Peering at pioneering the PSP Big/Little Program

Kari Ann Piatt
Cohort 2012

This semester marked the beginning of a new type of peer mentorship within the Provost’s Scholars Program. Thanks to the combined efforts of Angela Banks and Kelly Cave (both members of Cohort 2013 and the PSP Executive Committee) the PSP was pleased to launch a Big/Little program in which first years are paired up with an older student in the program.

Obviously inspired by a longstanding tradition within Greek life, this program is designed to allow students to have a mentor within the PSP from the beginning who share both interests and a drive to succeed.

Kelly and Angela coordinated with the PSP Social Committee to hold a “Big/Little Reveal” in October for all “Bigs” and “Littles” to attend. Prior to the big reveal, only Kelly and Angela knew which students were paired with which. The event coincided with a breakfast for the PSP first years in Juniper-Poplar Hall, and halfway through the “Bigs” welcomed their new “Littles” with signs and a pleasant time playing games and eating delicious pancakes!

Second and third years this semester participated as “Bigs” voluntarily to set it in motion, however all first years are participating as “Littles.” Moving forward, (continued on page 3)

Catching up with new Provost’s scholars

Jennifer Stenback
Cohort 2012

This year, thirty seven first year students entered the Provost’s Scholars Program. Cohort 2014 is made up of a diverse mix of students, each with unique academic interests and future goals. The two students highlighted here represent just a small sample of the high-achieving, creative, and promising students belonging to the Provost’s Scholars Program.

Dalia Elmelige, Cohort 2014

Dalia is an International Studies major who has dreams of attending some of the most prestigious International Studies graduate programs in the country. She hopes to work in the field of nations and would eventually like to work with an internationally-focused NGO. Her ultimate goal is to found an NGO of her own.

Outside of academics, Dalia is an avid swimmer and runner. She is currently (continued on page 2)
training for her second half-marathon. Volunteer service is another important area in Dalia’s life. She is already involved with the Events Planning Committee at the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement and is helping with Bulls for Kids. Besides her campus-wide involvement, Dalia is also in the process of becoming a Big Sister for the Big Brothers, Big Sisters Program.

Dalia felt drawn to USF because of the student environment, but the PSP program was also a major deciding factor. “I decided to join the PSP because I was eager to be surrounded by people as motivated as me to take control of their future,” said Dalia. Although she knew the program would be challenging, the support Dalia has received from Dr. Fogel and Ms. Wray “reassured [her] that this program was not impossible.” Since enrolling at USF, Dalia has enjoyed the diversity of students on campus and the welcoming atmosphere. As a PSP, she hopes to see the program continue to make efforts to build a sense of community and solidarity among the cohorts.

Chadwick Batdorf, Cohort 2014

Chadwick is a Nursing major who plans on continuing his education beyond his registered nurse degree. It is Chadwick’s ultimate goal to attend graduate school to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. He hopes this career will allow him to move to North Carolina in several years and stay active in his community.

Chadwick enjoys a range of sports outside of classes including golf, basketball, tennis, and soccer. For Chadwick, sports are both a way to stay physically active and healthy and a way to clear his head from college stressors. On campus, Chadwick has already joined the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and is looking forward to assuming leadership roles within Sigma Phi Epsilon and in additional organizations on the USF campus.

Chadwick’s decision to attend USF was largely determined by the opportunities provided by the PSP and the high caliber of USF’s Nursing School. Since coming to campus, he has been surprised by the unique experience of living away from home on a college campus and the increased freedom it brings. “It’s completely different than anything I have ever experienced before,” he said.

With his involvement in the PSP, Chadwick hopes to see more events planned which bring his cohort closer together and is looking forward to getting to know the other students enrolled in the program.
Peering at pioneering the PSP Big/Little Program (cont. from page 1)

all first years will receive a “Big” and all second and third years will have at least one “Little.” Angela explained how students were assigned “Bigs” and “Littles” this year. She said, “Most everyone has two ‘Littles,’ but a few have just one. [Kelly and I] based the matches on majors and interest as best as we could.”

Many students were paired with students who have the same exact major as them. This was easier to do with students studying a major common within the PSP. However there were stragglers who were difficult to pair up, generally because the individuals had an area of study that is not being actively pursued by anyone else in the PSP in a different cohort. This happened often with those in the social sciences. Fortunately, this is why Kelly and Angela surveyed potential “Bigs” and “Littles” for their interests and hobbies as well as their area of study. It allowed them to pair some students who did not have an older peer in their exact area of study with someone who still had interests relevant to the dream they were pursuing.

Angela and Kelly anticipate only good for the future of this program and look forward to continue working with Casey Hempel and Victoria D’Esposito, heads of the PSP Social Committee, to coordinate more exciting events for the “Bigs” and “Littles.” Angela revealed, “We’re looking at planning an event in the spring for the ‘Bigs’ and ‘Littles’ to hang out and maybe do a competition of some sort but we haven’t started planning it quite yet.” Be advised to be on the lookout in the coming spring semester!

Consult Caitlin

Caitlin Dumke
Cohort 2013

My name is Caitlin Dumke and I am a third year Provost’s scholar preparing for graduation this coming May. I take a full class load every semester and work around 20 hours a week at a small cafe in the basement of Moffitt Cancer Center here on campus. My major is Communication with a minor in Women and Gender Studies and I am in the process of applying to graduate schools to pursue my passion for issues in the Women and Gender Studies field. I encourage you to ask me any questions you may have concerning the Provost’s Scholars Program or life in general. You may contact me at cdumke@mail.usf.edu. If you prefer to remain nameless in the newsletter, please let me know and I will address your question anonymously.

(continued on page 4)
Consult Caitlin (cont. from page 3)

Dear Naela,

If you are a student in the Honors College, then the Fresh People 5 events apply to you. The Fresh People 5 requirement functions as a way for you to get to know other Honors College students and connect with them in social, academic, and intellectual ways. Convocation counts as one and then you are expected to choose four other that interest you. Your attendance of these events as an Honors College student will determine whether or not you are eligible for Honors College study abroad and competitive scholarships. Just make sure you remember your USF Student ID card so you can “swipe in.”

If you are living in the Honors LLC, it is expected that you attend 6 Honor-LLC programs throughout the academic year, especially if you would like to live in the LLC the following year. The mandatory $125.00 fee that you pay per semester is used to fund these events and activities, so I encourage you to check them out! They are, again, a fun way for you to connect with like-minded students with similar goals (and they are a way to set studying aside for a little while which can be incredibly refreshing). Don't forget your USF ID!

Lastly, as a Provost's Scholar, there are mandatory events that are usually announced by Dr. Fogel or our PSP Social Committee via email. Always make sure to RSVP to these events, even if you cannot make it. These events are fun and interesting and often have unique guest speakers. Going to these events is a great way to meet other PSPs.

Caitlin

Advice and tips for taking the LSAT

Brittnie Burns

Cohort 2013

Taking the LSAT may seem like an intimidating and daunting task, especially if you do not know what you are up against. It may feel like just another hoop to jump through, and it is, but it is also important to do well.

I recently took the LSAT this past September, so I know how stressful it can be! If this exam is in your future- far or near- then allow the following paragraphs to be your guide to making peace with your experience with the LSAT.

(Continued on page 5)
Advice and tips for taking the LSAT (continued from page 4)

PREP COURSES:
A big decision in this process is whether or not you want to take a prep course. They can be very beneficial, but also quite expensive. If you are the kind of student who can create a strict study plan and follow it diligently, then odds are you can survive without a prep course. I tried this my first time around and I found that I didn’t spend as much time studying as I should have.

As a result, I decided to try a prep course before my next attempt. The course just gives you a structure that independent study doesn’t necessarily accomplish. Material covered in most prep books will be very similar to the materials covered in a prep course.

The bottom line is learning the strategy. If you are diligent enough to make time to learn the strategies from a prep book, then by all means you should seriously consider saving your money instead!

If you do decide to take a prep course, here are a few things you should consider before signing up.

One of the most important factors to take into consideration is the schedule.
Another factor to consider is what kind of setting you learn best in. Classes can either be online, or a traditional classroom setting.
The last consideration, and probably the most obvious, is cost. Prep courses are not cheap!

TIMING:
It is very important to give yourself plenty of time to study for the test. It may sound self-explanatory, but it makes a difference. The first time I took the test one of my biggest mistakes was not giving myself enough time.

The LSAT is not a test you can cram for. There are very specific strategies that these prep books and course will try to teach you. The LSAT is likely very different from any other test you have taken because you need to train yourself to think in a particular way. Each section of the test is very tight in regards to time.

The main goal is not to answer every question, but to answer the majority of response correctly. This may sound like the same thing, but it is not. You need to train yourself to gain points where you can and just skip where you can’t. If you rush to try and answer every question you risk getting incorrect responses faster.

RELAX:
This may sound contradictory to the rest of this article, but you need to relax. Yes, this is a big test.
Yes, it is important to study hard for it. You need to realize that whatever happens, this score will not make or break your future. I am not telling you to treat this test like it is nothing; I am telling you to get out of your own head. The first time I took the test I psyched myself out. You can be your own worst enemy.

This may not be relevant to all of you, but hopefully it will help someone. It is amazing how much of a difference confidence can make. My second time taking the test it felt easier because I was confident and took control of the test. It may feel like the end of the world if you do not get the score you want the first time around, but it isn’t.

Do not make the test bigger than it is. You always have options. You may have heard rumors about how you shouldn’t take the LSAT more than once. This is not necessarily true. If you get a bad score, take it again. Reach out to the admissions officers to the school you want to apply to, if you have the chance, and ask. Each school will have different stances towards taking it more than once, but the majority of schools will take your highest score.

On test day just remember... you made it this far, and no matter what happens this will not make or break you.
As an international studies major with a focus in the Middle East, I wanted to study abroad somewhere that is culturally and linguistically significant to my interests. Of course, I couldn’t travel anywhere close to conflict, so Morocco was my best option. While Morocco is not in the cluster of Middle Eastern countries we hear about in the news, North Africa is considered to be an Arab country and subsequently part of the Middle East. Arabic is one of Morocco’s official languages and the vast majority of citizens practice Islam. I wanted exposure to this type of lifestyle to better learn the Arabic culture, as well as study foreign affairs from a Middle Eastern perspective.

I have now been living in Morocco for a majority of the semester. I have so many experiences to teaching about Moroccan history, Islam or international relations. They are a proud people and are excited to teach us American students why Morocco is important. Though Arabic is an official language, the people don’t actually speak it. The local dialect, Darija, is a mixture of Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin. Many also speak French and Spanish as residual effects of the French and Spanish protectorates.

Since I’ve been in Morocco, I have: visited three major cities (Casablanca, Marrakech, and Fes); cliff jumped and swam through waterfalls; walked through centuries-old medinas and their respective mosques, palaces, and souks; saw the oldest university in the world; explored Roman ruins and gawked at the mosaics left behind; and celebrated Eid Mubakar with dozens of children at the local orphanage. Since I’m sure many of you aren’t familiar with this Muslim holiday, here is a little summary of Eid. As an ode to Abraham, the father of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Muslims who can afford to all over the world purchase a sheep to be slaughtered. Yes, the slaughter is usually watched by everyone, and afterwards all parts of the sheep are cooked and eaten over the following three days. In Morocco alone, an estimated three million sheep were killed as a part of this religious holiday. This experience, though enlightening, was definitely the most “foreign” I have felt in my time abroad. As if the holiday in itself weren’t a lot to take in, the children treated those who attended like celebrities, all staring and showing off then eventually taking turns getting pictures with their new American friends.

All of my travels and experiences have reaffirmed my decision to study abroad and have left me wanting to learn and travel as much as possible. My time in Morocco is almost done, but I have so much to look forward to in the coming months. In November alone, I spent four days backpacking in Italy, three days searching for castles in Scotland, four days doing as many “touristy” things as possible in England (like seeing Stonehenge and eating fish and chips), and three days camping in the Sahara Desert. I can already see how this study abroad experience is altering my view on so many things, and I am excited to share that with all of you when I return to USF in the spring.
To be or not to be Greek

Leslie Gibson
Cohort 2013

Greek life at every university is typically surrounded by a negative stigma, perpetuated by a select few individuals who actually fit into the stereotypes. Many students and faculty at USF view the Greek community with distrust and disdain, failing to recognize what sorority and fraternity members contribute to our campus such as donating to philanthropic causes and being active in Student Government and other high-profile organizations.

Many incoming freshmen and even upperclassmen worry about the time, financial, and social commitment of Greek life, which are completely valid concerns. Sororities and fraternities do require a significant time commitment, but what members receive is invaluable. I spend at least six hours a week doing sorority-related events such as attending executive council and chapter meetings, participating in philanthropy events, or serving as an assistant new member educator.

I also live with four other sisters and see my “big” at least once a week, so I am with sisters every day. The close relationships and incredible opportunities that I have because of my affiliation constantly remind me of my short time in college…something all PSPs can identify with.

As Provost’s Scholars, we feel the pressure to “make the most” of our three years and joining a Greek organization may seem an obstacle in our fast track to graduation. As a sorority woman and a member of the Provost’s Scholars Program, I can say with certainty that my college experience has only been enhanced by my Greek affiliation and has encouraged me to take on leadership roles both inside and outside of my organization.

With the support of my sorority sisters and the Greek community as a whole, I was elected to serve as a Senator in Student Government. I am involved with both the PSP Newsletter and Alumni Committee and am also a member of the Honors College, like many of you. Just as my sisters support me in my academic and leadership endeavors, Dr. Fogel and Ms. Wray have offered me nothing but encouragement and guidance.

Balancing all these activities as well as my academics and an internship is a challenge, but I feel more prepared to enter the “real world” and take on even more commitments, something that I credit to being active on the university’s campus. I am not alone- there are several PSP students who are also part of the Greek community such as Haley Knapp and Ralph Herz, who both report successfully manage the commitments associated with Greek life and the Provost’s Scholars Program.

It is important to remember that just as Greek life is perfect for me, it is not for everyone. On campus, there are countless organizations to be involved in and opportunities for internships and leadership roles. Sorority recruitment has concluded for the fall semester, but some organizations participate in spring recruitment and fraternity recruitment is still ongoing. Regardless of whether or not you consider joining a Greek organization, I encourage you to join clubs, take internships, study abroad, and make remarkable memories of your three years at USF.

Leslie Gibson
Managing Editor

“The close relationships and incredible opportunities that I have because of my affiliation constantly remind me of my short time in college…something all PSP’s can identify with.”
Congratulations graduates!

If you are reading this newsletter, you are following a path that will lead you to graduate from the University of South Florida in three years or less. For the fall semester of this year, we do have three members of the Provost's Scholars Program who are graduating in December 2014. From Breaking Stereotypes and on behalf of the entire PSP, we would like to send well wishes and our congratulations to these three outstanding individuals!

SUFYAN DAWOODJE
Major: Computer Engineering
Plans after graduation: attending graduate school beginning in fall of 2015

GENNA ELKO
Major: Psychology
Minor: Criminology
Plans after graduation: applying to law school

JORDIN VORISEK
Major: Accounting
Plans after graduation: graduate school at USF as a TA for Managerial Accounting

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