-scenes and support activities she experienced this summer provide a back-up to her plans to become a dancer.

She will complete her work during the January Term, when she will spend two weeks in New York working with various dance companies as they rehearse, taking dance classes and learning from choreographers and dancers.

Smith echoed the appreciation of all the scholars. She said, "I can't thank Evelyn and Stephen Colbert enough for their support in enhancing my studies and opening so many doors."

The Colberts' gift expands the Arts Scholars Program. Each year, 15 to 20 incoming first-years are selected to participate in the program, based on an arts supplement to the admission application. A first-year Arts Scholars Seminar provides opportunities to meet with visiting artists and interact closely with U.Va.'s distinguished arts faculty to learn about their research and discuss practical applications of their art majors. The students are eligible for College Arts Scholars grants in the summer between their third and fourth years. The College is seeking additional funding to sustain and expand the program. Further funding will provide summer grants to every College Arts Scholar who majors or minors in one of the arts disciplines.

— By Jane Ford

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