LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR
Dr. Paulette G. Curtis
Faculty Director of the AnBryce Scholars Initiative at Notre Dame

DONOR SPOTLIGHT
Jack Myers ’86 and Nylce Prada ’87

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT
Elicia Dennis ’18
Armando Sanchez ’20
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Shamar Cousin ’21

BIENNIAL ANBRYCE FORUM
Navigating the Margins: Diversity, Inclusion and Access at the University of the 21st Century

TAILGATING GALLERY
Greetings to everyone from my office on the second floor of historic Brownson Hall, which as I am very fond of saying now, is my humble home away from home.

I have probably misspoken in describing Brownson as “humble,” whatever its somewhat eclectic nooks and crannies. Rumor has it that founder and first Notre Dame President, Fr. Edward Sorin, laid the flooring in parts of Brownson, which of course make Brownson a more stately and certainly more interesting space than we often give it credit for being (just don’t quote me on the veracity of the rumor). Knowing that Fr. Sorin may have played a part in laying the literal foundations of our space means that we should think of ourselves as carrying on his pioneering spirit, which I like to think is reflected in the work and events I write about below.

We celebrated the graduation of our first AnBryce Scholars cohort on May 22, 2017 in a lovely ceremony in the Oak Room. It was a wonderful experience, punctuated by heartfelt congratulations from friends and family. We cried and dried our tears that month, only to find ourselves three months later with a new cohort of eight bright-eyed and bushy-tailed first years on our proverbial doorstep; their group photo is included in this term’s newsletter. Our newest cohort comes from all over the United States, from Lakeside, Arizona to American Falls, Idaho to right here in South Bend, Indiana. Like each of our cohorts, the Cohort of the AnBryce Class of 2021 has its own personality, one that is decidedly lovely and sweet. We know you will enjoy getting to know them.

In other news, we have been keeping very busy with the planning of our biennial AnBryce Forum, which will take place November 6-8 in McKeenna Hall. As all of you know, a significant aspect of the AnBryce program at Notre Dame is the cultivation of community through monthly “talk back” sessions and social events, where AnBryce students talk about their experiences at Notre Dame, and the challenges they face, whether academic, social or personal. Our conversations with them are honest and thoughtful. We envision the AnBryce Forum as a continuation of these conversations for the campus community. The goal of the 2017 AnBryce Forum, which is entitled “Navigating the Margins: Diversity, Inclusion and Access at the University of the 21st Century”, will be to interrogate a number of important themes related to the diversity and inclusion mandate. Our panels and presentations will explore these themes in new and exciting ways that give the floor to students, faculty and invited guests from a variety of institutions (from our friends at Stanford on the West Coast to our sister institution, New York University, on the East Coast). By Forum’s end, we hope to have pushed the conversation campus and community-wide on this important topic.

You will find a more complete description of our Forum and panels on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter. Any and all of you would be welcome to attend these events, as they are completely open to the public.

Finally, thanks to all of you who have supported our Personal and Professional Development Series, or PPDS, as we say. This Fall the students will have sessions with CUSE, the CSC, Financial Aid, the Career Center, Study Abroad and with our generous “Resumé Whisperer” Ms. Tonia Zepponi. Hope that the Fall term, with its transitional waves and waves, brings all of us good things.

Til’ we speak again,
Paulette

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Donor Spotlight:
Jack Myers ’86 and Nylce Prada ’87

Jack Myers ’86 and Nylce Prada ’87 met as undergraduates at Notre Dame, marrying the year after her graduation from a Masters program at Washington University in St. Louis. “We always thought that we would be parents and have a large family with both biological and adopted kids. But life didn’t turn out the way we’d expected,” she says. That hasn’t stopped them from devoting their energies and resources toward helping the next generation.

An audit partner with KPMG, Jack has devoted time to volunteering with the Northern Star Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and Nylce, a former middle and high school teacher, regularly volunteers with various school and youth organizations. They have also served as hosts for and sponsors of Notre Dame students doing Summer Service Projects in Michigan, Virginia, and Minnesota, all states where they have lived.

Not having children of their own to educate, they decided early to direct their annual contributions toward Notre Dame’s general scholarship funds. “I was grateful for aid that I received as a student, and I wanted to pay that forward,” says Nylce.

Both of them note the sacrifices their own parents made on behalf of their educations, and they realize how much more difficult it is for students and families now to afford the cost of attending Notre Dame. But it is first generation students who particularly call to their hearts. “Our dads were once in their places,” says Nylce, reflecting on the difficulties students from low-income backgrounds encounter while adapting to life on a university campus. And as an immigrant from Colombia who grew up in GA, she’s also keenly aware of the social and cultural challenges posed to first generation students studying far from home.

Aware of these interests, Mike Seeley, who used to work with Notre Dame’s Development Office before transitioning to work with Enrollment, introduced Jack and Nylce to the AnBryce program in 2014. “He sent us a link to a video,” Jack remembers.

“We watched it together, and we both cried,” says Nylce.

Since then the Myers have worked together with Notre Dame Development to direct some of their contributions to AnBryce and toward creating an endowed fund that will help other first generation students attain their Notre Dame dreams so they can be forces for good in the world. “We like to think of all of them as ‘our’ kids,” they say.

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SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

Introducing the class of 2021 and our 5th cohort of scholars! One sing with Journey, one discovered in middle school that the secret to success is to be confident at all times, one drove 26 hours to get to campus, one’s last name is not pronounced Coo-zehn, one is a Physics major, one is nicknamed Rafa, one worked at IHOP, and one comes from the city where 7-Up and the secret to success is to be confident at all times, one drove 26 hours to get to campus, one’s last name is not pronounced SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

In Her Own Words: Excerpts from Elicia Dennis’s Reflection on A Balanced Equation

In the summer of 2016, I worked with a team put together by the production company Roadtrip Nation to research the lack of diversity in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Over 20 days we traveled almost 4,000 miles along the east coast and southeastern United States interviewing women in STEM along the way in hopes of gaining a better understanding of their experiences and challenges thus far. We focused on both their career paths and where they saw areas for improvement for diversity both within STEM and the broader society.

It became obvious early on that I needed to take chances and say yes to things that were intimidating if I wanted to make the most of my experience. I know living with 4 other people in an RV while working on such a tight filming schedule was going to be challenging and I almost said no to the opportunity. Ultimately, the road trip and the individual moments within it empowered me to trust myself and my ability to adapt in new environments and challenging circumstances.

During the course of our trip, we interviewed over 20 leaders in the STEM fields. While a wide variety of meaningful advice was imparted, one common thread stood out. Many of the women stressed the importance of finding mentors and support systems. Mentors and peers help you navigate challenges and make it easier to overcome moments of adversity. While I have been offered support throughout my time as a student, I did not fully appreciate things such as the relationships available through AnBryce or the resources that motivated them. This newfound understanding of the importance of support systems has lead me to become more engaged with my role within the AnBryce program as both a student and member of the alumni community.

Ultimately, these experiences have translated to some significant changes in my life. I have left the college of engineering to pursue a degree in Sociology in hopes of better understanding the social causes of the lack of diversity in technical industries such as STEM. The road trip has made me realize that careers do not always follow a straight path, nor is there a single way to reach a goal. I am now working to combine my interests in a way that will allow me to both continue my work with computing while impacting access to opportunity for others.

Elicia’s full reflection can be found at anbryce.nd.edu. For more information about Roadtrip Nation go to roadtripnation.org.

Finding ways to connect, no matter how trivial the interaction to better serve others.

Visalia California native, Armando Sanchez ‘20, originally thought AnBryce was “just” a scholarship program for first-generation students. Arriving on campus, he found out that AnBryce was more than a scholarship organization. It is a family dedicated to serving students who otherwise wouldn’t have support. It is a network of people who understand and help each other reach their goals.

Armando and Logan McDowell-Thomson ’20 learned how the idea permeates the greater AnBryce Foundation. When they spent ten weeks at Camp Dogwood in Virginia, the camp started by AnBryce founders, Ambassador Beatrix Wolfer and her husband Anthony. Campers are mostly from under-resourced areas around Washington, D.C. and come for one or two week sessions.

“The skill that impacted me the most was finding a way to connect with someone, no matter how trivial the interaction. I had to get to know the campers quickly, so I could better serve their needs.” Armando even received an award for his fellowship, the Brad Chotiner Spirit Award. He would love to see other AnBryce Scholars and Notre Dame students experience life at Camp Dogwood, “It will be very challenging, but extremely rewarding as well. You will experience physical and mental fortitude.”

Back on campus, Armando hopes to raise awareness and conversation about diversity. From his work this summer, he sees how important dialogues into solving problems and building relationships. “I feel that we are too inclined to say “we’re working on it” with improvement, I want to have those who come after me to never have to sit in a lecture hall and be one of the only minorities.”

Quite the socially-conscious scholar.

Jenna Kerro ’19 is quite the socially-conscious scholar. From Seattle, WA and majoring in Political Science, with a minor in Asian Studies, she is constantly seeking out opportunities to connect with others.

This summer she lived and worked at Hope Ministries in South Bend. “I thought I was more than equipped to serve the homeless population. I overestimated my readiness because I thought that I had some familiarity with poverty. However, I quickly came to realize that this work was going to challenge me emotionally, physically, and intellectually.” Jenna learned over the summer that it took more than empathy to make a difference in the community. When she could not relate to the difficulties people were facing, she could not help make them a “never-stop-being-courageous-to-them-transcend-their-pains.”

She continued to volunteer at Hope and arranged for her dorm-mates to serve, and organized an army-vaude-show this month. Not only does she reach out to others in her dorm and in the greater South Bend community, she also builds community within AnBryce. “When I first met my cohort, I thought that these people with the same background as me could always go to Notre Dame. It was difficult.”

A close friend with her cohort, she is the only AnBryce scholar in her major, so she also has the professional resource of older scholars, faculty mentors, speakers and our involved donors. “They have done and are leading incredible life endeavors that I know I can learn from them and network with them.”

To others interested in service, Jenna shares, “I recommend to go full out. That was the attitude of a service. The idea that you know you’re going to be challenging you. You should not be scared to be a heart that are not familiar with or out of your comfort zone. I think think that you can be a positive in the area that you would rather not go, where your service is most needed.”

Making friends and making a difference in the lives of others’ joining AnBryce.

This summer found Shamar Cousin ‘21 coaching 6th graders in AAU basketball. He is nothing if not humble about the experience. “The role model aspect of being around so many adolescents was what made coaching a struggle at times. I had to be the leader of the Philadelphia Bulldogs as well as the coach. Shamar felt a mentorship burden of being the first role-model the players had had. He did not want to disappoint them. “The majority of my players are from minority Philadelphia, they play so that they can make it out of the hood.” I wanted to show that you can become successful through academics, and that basketball or other sports are not the only route to computer poverty.”

A prime example of using academics to land a spot at a top university, he is also very honest about his first impressions of AnBryce. “My initial reaction was one of annoyance—I was not too happy about having to leave for school early.” This is something shared by many first year students when they hear AnBryce has an 8-day orientation. Orientation includes visits to the library and learning resource center and meetings with the writing and rhetoric tutor. First Year Studies and Athletics. Shamar did not make the appearance during their time at Notre Dame. Shamar is quick, though, follow up that assessment, “Coming here has honestly been the highlight of my Notre Dame experiences.”

Shamar realized the other perk of being on campus early. “One of my biggest fears about coming to ND was no longer having my friend group from back home and the lack of friends after that. Being a part of AnBryce gifted me with seven new friends upon arrival and even more friends after meeting AnBryce Scholars from previous cohorts.”

Shamar looks forward to seeing this cohort grow and verify in the next four years. AnBryce also plans to have him do outreach to next year’s first student to share how awesome it looks at
The 2017 AnBryce Forum: November 6-8

Navigating the Margins: Diversity, Inclusion and Access at the University of the 21st Century

The biennial AnBryce Forum will once again encourage conversation and debate on the campus of the University of Notre Dame this fall. Since 2013, the AnBryce program has supported first-generation, low-income students whose high school experiences, personal fortitude, and drive in the face of economic hardships and adversity indicate their potential leadership on a larger stage. The Forum is an outgrowth of the mission and values of the AnBryce Scholars Initiative. We often talk about our mission as one that is meant to foster the whole person as he/she goes on this journey and that includes strategic opposition to stereotypes, social experiences of Norte Dame in a range of environments (like residence halls and social events); and a discussion of identity by race, class and working-class Notre Dame faculty who have discussed their own experiences of marginality and working-class Notre Dame students who have discussed their own experiences of marginality.

Unique Challenges Faced by First-Generation Students

The first AnBryce Forum, Class, College and the Origins of Separation and Inclusion, Thinking About Belonging and the Social Politics of Separation and Inclusion, was held in 2015. The second AnBryce Forum, Class, College and the Unique Challenges Faced by First-Generation Students, will be held in 2017. The excitement among students and other leading institutions like Stanford and Georgetown talk about first year/first year into college-life. Students will come together to discuss what it means for the university to foster integration and inclusion in all of the ways that have been articulated and the technical efforts.

We created the AnBryce Forum as a continuation of the AnBryce Scholars Initiative, to inform and to spark discussion and debate, but to provide a space that brings together students and faculty.

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