

The Robinson Post

The newsletter of the Robinson Scholars Program

October 2011
Vol. 2, No. 1



Scholar explores health careers at UK

By Matt Reams
Student Editor

Taylor Hisel, a Class 13 Robinson Scholar from Jackson County, was among 50 Kentucky rising high school juniors selected to participate in the Health Researchers Youth Academy summer camp at the University of Kentucky in July 2011.



Hisel

The 4-week camp offered enrichment experiences in classroom and clinical settings as a way to prepare students for careers in healthcare. Hisel took courses in chemistry, biology, and mathematics and shadowed professionals in fields such as op-

tometry, physical therapy, dentistry, pediatric medicine, and surgery. The summer camp was structured to reflect a typical medical student's weekly routine.

Hisel worked with a variety of patients and their caregivers, including stroke victims, children, and adults. "I got to witness firsthand what taking care of a real patient was like and what a difference it makes in a patient's life," she said.

Participants also learned life skills that will help them prepare for college. "I learned so many new things about not only the medical field but also about responsibilities," Hisel said. "I had to wake myself up and be at class

(Please see HISEL, page 4)

Scholars in the spotlight

Name: Devin McCarty.

Class and Year: 12, Magoffin County senior.

Favorite subjects: History, law, and government.

Hobbies: Hunting, fishing, and reading about weaponry and Da Vinci's inventions.

Favorite music and food: I love rock, but I've recently developed a soft spot for Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Louis Armstrong. Bach, and Vivaldi. My favorite food is Grandmother's. Anything she makes is astonishing. It could be the fact that it's home cooked or simply that she makes everything with a dash of love.



McCarty

Name: Heather Posey

Class/Year/County: 8, UK Senior, Harlan County

Major: Community & Leadership Development

Hobbies: Playing rugby and reading

My impact on the world:

Maybe if I make a difference in my hometown, it will lead someone else to change theirs, then it will spread all over the world.

Comment on RSP: Without the Robinson Scholarship I wouldn't have made it out of my hometown. With them I have the opportunity to make a difference where I came from.



Posey

Visit us online at www.uky.edu/RobinsonScholars



Director's corner

by Jeff Spradling

I am pleased to bring to you a new edition of the *Robinson Post*, our program newsletter. We plan to offer this publication on a quarterly basis, and we will utilize our redesigned Web site to present the electronic version, as well as expanded features on the many good things our scholars are accomplishing on campus and in east Kentucky.

As many of you are aware, much has changed in the Robinson Scholars Program since I became director in December of 2009. We have a new staff, and we have instituted a new process for selection of future scholars. However, one thing has not changed. Our program continues to serve first generation students in our 29-county service region. We will always be a program for and about improving the lives of young people in east Kentucky through the promise of a college education. I am honored to continue building on that tradition and will be vigilant in ensuring that our program develops our region's young people to their fullest potential.

One of the major changes is the implementation of the Robinson Leadership Pool. This is our new model for developing high school talent and ultimately selecting scholars at the end of the junior year of high school.

We chose our first class of 92 Robinson Leaders this past spring, all of whom were completing the ninth grade. This group of highly talented and motivated youth will be eligible to participate in our program's development opportunities and apply to become Robinson Scholars. We will select our Class 14 scholars from this group in the Spring of 2013. The basic requirements for eligibility have not changed. Our thought was that we should seek well-rounded students who excel academically, represent their schools in extra-curricular

activities, and volunteer in their communities.

We have two goals for this new approach. One is to prepare a larger number of first generation students to attend college. Second, we seek to improve our scholar selection process by giving Robinson Leaders more time to mature academically and make better decisions about college choices.

We will still select 29 students per year to receive the Robinson Scholarship, but we do believe that competition for the scholarship will improve all students involved in the process. We will continue to give all of our high school students a first class experience both academically and culturally. Our goal is to bring students to UK who are among the best and brightest campus wide. Our scholars, and the youth of east Kentucky in general, bring tremendous energy and talent to the University, and this is a tradition we will continue at Robinson Scholars. We have tremendously talented youth among our first generation population in the region, and the Robinson Scholars Program is built on making their dreams come true!

We also seek greater involvement of our college scholars in east Kentucky, on campus, and in our program. Robinson Scholars at UK are taking active roles in the region, within the program, and at the University. Since all scholars perform community service as part of their scholarship agreement, their work should give back to the communities that produce and support them. Regardless of where our scholars go in life, they all value their communities and are doing their part to honor our people and traditions and represent their University well. As many of our scholars will attest, the Robinson Scholars Program, itself, is an important community for them, and their volunteer and internship support is ensuring that this novel program will continue to show the world what we in the region already know about our youth.

Our scholars are inspiring people, and this edition of the newsletter only scratches the surface in telling their stories. They have enriched my life and have become a new family for me. I look forward to witnessing the impact these young people will have on the region, state, and nation in the coming years.



In May 2011, the UK Water Quality Research Institute sponsored a trip to Montana for nine high school Robinson Scholars from Class 13. Pictured at Chico Hot Springs, Mont., from left: Marty Vest, Jesse Stallsworth, Jarred Givens, Nikki Abner, Darian Burks, Taylor Hisel, Cory Shouse, Laken Parsons, and Danielle Stephens.

Robinson Scholars experience Big Sky Country

A grant-funded research partnership between the University of Kentucky and the University of Montana resulted in educational trips to Big Sky Country for high school and college Robinson Scholars.

A Summer 2010 trip to Glacier National Park included five college scholars who spent nine days hiking, camping, and studying water quality issues in the park. Scholars selected to participate included Kayla Scalf (Clay County), Andrea Corkran (Bell County), Lori Adkins (Elliott County), Janet “KD” Eaton (Estill County), and Megan Henderson (Carter County).

The experience was organized by Barbara Kucera, deputy director of UK’s Center for Computational Sciences, and UM Professor of Limnology Richard Hauer. Robinson Scholars were among eight UK students who learned about the conductivity of water, advanced monitoring techniques, and the effects of flooding.

Scholars enhanced their scientific skills while enjoying the outdoors. They participated in activities such as rigorous mountain hiking, white water rafting, and wilderness camping as part of their study of the watershed in Glacier National Park. “This trip has changed my life in many ways and has awakened a curiosity for the wonders of this world,” Andrea Corkran.

High school scholars also visited Montana in May 2011, where they participated in a youth water summit with students from Montana high schools. The trip was an extension of RSP’s long standing partnership with the Kentucky Water Resources Research Institute, which runs the Water

Pioneers Summer Camp for Robinson Scholars.

The students took a day-long tour of Yellowstone National Park to learn about invasive and native plant and aquatic species, erosion, stream health, and sustainable use of resources.

Students were given group assignments on the topic of developing a plan for a sustainable community in southern Montana, near Yellowstone Park.

In the exercise, they were tasked with creating a plan to regulate development in a new, sustainable community. Since this is a particular problem for the popular Yellowstone area where there has been a huge influx of new residents from other states, students were asked to look at a variety of legal, economic, and environmental issues now being studied by officials in Montana.

Laken Parsons (Floyd County, Class 13) pointed out that in addition to what she learned on the trip, her bond with fellow scholars grew stronger. “These lifelong friends, my fellow Robinson Scholars, became more of a family to me, and that has changed the course of my life entirely,” she stated.

“The (Robinson Scholars) Program gives students unique experiences that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to do,” Kucera said, noting that the Montana wilderness experience was a confidence builder. “Never again will they think there is something they can’t do. Students said there’s no way they would have considered hiking 20 miles, let alone climbing mountains for 12 hours.”

The Robinson Post **Vol. 2, No. 1**

Jeff Spradling
Director and Editor

George Scott
(Morgan County, RSP Class 4)
College Services Coordinator

Neomia Hagans Flores
(Knott County, RSP Class 1)
Regional Services Coordinator

Charlene Powell
Data Management Specialist

Jessica Watkins
Regional Program Assistant

Dan Omlor
STEM Coordinator

Matthew Reams
(Laurel County, RSP Class 8)
Student Editor

Jordon Cook
(Rockcastle County RSP Class 9)
Student Community Service Coordinator

Kayla Scalf
(Clay County, RSP Class 7)
Student Intern

The Robinson Scholars Program provides college preparation and scholarships to first-generation college students in 29 eastern Kentucky counties.

The Robinson Post is published quarterly by the Robinson Scholars Program. RSP is a program located in the Office of Undergraduate Education at the University of Kentucky, Dr. Michael Mullen, associate provost and dean. Address correspondence to Jeff Spradling, Robinson Scholars Program, 1080 Export Street, Room 202, Lexington, KY, 40504. Phone: 859-257-5230. Email: jspra2@uky.edu.

The University of Kentucky is an equal opportunity institution.

HISEL

(Continued from page 1)

on time every morning, learn to get along with my roommate, and how to manage my time wisely. I was terrified of staying away from home that long, but once I got there and talked to some of the other kids, I absolutely loved it.”

This experience encouraged the Jackson County scholar to continue in her career path. “It made me feel much more secure with my decision on going into the medical field,” Hisel said. “I think I’ve found what I want to do with my life. I advise any student planning on going into the medical field to take full advantage of this amazing opportunity,” Hisel said.

Scholars to benefit from international travel grant

A recent gift to the Robinson Scholars Program will aid scholars who wish to study abroad as part of their UK experience.

The donor was interested in assisting students with demonstrated financial need in their desire to study in an foreign setting., a retired federal employee who recently mo

The “Adventure Grant for Study Abroad” will assist two scholars with personal expenses related to international study that are not covered as part of the standard Robinson Scholars award or foreign exchange programs offered at UK.

If you are interested in funding study abroad activities for Robinson Scholars, please contact Jeff Spradling, director, at 859-257-5230, email jspra2@uky.edu.

Alumni notes...

We’d love to hear from our program alumni. To have your information included in *The Robinson Post*, please send an email to Matt Reams at matthew.reams@uky.edu. Let us know about your current employment, graduate or professional school, community activities, awards, marriage, children, etc. Pictures are also welcome. Please include your RSP class year, UK graduation date, and current contact information.



Jordon Cook, UK junior from Rockcastle County, makes adjustments on UK's quarter scale tractor at the international competition in Peoria, Ill. Cook was a state champion in small engine repair as a Future Farmers of America member in high school.

At international competition

Rockcastle scholar shows UK team spirit

By Matt Reams
Student Editor

Jordon Cook, Class 9 Scholar from Rockcastle County, is not a member of a typical team at UK. He is a member of the UK Quarter Scale Tractor Team, which recently finished second overall in an international competition.

Cook, a junior at UK in agricultural economics, and five undergraduate colleagues, finished just a few points behind the winning team from Kansas State at the international competition in Peoria, Ill., this past spring.

When Cook, who won a state championship in FFA small engine repair, first heard of the tractor team he knew it was for him. "Freshmen year I was more focused on working on the farm, thinking I could handle college alone, but I decided that the tractor team gave me a reason to connect to campus and have something to do on the weekends," he said.

The competition provided a good test of his skills with machinery, since students must design and build the tractor from scratch. They are judged in 11 categories such as appearance, craftsmanship, safety, teamwork, and maneuverability.

The UK team finished first in the categories

of manufacturability and ergonomics.

As part of its preparation for competition, the team documented its market research, tested and planned development, presented a design to a mock cooperate management team, and demonstrated at a tractor pull event.

Cook, who this year serves as the team's treasurer, assisted the team with the marketing and cost analysis of the project. "I did all the economics and ergonomics for the team," Cook said. "I also helped build the tractor and was a mechanic at the competition."

Participation on the team helped Cook expand his experiences related to agriculture and become more involved with opportunities on campus. "The team was totally different than the farm. This was a new experience for me," Cook said.

He recommends to new students at UK that "you get involved in something you care about during your freshmen year."

Cook, who served as a counselor for the 2011 high school summer camps, is also a program intern this academic year. His job is to organize, and track community service projects for Robinson Scholars who are in college.

New Robinson Leadership Pool changes approach to selection of high school scholars

The Robinson Scholars Program, originally launched in 1997, has instituted a new selection process that promises to benefit more east Kentucky students throughout their high school careers.

Traditionally, RSP has selected 29 scholarship recipients at the beginning of their high school careers. The program worked intensely with those students to prepare them for college, and at the conclusion of the high school program, those students came to the University on a full scholarship.

The new approach will delay selection of scholarship recipients until the end of the junior year of high school. New scholarship recipients will be chosen in 2013. In the new approach, the program will select as many as 110 students in the 29-county service region to compete for scholarships as part of the Robinson Leadership Pool.

“At the high school level, we will serve about three times as many students each year,” said RSP Director Jeff Spradling. “The intent is to prepare even more first generation students in our region, regardless of where they attend college. We will still select 29 Robinson Scholars to come to UK each year, but students not selected will also benefit from a high-powered college preparatory experience.

In addition to participation in programs sponsored by RSP, Robinson Leaders are expected to pursue enrichment on their own, demonstrating work in three core areas of development, including community service, participation in extra-curricular activities, and dedication to academic excellence.

RSP provides programming to participants

at no cost to students, such as college visits, weekend retreats, and summer camps focusing especially on competence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

“We realize that not every student will choose a STEM discipline as a career path, but all students must take science and math in college, and we want to make sure these courses aren’t a barrier for our students,” Spradling said. “We will continue to offer a range of academic training in our programs -- including writing, public speaking, and social sciences -- but we believe that STEM training is essential.”

The program staff is also hopeful that delaying scholar selection will help RSP attract and develop east Kentucky’s best and brightest among first-generation students, or those whose parents do not hold 4-year college degrees. It will also introduce a healthy competi-

tion for the scholarship that will improve the entire group.

“Our first Robinson Leaders are amazing students. They are involved in community service, represent their schools in extra-curricular activities, and are very talented academically,” Spradling said. “The talent and commitment of these young people are inspiring. Our new approach will allow us to have a positive impact on the lives of even more deserving students,” Spradling said.

The program will begin taking applications for the second group of Robinson Leaders in November 2011. Ninth graders in the service region will be eligible to apply.

For more information about application to the program, contact Jessica Watkins in the program’s Jackson office at 606-666-2438, extension 232.



Robinson Leaders at the Space Science Camp hosted by Morehead State University built circuits and programmed them.

Robinson graduates hired to lead high school and college programming

By Matt Reams
Student Editor

The Robinson Scholars Program has hired two former scholars to serve as Regional Coordinator and College Coordinator. Neomia Hagans Flores, Class 1, Knott County, became the regional coordinator in January 2011. Graduating from UK with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Arts in Social Work, she has always given herself to serving first generation students and helping them succeed.



Scott

George Scott, Class 4, Morgan County, joined the RSP staff as College Services Coordinator in May 2011. He acquired his Bachelor of Science in Community Communications and Leadership Development from UK in 2008 and a Master of Arts in Higher Education from the University of Louisville.

"I am pleased that we were able to find such talented program graduates to work for Robinson Scholars," said RSP Director Jeff Spradling.

"These two individuals have already accomplished quite a bit, and they are just getting started in their careers. They bring valuable program history, enthusiasm, and a love for students to their jobs," Spradling said.

One of Flores' duties as coordinator of high school programming is camp director for the summer programs. This summer, the program held four camps, two for newly inducted students in the Leadership Pool and two for current high school scholars.

Leadership Pool students participated in either the Astronomy and Space Science Camp at Morehead State University or the Water Pioneers Natural Resources camp on UK's campus.

The other camps at UK were the rising juniors' Water Pioneers camp that emphasized video and media production, and the first ever rising senior College Boot Camp.

"I witnessed students being challenged, having fun, and gaining a memorable experience. Some students reported that they did not want to leave camp and that this was the best experience they ever had," Flores said about her students this summer.



Flores

Scott has worked in higher education since graduation, but working for RSP has been the most rewarding for him. "This is the most student-oriented position I have ever had in an advising capacity. The programming that I institute helps me get to know the students and has helped me cultivate a culture of trust and promise within the program," he said.

Scott and Flores plan to bridge the gap between the high school and college program by increasing involvement between the two. This is already being fulfilled by Scott's involvement in the summer camps, the hiring of college students for camp counselors, and building a culture that helps students succeed in their transition from high school to their freshmen year of college.

The fact that both are program graduates is an important guiding principle for their professional involvement with the program. For Flores, seeing the students interact over the summer "really took me back to my days as a scholar."

"I fully believe that I would not have been this successful without Robinson Scholars, and that's why I want to help the current RSP students realize their dreams, as well," Scott said.