

AUGUSTINIAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21
APRIL 2021 DRAFT—PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE

I. Program Overview:

- Year 1: Augustine & the Christian Tradition:
 - *Fall: Faith Seeking Understanding, 4 units, Philosophical Reflections GE*
 - *Spring: Pilgrim Citizens, 4 units, Understanding Society GE*
- Years 2-3: One 1-unit seminar each year; off-campus study
- Year 4: ASP Senior Capstone (2 units, Fall)

II. Key Program Developments / Features This Year

- *First Year Seminars*
 - In August 2020, 71 New Augustinians joined the program as first-year scholars (61 at the “Scholar” award level; 10 at the “Fellow” award level).
 - The first-year program contracted to a smaller faculty team each semester (four total each term), including Jesse Covington, Felicia Song, Jim Taylor, and Telford work in the fall, and Helen Rhee, Jim Taylor, Felicia Song and Ed Song in the spring. (The discontinuity between fall and spring teams is in part due to a planned sabbatical for spring 2021.)
 - COVID response was a major feature of the year, limiting the extent of team-teaching / larger sections and moving significant portions of instruction into online contexts. Some continuity between sections and diversified instruction was achieved in part through video guest lectures shared across all first-year students (both fall and spring).
 - Guest speakers/panelists in first-year seminars included: Gayle Beebe, Jesse Covington, Michael Everest, Andrea Gurney, Helen Rhee, Felicia Song, Ed Song, Jim Taylor, Telford Work.
- *Year 2-3 Seminars*
 - Eleven seminars were offered in this series (six in the fall, five in the spring), with Michael Everest, Andrea Gurney, Mark Nelson, Helen Rhee, Sarah Skripsky, Lesa Stern, and Telford Work offering courses.
 - A key effort this year was helping students to draw more course-content connections to themes in the first-year program.
 - Guest speaker in several sections was Cassie Wicoff (COVE Center)
- *Senior Capstone*
 - This course ran for the second time in Fall 2020 with 54 scholars enrolled, co-taught (in divided sections, due to COVID) by Jesse Covington and Sarah Skripsky.
 - In collaboration with the Martin Institute and the Campus Pastor’s Office, scholars in the Capstone were invited to individual spiritual direction for chapel credit.
 - Guest speaker (sponsored by the Martin Institute) was Dr. James K.A. Smith.
- *Diversity & Inclusion:* Reading selections, discussions, prayer, and other course activities in multiple facets of the program (all course levels) increased the cultural/ethnic and viewpoint diversity represented, and invited students to

make connections between course material and contemporary concerns—particularly regarding race and racial justice.

- *Mentoring*: Jaron Burdick, who provides administrative support to the program, took on additional leadership in coordinating the mentoring program this year—collaborating with cohort representatives in pairing new Augustinians with other scholars, prompting conversations with key questions, and gathering feedback.
- *Student leadership*: Six peer-nominated Cohort Representatives—two from each cohort year—provided student leadership and support:
 - i. Zion Shih and Brennan Confer (2017 cohort);
 - ii. Talia Bjelland and Josiah Swanson (2018 cohort);
 - iii. Phoebe Lu and Benny Saito (2019 cohort).
- *Events & Activities*: Program activities were severely curtailed due to COVID restrictions, but we still managed an online welcome/trivia night, a film screening of *Augustine: Son of Her Tears* in celebration of Augustine’s birthday, and a panel of Augustinian Alumni on life after Westmont.
- *Admissions*: Students, faculty, & staff worked closely with the Office of Admissions to help host COVID-modified visits in December, January, and February, including weekly Friday on-campus visits for individual candidates.

III. **What has gone well:**

- *Successful COVID Response*: While it involved significant structural changes to the program (fewer in-person classes, less team-teaching, fewer events, no regular hospitality), the program successfully participated in the campus-wide COVID response, maintaining a strong academic program and positive student experiences amidst many obstacles.
- *Academics*: Student work continues to demonstrate strong learning and engagement with key course themes and texts.
- *Mentoring for First-Year Scholars*: Under Jaron Burdick’s leadership, mentoring had its most organized year, including a quick launch and strong follow-up.
- *Year 2-3 Seminars*: Successfully provided a key point of program connection and provided increased curricular cohesion via connections to first-year program
- *Senior Capstone Seminar*: The second iteration of this course went well, particularly in terms of a reflective conclusion to the program, community relationships, and spiritual formation activities. Students report that spiritual direction was a highlight that was particularly timely during COVID season.
- *Diversity & Inclusion*: Students responded well to increased incorporation of diverse curricular materials and themes.
- *Administrative Support*: Jaron Burdick has continued to offer strong support to the program across key areas, adding more leadership responsibilities as mentoring coordinator and working more with cohort representatives.
- *Cohort Representatives*: The team of six students tasked with providing student leadership in the program did a good job shared consultation and prayer about program needs, communication to their peers, and limited event organization and planning.

- *Campus Collaboration*: The program liaised well with campus departments, Admissions, College Advancement, Student Life, Financial Aid, Martin Institute, Campus Pastor's Office, etc.
- *Admissions & Recruitment*. Despite the challenges of COVID, the Admissions office has secured commitments for new class of Augustinians for fall 2021. 77 students plan to join the program in the fall, including 53 "scholars" and 24 "fellows" (award levels).
- *Program expansion*: We continued to address the needs of an expanding program (even as this continues to pose unique challenges).
- *Formation*: While limited by the pandemic, the program provided and/ or encouraged opportunities for Christian formation (in-class worship practices, local churches, modified retreats, etc.) and reflection about formation.
- *Campus Engagement*: Assignments prompted students' reflective engagement and self-assessment in relation to broader community involvements (activity journals).
- *Faculty Collaboration*: There was good faculty collaboration within the teaching teams for each program segment, even though interaction was more limited during COVID season. In addition to other efforts, first-year faculty collaborated on video-lecture sharing, quiz sharing, and conducted a review of which edition of *Confessions* to use in the coming year.

IV. **Challenges in the Past Year / Areas for Future Reflection & Response**

- *COVID*-related challenges
 - Distancing & Zoom—Inhibited community / relational connections & classroom experience (meaningful discussion / student engagement). Hard to incorporate dual-modality participants. This will probably have some longer-term impact on remaining students.
 - Limited availability class-linked service and formation activities (impacts years 1, 2, & 3)
 - More students just struggled this year, with motivation, mental health, etc.
- *Size/Scale*: Effectively address program goals in relation to increasing program size/scale and faculty-student ratio, across a range of student experience, group cohesion, events, and relationships.
- *Formation*: Appropriately expand Christian formation practices/opportunities across sections/years. Emphasize communication and shared commitments among program faculty.
- *Diversity*: Continue to explore how best to refine and communicate curricular diversity/breadth and focus/parameters, including issues of race, gender, interdisciplinary connections (NBS), etc. Help students contextualize and critically engage older texts that may include archaic and/or discriminatory views on sex, gender, etc.
- *Inclusion*: Continue being attentive to/ supporting students who find it challenging to 'belong' at Westmont / within the ASP cohort, particularly in relation to race, ethnicity, Christian denomination, and/or socioeconomic background.
- *Campus Integration*: continue to promote full and equal engagement with campus life in ways that avoid insularity or elitism.

- *Athletic Schedules*: increasingly impacted Thursday academic commitments
- *Senior Capstone during 2022-23 Academic Year*: Consider offering both fall and spring if warranted by enrolment patterns of seniors into re-opening off-campus programs.
- *Program Impacts*: Continue to be attentive to the impact of year one curriculum on other G.E. courses, including (but not limited to) Phil-6.
- *Graduates/Alumni*: Determine how best to celebrate graduating Augustinians and how to engage them as alumni.

V. **Anticipated Staffing 2021-22**

- Jesse Covington will continue to provide program leadership, including for candidate event weekends during his spring 2022 sabbatical.
- First Year Seminar Teams:
 - Fall 2021: Jesse Covington & Helen Rhee; Jim Taylor & Telford Work
 - Spring 2022: Helen Rhee & Mark Nelson; Jim Taylor & Telford Work
- Year 2/3 Seminars: Michael Everest, Charlie Farhadian, Andrea Gurney, Mark Nelson.
- Year 4 Senior Capstone: Jesse Covington, Andrea Gurney
- Jaron Burdick will continue to provide program support, including increased role with mentoring program.

VI. **Additional Director Projects, Activities, & Outcomes:**

- *Faculty Coordination*: Led meetings of program faculty to collaborate on current and future curriculum and activities and including gathering and collating input from program faculty.
- *Information Management*: Worked with Anna Darby in the Registrar's Office and Jaron Burdick to better track program course enrollments and provide some accountability for program expectations (ongoing).
- *Candidate Selection and Communications (Admissions)*: Served on the selection committee for incoming scholars and aided in communications with incoming scholars. Due to COVID response, in addition to the virtual candidate weekend events, met with on-campus visitors on Fridays at 9:00am, 1:00pm, and 3:00pm during small-group campus visits.
- *Communication*: Responded to scholar inquiries from across the cohorts. Provided direct communication with all scholars regarding program expectations (courses, off-campus, GPA, covenant, etc.).

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with these wonderful scholars and colleagues!

Respectfully submitted by Jesse Covington