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Summer Eckley Scholars Develop Research Skills

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Summer Eckley Scholars Develop Research Skills

Aug. 1, 2016

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— How are students and teachers in two different countries resisting the privatization of public education? What new methods will be developed to help stroke patients in their rehabilitation? Can research on men as perpetrators of sexual violence help administrators understand how to reduce incidents on college campuses?

These and other questions are being investigated this summer by five Illinois Wesleyan University students who were selected as Eckley Scholars. The [Robert S. and Nell B. Eckley Scholars and Artists Program](#) was established by President Emeritus Eckley and his wife, Nell. The endowment provides a stipend of \$4,000 for each scholar to spend the summer on campus conducting research under the mentorship of a faculty member. Established shortly before President Eckley passed away in 2012, the program is designed to develop and deepen a student's creative and research competencies.

"The financial aid I get from the Eckley award is making a massive difference in my life," said recipient Paige Buschman '17. "I put myself through school, and having a secure income this summer, while simultaneously gaining skills that will prepare me for work I plan to do in the future, has impacted my life in a way I cannot explain."

Following are brief descriptions of the scholars' projects:

Martha Aguirre '17

While [studying abroad in Chile](#), Martha Aguirre '17 witnessed students protesting inequalities in their education system. "High school and university students united to fight for their educational rights," said Aguirre, who is majoring in [secondary education](#) and [Hispanic Studies](#). "I was inspired that students were so aware of the inequality of the education system."

During her time in Chile, Aguirre noticed that some of the same problems Chile experienced also plagued the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where Aguirre had received her education. The differences, she noticed, laid in who was doing the protesting. In Chicago, she noted, the resistance has largely come from the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU), while in Chile, it was students who were protesting privatization in mass numbers.

Guided by Irv Epstein, who is Ben and Susan Rhodes Endowed Professor in Peace and Social Justice in addition to Chair of Educational Studies, Aguirre is researching the ways teachers and students in two different countries are resisting privatization of public education, which generally means contracting out to the private, for-profit sector jobs and responsibilities of the public sector (school vouchers and charter schools, for example). In her research, Aguirre said she has most enjoyed interviewing teachers and students in both locations and bringing to light their voices and struggles. "Students are capable of producing huge changes if they recognize their capabilities and their potential," she said. After graduating from Illinois Wesleyan, Aguirre hopes to become a CPS teacher. "I want to give back to the schools like those I attended," she said. "I hope to receive an endorsement in ESL/Bilingual education and teach newcomer immigrant students."



Eckley Scholar Martha Aguirre '17 (right) discusses her progress with her mentor, Professor Irv Epstein.



Martha Aguirre '17

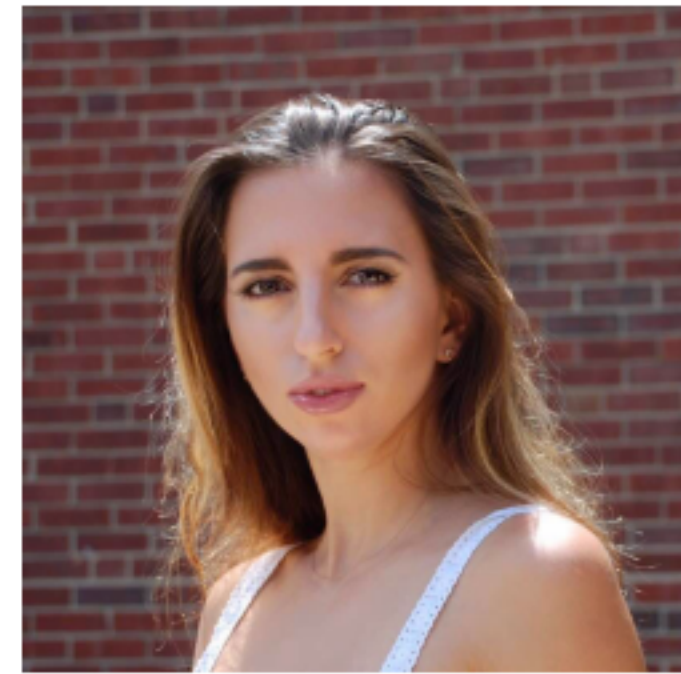
Boryana Borisova '17

As a 6-year-old immigrant from Bulgaria, Boryana Borisova '17 was introduced to Western culture through children's books. Now as a young adult and [International Studies](#) major at Illinois Wesleyan, Borisova is revisiting children's literature for her Eckley research project. Through a comparative analysis between the original English text of A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and its retelling by Russian children's writer and poet Boris Zakhoder, Borisova questions the subversive nature of Zakhoder's text.

"Adult readers looked upon his retelling as a manual of resistance to ideological pressures from the socialist state," said Borisova. "This anti-totalitarian message overshadowed the value of this text for children's readership. While paying attention to the politics of Zakhoder's text, my research will restore its merit for the younger audience by analyzing its place within the body of Soviet children's literature." Borisova will also expand her analysis to the realm of visual culture, comparing the Walt Disney Productions' film *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) with the work of the Russian animator Fyodor Khitruk in the early 1970s.

She said she was inspired to apply for the Eckley award because of her academic advisor, Isaac Funk Professor of German and Russian Marina Balina. "Her piercing insight and creativity introduced me to a new realm of Soviet children's literature," Borisova said of Balina. "She has challenged me to bring forth an independent study of merit."

Following graduation from Illinois Wesleyan, Borisova plans to apply to graduate school for programs in library and information science. "My mission of promoting books by foreign authors and exposing American youth to the globalized world of cultures began this summer as an Eckley Scholar," she said.



Boryana Borisova '17

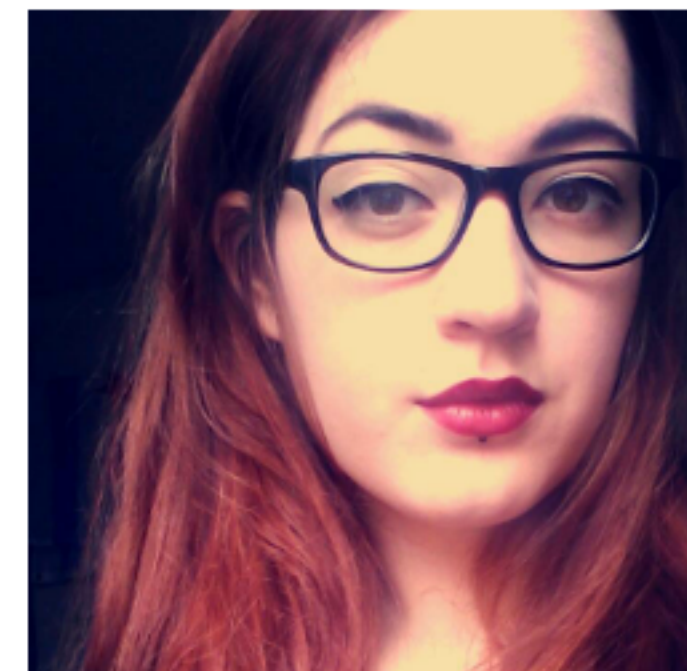
Paige Buschman '17

Earlier this year, the sexual assault conviction and subsequent sentencing of ex-Stanford University student Brock Turner brought attention once again to the realities of reporting and punishing sexual assault. While experts and activists laud colleges who have advocated for affirmative consent standards and launched bystander intervention training, research by Paige Buschman '17 adds to a growing body of research suggesting studying perpetrators rather than victims helps administrators understand how to reduce incidents of sexual assault.

"My study focuses on socialization processes, specifically of men, around issues of sexual assault and how those processes manifest themselves in institutions of higher education," said Buschman, a [sociology](#) major who is mentored by Associate Professor of Sociology Meghan Burke.

In researching the history of feminism and masculinity in the United States, "we have really come so far, but we have much further to go," she said. "We need to do a better job, as a society and as a campus, of teaching boys what sexual assault is and not to do it. There is not enough emphasis in men's upbringing on respecting women and their boundaries. Instead, we teach them to prove their masculinity in ways that are damaging to themselves and to their partners."

After graduation from Illinois Wesleyan, Buschman plans to attend graduate school to enter higher education administration. "Ultimately, I would like to work in a women's center or another kind of diversity center on a college campus."



Paige Buschman '17

Shannon Maloney '18

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, stroke is a leading cause of serious long-term disability, and some 95 percent of stroke survivors have some upper-limb dysfunction in routine daily activities.

"Stroke patients tend to rely heavily on compensatory strategies such as picking up a ball with their arm or with a couple of their fingers instead of implementing the whole hand," said Shannon Maloney '18, a [psychology](#) and [business administration](#) double major. Through a comparative study utilizing mice performing two different reaching tasks, Maloney hopes to discover a task that promotes behavior that closely parallels true recovery. She said "true" recovery signifies actions that mirror the behaviors patients exhibit pre-stroke.

"Currently in this field of knowledge, there are limited reaching tasks used for stroke rehabilitation," said Maloney, who is guided by Assistant Professor of Psychology Abigail Kerr.

Maloney said that in her first year at Illinois Wesleyan, she took the course "Brain Injury and Recovery" with Kerr. In the course Maloney learned what happens to the brain when patients are subjected to the rabies virus or receive multiple head injuries. "By the end of the semester, I was captivated by the field of knowledge called neuropsychology," Maloney recalled. "I started working in Dr. Kerr's lab to acquire more hands-on experience in the field." She said the opportunity to conduct research, made possible by the Eckley award, has helped her define her career aspirations, which currently include graduate school.



Shannon Maloney '18

Zach Silver '18

The sound of barking dogs is music to the ears of Zach Silver.

More specifically, Silver is investigating the degree to which domesticated dogs pay attention to changes in the "size" of the sound of a bark, and whether the dog attends more or less to various sounds. The [psychology](#) and [music](#) double major said his project combines many of the empirical methods he's learned from his advisors and mentors, Assistant Professor of Music Joseph Plazak and Assistant Professor of Psychology Ellen Furlong.

"In music cognition, researchers have learned a great deal about the way that humans perceive the size of sounds," said Silver. "In the field of comparative cognition, researchers have discovered a plethora of information about the way that non-human animals experience the world. By increasing our understanding of how non-human animals perceive and respond to sound, we can better understand our own hearing systems and our responses to sounds."

The Eckley project has had emotional benefits for him as well, Silver said. "I always look forward to coming into the [dog scientists lab](#)," he said. "Being around dogs always seems to have a positive impact on my day."

After graduation from Illinois Wesleyan, Silver hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology, continuing to investigate the way humans and non-human animals hear and perceive sound.

Conducting [research](#) as an undergraduate is one of Illinois Wesleyan's unique experiential learning opportunities. Approximately two-thirds of Illinois Wesleyan students conduct research, working alongside faculty in research or collaborating with them on students' own designs, artwork, musical compositions or other works of fine art.



Zach Silver '18