

## Summary of Student Perspectives Series Meeting, November 8, 2018

Trustees in Attendance: Thomas A. Cole, Michael Klingensmith, John Liew, Paula Wolff

Students in Attendance: Kyle Shishkin (College '21, Undergraduate Liaison), Chris Stamper (BSD '20, Graduate Liaison), Kelsey Berryman (College '20), Azai Calderon (College '19), Tyler Chan (College '19), Alexander Cowan (College '19), Ashley Leitner (College '19), Hunter Morgan (College '21), Anastasiya Pasheyeva (College '19), Nicholas Romanoff (College '19).

Guest: Meredith Daw, Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Student Advancement and Executive Director for Career Advancement.

The topic of the November 8, 2018 meeting was **career preparation opportunities for students in the College**. In advance of the meeting, undergraduate liaison Kyle Shishkin prepared a memorandum for the Trustees that included questions for discussion focusing on three areas of interest: (1) Addressing differences between engaged and unengaged students; (2) Diversity and access; and (3) Diversification of industries offering opportunities to UChicago students.

Following introductions, Mr. Cole provided an overview of the role of the Board of Trustees at the University, noting that Trustees in attendance at the Student Perspectives Series meeting do not speak for the Board as a whole.

The undergraduate liaison provided some introductory framing remarks. He explained that students have a diverse range of experiences when exploring career opportunities and the students gathered for the meeting are representative of that.

The students were asked whether the University should do more to encourage students to connect with Career Advancement if they have been otherwise unengaged. The ensuing discussion expanded to touch on a wide range of topics and suggestions. For example, during (or by the end of) their first year, students may change their career interests, so a brief annual survey to check in may help track students who are changing course and who may otherwise turn to their peers for advice and direction. Exposure to opportunities for professional development and career opportunities are especially important for first-year students coming from backgrounds that did not give them the same exposure to skill-building and job experiences as their peers from better-resourced schools. Students who attended high school in a rural area, for example, would have different kinds of summer employment prospects than students who went to high school in a large city; similarly, depending on where students live, their socioeconomic status or the type of high school they attended can result in varying degrees of experience putting together a résumé or participating in a job interview.

While there was general consensus that there is robust Career Advancement programming for

first-year students, students were less sure of what was offered for second-year students and whether there should be more structured requirements. For example, should all second-year students be required to meet with their career adviser? While there are many opportunities and resources available for students in the College beyond the first year, mandating a career counseling meeting may be a way to catch those students who, for whatever reason, are less aware or proactive in seeking out resources themselves. A required meeting could also help those students who are less certain of their career interests or who have had a change of heart about their career path.

The trustees were interested in ways that career advisers could be kept abreast of their advisees' changing professional interests. Automatic "flags" that notify career advisers when students change their major and/or elements of their academic program could be one method in addition to academic advisers communicating regularly with career advisers about their shared advisees. The Career Peer Advisers (or CPAs) could also serve as a bridge between students and their advisers. Some of the students present who were familiar with the Career Peer Advisers agreed that this group could have a higher profile among their peers.

One student noted that not having an internship when all your peers do can cause anxiety, but taking advantage of Career Advancement's profession-specific treks and other programs is very helpful. Striking a balance between giving students the information they need and not overwhelming them may be one reason to advocate for a mandatory second-year career advising meeting. The "Navigate: Creating Success in Your Second Year" conference (<https://cpo.uchicago.edu/page/navigate-creating-success-your-second-year>) is also a helpful opportunity for students seeking ways to connect with on-campus research and faculty-mentored experiences.

The discussion then turned to the general importance of internships and some of the challenges associated with getting one, especially after the second-year. Some firms preferentially hire third-year students because they want to recruit the most talented interns into full-time positions post-graduation. Many of these organizations have a robust infrastructure to support third-year interns and are not as well-equipped to ensure that younger students have a quality experience. Employers may also be concerned about attrition of second-year interns from the development pipeline leading to permanent employees.

However, even firms that prefer third-year interns expect to see evidence of second-year experience on the résumés they review. So, students should do everything possible to secure a second-year summer position, including using any family connections, faculty relationships (for research opportunities) as well as services provided by Career Advancement.

Ms. Daw explained that the Career Advancement staff seek feedback from students and employers to assess the effectiveness and quality of internship experiences. Career Advancement is very aware of the internship challenges facing second-year students. This is one major reason why Metcalf Internship opportunities are being shifted to fund more second-year students than in

years past. While some firms may prefer third-year students, there is no shortage of employers willing to take on second-years if they come with their own funding.

With respect to the question of whether there ought to be a greater variety of industries seeking UChicago students for internships or full-time jobs, it was noted that many companies and organizations representing sectors outside of finance, business and consulting do actively recruit and hire students in the College, albeit in different and perhaps less obvious ways. For instance, smaller companies and nonprofits are less likely to come to campus for information sessions and on-campus recruiting activities. They also tend to be “just-in-time” employers rather than follow a predetermined recruiting schedule. Therefore, students casually passing through Ida Noyes Hall (where Career Advancement is located) or seeing announcements about info sessions might have the impression that opportunities are mostly available to students interested in business and finance. Career Advancement acts as a proxy for many nonprofits and has offered them opportunities to participate in forums held in different cities around the country (at no cost to them) and bring students to them to learn about their internship and employment opportunities. Many different employers participate in the fall and winter career fairs on campus, not just banks and consulting firms. These fairs draw a large student attendance – about 1,300 students visit the fall fair, for instance.

The role of alumni in College student career exploration and job searches was also discussed. Career Advancement promotes the Alumni Association’s new mentoring platform, Wizr (<https://alumniandfriends.uchicago.edu/volunteer/connect-students/uchicagowizr-network>), which is like a UChicago-specific version of LinkedIn. There is currently a strong effort to get more alumni registered and to also encourage parents to sign up.

A question was raised about the potential for using older students as mentors and advisers for their younger, less-experienced peers. Specifically, first- and second-year students could attend networking events and career fairs with fourth-year peers and also seek advice about specific career paths with which they are familiar. Such informal mentoring already takes place through RSOs and other student groups (e.g., fraternities and sororities) that form mentorship circles. These circles allow for community-type mentorship, which in addition to one-on-one mentoring relationships could be very helpful. Career Advancement could play a role in fostering both types of mentoring.

When asked whether there were any issues with some opportunities being more skewed to one gender and/or domestic students, the students generally believed that women were just as likely as men to be successful in leading student groups oriented toward business and consulting and that there was a lot of support on campus for women interested in these fields. One student noted that in his interest area (STEM), the proportion of international students involved aligned with their representation in the student body. Ms. Daw noted that Career Advancement works closely with the Office of International Affairs (OIA) to maximize experiential and employment opportunities for international students, including helping students navigate Optional and Curricular Practical Training, launching the Kimpton Fellows Program

(<https://careeradvancement.uchicago.edu/jobs-internships-research/kimpton-fellows-program>) and assisting with international placements (in places such as Dubai, Japan and Toronto).

A final topic raised in the meeting was whether UChicago students are disadvantaged by the College's rigorous grading relative to other colleges and universities. Reactions were mixed; tougher grading can be an issue for pre-medical students where performance on required science and mathematics courses is scrutinized. For others, the sense is that top firms know that a 3.7 GPA at Harvard translates to a 3.5 at UChicago. Whether new curriculum options such as the business track in the economics major will ease the GPA differential will be of interest in the future.

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES SERIES: FALL 2018 MEMORANDUM



To: Student Perspectives Series Trustees  
From: Kyle Shishkin, 2021, Undergraduate Student Liaison to the Board of Trustees  
Date: November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018  
Re: Strategic Themes and Prompt Questions for November 8<sup>th</sup> SPS Meeting

I look forward to meeting you and discussing the state of Career Advancement for UChicago undergraduate students. In advance of our meeting, I am sending the following themes and prompt questions for your consideration, and which I hope can guide our conversation when we meet. We may not have time to touch upon all of these topics, but I hope that the overall themes can be addressed as the conversation develops.

One key guiding question that I believe would be helpful to ground our conversation is as follows: what should be the University's broader vision for the College graduates' impact on the workforce and society as a whole? With regard to specific themes and prompt questions, I propose we consider the following:

**Addressing Differences Between Engaged and Unengaged Students:** Some students are highly motivated to pursue career preparation activities early and actively. How can Career Advancement best identify their needs and provide them with adequate opportunities? Conversely, how can the University better support students who may not be as motivated, who may be uncertain about their career interests, or who engage in Career Advancement activities later than their peers?

**Diversity and Access:** Given the diversity of the student body, and that certain professions/fields are largely dominated by males, and that some international students may face issues gaining permits to work in the U.S. post-graduation, how do the University's employment opportunities fare for international, underrepresented, and female students?

**Diversification of Industries:** Some students are concerned that the University's career opportunities are too "corporate" and business focused. Although Career Advancement has *Careers In* programs span an array of industries, some students feel these non-business opportunities are perhaps less available or less visible. How can the University strengthen the number and types of non-business opportunities, and make these more visible and accessible to students who may not otherwise consider a non-business career path?

As our conversation unfolds, it would be helpful for us to identify how students and Trustees each view the work of Career Advancement differently; what suggestions there are for improvement; and consider how we stack up against our peers.

I look forward to our conversation,  
Kyle Shishkin