Graduate Prize Fellowships

When President Amy Gutmann proposed during her inaugural address an increase in financial aid to help move Penn “from excellence to eminence,” members of the Board of Trustees rose to the challenge. Their enthusiastic response, led by George A. Weiss, W’65, resulted in $1.5 million to establish 15 fellowships for graduate students in the humanities and social sciences.

Gutmann said she was “thrilled and honored by the trustees’ remarkable response to this new initiative in graduate student aid, which is of critical importance to Penn.” Their support advances the University’s goal of making a Penn education more accessible, a key strategy in Gutmann’s Penn Compact.

These competitive fellowships will supplement the standard graduate stipend of $17,500, affording students the financial freedom to continue research throughout the summer. Associate dean for graduate studies Jack Nagel says they “will help attract to Penn a growing share of the most superb candidates for admission to doctoral programs in the humanities and social sciences.”

Contributors include trustees Robert S. Blank, Esq., L’65; Christopher H. Browne, C’69; James D. Dunning Jr., W’70; Andrew R. Heyer, W’79, WG’79; William L. Mack, W’61; David S. Pottruck, C’70, WG’72; David M. Silfen, C’66; J. Peter Skirkanich, W’65; Michael L. Tarnopol, W’58; George A. Weiss, W’65, and Paul C. Williams, W’67, as well as emeritus trustees Robert A. Fox, C’52; Robert P. Levy, C’52; A. Bruce Mainwaring, C’47, and Paul F. Miller Jr., W’50, Hon’81.

PARTNERS Contemporary pARTners

Philosopher Sir Francis Bacon once said, “Houses are built to live in, not to look on.” Apparently Dallas investor and contemporary art collector Howard Rachofsky, W’66, disagrees. His Richard Meier-designed residence serves as a private art gallery that’s been featured in the New York Times, Architecture and Architectural Digest. In February, Rachofsky hosted students in the undergraduate course Issues in Contemporary Art and the Art of Curating for a private tour of the award-winning house.

Taught by Karen Beckman, the Elliot and Roslyn Jaffe Assistant Professor of Film Studies, and colleagues from the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), this two-semester seminar engages students with issues in contemporary art and film, and provides them with curatorial experience as they prepare to exhibit their own show.

During their tour, students viewed Rachofsky’s contemporary art collection, which includes works by Mark Rothko, Andy Warhol and Robert Irwin. The students later talked with Rachofsky about his experience as a collector, which he says “happened by accident, not by design.”

Beckman says Rachofsky taught them “not to be intimidated by art.”

Rachofsky has long opened the house to educational groups and nonprofits, attracting nearly 7,500 visitors annually. The art collector-philanthropist believes viewing art in a residence “adds a touch of reality that you don’t get on a wall in a public space.” To ensure that future generations can share this experience, Rachofsky donated his house and collection to the Dallas Museum of Art.

Beckman says the trip was especially significant because it allowed students to experience the culture of art in Texas, which sharply contrasts to sites they visited in New York and Washington, D.C. She continues, “I hope this taught them that art happens outside New York City and all over the country.” Adds Rachofsky, “Many would be surprised by Texas’s burgeoning contemporary and classical art scene.”

—BROOKE ERIN DUFFY


Students view Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen’s Monument to the Last Horse at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas. (Oldenburg’s sculpture, Split Button, sits in front of Van Pelt Library.)
Our Deepest Thanks

We are grateful to these recent donors of $1 million or more:

Edward W. Kane, C’71, and Martha J. Wallace for the Edward W. Kane Professorship; The estate of Peggy Lancaster, CW’44, for the Peggy Lancaster Endowed Scholarship; Parents Cathy and Marc Lasry for the Lasry Family Endowed Professorship in Race Relations; Karen Bress Rose, CW’67, Ged’68, and Gary D. Rose, C’67, to help renovate Bennett Hall and endow a fellowship for the Master of Science in Education in Jewish Education program; The John Templeton Foundation for the Positive Psychology Center.

Phantastic Generosity

When Sam Preston announced his resignation as dean last year, current and former members of the School’s Board of Overseers decided to recognize his contributions by supporting areas that had been among his highest priorities. The board, made up of alumni, parents and friends who advise the dean, knew of his commitment to faculty recruitment and retention, and graduate education. The overseers gave $667,000 to establish in Preston’s name an endowed term chair in the social sciences and four prize fellowships for social-science graduate students. The board also presented Preston, a lifelong sports fan and athlete, and his wife, Winnie Preston, with a trip to the Philadelphia Phillies Phantasy Camp in Florida, where he practiced with and played baseball against former Phillies. “While the playing was fun,” he wrote, “the greatest part was the camaraderie among teammates and players. It was truly a wonderful experience, and I am incredibly grateful to the overseers for making it happen.” Preston, now on sabbatical, will return to teaching and research in the sociology department and Population Studies Center this fall.