

Owen L. Coon Fund for Hardy Scholarships (4000274)

Each spring, the School of Communication selects students who will receive financial assistance from the Owen L. Coon Fund for Hardy Scholarships in the next academic year. Following are short profiles of the 14 Hardy Scholars who received support from this endowment in academic years 2010–11 and 2011–12 (a few of whom have already graduated).

Ryan Beiermeister is a senior who has been on the Northwestern debate team in all of her four years at the University. A thank-you letter from her is included in this package.

Senior **Jonathan Blough** is earning his bachelor's degrees in political science and international studies, with a focus on international security and Asia, and also minoring in Chinese. Outside of class, Blough has worked as an intern on two Illinois political campaigns and served as campus marketing/recruiting coordinator for The McTigue Financial Group/Northwestern Mutual. At the Northwestern Debate Institute, he served two-month stints as assistant director and as a lab leader, instructing 20 high-school students on the skills and techniques necessary for effective policy debate. When asked about the impact of debate on his life, Blough said the following:

Debate catalyzed my intellectual creativity, giving me an unstoppable hunger for absorbing information on a wide variety of topics. It granted me an open-minded perspective that enhanced my ability to research. My communication and presentation skills owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many speeches I gave over the years and the many hours I spent devising how to distill piles of articles into strategic statements. The attitudes and abilities I accrued through my debate work were essential to my academic successes at Northwestern. I also carried over the team's "When one of us wins, we all win" attitude into how I captained multiple intermural sports teams. I could not have asked for a more beneficial experience from a school activity.

Jordan Blumenthal, who hails from Dallas, Texas, is a senior at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. He is majoring in political science, with a minor in philosophy. 2012 marks Blumenthal's 10th year in debate. Throughout his Northwestern career, he has worked summers at the Northwestern Summer Debate Institute for high school students and served as debate coach or instructor at such institutions as St. Mark's School of Texas; University of California, Berkeley; and Glenbrook South High School. Since April 2012, Blumenthal has been working as a debate coach at Harvard University.

Matthew Fisher graduated from Northwestern in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in political science. Stellar performances by Fisher and teammate Stephanie Spies at the University of Texas-Dallas led the Northwestern Debate Society to a triumphant victory as the 2011 National Debate Tournament champions. Fisher provided the following comments in April, reflecting on the significance of his experiences with the Northwestern team:

Debating for Northwestern University impacted my life monumentally. During my four years as a debater at Northwestern, my partner and I won a number of national tournaments, including the 2010–2011 national debate championship.

The benefits of participating on the debate team extend far beyond merely winning awards, though. Debate trained me to become a better writer, researcher, and thinker; helped me form strong, lasting friendships with my teammates and coaches; and taught me the value of hard work and dedication. The skills that I acquired through debate helped me achieve academic success at Northwestern and now help me on a daily basis in my current position as a researcher with the Global Health Policy Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. In my spare time, I assist current members of the Northwestern debate squad in honing their skills.

The Hardy Scholarship made all of this possible; I could not have attended Northwestern without that scholarship. I am _____ and will be _____ eternally grateful for the support of the Owen L. Coon Foundation.

Gregory Friend graduated from Northwestern with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a certificate from the Integrated Marketing Communications program at the Medill School. He offered the following thoughts about the importance of the debate program in his life:

Without the slightest bit of hesitation, I can say debate was the single most important aspect of my time at Northwestern, and has had a permanent impact on my life. Debate has been indispensable toward developing a fundamental skill set that gives me a leg up on my peers. Beyond the obvious skills of communication, research, and persuasion, debate has helped me foster and hone a unique knack for critical thinking, a sense of dedication and loyalty, and a confidence in my ability to change the world. More than any other class, teacher, or activity at Northwestern, debate and the coaches I've had the great privilege of working with have prepared me for success in the "real world."

After graduating from Northwestern, I entered an 18-month leadership development program with Nielsen, where I currently hold a full-time position as the Project Manager for Digital Integration. My work focuses on product and strategy development to meet our clients' needs regarding measurement of media consumption on computers and mobile devices. On a daily basis, I am confronted with situations that cause me to draw on my debate background: thinking about various ways to solve a problem, responding to the competition's criticism, persuading clients, or generating internal support.

As someone who has been active in competitive sports teams, my fraternity, and a wide variety of other extracurricular activities, nothing has come close to debate in imparting lessons that will remain relevant and important for my entire life. In the words of the Duck [the nickname for longtime debate coach Scott Deatherage]: Character, commitment, hard work, teamwork — these are the pillars of success that define greatness.

Pavan Krishnamurthy is a senior at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. During his time at Northwestern, he has served internships at the Chicago Legal Clinic on the city's South Side and at Metro TeenAIDS. Among his accomplishments in debate, Krishnamurthy (then a sophomore) teamed with Jonathan Blough and advanced to the semifinals at the University of Northern Iowa. He has also worked as an assistant debate coach at New Trier Township High School District 203.

When asked what impact the debate team has had on his life, Krishnamurthy responded, "I debated mostly in high school and tried it out in college. It was very competitive but fun. I came from a public school so getting all of these resources was an incredible opportunity. There is a reason why Northwestern Debate is the best in the nation. I study political science because of my time in debate."

Taylor Layton hails from Salt Lake City, Utah and is a senior at Weinberg College who expects to graduate this spring with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. Outside of the classroom, he has worked as a volunteer mentor at the YMCA. Layton's post-graduation plans include applying to graduate school and the Peace Corps. He provided the following comments about how participating in debate has made a difference in his life:

Debate taught me to comprehensively research any topic. Although I had some of these skills before arriving at Northwestern, they continually get better with time spent practicing. Debate provides an impetus and a topic for extremely deep research. The high standards for evidence, truth, and argumentative structure make it a highly intellectual activity and prepare someone for systematic and comprehensive thinking in almost any field. Although I no longer do debate, I know that many of my writing and speaking skills were honed and developed almost solely from debate. If it weren't for debate, I would likely still be struggling with the University standard for papers. Thanks to debate, I am very comfortable selecting a paper topic, researching it, and constructing a coherent, well-reasoned argument. I do not think that it is incorrect to say that the critical thinking skills that debate teaches are the most important skills to have to be a citizen, or even just a human being, in the 21st century.

Peyton Lee is a junior at Northwestern. She has been involved in debate since high school, when she debated for Pace Academy, winning three Georgia High School State Championships and finishing

twice as the top Negative speaker, according to the Georgia Debates Institute, where Lee is now a policy lab leader. Her thank-you letter is included in this report.

Hailing from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, **Christopher Mair** is a junior who is the first generation of his family to attend college. He is earning a bachelor's degree in political science. Mair serves as sergeant-at-arms for Beta Theta Pi fraternity and has been a member of the Special Events Committee for Homecoming 2011. His post-graduation plans include applying to law school and pursuing work as a public policy consultant.

Jason Rickard came from Wichita, Kansas to Northwestern, where he became a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and graduated in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in political science. He is currently working as a paralegal for Peter Francis Geraci, a Chicago attorney specializing in bankruptcy cases.

Yuheng "Victor" Shao is a junior majoring in economics with a minor in business institutions. In April 2012, he was elected president of the Northwestern University Associated Student Government. Shao has twice worked as a risk management intern at CME (Chicago Mercantile Exchange) Group and plans to pursue a position in the financial services industry after graduation. He also manages fundraising for Camp Kesem, a week-long summer camp for children whose parents are affected by cancer.

Stephanie Spies graduated from Northwestern in 2011. In her senior year, Spies and fellow debater Matt Fisher made history as the first duo to win both the National Debate Tournament and the Tournament of Champions. They are longtime friends who won the Tournament of Champions as debaters at Glenbrook North High School. Contacted in April 2012 and asked about how debate had influenced her personally and academically, Spies said:

I am currently a research assistant for the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., a job that I got only as a result my college debate experience. (I received the Taylor Debate Internship award as a result of my competitive success at NU.)

Debate is an amazing activity and it has undoubtedly changed my life. During my time on the NU team, I not only won a national championship and became the first female top-speaker award recipient at the National Debate Tournament in over two decades, but I also gained invaluable research, public speaking, critical thinking, and leadership skills that will assuredly help me achieve success later in life.

Sophomore **Zane Waxman** came to Northwestern from Phoenix, Arizona, where he attended Brophy College Preparatory. Apart from his debating activities, he participates in Jumpstart, a

national early education organization that helps children from low-income neighborhoods develop language and literacy skills. A letter from Waxman is included with this report.

Binyang "Jeffrey" Xu hails from Austin, Texas. He is a junior majoring in Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences. His post-graduation plans include working toward a PhD in economics.