

EXPLORATION SUMMER 2021

September 2020

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

There are so many unknowns about Summer 2021, but Robertson Scholars are thinking about the possibilities! Although the pandemic may impact their eventual activities, we are committed to helping them create Summers that will complement their academic work and further their leadership development.

I have prepared this document for Robertson sophomores to share with potential summer Mentors. Regardless of what they will eventually be able to *do* during the summer, the process of working through their ideas is beneficial to Robertsons and often the Mentors, as well.

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 individually designed projects. 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.

Because of COVID-19, Robertson sophomores were not able to participate in an in-person Community Summer. This cohort missed the chance for deep, in-person commitment to community-based issues within a small group of peers. However, many in this class did important, personally meaningful work they identified or created on their own, despite tremendous barriers. Although their first year of college ended so abruptly, they were able to move forward productively during the summer and displayed fantastic intrinsic motivation. This perseverance will certainly be helpful as they begin to plan Exploration Summer. I am confident this group will be able to develop fascinating avenues for Exploration of many kinds.

What is an Exploration Summer Project?

Scholars work with us (and you!) on early ideas and submit a series of proposals for review. What does Exploration mean for each Scholar? What are the possibilities? Scholars request funding by preparing budgets later in the process. Projects can be completed alone or in groups, in the US or abroad, depending on the coronavirus situation. For 2021, the Program is emphasizing the role of Program values in Summer projects: Purposeful Leadership, Collaborative Spirit, Intellectual Curiosity, and Strength of Character. At the end of this document, I have listed some sample projects completed over the past few years (pre-pandemic) 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 a university 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. This structured arrangement can be especially helpful for students during times of uncertainty and unrest.

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 consultation with the Scholar 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 basic proposal "draft" is tentatively scheduled for **December 1**. *Because of the uncertainty of the academic calendar during the preparation of this document, we cannot yet determine exact dates and procedures.* Further deadlines will be announced as soon as possible. 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 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. COVID-19 has certainly illuminated this characteristic! 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) if you'd like to talk about this.

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)



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