

## EXPLORATION SUMMER 2020

September 2019

TO: Prospective Exploration Summer Project Mentors  
FROM: Vicki B. Stocking, Ph.D., Summer Programs Director  
RE: Supporting Robertson Scholar's Exploration Summer project

Thank you for your interest in and support of our scholars.

I have prepared this document for Robertson sophomores to share with potential summer project mentors. Robertsons are often reluctant to ask for help with their project ideas--they would rather figure everything out themselves. However, we require that they find someone (besides Program staff) to help inform and advise these projects.

Please contact me if you have questions or concerns about our process or about specific Robertsons who may contact you.

Sincerely,



Vicki

### Overview of Robertson Summer Programs

The Robertson Scholarship includes funding for up to three summers of programming. The first--the *Community Summer*--focuses on community-building, cultural immersion, and service-learning in the Southeastern United States. After sophomore year, the *Exploration Summer* encourages Scholars to get "out of their comfort zones" through challenging exploration to achieve intellectual pursuits. Finally, the *Launch Summer* provides Scholars with the missing piece(s) of their academic and/or pre-professional puzzle to "launch" them into senior year and beyond. Our summers are designed to foster increasing responsibility and leadership outcomes as the Scholars progress.

The Exploration Summer is often the most challenging for Robertson Scholars. Sophomore year is difficult. Sophomores settle into hard work and make serious commitments to majors and long-term plans. Robertson sophomores have the additional challenge of the Campus Switch, where they actually move to the sister campus and take up residence for spring semester. On top of this, we have given them the task of creating, for the first time, an individualized summer experience.

### What is an Exploration Summer Project?

Scholars work with us (and you!) on early ideas and submit a series of proposals to our program for review. Projects can be completed alone or in groups, in the US or abroad. For 2020, the program is again emphasizing the intellectual focus of the Exploration Summer. Scholars are expected to pursue intellectual pursuits through physical, mental, and/or intellectual challenges. At the end of this document, I have listed some sample projects completed over the past few years for illustration.

### Roles of the Exploration Project Mentor

Because the second Robertson summer involves a type of independent work we have not emphasized to this point, we ask our Robertsons to be guided by an *Exploration Project Mentor* from one of our universities or a relevant local or international organization.

Advisors such as this play a key role in guiding a student's intellectual and personal development; their connection and relationship with students can significantly influence student productivity and success.

Ideally, the Exploration Project Mentor will be able to assist in the following ways:

- Advise the scholar on his or her proposal development
- Be available for scholar consultation during the summer if needed—either in person or via email or telephone
- Debrief with the scholar post-summer
- Inform the Robertson Scholars Leadership Program of any issues that may impact the integrity or feasibility of the project

The specific involvement of the Mentor will depend on the Robertson's individual circumstances and on the nature of his or her project. Robertsons have asked Mentors for help with the following:

- Choosing among various internships or other activities
- Conceptualizing and implementing research, particularly research with human subjects
- General affirmation and advice about academic connections, taking risks, trying something new, etc.

### **Robertson Program Procedures**

Each Robertson is expected to provide the name and contact information of his or her Exploration Project Mentor by October 30. The first proposal is due November 13. We will not allow a Robertson to proceed with the Exploration Summer process until we are sure a willing Mentor is in place.

### **Why be an Exploration Project Mentor?**

In my role as Summer Programs director, I work with every Robertson Scholar over the four years of college. Sophomore year is a challenging time for Scholars and, simultaneously, an exciting time to support them. They return to campus from their first Robertson summer with a confusing mix of emotions. They are, alternately, excited, confused, open-minded, and frustrated. They are reflecting on goals and life choices and are asking questions about not only the past and upcoming summer, but much larger issues. This role is a chance to interact with a talented, enthusiastic Robertson who is interested in learning along with you. Please contact me ([stocking@robertsonscholars.org](mailto:stocking@robertsonscholars.org)) if you'd like to talk about how this might work for you.

### **Selected Exploration Summer projects (2011 - 2019)**

- Internships with a variety of startups
- Mental health fellowship with Emerge Global (Sri Lanka)
- Exploring public land through internship with National Park Service (Wyoming and Montana)
- Exploration of art, culture, languages with intellectual themes (various locations)
- Medicine/public health projects on topics such as doctor-patient relationships, stress and biochemical markers, nutrition, and sexual health education (various locations, including Bolivia, Indonesia, and the US)
- Research on gentrification and anti-gentrification policy (Germany)
- Teaching and youth development (various locations, including Shanti Bhavan in India)
- Supporting local entrepreneurs through Social Entrepreneur Corps (Ecuador)
- Linguistics research at the *Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle* at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (France)
- Consulting internship with Oliver Wyman Financial Consulting (London)
- Conservation research/engineering, public health, public policy (Duke Marine Lab, Faroe Islands, Thailand, other locations)
- Research on school resegregation in Atlanta, Georgia (Atlanta, GA)
- Cross-country research on voting motivations
- NBC News internship (NYC)
- Internships with government officials (Washington DC)
- Internships, research, and service projects related to health and education in the context of incarceration, in US and abroad (various locations)
- Exploring racial justice and education, in US and abroad (various locations)
- Internship with political party in Vienna (Austria)