

THE RUTH & HAROLD NEWMAN OFFICE OF PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS



Devashish Basnet ('22), Rhodes Scholar, 2022

Annual Report 2021-22

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hunter College is proud to report on the continued achievements of the Ruth & Harold Newman Office of Prestigious Scholarships & Fellowships (“the Newman Office”), established by the generous gift of Ruth and Harold Newman in 2016. Over the past six years, the Newman Office has connected an ever-larger number of Hunter’s talented, motivated, and deserving students with many of the nation’s leading fellowships. Since its founding the average annual number of Hunter student fellowship winners has more than doubled over the average number of awardees each year dating back to the late 1990s.

With the support of the Newman Office’s outreach and encouragement – including one-on-one advising, information sessions, panels on student intellectual development, practice interviews, and writing workshops, Hunter students have won the Rhodes, Marshall, Luce, Goldwater and Schwarzman Scholarships, multiple times. 2021-22 was a historic year: Hunter produced its second Rhodes Scholar in its history, was a “Fulbright Top Producer” for the 14th time in 16 years, had its first Soros winner in 8 years and had 3 Goldwater Scholars, the most ever by Hunter students in one year. Moreover, Hunter students won 66* prestigious scholarships this year, which represents a 30% increase over the previous record, 51 fellowships, in 2018.



*This total (66) does not include the 9 “AANAPISI” scholar winners, whom we are including on our rolls for the first time this year. This scholarship is just a few years old and is overseen by an office at Hunter which attends specifically to the needs of our Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students.

NEWMAN OFFICE OVERVIEW:

HISTORY, LEADERSHIP, AND RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Each year since the Newman Office was established, our students have surpassed the accomplishments of Hunter applicants in previous years, either by being the first student to win a particular fellowship (Rhodes, Marshall, Schwarzman) or by winning multiple awards of the same scholarship (Goldwater, Schwarzman, Watson). Remarkably, a Hunter student has been a winner or finalist for the Marshall or the Rhodes Scholarship *every year* since the Newman Office was founded. In fact, with two Rhodes Scholarship winners in the past five years, Hunter ranks *third* after Yale and Harvard in the number of winners for the district in which our students compete. In each year since this office was founded the number of student applicants and winners who are students of color, first-generation college students, students from immigrant families, and students with high-financial need has increased. Moreover, we have also experienced a shift in the ratio of competitive candidates from our honors programs to the population of students who enter Hunter without having been admitted through any honors program. In recognition of Hunter's success in producing student winners from historically underrepresented groups, this year the Luce Foundation asked me to serve with two other nationally-prominent educators to help the Luce Scholarship program rethink and revise its admissions practices for the future.

Please see our website under "Recipients" to view the full list of winners in 2021-22.
<https://s29068.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/winners-2021-22--fnl.pdf>

NEWMAN OFFICE OPERATIONS

Philosophy

We believe that every student who applies for a scholarship—*whether or not they win*—should have learned five important things about themselves: 1) what they care about; 2) what they are good at and what good they can do in the world; 3) what their goals are in the short, mid, and long range; 4) how the different parts of their lives connect; and 5) how to tell their story. Our students learn the importance of leadership and engagement in all its forms; the value of service to their communities; the utility of experiential learning in labs, internships, jobs, and extracurricular activities; and the importance of becoming global citizens through participation in a study abroad experience.

Students also learn that they must expect to fail many times before they succeed and that the key to success in applying for fellowships is practice, reflection, and re-application. They are also taught that to be successful during college as well as afterward, they must cultivate mentors. Toward this end, they learn how to get to know faculty who can explore with them the excitement and possibilities of their disciplines and research. Ultimately, the goal of the Newman Office is to meet each student at their “starting line” and help them go as far as they can.

Student Identification

Expanding outreach to Hunter’s diverse student body has been fundamental to the Newman Office’s growing success. This is because we maintain a list of hundreds of students to approach based on recommendations from Hunter faculty, advisors, records of student GPAs, workshop participants, and past scholarship winners. To reach even more widely into the broad Hunter community, the Newman Office has significantly increased the number of open group information sessions that are held each year. We have also worked hard to inform and support students applying for internal fellowships and honors programs at Hunter, which serve as “building blocks” for national fellowships during their final years at Hunter and afterward.

The Office also promotes its activities through channels noticeable to everyone on campus. For example, before the pandemic, at staffed information tables outside the cafeteria, students could sign up for individual appointments at the Office. This practice was surpassed, however, through direct solicitation of students through Hunter’s new advising interface, “Navigate,” which allows the Office to identify likely candidates for specific scholarships and invite them to information sessions or individual appointments. Recent fellowship accomplishments, with photos of the winners, are prominently displayed on campus flatscreens, along with the contact information for the Newman Office. These strategies have increased the numbers and types of students who pursue scholarships at Hunter and have involved students outside the usual realm of those already participating in Honors programs.

Developing Successful Applicants

The Newman Office takes a two-pronged approach to fellowship development, holding both individual advising sessions, and group activities including information sessions, the Personal Statement Writing Workshop (held twice a year), and events

featuring capstone or thesis presentations by students in the Honors Scholars Cohorts, which are jointly hosted with their directors.

In the one-on-one meetings, students explore which fellowships they are best suited for and at what point in their undergraduate careers they should be prepared to apply for them. They learn the essential attributes of successful applicants – such as demonstrating intellectual curiosity, creating and maintaining mentors, and gaining experience through research, jobs, or volunteering – and what aspiring applicants need to demonstrate in their applications in order to be successful. Students are encouraged to seek out leadership experiences and to practice applying for fellowships, activities that will stand them in good stead for successful applications in the future.

Advising

One-on-one advising is particularly necessary for pivoting the expectations and goals of Hunter’s uniquely diverse student body. As mentioned, many Hunter students are first-generation Americans who are focused on their roles as a source of support and betterment for their families. Students who seek advising at the Newman Office are usually already high academic achievers, strong writers, and excellent fellowship candidates. However, the perspective of first-generation or otherwise financially pressured undergraduates tends not to encompass an awareness of the breadth of possibilities available to them. Individual advising shows them that their talents and education may enable them to live “larger” lives than they had imagined. The Office also shows these students how the very difficulties of their circumstances make their biographies compelling to fellowship-granting bodies. Each year as more students become aware of the scholarship opportunities available to them the number of students we work with to review and revise their application essay drafts increases. This year we worked intensively with 140 students helping them to revise multiple drafts of multiple applications essays.

Introductory Sessions, Workshops, Interview Preparation and Research Dinners

The Newman Office’s introductory information sessions are aimed at students who are new to the world of fellowships. These sessions explain why students should consider applying for various fellowship opportunities and explore both the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of applying. The extrinsic rewards of winning a fellowship are

clear—students become more competitive applicants for graduate and professional school and for jobs, they are more likely to win other fellowships, their scholarly work is more likely to be accepted for publication, and they are able to participate in an international community.

The intrinsic rewards are also meaningful. Through the fellowship application process, the Newman Office also conveys that students will discover and articulate their purpose and goals and understand and shape the narratives of their intellectual, social, and personal development in ways that will guide them and focus their ambitions, regardless of whether they win a particular fellowship. On a more practical level, attendees at this stage also learn the specific components of the application process and the kinds of fellowships that are available to them as they progress through Hunter.

Workshops

Twice each year, Margaret Sabin and I offer a week-long workshop (four consecutive days for five hours a day) to teach aspiring fellowship applicants how to write personal statements. The workshop is designed for students who have not previously written a personal statement, examining everything from grammar and writing style to what fellowship-granting agencies are looking for in successful candidates. Since the personal statement workshop was first offered in January of 2017, more than 200 students have taken it, and of these, 85% have won a fellowship after completing the workshop.



Margaret Sabin, co-teacher of Personal Statement Workshops

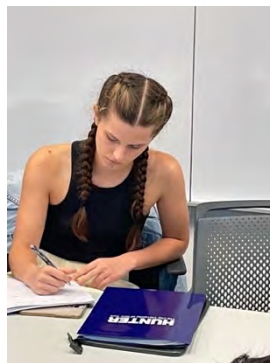
The Newman Office also leads workshops for applicants tailored to specific opportunities, such as the Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship (open to first- and second-year students). The Watson Fellowship awards exclusive curated internships for about fifteen students a year from among twelve New York City-area institutions for three successive summers. This year, three Hunter students won the fellowship and since the Newman Office was founded, Hunter students have won the Watson Fellowship at twice the rate of other participating institutions. The Watson Fellowship workshops are important to the College and the Newman Office not just because of our students' success rate, but because they provide an opportunity to work with students in a substantive way from an early point in their Hunter education. Each year since 2017 between 25-30 first- and second-year students have completed the Watson application-writing workshop. These students (like Rhodes winner, Devashish Basnet, and Goldwater winner, Nibras Ahmed) help build an important "talent pipeline" for future winners of nationally competitive scholarships.

Finally, Hunter's faculty recently approved a 5-week, 3-credit, in-depth version of the writing workshop to be offered as a course in the first session of summer school this June. The expanded version created more time for us to work with students individually on their writing and personal statements and help our Fall fellowship applicants get their writing underway earlier in the summer so they would have more time to sharpen their application essays.

**"Framing Yourself," Summer Session 3-Credit Course
May 31-July 6, 2022**



Prof. Thomas McDow
Guest Lecturer



Anna Vera (BA/MA, '23)



Devashish Basnet ('22)
Guest Lecturer

Interview Preparation

The Newman Office's interview workshops have become an essential element in successful applications, as many of the top fellowships entail one or more interviews. Most students at public institutions have not had any experience that would prepare them for the kinds of questions they will encounter and the extreme social and intellectual pressure of such a situation. Yet, Hunter students have been selected for final-round interviews each time they have applied for prestigious awards. The Newman Office helps these students prepare by providing them with practice sessions as soon as they learn that they have been chosen for an interview. With the help of Hunter faculty, the Office has conducted mock interviews with finalists for Rhodes, Marshall, Schwarzman, and Fulbright Scholarships, and has held general workshops on interviewing skills for all students who completed an application for some of the most competitive fellowships.

Alumni Involvement

The Newman Office has also involved Hunter fellowship alumni in its outreach and activities, both in applying for fellowships post-graduation, and by engaging them to inspire current student applicants through individual video advising sessions, participation in information sessions, emailing with current applicants, meetings with prospects in-person during summer and winter intersessions, and participation in mock interviews. In addition to helping prepare our candidates for the Rhodes, Marshall, and Schwarzman interviews, our alumni have been particularly helpful in practicing our Fulbright, Watson, and New York City Urban Fellows candidates over the past three years.

The Newman Office also follows up regularly with students who have taken the writing workshops, supporting them through the remainder of their undergraduate careers and beyond, as alumni. With this assistance, between 2017-2021, Hunter alumni have won 2 Rhodes Scholarships, 2 Marshall Scholarships, 6 Schwarzman Scholarships, 4 Luce Scholarships, 4 Goldwater Scholarships, 36 Fulbright Scholarships, 56 Gilman Scholarship, the Soros Fellowship and many others. As word spreads about the availability of the Newman Office's services to alumni, more are taking advantage of it each year.

GOALS FOR THE COMING YEARS

As projected in last year's annual report, the Newman Office worked hard to increase the number of students applying for Goldwater Scholarships over the past application cycle. Working with me in 2021-22 was a faculty-liaison assigned by the Goldwater Foundation, which resulted in three Goldwater Scholarships for our students this cycle, the most ever in one year. Unfortunately, Hunter students performed less well competing for the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship this year, winning just one award but Hunter was one of just two CUNY colleges to win an NSF-GRFP this year. I am already working with science departmental chairs to get the help of our science faculty in recruiting and supporting future NSF-GRFP candidates.

As the Covid-19 shutdown has demonstrated to dramatic effect, holding both group information sessions and one-on-one advising meetings over Zoom greatly expands the reach of the Newman Office. I plan to continue to use the capacity of Zoom to make an increasing number of students aware of fellowship opportunities even as we return full-time to in-person advising.



Demi Moore ('19); Yale Law School ('24); Imposter Syndrome panelist, January 2022

Another innovation of the past year that I will continue in years to come is to offer Zoom discussions on topics related to the fellowship application process but also touch upon many aspects of our students' intellectual and social development. This year we hosted a panel discussion by four major fellowship winners on "Imposter Syndrome," which was attended by 150 students and another panel on "Mentoring at Hunter," which paired two sets of mentors and "mentees"; 170 students attended

this event. Underscoring the fact that our students can be competitive in applying for major fellowships, helping them understand that even the most accomplished among them harbor feelings of self-doubt, and facilitating students in seeking out and maintaining mentors among our faculty are all critical to their success in winning fellowships.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to generosity of the Newman family, the Newman Office of Prestigious Scholarships & Fellowships has been a resounding success for Hunter College, guiding our highly qualified and diverse students toward possibilities they would never have been aware of otherwise. Their scholarships and fellowships, and the lessons learned in applying for them, will undoubtedly be instrumental in shaping their future opportunities and careers.

Since its inauguration, the Newman Office has made this outreach and development possible. The many nationally prominent fellowships attained by our students through the work of the Office have opened new worlds to them. At the same time, their landmark achievements have raised the prestige of Hunter's academic profile, and its appeal to future cohorts of motivated applicants. Ultimately, the impact of the Newman Office will be seen in the fields of science, medicine, academia, business, and public service, among others, where Hunter's fellowship winners will make their mark.

Hunter College is deeply grateful for the Newman's visionary philanthropy, which has enabled us to establish this deeply impactful resource, one that is transforming both the futures of Hunter's most talented students and the reputation of Hunter itself.