



RAINIER
SCHOLARS



Discovering the Power of Internships

Taking a Stand for Social Justice

The words incarceration and restorative justice flow easily in conversation from Cheyenne Brashear, a Rainier Scholar and senior at The Bush School. As a young person, Cheyenne has a deeper understanding of the juvenile justice system than most people her age. Her electric energy for this topic is palpable. It seems this change-maker and activist has found her purpose.



“I first learned about the justice system and ways to productively resolve social conflict in a youth mediation training and then through a summer internship. It had a big impact on me.” said Cheyenne. “I loved learning skills that helped to cut directly through a problem to identify better solutions.”

Knowing what a critical step an internship can be, Rainier Scholars offers both high school and college students the chance to explore future career opportunities, build their resumes, network with professionals and discover their strengths in a workplace setting. Over the past eight years, Rainier Scholars has facilitated more than 400 internships in a wide range of job sectors and has created partnerships with some of the leading employers across the region. For students like Cheyenne, these internships often solidify a passion. “I love the practice of restorative justice and the work that is being done at the local government level. I believe this is my true calling.”

During her internship with The Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution, under the guidance of Polly Davis, Cheyenne took on the role of a teen facilitator in a program providing alternatives to youth incarceration or punitive sentencing. The objective? Getting youth and adult mediators talking with youth offenders to create connection and community and find ways to move forward without jail time.

“I learned what the right questions are when dealing with people who are emotionally vulnerable. Then, through a place of understanding, we can begin conversations and encourage that person to be in a position of problem solving.”

Viché Thomas, her RS academic counselor of two years, confirms that Cheyenne is a natural leader and activist. “Cheyenne carries her passion about race and equity with her in everything she does. She is focused on addressing inequalities – at school, on the sports field and throughout Seattle. Anyone who meets Cheyenne knows – if there is any sign of injustice, she will speak to it without hesitation.”

As Cheyenne explains, “The system we have serves to oppress and separate – but social justice conversations have a way of bringing people together for better outcomes.”

What’s next for Cheyenne? She will facilitate a workshop on restorative justice at one of the next Leadership Retreats for high school seniors at Rainier Scholars. And applying to highly selective colleges across the nation. Stepping up into roles where she is truly making a difference as a youth leader, Cheyenne offers a clear example of how transformative it can be to match a scholar’s passion with the real-world, hands-on experience of an internship.

Windows of Opportunity

With a 1,000 watt smile and an easygoing manner, Jalen Wright puts almost anyone at ease. Underneath his warm exterior is a hard-working, dedicated scholar who is rising quickly both as a sophomore at Morehouse College and through internships at one of the nation’s top tech companies – Microsoft Corporation.

During his senior year at Lakeside School, Jalen landed a stellar internship at Microsoft with their University Recruiting team. This was the start of a transformative three-year journey within one company. Jalen made such a meaningful impression his first summer that he was awarded a scholarship, granted a second internship and was recently invited to return for a third summer.



“He’s smart, has a strong work ethic and really knows how to connect with people,” shared Susie Wu, Director of Leadership Development and who also manages the organization’s high school internship program. “Jalen sees the big picture. He has a real talent for navigating from the school environment to the workplace – two different worlds.”

“I learned a lot while on the job at Microsoft this year,” said Jalen. “I was part of the Explore Microsoft intern program where I served on the 3D printing team, working both as a program manager and developer. Although it was my first time coding in a professional environment, over 12 weeks I was able to learn hundreds of new things, and eventually designed a brand new website.”

Cover story continues next page

A newsletter
from Rainier
Scholars

Fall 2016



Rainier Scholars School Partnerships

Confident and Courageous

Making a transition to a new school can be challenging for middle school students, but Rainier Scholar Adriana Hernandez makes it look easy. Seamlessly adapting to her new learning community at Seattle Girls School (SGS), Adriana brings an important mix of experience and courageous confidence to this new academic setting.



“During the second week of school Adriana announced, ‘I want to step outside my comfort zone’ – and I was very impressed,” said Barbara Frailey, Assistant Head of School at SGS. “She decided to join the cross country team where she brings a thoughtful, dedication to every practice. She encourages her peers and continuously sets new goals for herself.”

“We are very fortunate to have incredible school partners like SGS,” said Dominique Daba, Director of Placement. “With these partnerships our students are presented with options that they might not have otherwise.”

Adriana’s experience reflects the ideal that Rainier Scholars strives to provide for students through its extensive school partnerships.

In total, RS teams up with 40+ middle and high schools around the region, both public and private, who offer a college preparatory curriculum. These partnerships are critical to our success, opening doors of opportunity for our scholars.

“Transitioning to a new school was actually easier than I thought,” said Adriana. “SGS is a very welcoming community. I thought that I wasn’t going to fit in, but my transition went really well. Starting over is a bit tough because it

feels awkward, but if you have an open mind and a positive attitude, it makes a big difference. Rainier Scholars also helped me get organized, giving me tips that are really paying off.”

Wendy Ewbank, her SGS advisor shares, “Adriana always shows up with a lot of enthusiasm and asks great questions. She does a terrific job of linking what we are learning to some of the ideas she’s seen in her Rainier Scholars classes...I also see her pushing herself to get to know new kids and is intentional about it.”

“We love working with Rainier Scholars,” continued Barbara. “With our two organizations working together there is a network of support. At our school – we talk about building a village around every girl – and Rainier Scholars serves an important role in that village.”

It’s only natural that a student like Adriana makes for a great school ambassador. She recently participated in a student-led ‘Voices for Votes’

rally and was the first speaker at the event. It is clear she is developing her voice and thriving.

“At our school – we talk about building a village around every girl – and Rainier Scholars serves an important role in that village.”

Cover story continued

Thomas Wilson, Internship and Networking Manager at Rainier Scholars, explains the value of our internship program for scholars like Jalen. “Talent is universal, but opportunity is not. This is especially true for our students who are

striving to build professional networks that could be new avenues for them.”

“I had such a great time on campus at Microsoft. I made sure to give it my best. I couldn’t be happier that they offered me a summer developer position,” Jalen said. He will start his third internship experience with Microsoft next summer,

but in the meantime he carries a heavy course load at Morehouse College studying Computer Science. His experience at Microsoft is a testament to an extraordinary scholar and is a window into his future where a lifetime of opportunities will undoubtedly unfold.



An Interview with Academic Director Sumiko Huff

Q&A: The Earlier Start Initiative

The Earlier Start initiative is a key component of Vision 2020, the strategic plan adopted in October 2015 to guide our organization’s growth over the next five years. Academic Director Sumiko Huff shares more on the thoughts behind this effort and how it will benefit our scholars and families.

Q. Can you tell us about the new Earlier Start initiative at Rainier Scholars?

Rainier Scholars was modeled after Prep for Prep in New York, which places students on college prep pathways in 7th grade and supports them through college graduation. In the beginning, it made sense to replicate their framework, as Prep for Prep had demonstrated a great deal of success with their design. Over the years, we have worked to adapt our program to meet the specific needs of students and families in our area. With local middle schools starting in 6th grade, this shift makes good sense.

The Earlier Start Initiative is an effort to accomplish three things: first, by starting the Academic Enrichment Phase one year earlier, we will place scholars on college prep pathways at the start of their 6th grade year, allowing them to transition into new schools and programs at the same time as their peers, as opposed to making multiple transitions during middle school. Second, this also allows our scholars to compete for financial aid spots in independent schools when the greatest number of dollars is available to new students. Finally, research tells us that providing support for students earlier in their school careers is more effective in ensuring their long-term success.

What’s the biggest change and what remains the same?

Q. We have spent 15 years developing curriculum and instruction designed to effectively prepare students to be powerful scholars in college prep settings. This has been really amazing work that has yielded tremendous results! Much of what we have learned will still be highly relevant, however, we now need to adapt it to be developmentally appropriate for 5th graders. How we ramp up and the materials we use will need to shift. Our commitment to excellence, high expectations, comprehensive support and focus on community, all hallmarks of our program, will definitely remain the same.

...providing support for students earlier in their school careers is more effective in ensuring their long-term success.



Q. What are you most excited about with this Earlier Start model?

This work is a huge undertaking and a remarkable opportunity. The shift to a one year earlier start allows us to examine all the pieces of the puzzle with fresh eyes. It requires that we ask hard questions, and challenges us to innovate on an entirely new level.

I love the creative and collaborative aspects of the work. I think I’m most excited to be able to consider how we can reshape our program to effectively empower students who face the greatest barriers to achieving their goals of college graduation. And of course, I’m excited to welcome our first cohort of rising 5th graders to the Rainier Scholars family next summer!

#GoodsforGrads

Turn your gently used books, clothing or household items into support for scholars!

Value Village contributes funds to Rainier Scholars for every pound you donate. Visit our website for locations and how to participate. Thank you!

www.rainierscholars.org/partnership_giving.html





Patricia Flores-Perez 1994–2016

Remembering a Scholar, Honoring a Legacy

“There are some who bring a light so great into this world that even after they are gone, the light remains.”

The Rainier Scholars community experienced a tremendous loss this summer that continues to fill our hearts with sadness. Cohort IV scholar and recent Columbia University graduate Patricia Flores-Perez drowned in a scuba diving accident on August 28, 2016.

Patricia was a shining example of excellence and embraced every opportunity that came her way. Most recently she attended our luncheon in April, one of a dozen graduates representing her cohort from colleges around the country. Pati earned a dual degree in Mathematics and Economics and had just launched her professional career with Liberty Mutual. She was thrilled to be back in Seattle near her family and friends. As heartbreaking as this loss was to the Rainier Scholars community, it was devastating to Pati’s close-knit and beloved family.

One of Pati’s best friends in Cohort IV, Duyen Tat, described her family relationship eloquently. “It was apparent to anyone who met her that she was deeply motivated by her love for her family. To Pati, her family was the driving force behind everything she did. They were her motivation. They were her world.”



Pati joined Rainier Scholars in the summer of 2005. She reflected often on the life-changing nature of her time in the program.

After completing the Academic Enrichment Phase, Pati earned placement at Lake Washington Girls Middle School, Bishop Blanchet High School and then went on to attend Columbia University.

“I’d like to think I witnessed the moment Pati got accepted to Columbia,” Duyen recently shared. “Rainier Scholars had invited a Columbia recruiter to review our essays and applications, and Pati dazzled the recruiter in that small conference room in the 2100 Building. I believe that was the moment the recruiter got to see firsthand what I saw in my best friend every day: grit, determination and passion. We talked a lot about our lofty dreams and goals for the future.”

My skydiving, kickboxing, salsa dancing, scuba diving friend was full of courage. Pati never let her circumstances define her or limit her possibilities.

Pati has always embodied what it means to be a Rainier Scholar. She would seek out challenge as well as opportunity. Pati was fearless in her pursuit of knowledge. She had the ability to rise with high expectations. Pati knew the meaning of perseverance and was determined to defy the odds. She was optimistic and had a smile that would light up the room. Pati had the ability to always maintain a hopeful spirit.

Most of all Pati had courage. She was willing to step outside of her comfort zone. As Duyen says “My skydiving, kickboxing, salsa dancing, scuba diving friend was full of courage. Pati never let her circumstances define her or limit her possibilities.”

“When I first met Pati at age 10,” Duyen reflected, “I never fathomed what she would mean to me. She has been by my side every step of this long and winding journey, my voice of reason through thick and thin. As I attempt to make sense of my world without her, I can only be comforted by the fact that I had the singular opportunity to grow up with Patricia Flores-Perez. You were brimming with boundless hopes and dreams, Pati. While I selfishly weep for losing my other half, I also grieve for the world that never got the chance to know the force that you were.”

We welcome gifts made in Patricia’s honor.





Executive Director's Perspective

A Renewed Commitment

As the seasons transition ever so quickly here in Seattle, so too am I transitioning back to work following an extraordinary summer sabbatical which took my family through many of our nation's most stunning National Parks. As we hiked, biked, rafted and backpacked in all corners of this country, I had extensive time and space to ruminate on the power and impact of Rainier Scholars. While the time away was as rejuvenating as I had anticipated, it was events here at home, rather than any particular aspect of the trip, which shaped my reflections and deepened my commitment to our mission and work.



The second tragedy, the one program milestone I always dreaded reaching, was the drowning death of Cohort IV scholar and recent Columbia University graduate, Patricia Flores-Perez. In nearly 16 years, it is our first death of

a student and one which was felt intensely by every member of the extended Rainier Scholars community.

In gathering with grieving families, friends and Rainier Scholars cohort mates, I was struck in the deepest way by what Joe & Patricia's involvement in Rainier Scholars

had meant to them. For Joe, the pride in his daughter's college degree attainment was so profound that he had a sweater handmade for the occasion, with a Rainier Scholars emblem

sewn on the breast pocket. For Patricia, her family's eulogy words were simple and pure: Rainier Scholars was the program that enabled their beloved daughter and sister to pursue her dreams and fulfill her potential to the fullest.

In the midst of such sadness, the reality that the Rainier Scholars community was of such significant meaning to each of these families and to all of us gathered together was a testament to the impact and importance of our work. For me, it sparked a renewed and intensified commitment to

ensure that more fathers (and mothers) in our community will get to experience the pride in their child's achievements so beautifully personified by Joe, and that future Patricias who are willing to work as hard as she did, will have unlimited access to exceptional educational and

leadership development opportunities. I thank you all for your role in helping make this possible.

As I resume my daily role with an even greater sense of purpose, I am immensely grateful to the entire staff for their

support, but in particular, to the steadying interim leadership of our Associate Executive Director, Jeanne Ting Chowning. Serving as the ED in my absence, Jeanne provided remarkable guidance and stewardship of the organization, making it doubly hard to say farewell to her this month as she departs to lead the Science Education Program at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. In her nearly three years here, Jeanne's impact is evident in our program, staff, and technology infrastructure. She made us a stronger community and positioned us well for the important strategic work that lies ahead.

Even after a season marked by so much loss, I feel comforted and confident knowing that a vigilant commitment to mission and attainment of results for our scholars will propel our team forward with strength and unity in the coming year.

Sarah Smith

Sarah Smith, Executive Director

...our scholars will propel our team forward with strength and unity in the coming year.



During my sabbatical, two untimely and unexpected deaths shocked the Rainier Scholars community. One was Joseph Bland, beloved father of Jomeka, a Cohort II scholar and

Agnes Scott alumna. Joe was a man who supported not only our work, through the investment and placement of trust in us with his very own daughter, but also the educational journey of thousands of students at Garfield High School, serving for over 25 years as a locker room attendant and unofficial counselor to all.



RAINIER SCHOLARS

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Meet Our Staff

Mental Health Clinician

Roy Fisher

“I want to make sure that our students understand what it means to be a highly capable student of color. To push back against the messages out there that tell them they don’t matter...I want to make sure their self-worth is protected.”

Roy Fisher brings extensive experience to Rainier Scholars as our new mental health clinician. With nearly a decade of counseling service for youth and families in the Seattle area, he is interested in how racial differences impact access, resources and opportunities for students. Rainier Scholars works hard to provide a network of support for our students. The mental health team is available for a myriad of issues that may arise for scholars and families that make it difficult for scholars to follow through on their commitments.

“I want to help them manage the pressures and challenges of being a student of color in the educational system – especially important in private and independent schools where there won’t be many kids who look like them.”

Roy earned his MA in Marriage and Family Therapy from Pacific Lutheran University and BA in Psychology from University of California, Berkeley.



Director of Placement

Dominique Daba

“I hope to give families all the tools, information and support they need to allow them to feel empowered to make choices about their child’s education.”

In her role as Director of Placement, Dominique works with up to 70 families per year to place students into advanced placement opportunities in 7th and 9th grades. It is a key step on our scholars’ journey to college.

“My job is to work with families on a case-by-case basis and give them attention and information tailored to their needs and experiences. In placing students in school settings, there are no right or wrong answers. My goal is to help families find the ‘highest rung, best fit’ – meaning the most challenging environment that best fits their student.”

With 40+ school placement partners across the region, Dominique has a tall order to fill.

What’s her favorite part of this work? “I love seeing our students in class and getting to know them as individuals. It’s a pleasure to see them light up when they get into the school of their choice.”

Dominique earned her BA in Literatures and Cultures in English from Brown University.



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SAVE THE DATE!

Rainier Scholars Annual Luncheon

Tuesday, April 25, 2017 | 12–1:30 p.m.

Sheraton Seattle | Grand Ballroom