

Inaugural Truman Scholars National Conference a Major Success

Jeff McLean, WI '03 & James Gibson, AL '02

The Truman Scholars National Conference, held June 19-21, 2009 in Washington DC, was by all accounts an incredible success. More than a year in the making, the conference brought together the largest group of Truman Scholars in one location in the scholarship's 33-year history, with over 300 Truman Scholars and 100 guests in attendance.

The conference kicked off on the afternoon of Friday, June 19, with a cocktail reception at the historic National Press Club in downtown Washington.

continued on page 2.

From the Executive Secretary

Frederick G. Slabach, MS '77

Congratulations to the Truman Scholars Association (TSA) on the phenomenally successful inaugural Truman Scholars National Conference in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club.

As I said at the conference banquet, "whoever you are and wherever you are on your path in public service, the Truman Foundation is proud of you. And I am proud to be a member of your community."

I am delighted that the Truman Foundation and TSA could jointly sponsor such an important event. And I am deeply grateful for TSA's support for the Foundation's programming that will benefit future generations of Truman Scholars.

continued on page 3.

Truman Scholars Annual Fund Reaches Half-Way Mark to 2009 Goal

Cameron Brown, ID '95

The Truman Scholars Association (TSA) formally started an Annual Fund drive in late 2008 to benefit the activities of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation (HSTSF). This is not the first fundraising effort of the TSA, but it is the first to direct the primary benefit to the HSTSF. It has also been the largest success to date, and promises to continue to be a significant success into the future.

continued on page 5.



"The mission of the Truman Scholars Association is to build, maintain and educate a community of Truman Scholars; to foster a life long commitment to public service, in all its forms, through intellectual, personal and professional development; and to support and promote public service."



Harry S. Truman at the National Press Club

Inaugural Truman Scholars National Conference a Major Success (continued)

There, Trumans from the entire range of class years caught up with old friends and met many new ones. The night's formal programming commenced with a black-tie-optional dinner, highlighted by remarks from Truman Foundation Executive Director Frederick G. Slabach (MS '77) and a moving tribute to the late Brooks Roy Burdette (GA '80). Mr. Burdette was memorialized by his sister, Ila Burdette, and fiancée, Corine Hegland (IA '97). Both women spoke of Brooks's lifelong commitment to helping others and to the Truman Foundation, noting that at the time of his passing, he was involved in planning this very conference and co-chairing the TSA Fundraising Drive. In honor of his consistent and selfless dedication to the Truman community, Brooks was posthumously awarded the first "TSA Distinguished Service Award."

The evening's keynote address was delivered by Dr. Madeleine K. Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and current Truman Foundation President. Dr. Albright gave an inspiring and humorous speech on her life in public service and took questions from the scholars in attendance. Following dinner, nearly everyone stayed until late in the evening, enjoying drinks, dancing, and each others' company.

Saturday's programming, also held at the National Press Club, consisted of five sets of panel discussions and a working lunch featuring keynote speaker, former Governor of the State of Arizona, current U.S. Homeland Security Secretary, and Truman Scholar Janet A. Napolitano (NM '77). Secretary Napolitano's inspiring address reaffirmed the virtues of public life despite its challenges and provided unique insight from a member of the first class of Truman Scholars. The panel discussions, moderated by Trumans from a wide array of class years, were incredibly engaging and capitalized on the vast amount of professional expertise available at the conference. Panel topics ranged from education and health care policy to methods for effectively partnering with the private sector.



Madeleine K. Albright delivers keynote address at the Truman Scholars National Conference, Friday, June 19, 2009

On Sunday, those scholars whose travel schedules permitted took part in a community service project by cleaning up the riverbank at East Potomac Park in the Hains Point region of Washington. The group, comprised of scholars from various years, literally got their hands dirty (very dirty) and made a significant difference in the landscape of the park. The service project was a fitting coda to a successful National Conference that underscored the impassioned, all-hands-on-deck approach exemplified by President Truman and aspired to by all honored with the scholarship that is his legacy. □

*"Great networking opportunities.
So many people from so many
classes turned out."*



300 Scholars and their guests packed the house in the National Press Club Ballroom

From the Executive Secretary (continued)

The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation has been building human capital for social innovation and national service since its inception in 1976 as the federal government's living memorial to our 33rd president. And TSA has been broadening and deepening the interconnections among Truman Scholars for decades. It seems only natural that the two organizations would work in partnership to further our mutual goals.

I hope the Foundation and TSA will be able to collaborate in many ways in the future. The TSA Board and the Foundation already are thinking of ways to capitalize on the tremendous energy created by the National Conference.

- Several scholars have suggested ideas for future meetings and events on a regional and national basis.
- May of 2010 will be the 20th anniversary of Truman Scholars Leadership Week (TSLW) in Missouri, and we have already begun informal discussions about a possible Truman Scholar reunion in Independence in conjunction with TSLW.
- Plans are underway for further development of the Truman Scholar database so that our alumni can network more easily on their own.

The most enjoyable aspect of the National Conference was meeting and getting reacquainted with Truman Scholars. As I surveyed the ballroom, meeting rooms, hallways, and lobby of the National Press Club, I was delighted to see informal groups of Truman Scholars locked in intense discussions of policy, career plans, family, friends, and fun.

If you attended the National Conference, thank you. I hope you will continue to engage with TSA and the Foundation in the months and years ahead. If you were unable to attend the National Conference, I hope you will look for other opportunities in the future to participate in this most amazing community. □



Janet A. Napolitano (NM '77) delivers keynote address at the Truman Scholars National Conference, Saturday, June 20, 2009

Reflections from a New Scholar

Matthew Garza, CA '09

In the past three months, there have been a few moments when I began to feel like a Truman Scholar. As a member of the youngest class, I sometimes have the feeling of being a guest at Truman events, invited to witness the brilliance and warmth of this community – but only temporarily. As my fellow classmates will attest, we harbor a latent fear that the Foundation might recognize that one of our scholarships is the result of a clerical error. Things are changing, though.

The defining moment for me was a brief remark from Frederick G. Slabach (MS '77). As hundreds of us gathered in the National Press Club for lunch, he announced matter-of-factly that he was proud of us. All of us. Even those still in college (this last part was implied). It was then that I took a more deliberate look around the table and around the room to reflect on what it means to be a Truman Scholar. With speakers like Madeleine K. Albright and Janet A. Napolitano (NM '77), it is easy to equate this scholarship with power and prestige. However, Mr. Slabach's comment helped me recognize a more convincing message that was repeated, not always explicitly, throughout these past months and in particular at the conference. We are a community that values one another regardless of how we choose to serve. As someone who is rather quiet and eschews

continued on page 7.

"It was so wonderful to interact with and learn from so many Trumans - it was a wonderful experience that packed a lot more in than I thought possible in a weekend."

Community Service Project

Ted K. Bilich, CT '84

Approximately 20 participants in the Truman Scholar Association's 2009 National Conference scoured the grass of Hains Point in East Potomac Park in southeast Washington D.C., in the early morning hours of Sunday, June 21st, cleaning up trash as part of a service day associated with the conference.

Hains Point is located near the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, and is defined by the Potomac on one side and the Washington Channel (which receives outflow from the Tidal Basin) on the other. It is a popular park with locals who come to fish, run, bike, and enjoy the view across the rivers to Northern Virginia and Maryland. Because of its location and popularity, the park gets more than its fair share of trash - both from overflow of the rivers and Tidal Basin at high tides and from careless visitors.

The Truman Scholars National Conference Steering Committee arranged to have Truman volunteers assist the National Park Service in a two-hour clean-up project. The participants



Scholars enjoyed reconnecting with old friends and colleagues

ranged from the original Truman class of 1977 through the current class of 2009, from as far away as Texas and New Mexico, and the friendly conversation covered a wide variety of topics while people pitched in, working together in informal groups. The group also included at least one "future Truman Scholar" - my son Vidal, a five-year-



Truman Scholars during the Community Service Project at Hains Point, Sunday, June 21, 2009

old who visits the park regularly, and who thoroughly enjoyed picking through trash that he's usually dissuaded from even approaching. I got a chance to connect with classmate Jim Slaughter (NC '84), and we compared notes about our community and political involvement. My son and I, moreover, were excited to meet and talk to Jeff McLean (WI '03), who is learning to fly F/A-18 fighter aircraft for the Navy and will soon be heading out on an aircraft carrier. Needless to say, fighter aircraft dominated my morning's conversation.

Although the weather threatened the entire time, and although most participating scholars did not have gloves to protect themselves from trash that ranged from mundane to unmentionable, the team filled at least ten trash bags that morning. By the end of the event, the grass in the team's work area was noticeably tidier, participants knew that they were leaving Washington cleaner than when they arrived, and all involved had proven once again that Truman scholars are always willing to get their hands dirty. □

"What I liked best about the Conference was seeing old friends and meeting new and interesting people - a great reunion. Very refreshing and inspiring - helps bring back my belief that I can make a difference and my belief in the goodness and humanity of others."

Truman Scholars Annual Fund Reaches Half-Way Mark to 2009 Goal (continued)

What is the Annual Fund?

The Truman Scholars Annual Fund is an alumni giving program. By donating to the Annual Fund, you are supporting the maintenance and growth of the rich programming that the HSTSF has supplied to Scholars over the last 20 years since it established Truman Scholars Leadership Week. You are also helping to establish and strengthen the community that we have become by supporting activities aimed to bring together Scholars of all years. The TSA Board will invest the Annual Fund proceeds in close coordination with Executive Secretary Frederick G. Slabach (MS '77). Forward-thinking plans on the part of both TSA and HSTSF are being made to build capacity for a sustainable scholar development program aimed at enhancing the public service excellence of Scholars across all class years since inception. The 2009 Truman Scholars National Conference is the first fruit of this collaboration.

Why does the HSTSF need our support?

As you may be aware, a Trust Fund was established by Congress in 1976 to support the HSTSF in perpetuity. However, as with all U.S. government trust funds, this fund is mandated by law to be administered by the Treasury Department and invested only in short term Treasury Bills. During the 80s, when interest rates were high, the trust fund actually grew from the original \$30M to about \$55M. However, since the early 90s, Treasury yields have not kept pace. In the last three years, the HSTSF has found itself with a 30% lower draw on the interest than it had in 2000, causing it to cut the number of scholarships given in recent years from 85 to 65. At the same time, the cost of education has increased significantly, while the amount of the scholarship has remained at \$30,000.

What have we accomplished to date?

Annual Fund has collected donations from 167 Scholars totaling \$46,500 in cash and \$13,000 in additional pledges for 2009. All



*\$40,000 towards a goal of \$100,000 for 2009
Presenting the results of the first 6 months of fundraising*

told, this puts us 60 percent of the way toward our \$100,000 goal in 2009 with a head start on future years of the drive via multi-year pledges of \$38,000.

What do we still need to accomplish?

We need to get all Scholars involved. Whether your donation is \$1 or a million, it COUNTS! A successful Annual Fund is a factor not only of the total dollars raised, but also of the diffusion of participation. We believe that as Truman Scholars, it's our very nature to give, and in our best interest to share with future Scholars the richness of our vibrant community evident at the 2009 National Conference and on our discussion groups. So do your part and visit

trumanscholars.org/giving

today to make a donation, then send an email to

annualfund@trumanscholars.org

and pledge to continue giving next year and beyond! □

Annual Fund Pacesetters

(as of July 1, 2009)

Kent Bradley, KS '86	Jason Saul, IL '89
Cameron Brown, ID '95	Horacio Trujillo, NM '94
Mark Cannon, OH '84	and
Chris Coons, DE '83	Brooks Roy Burdette, GA '81
Elizabeth Hill, FL '96	in memoriam

trumanscholars.org/giving/be-a-pacesetter.pdf

trumanscholars.org/giving/tsaf-investors.pdf



Two Scholars deep in conversation

"Hard not to feel inspired with a group like this!"

Ways to Get Involved

Jeff McLean, WI '03

One of the most exciting aspects of the conference was how invigorated scholars were by seeing the community active again, and the most frequently asked question was "How can I get involved?" Over the past year, the TSA board has worked hard to create opportunities for members of our community to stay connected. Some examples:

Update your information in the Truman Scholars Directory

The directory ensures the TSA and Foundation have the most up-to-date and accurate information for each scholar and provides an opportunity to find other scholars from particular classes, career fields, institutions, and regions.

- 1) Go to truman.gov
- 2) Enter your username (an email address) and password
- 3) Click on the "For Scholars" tab on the left of the page
- 4) Click on "Update My Profile" on the left frame of the page
- 5) Click on "Search Scholar Network" on the left frame of the page.

In the Scholar Network, you can search by Scholar name, year, state, institution, degree type, honors, professional/academic field, or current state of residence.

"Overall, thank you so much! It is an honor to connect with and be part of this community."

Join the TSA Google Group

This Google Group is the main avenue through which news and discussions are passed from the TSA. When the TSA board opens the application process for new board members or seeks committee volunteers, this Google Group is the primary means of outreach. On this group, you can connect with over 780 scholars, post and receive pertinent news articles, job and fellowship opportunities, and join ongoing discussions about current topics.

<http://groups.google.com/group/trumanscholarsassociation>

Join a TSA Regional Club

These clubs are the best means for meeting other scholars in your area. The TSA has groups in all major cities and regional areas to coordinate more frequent gatherings of scholars through dinner parties, cocktail hours, and other special events. A complete list of the regional clubs can be found at

<http://www.trumanscholars.org/keep-in-touch/tsa-regional-clubs>

Join TSA on Facebook, LinkedIn, & Twitter

Facebook:

"Truman Scholars Association"

LinkedIn:

"Truman Scholars Association"

Twitter:

twitter.com/trumanscholars

Links to all of these opportunities are available at

trumanscholars.org/keep-in-touch

In addition to simply joining our groups, we highly encourage everyone to take an active role by getting in touch with other scholars or organizing a dinner, happy hour, service opportunity, or other major event. The strength of the community rests on the initiative of our scholars. Please start an initiative near you! □

"Do this again!"

Reflections from a New Scholar (continued)

public exposure, that was important to hear.

Throughout the weekend it was readily apparent that there is no specific model for being a successful Truman Scholar. I remember one Saturday session in particular when a woman saw that I was a member of the Class of 2009 and jumped out of her seat to tell me all about the importance of serving in municipal government and her interest in being a mentor. Another man was quite adamant about the role of small business in urban development. From the moment I arrived on Friday evening, so many wonderful people were quick to grab my hand and introduce me to someone else who might share an interest or have advice about graduate school. Even those who were seeing old friends for the first time in years made a point to welcome me.

When I think about the conference, I did enjoy the learning component. I took good notes during the sessions and did my best to learn about non-profit management and the intersection of academia and policy. More importantly, though, for the first time I started to sit back, loosen my shoulders, and feel comfortable with the idea of being a Truman Scholar. It is still just as intimidating as it is exciting, but now I am confident that I will find my own role among the thousands who have come before me. It is a privilege to be a part of this community, and I look forward to extending the same welcome to all future classes. □

Education Panel

Ulcca Joshi Hansen, NJ '97

The First Amendment Lounge was packed on Saturday afternoon, and a spirited conversation was taking place about charter schools and the role they play in advancing urban education reform. In fine Truman form, the panelist avoided tired debates about whether charter schools are a good or bad educational phenomenon, and also dispensed quickly with the idea that charter schools can be a silver bullet for the problems of urban education. Jennifer "Eduwonkette" Jennings (NJ '99), who has made a name for herself analyzing data and using it to challenge educational myths, pointed out that there are really good and really bad examples of both charter and traditional schools. Ron Brady (MA '87), founder of Foundations Charter School in Trenton, agreed: "Charter schools versus district schools is an irrelevant argument. It's about good schools versus bad schools."



*Education Panelists
The First Amendment Lounge, Saturday, June 20, 2009*

What high-performing charter schools have done successfully in the last decade is: (1) to challenge the pervasive belief that urban, minority and poorer students cannot achieve academically and (2) to demonstrate educational approaches that succeed in helping these students achieve both academically and personally. Seth

Andrew (RI '99), founder of Democracy Prep Academy, the highest performing public school in Central Harlem, sparked a wide-ranging conversation when he read aloud his list of things that DON'T matter in schools: class size, money, parents, certification of teachers, textbooks/curricular materials. While reasonable people can (and did) disagree about items on that list, the panel agreed that charter schools have paved the

continued on page 8.

Education Panel (continued)

way for state- and nation-wide conversations about some of the issues that charter school successes seem to indicate DO matter: more time in school, a culture that expects and supports academic achievement, and high-quality teaching.

The expansion of charter schools is a key priority for the Obama Administration, so the topic is both timely and important. While no one disputes that they often achieve wonderful results for the students who attend them, charters are critiqued on several grounds: for inadvertently “creaming” students through high attrition rates for lower-performing students who must then be served by traditional district schools; for burning teachers out quickly due to their demanding schedules; and for being difficult, if not impossible, to scale up effectively.

Should these issues matter as we consider how best to use limited funds and political capital to improve urban education? Seth and Ron argued that their primary concern

was to provide quality education for the children in their schools. For those in the room interested in policy, the variety of interests to be served within the education sphere could not be shrugged off so easily. The session’s back and forth explored the natural tensions that exist between players in the educational entrepreneurial sector, who are ultimately accountable to their own goals and values (usually the education of individual children), and actors in the larger “traditional” system, who argue that their responsibility

necessarily extends to constituents with myriad interests tangentially yet inextricably related to education.

As would be expected in a Truman forum, there were far more interesting questions posed than could be discussed: Why is the quality of traditional teacher education so poor generally and how can it be improved? By opening the doors to teaching too widely and encouraging a short-term approach to teaching, do we risk de-professionalizing the field? Is there any potential traction for charter school students and parents to sue districts to be provided with facilities? How do we ensure that low-performing charter schools are closed? Is the highly structured, teacher-centered approach of high-

performing charter schools good pedagogy? Should it matter that many middle and upper class parents would not choose this approach for their own children? Should the next chapter of education reform focus on creating more choice for parents within the public education sphere?

For many in the audience, and

for me as the panel organizer, it was fulfilling to see so many Trumans engaged with an issue that, until relatively recently, has been an afterthought for many of the “best and brightest.” As one 1996 Truman observed, in the past, Trumans interested in education have often been alone in their Truman classes. Most of us spent TSLW and SI learning about other scholars’ fields of interest, which were more often at the center of public and policy discourse.

continued on page 9.



Truman Scholars discussing a variety of topics on national service and social innovation at the Truman Scholars National Conference, June 19 - 21, 2009

Education Panel (continued)

How times have changed.

Interest in education, or perhaps more accurately, educational entrepreneurship has never been as strong as it is right now among our peers. Teach for America was in its infancy a decade ago. Today it boasts over 4,100 Corps members in its 2009 class and is the largest employer for members of the recently graduated classes of Brown, Georgetown, and the University of Chicago. Charter management organizations like KIPP, Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools are drawing interest from top graduates interested in helping to lead new schools. New education fellowships including The Broad Residencies, Building Excellent Schools, and Education Pioneers field thousands of applications from graduates of top professional and management programs who want to use their skills to become school and district leaders. Urging traditional education actors to engage with and learn from these new players, while holding this growing cadre of entrepreneurial organizations accountable for high performance, promises

to be an ongoing challenge for those committed to high-quality education for all children.

Members of the panel are eager to hear from Trumans interested in getting involved. Seth and Ron welcome visitors and teaching applications. For those interested in educational issues, a new Google Groups listserv has been formed: Truman Scholars in Education. Go to

<http://groups.google.com/group/truman-scholars-in-education>

to sign up or contact Ulcca for more information.

Education Panelists

Ulcca Joshi Hansen, NJ '97
ulcca1@gmail.com

Seth Andrew, RI '99
sandrew@democracyprep.org

Ron Brady, MA '87
rbrady@foundationacademy.org

Jen Jennings, NJ '99
jlj2102@columbia.edu

Thanks to everyone who attended the panel! □

Newsletter Editors

Pooja Agarwal, MO '05 Chiraag Bains, MA '02 Cameron Brown, ID '95

Photographers

Kyle Gracey, PA '05

Joy Hecht, MA '78

Ali Lange, ND '07

Bob Van Der Velde, OH '79

Truman Scholars National Conference Steering Committee

Pooja Agarwal, MO '05

Adair Boroughs, SC '01

Cameron Brown, ID '95

Mark Cannon, OH '84

Katie Liberman, MA '06

Jeff McLean, WI '03

Frederick G. Slabach, MS '77

PDFs of literature from the National Conference are now online

<http://www.trumanscholars.org/events/national-conference/literature>

Donations to the Truman Scholars Association, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization, are deductible to the extent allowed by law for computing income and estate taxes.
