



*From the Office of the American Secretary*

November 22, 2014

Elliot F. Gerson  
American Secretary  
The Rhodes Trust  
8229 Boone Boulevard, Suite 240  
Vienna, VA 22182-2623

Telephone: 703 821 5960  
Fax: 703 821 2770  
E-mail: [amsec@rhodesscholar.org](mailto:amsec@rhodesscholar.org)  
[www.rhodesscholar.org](http://www.rhodesscholar.org)

## American Rhodes Scholars-elect for 2015

*(Subject to ratification by the Rhodes Trustees after acceptance by one of the colleges of Oxford University)*

### DISTRICT 1

#### Massachusetts

**Noam Angrist**, Brookline, graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2013 with majors in Economics and Mathematics. While at M.I.T., he did economic research for the World Bank, The White House, and on the Affordable Care Act, and also founded an enrichment program combining athletics and academics for low-income youth that achieved considerable success measured by achievement and college matriculation. As a Fulbright Scholar in Botswana, Noam founded an NGO for HIV education designed to discourage intergenerational sex (“sugar daddy awareness”). Its success led him to raise the money to extend the program to 340 schools, and he now plans to launch it in four other southern African countries. He hopes to continue to apply his economics acumen to assess and develop poverty-alleviation projects that work. Noam will do the M.Sc. in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation at Oxford.

### Massachusetts

**Benjamin D. Sprung-Keyser**, Los Angeles, California, is a senior at Harvard University concentrating in Economics. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior, and with a perfect academic record, his interests focus on labor economics, and particularly issues relating to unemployment. His two-man team won the 2014 World Universities Debating Championship and in 2013, he was the youngest national champion ever of the American Parliamentary Debate Association. Ben won the Young Playwrights Inc. National Playwriting Competition; his play was performed in New York City in 2012. He organized a program to teach debate skills to disadvantaged students in Boston, a program that has been expanded to students in China. He is research assistant to Professor Larry Summers, and for the president of the National Bureau of Economic Research. Ben plans to do the M.Phil. in Economics at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 2

### Connecticut

**Matthew J. Townsend**, Chappaqua, New York, is a senior at Yale University majoring in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. Elected as a junior to Phi Beta Kappa, he has a perfect academic record across the sciences, economics, and Latin. Matt has complemented his work in medical sciences with deep interests in the psychology of health, the history of disease, and the social networks that affect health, and has a particular interest in the socio-cultural, environmental and biological roots of obesity-related diseases. He is also a two-year starter on the Yale Varsity Basketball Team, where he won the award as the top defensive player, and a volunteer, shift-leader and then co-coordinator of the Yale Hunger and Homelessness Action Project. At Oxford, Matt plans to do the M.Sc in Medical Anthropology.

### New Jersey

**Ruth C. Fong**, Somerset, is a senior at Harvard University majoring in Computer Science. Her senior thesis focuses on how computers can intuitively identify and perceive objects in a way that more closely mimics the human brain, and was chosen to teach three undergraduate computer science courses. She won a highly competitive scholarship from Apple for women

in technology, and a Tech in the World Fellowship to work on infectious disease data in Tanzania. Ruth is also extremely active as an advocate for special needs causes, and was a director of Big Sibs program in Boston's Chinatown. She is a member of a dance troupe and enjoys both hip-hop and traditional Chinese dance. She is also a bible study leader in the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian-American Christian Fellowship and enjoys processing spiritual questions with others. Ruth plans to do the M.Sc. in Mathematics and Foundations in Computer Science and the M.Sc. in Computer Science at Oxford.

### DISTRICT 3

#### New York

**Joseph W. Barrett**, Port Washington, graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University in June with a major in History and a minor in South Asian Studies. He won the highest award for undergraduates, based on scholarship, character and leadership, as well as the prize for the best thesis in American History. Joe is passionate about prison education and reform, an issue he focused on as a freshman and that led him to establish a program on incarceration issues at Princeton that he has expanded to other colleges. He has worked with the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Lesotho, spent a year learning Hindu and Urdu and working on literacy projects in Varanasi, India, and is passionate about social justice and economic development. Joe plans to do the M.Phil. in Economic and Social History at Oxford.

#### New York

**Gabriel M. Zucker**, Brooklyn, graduated from Yale in 2012 summa cum laude with majors in Ethics, Politics and Economics, as well as in Music. He won many major awards for character and service as well as scholarship. After Yale, he worked at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty "Action Lab," conducting fieldwork in Pakistan and Indonesia. For the past year, he has been associate director of the Connecticut Heroes Project, a campaign to end veteran homelessness in Connecticut. He had run Yale's Hunger and Homelessness Action Project as an undergraduate. Gabriel is also a highly accomplished musician and composer. He is a professional pianist, bandleader, singer-songwriter, and producer. He played the piano at

Carnegie Hall, and a work he composed for symphony orchestra and big band premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2012. Before pursuing a Ph.D. in Economics, Gabriel plans to do the M.Sc. in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 4

### Pennsylvania

**Jordan R. Konell**, Philadelphia, is a senior at Yale University where he majors in African American Studies and Political Science. His academic interests circle around principles of social justice, as do his community and campus involvements. In Philadelphia, he has worked in the Public Interest Law Center and as a community organizer in Take Back Your Neighborhood. In New Haven, he is executive advisor to Community Health Educators, the largest community organization on campus. Jordan was editor-in-chief of the *Yale Undergraduate Law Review*, was a summer fellow for the American Federation of Teachers, and is a Director's Fellow of the Yale Institute for Social Policy Studies. He is also a jazz trombonist. Jordan will do the M.Phil. in Comparative Social Policy at Oxford.

### Rhode Island

**Kate I. Nussenbaum**, Newton, Massachusetts, is a Brown University senior majoring in Comparative Neuroscience, with a minor in Science and Society. A junior member of Phi Beta Kappa, much of her academic work has centered on the ways social factors distort learning capacity and how those barriers can be surmounted. Kate's research, publications and presentations broadly investigate the subject of distraction, and her experiments and interests involve mitigating the effects of socioeconomic status on memory and retention among young children. She is the Senior Editor of the *Brown Daily Herald*, a peer advisor, and has been a volunteer math and science tutor. She was also associate editor of *The Science and Society Review*. Kate will do an M.Sc. by Research in Experimental Psychology at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 5

### Maryland/DC

**Fang Y. Cao**, Silver Spring, is a senior at the University of Maryland, where he majors in Neurobiology and Physiology, and Computer Science. He is both a Truman Scholar and a Goldwater Scholar, with a 4.0 across many disciplines. Born in China, he emigrated to

London at age five, and to the United States at seven. His family slept on cardboard before moving onto mattresses found in a dumpster. He has done research at NIH, the Children's National Medical Center, and at a health clinic in Jamaica. Fang founded two tutoring programs to help low-income local high school students succeed in the sciences, and is passionate about solving the national crisis in community healthcare for the underserved. Fang will do the M.Sc. in Medical Anthropology at Oxford.

### Maryland/DC

**Maya I. Krishnan**, Rockville, is a Stanford University senior majoring in Philosophy, with minors in Computer Science and Classics. Her book, Modern Illuminations, includes ten essays on the relationship between the theory of knowledge and theology. Maya also created and maintains an interactive online database correlating datasets around ancient Greece and Rome. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior, her senior thesis is on the relationship between mathematics, meaning and history in Kant. The daughter of a Hindu-Unitarian and a Jew, she became interested in how post-Reformation Christian theology affects basic approaches to truth. She is an oboist, and has worked as a technology scientist for a nonprofit serving children in some of Washington, D.C.'s most at-risk neighborhoods. At Oxford, Maya intends to do the M.St. in Theology and the M.Sc. in Social Sciences of the Internet.

## DISTRICT 6

### Georgia

**Sarah M. Bufkin**, Atlanta, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2013, majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies (Cultural Studies) and with a minor in Creative Writing. She is now attending Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as a Mitchell Scholar, where she will obtain a master's degree in Moral, Legal and Political Philosophy. At Chapel Hill, her research focused on questions of voice, agency and political action: the interface between civil rights and sentencing in the U.S., and the role of the Belfast Group of poets during sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. An accomplished poet, Sarah also was editor-in-chief of a progressive campus magazine, a columnist for the *Daily Tar Heel*, a politics intern for the *Huffington Post* during a semester off, and a communications coordinator for the North Carolina NAACP. Her interests in civil rights and capital punishment lead to her intention to do a D.Phil. in Politics at Oxford.

## Georgia

**Ridwan Y. Hassen**, Marietta, is a senior at Dartmouth College where he is majoring in Computer Science modified with Neuroscience. Before Dartmouth, he attended Emory University for two years. The child of refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia, he has always worked to help support his large family, up to 30 hours per week, all the while achieving a superb academic record and leading many campus and community activities. Ridwan founded a global development project focused on the Horn of Africa, was a volunteer coordinator for the NAACP, and founded Emory's first AIDS activist organization. He has done neurobiology research at UCSF, and on an implicated gene in Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is an active mentor of students and a community activist at South Cobb High School, from which he graduated. He is a member of the Dartmouth Endurance Racing Team and competes in many mid- and long-distance runs. Ridwan plans to do a Master in Public Policy at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 7

### Alabama

**Ameen Barghi**, Birmingham, is a senior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he majors in Neuroscience and Translational Research and minors in Chemistry and Biology. A Goldwater Scholar with a 4.0 G.P.A, he does extensive research in constraint-induced movement therapy for patients with multiple sclerosis, stroke and other diseases, and has many publications relating to his work. Ameen is also active in community programs relating to substance abuse, on a crisis line, in blood drives and hospital clinics. He speaks Azari and Farsi and has also done health-related work in Azerbaijan and Iran. He has also, for five years, been a clerk and floorman at a gas station and convenience store in Bessemer, Alabama. He is interested in developing clinical imaging systems and software technologies that could allow for earlier diagnosis of progressive diseases. Ameen will do a D.Phil. in Clinical Neuroscience at Oxford.

### Florida

**Jane Darby Menton**, Tallahassee, is a senior at Yale University with majors in History and Global Affairs. As Managing Editor of the *Yale Daily News*, she is a member of the three-person management board that makes all major decisions for the newspaper, and reads and

edits all its stories. She won the Thouron Prize for a summer fellowship to Cambridge University. Jane Darby has also interned for Anderson Cooper 360, organized a student trip to Greece to study the country's financial crisis, and is a member of the Yale International Relations Association. She plans to write her senior thesis on John Hersey and the journalistic novel. She also was the conference organizer for the Yale Model United Nations Organization, and aspires to be a foreign correspondent. Jane Darby intends to do the M.Phil. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 8

### Texas

**Sai P. Gourisankar**, Atlanta, Georgia, is a senior at the University of Texas, where he will graduate in May with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering and a B.A. in Plan II Liberal Arts. He also has a minor in German. He is a Goldwater Scholar and was recognized as a Churchill Scholar by the British Studies Department at the University, with a 4.0 across multiple disciplines. He has several publications relating to his work in nanotechnology, particularly relating to nanoclusters. He is also president of an organization that fosters discussion between the humanities and the sciences. At Oxford, Sai plans to do the M.Sc. in Mathematical Modeling and Scientific Computing and the M.Sc. in Mathematical and Theoretical Physics.

### Texas

**Abishek K. Kulshreshtha**, Grapevine, is a senior at Brown University where he majors in Physics. Much of his work in theoretical physics has applications to the creation of a quantum computer that would make computations exponentially faster, and toward the goal of better understanding of biological processes. Abi is president of Brown's Model United Nations and founder of the Providence Public Schools Model United Nations. He is also a peer advisor, a pianist, a cyclist, and a teaching assistant and mentor in local schools. He has strong interests in improving educational opportunity and community health. Abi plans to do a D.Phil. in Theoretical Physics at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 9

### Indiana

**Jacob L. Burnett**, Mishawaka, is a senior political science major at Wabash College. He also has a minor in psychology, and has won major academic awards in several subjects. He has done research in transnational crime involving adoption, on sub-Saharan political leadership, and on Appalachian poverty. Jacob is especially interested in criminal justice, having worked for the Legal Aid Society in Kentucky and as an intern with the Public Defender Service in Washington, D.C. He has been a tutor and mentor for underprivileged elementary school children. At Wabash, he is news editor and was formerly opinions editor of the student newspaper, president pro tempore of the student body, and was president of the College Democrats. At Oxford, Jacob will do the M.Sc. in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

### Indiana

**Alexander F. Coccia**, Columbus, Ohio, graduated from the University of Notre Dame in May. He majored in Africana Studies and Peace Studies. A Truman Scholar, he won many awards for scholarship and leadership. Alex is now a Truman-Albright Fellow in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At Notre Dame, he was the student body president. His platform focused on promoting the passions and interests of all students, including those who felt marginalized. He successfully led the amendment of the student union nondiscrimination clause to include gender identify, disability and documentation status. He also founded a student movement to create a more welcoming environment for students who identify as LGBTQ and their allies. He was also a member of the varsity fencing team, which won the 2011 National Championship. Alex plans to do the M.Phil. in Comparative Social Policy at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 10

### Illinois

**Rachel V. Harmon**, Champaign, is a senior at Cornell University majoring in Industrial and Labor Relations. Before college, she was an AmeriCorps volunteer as a reading tutor at an all-black rural elementary school in the Mississippi Delta, an experience which—like some of her own—has fueled her motivation to study social and economic policies and their effects on



socioeconomic mobility. Rachel's honors thesis relates to strategies for economic justice for low-income Mississippians. She has won many awards for scholarship, was an intern for the Southern Education Foundation, a teacher in a maximum security prison and in a juvenile detention center, and manages a café. At Oxford, Rachel plans to do the M.Phil. in Evidence-Based Social Policy.

### Ohio

**Rebecca A. Esselstein**, Dayton, is a senior at the United States Air Force Academy where she majors in Astronautical Engineering. She is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in her class overall, and is currently ranked 1<sup>st</sup> both academically and militarily. She is also a 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Academic All-American in Women's Track as an 800 meter runner. She is also a varsity cross-country runner. Rebecca has done research at M.I.T. on radar and infrared signatures, and was an Aspen Institute Socrates Program Scholar studying the U.S. Supreme Court. She hopes to become an astronaut. Rebecca intends to do a D.Phil. in Astrophysics at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 11

### Michigan

**David S. Moore**, Holland, received his bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Michigan in May, and remains there for his master's in Mechanical Engineering. He won the top award in engineering both his junior and senior years. In his design and manufacturing work and courses he has created a mechanism that allows wheelchair users to more easily use a backpack, and developed a new needle biopsy device. He was captain of the Michigan Men's Varsity Swim Team, a team that won the 2013 National Championship and four Big Ten Championships. He was also the community service chair for the Student Athlete Advisory Council, and organized the Swim Team's community service activities. At Oxford, David plans to do the M.Sc. in Computer Science followed by the M.B.A.

### Wisconsin

**Tayo A. Sanders II**, Neenah, is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, where he majors in Materials Science. A Goldwater Scholar, he has done extensive research, with many publications and presentations, particularly in nanotechnology, and has presented at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society, where he will present again next year. He

has also done research in the nanomaterials lab at the University of Strasbourg in France. Tayo is a mentor and leader of a program for minority students, and does community outreach for STEM careers. He is also a triathlete, and co-captain of a triathlon team. Tayo plans to do a D.Phil. in Materials at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 12

### Missouri

**Anisha N. Gururaj**, Chesterfield, is a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she majors in Chemical and Biological Engineering and minors in Energy Studies. Her career interest is to develop affordable biomedical devices for both the U.S. and developing world. She has a perfect academic record and has done research on many different health technologies, including drug delivery and diagnosis. With three student colleagues, Anisha designed and patented a low-cost blood warmer that could save the lives of soldiers who die on the battlefield from hypothermia. She published an investigative report on the experience of trauma surgeons following the Boston Marathon bombings. She also founded the M.I.T. Chapter of the Circle of Women, which works to expand secondary education for girls globally. She performs Indian classical dance and is president of an a cappella group. Anisha plans to do an M.Sc. in Biomedical Engineering and a Masters of Public Policy at Oxford.

### Tennessee

**Robert A. Fisher**, Chattanooga, is a senior at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga where he majors in Political Science and minors in History and Africana Studies. A Truman Scholar with a perfect academic record, he is the student body president. He was appointed by the Governor as student representative to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and is a Presidential Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress. Robert was chosen by Chattanooga's mayor to co-chair a task force to develop a vibrant and more inclusive downtown, and is a mentor in a local school. Much of his university and community leadership is focused on issues related to racial inequality in America, and is influenced by his deep interest in black political thought. Robert plans to do the M.Phil. in Comparative Social Policy at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 13

### Colorado

**Emily E. Witt**, Greenwood Village, is a Stanford University senior where she majors in Human Biology and minors in Psychology. Her honors thesis relates to the immunomodulatory mechanisms of vitamin D in multiple sclerosis and neurofeedback as a therapeutic intervention for autism, and has done research at Stanford's Steinman Laboratory and its Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research. She is a passionate human rights advocate and has served as president of the Stanford Chapter of Amnesty International. She has also worked to promote health care in impoverished communities in Central America, and this past summer investigated the social determinants of chronic malnutrition in Guatemala. In her free time, she volunteers as a Spanish interpreter for a free health clinic in Northern California, and enjoys cycling, running and kayaking. Emily will do the M.Sc. in Neuroscience and the M.Sc. in Experimental Psychology by Research at Oxford.

### New Mexico

**Peter N. Kalugin**, Albuquerque, is a senior at Johns Hopkins University where he will receive a B.S. in Molecular and Cellular Biology and a B.A. in Mathematics with a minor in Physics in May. A Goldwater Scholar, and elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior, he has worked in basic science labs on cell signaling and immunobiology and completed a thesis on brain tumor biology. He has also worked on statistical analysis of medical data sets at the University of New Mexico. Peter plays the alto saxophone, speaks five languages, has taught English to new immigrant students, volunteered at orphanages in Mongolia and Nepal, and founded an organization to connect other university students with local NGOs abroad. He is passionate about pediatric oncology and research in cancer cell growth. Peter plans to do the M.Sc. by Research in Oncology at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 14

### Montana

**Aven P. Satre Meloy**, Helena, graduated summa cum laude from Santa Clara University in 2013 with majors in Political Science and Environmental Science, and a minor in International Studies. He won the graduation award for the top male graduate in scholarship, character and leadership. He won a Fulbright Scholarship to Turkey, and is now a

White House intern working in the office of Energy and Climate Change. While at Santa Clara, he developed its first university-wide honor code, served as Chief Justice in the judicial branch of student government, and led efforts to raise awareness about sexual violence. He is passionate about the profound social, political and economic challenges posed by environmental change. At Oxford, Aven plans to do the M.Phil. in Geography and the Environment.

### Washington

**William J. Rathje**, Lake Oswego, Oregon, is a senior at the University of Puget Sound where he double majors in Computer Science and English Literature. His talents extend across theater performance, poetry, musical performance and composition, the sciences and applied science. He is a Goldwater Scholar and junior member of Phi Beta Kappa who has done research in proteomics, biochemistry, and computer science. Billy also co-founded a literary magazine for new plays and has developed four iPhone apps. He also composed a full-length musical that was performed by a professional cast in Portland as well as three ten-minute musicals. He is a contributing writer to *USA Today College* and has a peer-reviewed publication in computer science. Billy will do the M.Sc. in Computer Science at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 15

### California - North

**Elliot H. Akama-Garren**, Palo Alto, is a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology majoring in Biology. He has maintained a 5.0 G.P.A. (on a 5.0 scale), including one semester where he took as many courses most college students take in a year. His research, which has led to many publications, including in the *Journal of Immunology*, focuses on novel ways to manipulate the immune system to treat human diseases, especially cancer. His work has been conducted not only at M.I.T.'s Koch Institute, but at Stanford, Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital. Elliot is also Editor-in-Chief of the *MIT Undergraduate Research Journal*, has designed and taught four, seven-week-long courses for middle and high school students, and volunteers in the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter. He is also President and Co-Captain of the M.I.T. Men's Ice Hockey Team. Elliot will do the M.Sc. in Integrated Immunology at Oxford.

### California - North

**Rachel A. Skokowski**, Palo Alto, is a senior at Princeton University majoring in French. She has a deep commitment to making the arts more relevant and accessible in the modern world. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, she has a superb academic record across the humanities and a commitment to forge strong connections between art museums and local communities, especially to expose underprivileged children to museums and to the beauty of art. She has curated or interned at the Morgan Library and Museum, the Princeton Art Museum and for the Santa Fe Arts Commission, and is a Behrman Undergraduate Fellow. She is also a three season (year-round) varsity cross country and varsity track athlete. Her career aspirations are to push the boundaries of art curation. Rachel will do the European Enlightenment Programme within the M.Phil. in Modern Languages at Oxford.

## DISTRICT 16

### California - South

**David R.K. Adler**, Encino, is a May graduate of Brown University where he majored in Development Studies and graduated with highest honors. He also spent a semester at St. Stephen's College of Delhi University in India. He is now on a Fulbright Research Fellowship in Mexico where he is doing research on housing. At Brown, he was Managing Editor of the *College Hill Independent*, an alternative weekly newspaper written for the community, won three major research awards, and was Assistant Director and Head Fellow of the Brown Writing Fellows Program. David was the coordinator of Brown's Sexual Health Education Program and taught a weekly course in a South Providence school. He was a core member of an Indonesian music ensemble and founded an artistic production house in New York City. David will do the M.Phil. in Comparative Government at Oxford.

### California - South

**Sarah E. Yerima**, Los Angeles, is a senior at Princeton University where she majors in Sociology. Much of her scholarly work relates to what she describes as the fallacy of post-racialism in the United States, and framed by her own and her family's experiences, her grandparents' in the rural south, and hers in an all-black neighborhood in Los Angeles and finally in the privilege of Princeton. Her senior thesis is on the evolution of colorblindness in

American jurisprudence and the perpetuation of racial inequality. Sarah has an exceptional academic record across the social sciences at Princeton, has been active as a peer and residential college advisor and as a women's mentor, and is a member of the Behrman Undergraduate Society of Fellows. She also studied in Brazil where she investigated racial prejudice in a different historical context. Sarah plans to do the M.Phil. in Comparative Government at Oxford, where she plans to compare the racialized elements of policing policies of the U.S. and U.K..