

Robertson Deferred/Post-Grad Summer 2022

Long Comments after First Draft

Vicki Stocking 1/10/2022

I just finished reviewing your 29 proposals. I read the entire collection twice before writing any comments. Altogether, you've done really good work, proposing activities that will stretch, challenge, and inspire you on your way to becoming a transformational leader. Your ideas will help inform and inspire our team, too, as we learn about your dreams and motivations for this most unusual Robertson Summer.

I offer the following overall comments:

- The materials we've created for this first Deferred Summer are underdeveloped at best, and you've done a good job interpreting, creating, and imagining, based on our informational zooms, the Bulletin, and lots of conversations with staff and alumni.
- You're also helping to create this experience for the cohort that will follow you. A year from now, we'll have a better idea about how to frame the Deferred/Post-Grad Summer. It is different from other Robertson Summers and hard to describe. (Can someone come up with a better name?)
- The strongest proposals (there were a bunch of these!) showed these characteristics:
 - Your willingness to think deeply about the principles you wrote about: curiosity, commitments, and your own leadership development. We could see that when you really considered these principles, you allowed yourself to propose creative, off-the-beaten path projects that will stay with you. An example: one of you wrote about learning **about** a thing for many years but hasn't "walked the walk" (her words). To truly implement the skills and outlooks she has learned about, she has proposed intense guided learning experiences in a variety of formats.
 - Content that reflects your own desires for growth: A few of you are hoping this summer will meet requirements for something else or will definitively set you up for your next step (e.g., job, school). That layer of stress is evident.
 - Collaboration with other Scholars: We enjoyed the commitment many of you have made to purposefully reconnecting. This adds an element of complexity to your already challenging next steps, but based on other Scholars' accounts, it's worth it.
 - Close work with your Coach: Those of you who feel comfortable with your Coach—particularly those who have had a long relationship—have a layer of support built in that adds to your confidence.
- We received permission to create this special summer because you missed a traditional Exploration Summer, an experience we know contributes to leadership development. We suggested that you consider activities you wouldn't be able to do any other time, things you're hungry for. Elise came up with a good statement for these Summers: "I'd love to ___." We did not state that you **couldn't** to the kinds of things you usually do. A few of you proposed Summer 2022 projects that are a continuation of the work you've already been doing in terms of internships with direct career applications. I've tagged these to bring to the attention of our team.
- A few of you proposed activities that are *required* for something else in the future, such as medical or law school. That language caught my attention. This is another issue for staff to consider, but I believe we will want you to have motivations in addition to meeting a requirement.
- We'll ask you to have a framework and intention to shape some of the less-structured activities you're proposing. For example, a few of you want to hike and reflect, or write, or do art. We'll ask you to create a timeline or process for these kinds of things. Prepare. For example, identify a model of meditation you want to practice. Or read the accounts of poets and novelists so you see the strategies they used, and build that into your own plan. The point is, don't wait until you're "there" to figure out what you'll do.
- One way to frame a creative project is in terms of an issue or question.
- When we held our informational zooms in the early fall, many of you described needing rest and wanting this Summer 2022 to provide that. We do hope you feel restored after the summer, but rest is a different thing. If rest is your top goal, it will not make sense to travel to several places. We also strongly encourage you not to fill every minute with activity and not to hop around to a lot of places for short visits. Just like any other Robertson Summer, we'll want this one to be coherent and meaningful.

- We appreciate that it's a fine line between writing a compelling, enthusiastic proposal for an experience that will fulfill you and writing a proposal for an unstructured vacation. In your first step, it was absolutely the right approach to lay it all out there—we asked you to dream. Now, it's time to get serious with an actual plan.

Finally, let's talk about administration and next steps:

Administration: We have determined that your funding will come through Duke, even if you're a UNC Scholar. We are still working on other aspects of this unique summer to be sure you'll have adequate support.

- I'll contact UNC Scholars soon for information about SSNs to enroll you in Duke's system.
- Everyone must complete a Direct Deposit form for Non-Compensatory payments, even if you've already done one. I'll find the best version of this form and will get it to you soon.
- I must submit a request for your payment in mid-April at the latest, so the April 8 deadline is serious. (More on that below).
- We're still clarifying this, but our understanding now is that you'll follow Duke's rules for international travel. I'll know more about the evolving rules after a meeting this week, but be aware of this [list](#) of restricted regions. (Many of you have worked with this before, and it's posted on our resource pages.)

Next steps: You're off to a good start, and you are Robertson Seniors! You are well equipped to create and experience a transformative experience! You're leading the way into a new form of Robertson Summer that might have long-lasting implications for our Program.

- A final reminder about Coaches: As soon as I can, I'll be communicating with your Coaches to welcome them into the "fold" of this special Robertson Summer and thank them for their commitment to you. Your Coach will be your primary partner as you continue to work on your projects. When you turn in your final materials, we will ask for a comment or statement from your Coach.
- Your next deadline is April 8. Soon, we'll have posted all the things that go into those final materials. We will not have intermediary deadlines because we are expecting you to drive this process, work closely with your Coach, and come to staff when you need additional guidance. You must meet that date to ensure that you'll have funding for Summer 2022. We will not send multiple reminders. Once we have all the materials ready, it's up to you to get it done. We believe you can do it!
- I have reviewed your first drafts and will now send them to alumni for an additional level of feedback. Some proposals will also be reviewed by other staff. All proposals will be shared with all staff, so do not be surprised if someone other than me asks about your project.
- Do not wait for further comments to begin planning your work on this.
- Work with other Scholars as much as you can. Find a partner or group to keep you on track—your own accountability team.
- In terms of budget, we will be prepared to provide you with \$6300 minus whatever you received for 2021. We'll ask for a general budget (many of you have already done this) but will not spot-check your budgets and will not ask for receipts. We have confidence that you'll use the money responsibly.
- Before the summer begins, we'll have set out the plan for summer communications and end-of-summer sharing and reporting. As with any Robertson Summer, if your conditions change, we expect communication so we can work with you to adjust. If you don't complete your project as planned and do not communicate, we will expect you to return funds to the Program. Our Program has received special permission to offer this unusual summer, so we're held to high standards, too.

Right away:

- Be glad you're a Robertson and have the chance to take on these difficult projects!
- Put April 8 in your calendar and, with your Coach and your accountability team, start to map out what you need to do to have a full plan by that time.
- Go back to the resource page for reports about how Scholars prepared for deeply experiential summers. I posted instructions about how to get better info from Robertson Connect. I've recommended the accounts from Divya Mahesh, Sydney McAuliffe, Olivia Linn, and Clare Boyd. Sydney, Liv, and Clare did their Exploration Summer

together. They came to the same activity from different perspectives, pursued different goals, but did the same activity. They're a great model of intention and collaboration.

- Get ready for the Capstone experiences happening in Spring semester, especially the retreat in late January! The retreat has been developed along with the Deferred/Post-Grad Summer. You'll see how that programming will help you stay inspired and committed to developing your final Robertson Summer, in your cohort. We are extremely excited about the possibilities.