Honors student and Foundation Fellow Matthew (“Matt”) Sellers has been awarded a 2012 Marshall Scholarship to pursue graduate studies in the United Kingdom. He was one of 36 recipients in the nation.

Matt, who is from Perry, GA, will graduate from UGA in May with a bachelor’s degree in English and a minor in history. He plans to pursue a master’s program in modern literature followed by a doctoral program in English language and literature, both at Oxford University.

“The Marshall Scholarship furthers America’s bond with its oldest and most faithful ally, Great Britain, while also advancing UGA’s goal of internationalizing the student experience,” said UGA President Michael F. Adams. “It is a mark of quality that Matt is the fifth UGA Honors student to earn this opportunity in the past several years. I am very proud of him, and I know that he will represent UGA well.”


While at UGA, Matt has taken advantage of research, internship, and travel opportunities to prepare for a teaching and research career in academia. He became interested in studying literature after completing a research project as a 2009 Summer Fellow through UGA’s Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO). Matt’s summer project eventually evolved into his Honors thesis, which he presented at the 2011 CURO Symposium at UGA.

“I am very pleased that Matt has earned this level of recognition of his talents and promise,” said David S. Williams, Associate Provost and Director of UGA’s Honors Program, who serves as the UGA faculty representative for the Marshall Scholarship. “He is one of the most erudite students I have ever met. More importantly, his past work and his level of dedication strongly suggest that he is destined to be a force for positive change in society.”

— Dr. David S. Williams, Associate Provost and Director
JoyEllen Freeman, a third-year Honors student and Foundation Fellow majoring in English and English education, is fascinated by history, documentaries, and books. In May 2011, she participated in a 10-day journey that allowed 40 students to travel from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans to recreate the 1961 Freedom Ride of the American Civil Rights Movement. During the trip, hosted by the American Experience and the Public Broadcasting Service, students stopped at 20 Southern cities. “It was seeing, literally riding with, talking to, and eating with my research,” JoyEllen said. “I spent time with the people who were the original Freedom Riders involved in protests and sit-ins.”

JoyEllen began her research as a CURO Honors Scholar under English associate professor Barbara McCaskill, working with the University’s Civil Rights Digital Library. Named a CURO Summer Research Fellow in 2010, JoyEllen researched the life and music of Blind Tom, and then presented the research titled, “The Message behind the Music: Blind Tom’s Response to Nineteenth-Century Views on Race,” at the 2011 CURO Symposium and the 2010 Constructing Identity Conference at Macon State College. Now she’s pouring through documents about slavery, interviewing civil rights activists, and focusing on archival film about the Black Power movement in Philadelphia in the 1960s. She plans to extend her research as she writes an Honors thesis about the topic.

JoyEllen, who was awarded a mid-term Foundation Fellowship in 2011, attended the UGA en Buenos Aires program during the summer, where she expanded her ideas about culture through a homestay and language immersion in Argentina.

“I had the wrong impression of what it would be like, and it surprised me to learn that many mannerisms were very European,” she said. “I was also looking at their world through American glasses, so it was great to shed that and not come into an experience with expectations about what it should be like.”

She also observed new notions of race and ethnicity.”I had been preoccupied with North America and U.S. race issues and didn’t think about the fact that South America and Central America deal with the same issues,” she said. “It’s not unique to one location, and we all have racial issues to work through.”

JoyEllen hopes to teach after graduation. She also aims to work in the nonprofit sector related to education and research. Her dream job is with the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit civil rights organization that tracks and exposes the activities of hate groups. Founded by civil rights lawyers in 1971, the group offers a Teaching Tolerance program, which produces and distributes films, books, and lesson plans that promote tolerance in schools.

“I want to work for a group that is committed to social justice, teaching tolerance, and focusing on diversity,” JoyEllen said. “This group brings together tolerance and teaching in a powerful way.”
Five second-year Honors Program students have been named mid-term Foundation Fellows. Yuliya Bila is from Canton, GA (originally Ukraine, which her family left when she was eight years old) and is majoring in Spanish, international affairs, and Russian. She wants to pursue a career in the foreign service. Osama Hashmi is from Augusta, GA and is majoring in biology and working on a joint bachelor’s/master’s in public health. He seeks a career as a physician policymaker. Marianne Ligon from Clemson, SC, is majoring in cellular biology and will pursue a joint MD/PhD for a career as a physician scientist within the field of immunology and infectious diseases. Matt Tyler is from Atlanta, GA and is majoring in political science with a joint bachelor’s/master’s in public administration. He intends to pursue a career within environmental education policy. Cameron Zahedi, from Milton, GA, is majoring in economics, mathematics, and physics, and intends to pursue a career as a scientist, educator, and policymaker.

The Search for Salamanders Continues

Todd Pierson, a third-year Foundation Fellow and ecology major from Zionsville, IN, was recently awarded a National Geographic Young Explorers Grant. He will use the grant to fund a trip to China in the summer to investigate an obscure salamander found on a Tibetan plateau.

“The type of salamander that I am studying is one of the most interesting and largest amphibians in the world, growing to two meters in length,” Todd said. “They are threatened by habitat loss and are popular to eat in China, so they are heavily farmed and intermixed during breeding. They are hard to find. There’s one record of it in a museum in China, and we don’t know much about it, but we’re guessing that by the way the mountains formed around its habitat, it has been separated from other species. It could be distinctly different and maybe even a new species,” Todd explained.

Todd, a 2011 Udall Scholar, has studied salamanders throughout the U.S. and with herpetologists in Guatemala, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Todd started conducting amphibian research as a first-year student and has worked with Dr. John Maerz in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources as well as Dr. John Pickering in the Odum School of Ecology.

Newest Mid-Term Foundation Fellows

L-R: Osama Hashmi, Cameron Zahedi, and Marianne Ligon. Yuliya Bila is currently studying in Spain and Matt Tyler is currently studying in England.
Scholarships, Internships, and Honors

Somehwere along the Trans-Siberian Railway, Chad Peltier realized he had achieved his childhood dream of becoming an explorer. As a 2010 recipient of the Honors International Scholarship, Chad traveled the railroad and conducted interviews with professors in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Beijing about the long-term potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a cooperative agreement among China, Mongolia, and Russia. “I wanted an insider’s view of what the policymakers and academics in these countries thought about the idea,” said Chad, a fourth-year international affairs student. “I got a feel for it, but not in the ways I anticipated. The experience of travel, the adventure, and the railroad itself were the most informative aspects of the trip.”

The study-abroad experience contributed another aspect to Chad’s growing fascination with cooperative arrangements and foreign policy. During his first year on campus, Chad helped create Georgia Grand Strategy, a collaborative student research group. He co-authored papers titled “Element, Principles, and Issues: A New Framework for Grand Strategy Analysis” and “A New Model for Grand Strategy Analysis and Its Application to the Obama Administration.” As an undergraduate research fellow in UGA’s Center for the Study of Global Issues, Chad hosted an undergraduate forum that focused on perspectives about Iran’s nuclear program. He also presented at the 2011 CURO Symposium.

As a 2011 Honors in Washington intern, Chad acted as a research assistant to Nuno Monteiro, an assistant professor of political science at Yale University, by conducting literature reviews on Chinese military modernization and providing research for upcoming articles in Foreign Affairs. He was also a research intern for the National Defense University’s Institute for National Strategic Studies. The internship encouraged his goals to pursue a doctoral program in political science. Chad’s recent D.C. experience and graduate-level classes in foreign policy and international relations have also solidified his desire to become a professor.

“In high school, I wasn’t the most engaged student until I had a particular teacher who made me care about learning because it became interesting,” Chad said. “I’ve had three amazing teachers like that in my life. If I could be that kind of teacher, I hope I could inspire students to do great things.”

Chad Peltier is a fourth-year student from Cumming, GA majoring in international affairs.
I chose to attend UGA because...

I wanted a first-class academic program, a challenging curriculum, and the consistent company of smart and engaging people. I also wanted to be in a large university setting that offered a wide range of college experiences and a broad student population. Not many schools have that. UGA and the Honors Program made for an unbeatable combination.

—Patrick Fitzmaurice ’12
BBA/MA in Economics

You can read more about Patrick’s experience at UGA at:
www.uga.edu/amazing/profile/fitzmaurice-patrick
Nine first-year Honors students have been selected as CURO Honors Scholars. They joined a group of 13 returning second-year undergraduate researchers. “The CURO Honors Scholarship, formerly the CURO Apprenticeship, allows students to participate in original research from their earliest days on campus,” said Dr. David S. Williams. “CURO Honors Scholars thrive in a small community complete with financial support, faculty mentoring, and guidance in developing writing and presentation skills.”

During their first semester in the program, undergraduates meet with faculty members whose research may interest them in order to select a research mentor. They then work with these faculty members 10-12 hours a week on year-long projects in a variety of disciplines ranging from physics and astronomy to art and international affairs. The students also attend a weekly seminar that focuses on research theories and practices. Peer support and student-led group discussions are also part of this hands-on approach to learning.

Second-year student Alexis Garcia of Norcross said her experience in the program has impacted her tremendously and in ways I never foresaw,” said Garcia. “I started off at UGA wishing to pursue an undergraduate degree in business. After completing a few weeks of research with Dr. Johnson, I quickly changed my major to international affairs. I now wish to pursue a career in international law.”

2011 CURO Honors Scholars

First-year students:

- Maria Cox
- Hope Foskey
- Tuan Nguyen
- Babajide Oluwadare
- Elliot Outland
- Colby Ruiz
- Aveek Sarker
- Cole Skinner
- Courtni Young
- Peachtree City, GA
- Matthews, NC
- Douglasville, GA
- Stone Mountain, GA
- Alpharetta, GA
- Valdosta, GA
- Duluth, GA
- Savannah, GA
- Alpharetta, GA

Second-year students:

- Dervin Cunningham
- Alexis Garcia
- Anna Beth Havenar
- Sam Hempel
- Elena James
- Cody Knapp
- Marianne Ligon
- Katie Manrodt
- Brittany McGrue
- Sarah Mitchell
- Julian Rios
- Connor Sweetnam
- Cameron Zahedi
- Albany, GA
- Duluth, GA
- Statesboro, GA
- Atlanta, GA
- Suwanee, GA
- Thomasville, GA
- Clemson, SC
- Statesboro, GA
- Alpharetta, GA
- Tucker, GA
- Duluth, GA
- Suwanee, GA
- Milton, GA
2012 CURO SYMPOSIUM
April 2, 2012, Classic Center
Athens, Georgia

Concurrent Oral Sessions
(students will give talks on their research)
10:10 a.m. – 3:20 p.m.
Athena Room A–J

Welcome and Keynote Address
Dr. Charles Bullock
Professor, School of Public and International Affairs
“A Prospective Look at the 2012 Elections”
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Ballroom E

Poster Session and Reception
(students will present their research in poster format)
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Grand Hall South

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Because of CURO, Kishore Vedala has upgraded from a high school science project studying raw oysters to researching intricate protein binding at the Complex Carbohydrate Research Center (CCRC) with graduate students and renowned faculty.

“CURO was definitely a reason I decided to come to UGA,” Kishore said. “I knew UGA had a great undergraduate research program and when I came here during the Foundation Fellowship Interview Weekend and got to hear current students and professors speak about the program. I knew this kind of opportunity was rare.”

Kishore, a second-year student from Alpharetta, GA, is majoring in economics and biochemistry and is participating in research relating to congenital muscular dystrophy at the CCRC under the guidance of Dr. Carl Bergmann and Dr. Lance Wells. Various forms of congenital muscular dystrophy, including Walker-Warburg syndrome, muscle-eye-brain disease, and Fukuyama CMD, are caused by a defect in protein binding. The defect is thought to be a result of a mutation in a specific molecule, phosphorylated o-mannose glycan, which is required for the protein binding. Unfortunately, there is little knowledge about the structure of these molecules.

That is where Kishore and other researchers at the CCRC come in. Kishore has been harvesting and manipulating proteins in order to recreate the binding process in hopes of determining the exact structure of the glycan.

“Hopefully, determining the structure of the glycan will be achieved by the end of this study and we will be one step closer to mitigating the effects of congenital muscular dystrophy,” he said. “The reason I chose to become a biochemistry major is because I am interested in how and why things in the body work the way they do. This curiosity led me to ask questions in order to understand some of the lab processes. My advisors have been very helpful in answering these questions and helping me learn proper lab techniques.”

After graduating in 2014, Kishore hopes to continue on this path of discovery through an MD/PhD or MD/MBA program.