

Ex Libris

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Spring Break in Ireland for the Class of 2026

Photo courtesy of Lauren Heinzelman



The freshmen stop for a group picture while sightseeing

By Lauren Heinzelman '26

The Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program Class of 2026 was met with overcast skies when they landed in Dublin for what promised to be an insightful spring break. The Scholars regrouped and got their first glimpses of Dublin on the 15 minute walk to Boston College Ireland (BCI), where they were introduced to Irish History with a lecture by Professor Mike Cronin. The Scholars were driven to “The Merry Ploughboy,” an Irish music pub. The Scholars had an Irish meal while clapping along to live Irish music and being dazzled by traditional Irish dance. During one memorable moment from the night, Sarah You '26 was invited on stage to lead the clapping.

After a festive first night, the Scholars rested up and got an early start the next morning with a walking tour of Georgian Dublin. During the tour, the Scholars learned about the early history of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland. The walking tour finished with a tour of Trinity College and the Book of Kells. The rest of the afternoon the Scholars were free to explore their surroundings.

The following morning it was back to business, literally. The Scholars met with a representative from Sigmar Re-

cruitment to learn about how businesses operate in Ireland as well as the effect of Brexit on them. Later in the week, the Scholars attended the “Talent Summit” to hear from global leaders in business. For the afternoon, the Scholars enjoyed a Hop On Hop Off bus tour to see the city and to visit the Guinness Storehouse and the EPIC Emigration Museum.

The next day was a diplomatic one, with visits to the Dáil Éireann and the U.S. Embassy Dublin. At the Dáil Éireann, the Scholars were shown around by senators and sat in on a house meeting for a few minutes. At the U.S. Embassy Dublin, the Scholars heard about careers in the foreign services, which definitely garnered the interest of a few of them. After a reflection about the day at BCI, the Scholars were whisked away to Afternoon Tea at The Westin Hotel.

On Wednesday, the Scholars went to the countryside. On the bus ride the Scholars saw rolling green hills, farmhouses, cows, and plenty of sheep. The Scholars arrived at The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, ready to meet with the CEO to talk about diplomatic peacekeeping in Northern Ireland. Thinking about the insightful conversation they had just had, the Scholars loaded back onto the bus and headed to

the Powerscourt Estate and Gardens where they explored the pristine gardens. After a delightful day, the Scholars headed back to Dublin to have a final dinner with BCI staff and thank their gracious hosts.

After attending the Talent Summit and traveling from Dublin to Belfast, the Scholars had their first full day in Belfast. The first activity on the itinerary was a political mural tour led by Professor Dominic Bryan from Queen’s University Belfast. The tour far surpassed any standard sightseeing tour. Scholars witnessed the stark physical divide between Protestants and Catholics in Belfast. The day continued with a meeting at Springboard Opportunities to discuss their work bridging the Protestant-Catholic divide in Belfast through conversation groups with young residents. The Scholars enjoyed tea at a meeting with the U.S. Consulate in Belfast, followed by more tea with the Deputy Lord Mayor at the Belfast City Hall.

The trip concluded with a day split between the Titanic Experience (a museum about the building and sinking of the Titanic) and the Game of Thrones studio tour. After a trip they will surely never forget, the Class of 2026 returned with a greater understanding of the history of Ireland and its religious conflict.

Class of 2024 Travels to the Middle East

By John Bottei '24

During this Winter Break, the Junior Scholars had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait with Prof. Tracy Regan and GPSP Director Prof. Kathy Bailey. They spent nine days in the two locations ready to learn about the history of the areas and about people's daily lives. While it's hard to sum up the trip in a one-page article, there were a few main themes of the experience: sightseeing, learning about history and culture, interacting with locals, and eating good food.

The sightseeing was incredible: the Scholars had the chance to explore the Dubai Marina, an area near the hotel with shopping, restaurants, skyscrapers, and yachts galore. In addition, they went to the massive Dubai Mall and made their way to an observation deck very close to the top of the tallest building in the world, the Burj al Khalifa. They also explored the Old Souq, especially the gold section of the market. In Kuwait, soon after checking into the hotel, the Scholars went on a scavenger hunt in groups of three or four through the Mubarakiya, the main market.

Scholars also had the chance to learn about the history and culture of Dubai and Kuwait. On their first day in Dubai, the Scholars visited the Al Wahidi neighborhood in Old Dubai. They stopped into a dagger museum to learn about the history of dagger usage in the UAE and other Gulf nations. They also had the chance to go on a desert safari about an hour outside of the city, which included a camel ride, a falconry demonstration, and an evening at a Bedouin encampment. In Kuwait, the Scholars visited the Kuwait Oil Company and learned about the significance of oil to the country's wealth and prosperity. The COO of the holding company Kipco, Samar Khanachet, spoke to them about the history of Kuwait and Arab-American relations. In addition, they visited the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City, learning about the mosque's architecture and history as well as some basics about Islam.

A major highlight of the trip was interacting with the locals, especially in Kuwait. The Scholars visited the American Univer-



Photo courtesy of Nicole Masuoka

The Scholars before they rode camels through the desert

sity of Kuwait where they were warmly welcomed to the community, starting with a mixer with faculty, administrators, and students, followed by a tour of campus. They then had the opportunity to play basketball and volleyball with students, as well as take advantage of the art and music therapy rooms. Later on, some AUK students joined the Scholars to go to an arcade named Hangar, where they played several rounds of darts. A couple of days later, the Scholars also had the opportunity to go bowling and spend time at a café with some of the current AUK students. In addition, they had the chance to participate in a dance class with one of Professor Bailey's friends Rana and some of Rana's dancer friends in Kuwait. All in all, the Scholars were able to have thought-provoking conversation and have some fun with locals in Kuwait.

Finally, the food was a fantastic part of the trip. In Dubai, the Scholars had a chance to try a wide array of Lebanese dishes at a dinner at the Al Qasr Hotel hosted by Hala and Ibrahim Belselah. In Kuwait, they attended a Diwaniiyah, a traditional dinner preceded by conversation in the main sitting room with the host Abdul and his friends and family. To round the trip off, the Scholars had the privilege of dining at Dar Hamad, a restaurant in Kuwait City with a rich history and delicious Kuwaiti food.

Overall, the group experienced two new countries and cultures, exposing them to both the similarities and differences among

the US, the UAE, and Kuwait. As Paxton Decker '24 notes, "I had never been to either country, so I loved the opportunity to explore a new setting. From craning my neck up at the towering Dubai skyscrapers to becoming hopelessly lost in Kuwait City's old market, I woke up each day totally unsure of what surprise would find me next. Riding a camel into the desert would have to be my favorite moment." Many thanks to all who made this trip possible, including Program Director Kathy Bailey, Professor Tracy Regan, Associate Director Jennie Thomas, Sarah Gregorian, and especially all of the hosts in Dubai and Kuwait for their generosity and hospitality.

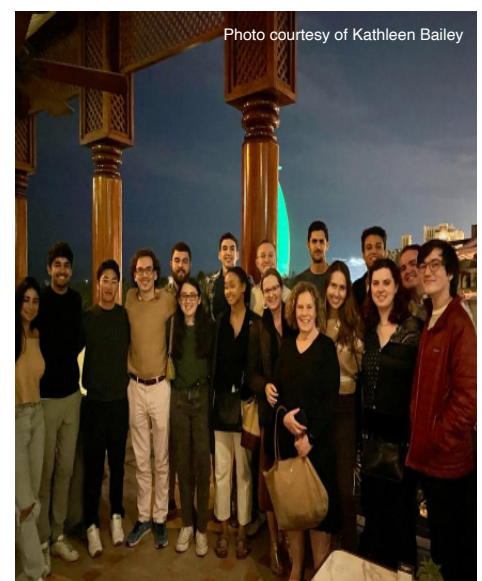


Photo courtesy of Kathleen Bailey

Scholars pose for a group picture with Professor Bailey

Alumni Guest Speaker: Ameet Kallarackal '18

By Amelia Gaffney '26

At the Gabelli Presidential Scholar Program Selection Process Welcome Dinner, current and prospective Scholars, as well as faculty members, were given the incredible opportunity to hear from Ameet Kallarackal '18. In an introduction by GPSP Director Kathleen Bailey, Ameet's collegiate activities and post-graduate experiences were highlighted. Ameet graduated from the Carroll School of Management with a concentration in computer science and a minor in philosophy.

While at Boston College, Ameet founded the BC Philosophical Society, played on the club soccer team, participated in the Bollywood dance team, and co-founded a startup called "Campus Insights," which was later acquired by Harvard Student Agencies. Currently, Ameet is co-founder and CEO of Fisherman, a software startup dedicated to help brick-and-mortar businesses online.

Ameet began his address to the attendees by reflecting on his experience nearly ten years ago – when he applied to BC. Ameet was drawn to the idea of getting away from home and finding a college environment that aligned with his philosophical and cultural identities as well as his "free-spirited way of wandering." Ameet spoke about his desire for freedom and financial independence.

Finally, Ameet attested to the fact that he was drawn to the Jesuits and their approach to education, reflection, and the nature of questioning. He emphasized that, at the time, he believed BC could be the place to have meaningful and insightful discussions with people who would appreciate his ideas and questions.

Moving through his experiences with GPSP, Ameet spoke about his experience at the selection weekend, when he sat in the same seat as the prospective students. When he initially visited, he noted that he was incredibly nervous but quickly grew to form connections with current Scholars and administrators that inspired and excited him. Ameet articulated his experiences learning about the nature of the Program, but mainly focused on the impact of his Welcome Dinner speech by GPSP alum, Pat Grady '04, who spoke about his experiences in the business world. Ameet was inspired by Grady's speech, which emphasized applying his BC education to the real world, through the formation of his values and leadership capacities.

Furthermore, Ameet emphasized the unique nature of the Boston College community, as well as the GPSP. He highlighted BC's strong focal point of reflections in both a classroom and extracurricular setting, the proximity to one of the most vibrant cities in the world, and the importance of community service to students.



Photo courtesy of Amelia Gaffney

Professor Bailey introduces Ameet

Ameet discussed how the GPSP afforded him even more extraordinary experiences, including research, internships, and jobs, and being part of an incredible alumni network. He mentioned that through GPSP and other grant-funded programs, he was able to travel to Milan, Italy, Nicaragua, Chile, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Bosnia, and Ecuador for "immersive, thoughtfully organized experiences," allowing him to engage with complex cultural dynamics.

Ameet concluded by encouraging current and prospective Scholars to appreciate all that the GPSP and Boston College community has to offer. His speech served as a reminder to the audience of the opportunities and experiences available to them and urged them to make the most of their time at Boston College and in the GPSP.



Photo courtesy of Amelia Gaffney

Ameet '18 shared words of wisdom and advice on the selection process and more

GPSP Prospie Week Returns to Campus

By Sam Jain '26

After three years of pandemic-induced disruptions, almost sixty “prospies” from across the United States, as well as the international community, were selected to enter the public arena also known as the Boston College campus, learning from current Scholars while living in their dorms.

From March 15-18, prospies participated in activities from their meticulously curated schedules to gauge what life as a student would look like, not just as a potential Presidential Scholar but also a BC student, while being simultaneously interviewed by esteemed faculty and members of admissions.

After a first evening of tours, dinner and a dessert open house with admissions and GPSP staff, prospies retreated with their hosts to the respective dorms to calculate their next moves for the following few days of evaluation. The next morning began with a presentation by Director Kathleen Bailey, highlighting the key aspects of the Program and alleviating the palpable tension with kind words of encouragement. They attended classes with current Scholars in their intended majors or just classes



Photo courtesy of Marjorie Sardella

The prospies gathered together at the welcome dinner

they were curious about, gaining insight into the educational atmosphere of BC.

Alongside interviews, seminars simulating a traditional classroom environment, and a Presidential Scholars Research Panel discussion, prospies ventured to the Murray Function Room for the Welcome Dinner featuring an invigorating keynote speaker—Mr. Ameet Kallarackal '18, Co-Founder and CEO, Fisherman Technologies, Inc. It was a multifaceted address that spotlighted Kallarackal's journey through his

four years in the Program and how it continues to inform his life as a Forbes' '30 Under 30' entrepreneur today.

During his undergraduate years, apart from pursuing the scholarly echelons of philosophical thought (even presiding over BC's Philosophical Society), Kallarackal was an active member of the club soccer team, the Bollywood-fusion dance team Masti, and the Boston College Students Against Mass Incarceration. “I just loved how passionately he talked about his numerous international trips influencing business strategies and start-up ideas and just life principles as a self-proclaimed ‘digital nomad’,” remarked one prospie.

Kallarackal noted, “Most of you will not get in,” providing a vital dose of reality and humility treasured amongst the Presidential Scholars community.

Their last night on campus as prospective Scholars was characterised by a more social and light-hearted ambiance. They partook in a tradition of bowling and dinner at Lucky Strikes in Boston, followed by the GPSP-trademarked trivia night. These traditions helped burgeon a seemingly competitive selection process amongst a strong cohort of students from a vast variety of backgrounds into a community that extends far beyond mere college or career.

“Watching them have conversations beyond jokes and small talk even at pool tables in Lucky Strikes reminded me of our experience with Discovery Days last year and the instantaneously close circle we built,” reminisced Sarah You '26.

Another dwelled more on his advice to make the most of college life, from strengthening friendships with other Scholars (bonds that led a philosophy major into the world of coding and computer science) to the integral role of building relations with professors. Moving towards the concluding remarks,



Photo courtesy of Marjorie Sardella

Prospies with former director Dennis Sardella

Alumni Announcements

Sean Flahaven '95 won a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album on February 5 as producer of *Into the Woods* (2022 Broadway Cast Recording), starring Sara Bareilles and written by Sean's late mentor (and subject of his Scholar of the College thesis), Stephen Sondheim. Sean previously won a Grammy Award in 2016 as a producer of the Broadway cast recording of *Hamilton*.

Heather (Speller) Vestal '05 and husband Matt welcomed Hope Speller Vestal on Valentine's Day.

Chris Scullin '10 was promoted to Principal at Bain Capital and relocated to the Bay Area to help launch and lead the West Coast presence.

Patrick Passarelli '10 will be starting an infectious diseases fellowship at the University of Rochester Medical Center this coming July.

Anne Kornahrens Ward '11 and husband Andrew welcomed a baby boy, August Kornahrens Ward, to the world in March. She was recently appointed as a 2023 U.S. delegate to the International Younger Chemists Network (IYCN) Assembly and will be attending the 52nd International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) General Assembly and World Chemistry Congress in The Hague, Netherlands in August.

Kelsey Swift '13 successfully defended her dissertation, *What is the 'E' in ESOL? Linguistic Borders, Normativity, and Race in Adult English Education*, earning her PhD in Linguistics.

Vivian (Chang) Baumgartner '16 has a new job: IT Product Manager, Commercial Trade Channels, and a new address: Paris!

Andrew Cammon '18 recently hosted an impactful conference with over 100 health leaders at the 2023 Stern Healthcare Association Conference.

GPSP Alumni:



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