

# *Ex Libris*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GABELLI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM, BOSTON COLLEGE

Volume XXV, Issue 3

Spring 2025

## The Graduating Class of 2025



Photo Courtesy of University Advancement

Seniors at the Wall Street Council alumni event.



Photo Courtesy of Scott Eisen

The Scholars posing for their class photo.



Photo Courtesy of University Advancement

Student Speaker Sancia Sehdev '25



Photo Courtesy of University Advancement

Honoree René Jones '86, P'25



# Stories from the Shelter: Class of 2027

By Catherine May '27

Photos Courtesy of Catherine May '27

For their Spring Event, the sophomore scholars decided to host a fundraiser and speaker event in support of the new BC Foot Clinic at Women's Lunch Place. The event was called Stories from the Shelter, and also uplifted the lived experiences of unhoused people in Boston.

Several Scholars spoke about the foot and related efforts, including Catherine May, Grace Snell, Kendall Liesching, Patrick Sheesley, and Callie Walsh. The Scholars were joined by Nancy Armstrong, who is the Chief Program Officer at Women's Lunch Place. The event was hosted in Gasson 100 and 112. The room overflowed with students, faculty, and community members alike. The event also featured a silent auction with donations from over 40 local businesses, raising thousands of dollars.

In addition to founding and financially supporting the foot clinic, the sophomores conducted an IRB-approved study on health and homelessness, partnering with Bridge Over Troubled Waters. The study included almost 20 informational interviews with unhoused youth about their experiences with the healthcare system and social determinants of health. These interviews were also presented within a short publication and a series of posters designed by Kate Bishop. The publication was created and edited by Grace Snell, Callie Walsh, and Catherine May.

This year, the sophomores raised



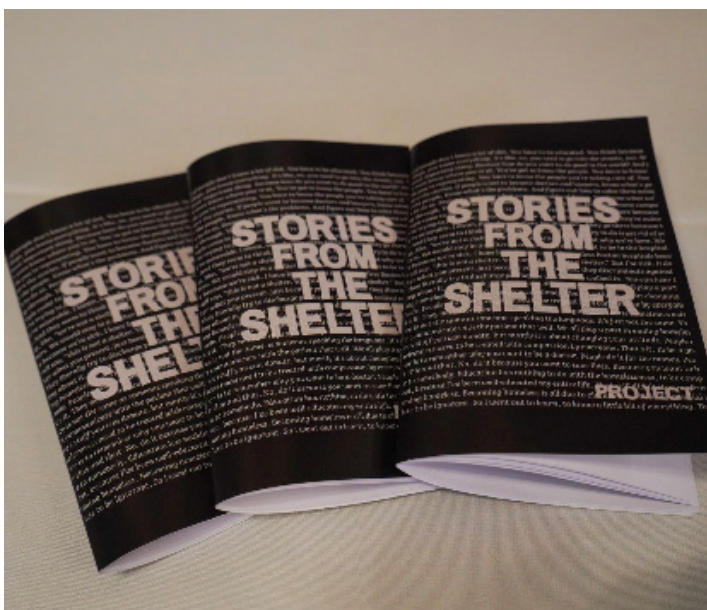
Scholars pose with their poster at their spring event: Stories from the Shelter.

\$22,000 for their social justice project. They saw over 250 patients within the new foot clinic and interviewed almost 20 unhoused youth. They presented at the National Public Health Association and have multiple publications in progress.

The foot clinic at Women's Lunch Place will remain open indefinitely.

The Scholars Class of 2027 are extremely thankful to the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program for providing the framework to make such a profound impact on

the lives of unhoused people in Boston. They also wish to thank Women's Lunch Place, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, and Bridge Over Troubled Waters. Most importantly, they express their gratitude towards the unhoused individuals who shared their knowledge, experience, and stories in such a generous manner.



The collection of stories the Scholars put together



The crowd at the speaker portion of the event



# Class of 2026 Treks through the Middle East

By Evan Dao '26

Photos Courtesy of Evan Dao '26

In between the spring semester closing and the start of summer internships, the Class of 2026 Gabelli Presidential Scholars set off on a ten-day journey through Dubai and Jordan with the leadership of program director Kathleen Bailey and BC professor Tracy Regan. What unfolded was an immersive experience in global cultures, histories, and traditions- one that challenged and inspired students far beyond the classroom.

After a long overnight flight, Scholars landed in Dubai and made their way to the Crowne Plaza Hotel overlooking the Marina. They kicked off the trip with a light dinner on the hotel's outdoor terrace, surrounded by the city's gleaming skyscrapers and waterfront views. The following day was spent exploring the heart of downtown Dubai; from the glittering Dubai Mall to the towering Burj Khalifa and the world-famous fountains, the group experienced the sleek, futuristic charm that defines much of the city. That evening, Scholars were welcomed at Netsu, a Japanese steakhouse in the Mandarin Oriental, by BC parents Hala and Ibrahim Belselah and their two children, Khalid (BC'25) and Omar (BC'27).

Over wagyu beef and shared conversation, the group discussed life in the Emirates, cross-cultural career paths, and the ties that connect BC's global community.

Before departing Dubai, the group had one more adventure: a Heritage Desert Safari. Camel rides took them across golden sand dunes to a Bedouin camp, where they learned to make traditional bread and Arabic coffee and enjoyed a Yola dance performance under the stars. What began as a fun cultural experience left many with a deeper appreciation for the traditions that persist in contrast to the city's hyper-modern skyline.

The next day, the group flew to Amman, Jordan, where a different rhythm awaited them. The streets were older, the architecture storied, and the hospitality just as warm. Their first full day was a dive into the city's layered past, with visits to the Citadel, Roman Amphitheater, and Folk-



Some scholars pose on the Heritage Desert Safari.

lore Museum. At Wild Jordan, they ate lunch overlooking the historic cityscape while learning about the country's environmental and conservation efforts.

The following day was packed with two of Jordan's most iconic sites. Perhaps the most anticipated day of the trip, first was Petra, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, where Scholars trekked through the Siq and stood before the iconic Treasury, marveling at the rose-colored stone and carved facades.

Scholar Caroline Ahn describes, "Petra left the most lasting impression. The scale, craftsmanship, and the preservation of Petra's architecture was a testament to a layered history that has endured the test of time, leaving behind a living monument of resilience and cultural identity."

After lunch at the nearby Movenpick Hotel, the journey continued south into the heart of the desert: Wadi Rum. There, under a sky filled with stars, the group spent the night in a Bedouin camp surrounded by towering rock formations and soft, red sand.

Scholar Joshua Gorniak recalls, "I never imagined I would be in a position where I would see nothing but desert and cliffs regardless of where I looked. I felt exactly like Matt Damon in *The Martian*. Wadi rum was beautifully surreal in its stoic nature, but also in the unique culture of the Bedouin people that inhabited it."

Back in Amman, the itinerary continued with visits to Mount Nebo, said to be the burial site of Moses, and the mosaic-rich city of Madaba. The day ended with a dinner at Em Sherif, where Scholars



Scholars pictured at the Beit Sitti after learning to cook a traditional Jordanian meal.

*Continued on page four*



# Class of 2026 Treks through the Middle East

*Continued from page three*

shared a table with Nashat T. Masri, a Harvard-educated investor and founder of the Foursan Group. Masri, who began his career at J.P. Morgan and now serves on numerous boards, including the King Hussein Cancer Foundation, spoke candidly about business, finance, and development in Jordan. The evening offered Scholars a meaningful opportunity to engage with a local leader whose work spans both the private and public sectors, sparking thoughtful discussion about economic growth and social responsibility in the region and the world beyond.

Over the next two days, Scholars delved deeper into issues of displacement, heritage, and social change. At Jerash, they explored ancient Roman ruins, and in the afternoon, met with leaders at Tamkeen, a human rights NGO, and Microfund for Women, a microfinance organization supporting female entrepreneurs.

They also visited the Royal Automobile Museum, home to some of the most luxurious cars used by royalty in Jordan's history. That evening, Scholars tried their hand at cooking a traditional Arabic meal at Beit Sitti, learning family recipes alongside Jordanian grandmothers and exchanging stories through laughter and food.

The following day featured some of the trip's most powerful conversations. At Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), the group met with refugees from across all regions and heard firsthand stories of displacement, education, and resilience. Refugees from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, and several other countries grouped together with JRS staff and BC students to learn more about world culture, diverse customs, and from each other.

Scholar Courtney McDonald recounts the experience, "Getting to visit the JRS in Jordan was one of the most special experiences of the trip. We basically spent the afternoon with a community of refugee 'students' in JRS's programs. We played conversational games, talked about our countries, and then shared a fantastic lunch together. It was beautiful getting to experience a true cultural exchange, and I even walked away with new friends on social media!"

The final full day was spent at the Dead Sea, floating in its salt-rich waters and taking in the stillness of the lowest point on Earth. After lunch at the Movenpick Dead Sea Resort and some splashing in the resort's pools, the group returned to Amman one last time. Bags were packed, thank-you's exchanged, and farewells shared over a final dinner at the hotel.

Scholar Caroline Ahn reflects on the trip, "Over the last three years, Jordan was by far was my most memorable Gabelli trip. This experience exceeded every expectation I had, immersing me in a landscape, culture, and history unlike anything I've encountered previously."

As the Scholars boarded their early morning flight, many looked out at the Amman skyline one last time. What had begun as a whirlwind itinerary had become something much more- a reminder of the complexities and beauty of the Middle East, the power of hospitality, and the privilege of learning through people and place. For the Class of 2026, the trip was not just a final Gabelli journey across borders, but a leap toward global cultural compassion.



Scholars posing behind ancient Roman ruin pillars at Jerash.



Kathy, Tracy, and the Scholars in front of a sign for the Dead Sea.

# Awards

## *Commencement Awards*

### **Order of the Cross & Crown**

The Order of the Cross and Crown is the Arts & Sciences honor society for seniors who, while achieving an average of at least A-, have established records of unusual service and leadership on the campus.

**Jason Adhinarta**  
**Liz Schwab**  
**Sancia Sehdev**

### **George F. and Jean W. Bemis Award**

This award was established in memory of George Fisher Bemis (1899-1971) and Jean Wilmot Bemis (1903-1987) of Milton, Massachusetts, a devoted couple quietly of service to others and with whom it was a delight to work. The award seeks to single out a member of the senior class distinguished for service to others.

**Steven Roche**

### **Wendy Berson Language Award**

Given to a senior who has demonstrated excellence in the area of Romance Languages in general, but more specifically, to one with the ability to speak one or more of them with great expertise.

**Hunter Linton**

### **Donald S. Carlisle Award**

An award established by the Department of Political Science in memory of Donald S. Carlisle, Professor of Political Science at Boston College (1968-1997), given each year to a graduating senior for outstanding achievement in political science.

**Caroline Macneill**

### **CSON William F. Connell Award**

Established in memory of William F. Connell, the award is given to a graduating student, as determined by the Connell School faculty, who best demonstrates the attributes of leadership, loyalty, service, achievement, humility and good will.

**Johany Jeune**

### **Matthew Copithorne Scholarship**

For a senior demonstrating character, industry and intelligence and planning graduate work at either Harvard or MIT.

**Jason Adhinarta**

### **Ever to Excel: Brian D.A. Hall Legacy Award**

To the senior who demonstrated deep commitment to a student program or organization, and whose leadership advanced the mission of the organization and enhanced the quality of student life.

**Sancia Sehdev**

### **Edward H. Finnegan**

An award in the memory of Rev. Edward H. Finnegan S.J., given to the student who has best exemplified in their four years at Boston College the spirit of the College motto "Ever to Excel."

**Hayoung Cho**

### **Mary A. & Katherine G. Finneran Commencement Award**

An award, the gift of Misses Elizabeth and Theresa Finneran, given to the student who has achieved outstanding success in studies, while also devoting time and talents to other activities for the enrichment of the College and student life.

**Sancia Sehdev**

### **Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., Award**

An award in honor of Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., President of Boston College (1907-1914), given to the graduating senior with a distinguished academic record over a four-year period.

**Liz Schwab**

### **Keys to Inclusive Leadership in Nursing - Key Award**

The KILN program assists students to maximize their leadership potential, prepares them for the challenges of providing nursing care in our increasingly multicultural society, and nurtures their ability to create positive social change.

**Johany Jeune**

### **John J. Neuhauser Award**

For outstanding achievement and / or citizenship in Computer Science over the course of their studies at Boston College.

**Jason Adhinarta**

### **Scholar of the College**

Scholar of the College is a special designation conferred at Commencement on seniors who have successfully completed particularly creative, scholarly, and ambitious independent research projects while maintaining an overall cumulative grade point average of A- or better.

**Caroline Macneill**  
**Sam Peterson**  
**Steven Roche**  
**Sancia Sehdev**

## *Undergraduate Awards*

### **Sophomore Scholars**

Each year the most academically distinguished members of the sophomore class are honored as Sophomore Scholars. The young scholars listed below have achieved an academic ranking that places them in the top three percent of their class of more than 1,500 and have also received the recognition and nomination of their major departments.

# Awards

Kendall Liesching  
Connor Nicholas  
Henry Reichman  
Grace Snell

## Advanced Study Grant Winners

The Boston College Advanced Study Grants were established to encourage, support, and give visible recognition to first and second year students who have that special spark of scholarly initiative and imagination. Advanced Study Grants are for student-designed projects and are awarded for summer “skill acquisition” projects that promise to accelerate dramatically the applicant’s progress in the major field of study.

Aalok Bhattacharya ’27  
Maia Choe ’28  
Adriana Curtis ’28  
Alyssa Cutrona ’27  
Lukas Kucera ’28  
Connor O’Brien ’28  
Grace Snell ’27

## Omar A. Aggad Travel and Research Fellowship

The Omar A. Aggad Travel and Research Fellowship was established through the generous gift of a Boston College family to inspire BC graduate and undergraduate students to expand their understandings of the Arab world, and of the relationships between Arab societies and the West. The donors have a particular interest in helping students to understand the Palestine-Israel issue, and supporting research and activities designed to promote peace in the region.

Connor O’Brien ’28

## Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy Junior Fellowship

The Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy is an interdisciplinary center whose goals are to enable and spur some of the most innovative work on relevant aspects of social and political organization. Through its programs and initiatives, the Center aims to become one of the most innovative institutions for reflection on the promise and challenges of constitutional democracies around the world.

Lukas Kucera ’28

## The Mizna Fellowship

The Mizna Fellowship Fund was established through the generous gift of one of BC’s alumni to create new opportunities for BC undergraduates for international travel for research, language study, internships and service learning initiatives throughout the Islamic world.

Maia Choe ’28

## Non-University Awards, Honor, or Scholarships

### Fulbright Award

The Fulbright Program is an American scholarship program of competitive, merit-based grants for international educational exchange for students, scholars, teachers, professionals, scientists and artists, founded by United States Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946. Under the Fulbright Program, competitively selected American citizens may become eligible for scholarships to study, conduct research, or exercise their talents abroad.

Hunter Linton ’25 (Brazil)  
Caroline Macneill ’25 (Turkey)  
Faith Drescher ’25 (Lithuania)

### Alpha Sigma Nu

Alpha Sigma Nu is a national Jesuit honors society started in 1915. Admission is based on scholarship, loyalty, and service.

Jared Aimone ’26  
Garret Eichlin ’26  
Sam Peterson ’25  
Liz Schwab ’25

### Phi Beta Kappa

Phi Beta Kappa is the most prestigious academic honors society in the United States. Annually it elects to membership the most outstanding seniors (and a handful of truly exceptional juniors), based on superior scholarship and good character.

Jared Aimone ’26  
Ai-Kee Cheung ’25  
Sam Craft ’27  
Maggie Hynes ’25  
Caroline Macneill ’25  
Sam Peterson ’25  
Steven Roche ’25  
Liz Schwab ’25  
Moiria Ujda ’25

### Lambda Pi Eta

Lambda Pi Eta (LPE) is the official communication studies honor society of the National Communication Association. LPE was founded at the University of Arkansas in 1985 and has grown into a national organization with more than 400 active chapters at colleges and universities across the country.

Liz Schwab

### The DoD SMART Scholarship

The SMART Scholarship-for-Service Program is a combined educational and workforce development opportunity for STEM students. SMART offers scholarships for undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students pursuing a STEM degree.

Steven Roche