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NYU announces first class of Reynolds scholars

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(U-WIRE) NEW YORK -- Seventeen graduate students and nine undergraduates were recently named scholars and fellows of a new social entrepreneurship program at New York University, university officials announced on Friday.

The graduate and undergraduate students are recipients of fellowships and scholarships, respectively, in the newly-created **Catherine B. Reynolds** Program in Social Entrepreneurship at the university. NYU created the program last June after the **ReynoldsFoundation** donated \$10 million to NYU for that specific purpose.

Social entrepreneurship is the emerging concept of applying the skills and creativity typically associated with business entrepreneurship strategies to solve broad social issues.

Robert Polner, the university spokesman for the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, said the donation is appropriate for NYU, given its motto, "A private university in the public service."

"It fits well with NYU's broader ethos," he said. "It's a wellspring for sophistication and social good. It's why **Reynolds** gave it to NYU and, in turn, why NYU gave it to [Wagner]." The professional school, which encourages its students to take on social challenges and create solutions, is in charge of running the program.

The winners include students from all schools and disciplines at the university, **ReynoldsProgram** Director Gabriel Brodbar said. Of the 17 selected, over 600 graduate students and 130 undergraduates applied.

Brodbar said the program looks to identify two types of individuals -- those who will be the next generation of visionaries and also those who will help the organizations with their general infrastructure.

"We're focused on both models," he said. "We're very interested in finding those folks within the NYU community, connecting them with scales and resources and capital to help realize their vision, but equally interested in finding ... folks that will play important roles in burgeoning roles of social entrepreneurial infrastructure."

NYU's program will focus on incorporating students from all disciplines and at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, thus personifying the social entrepreneurial ideal that "everyone is a change-maker," Brodbar said. "I definitely think part of the richness of the NYU **Reynolds** experience will come from doctors working with lawyers working with artists in a way that heretofore hasn't been possible."

Reynolds scholar Zach Lane, a CAS sophomore majoring in politics, said this diversity is what initially attracted him to the program.

"The program really struck me as something that was different from anything that I'd ever seen," he said. "I thought that it would be really an outstanding way to meet other people who care about social causes and who have a variety of backgrounds."

Fellow Joseph Shin, a second-year medical student, is interested in primary care and international health and the chance to work with other students who can provide ideas and solutions in his own line of work provided great impetus for him to apply.

"One of the reasons I wanted to get into medicine was to help people, but there's so much to do as a physician and [it's important to] understand the greater picture," Shin said. "This program sets up for the fellows to ... get broader exposure to different kinds of people ... and to help the fellows achieve what they want to in whatever their respective field is."

Program participants are required to take a course in Wagner that will deal with topics associated with social entrepreneurship, though the exact curriculum has yet to be established. Fellows and scholars are also required to attend lectures given by leaders in the field of social entrepreneurship who draw on skills that work on problems related to each of the students' disciplines, Brodbar said. The lectures will be open to the public.

Lane said he is excited about learning about the new fields from each lecture.

"I really like the idea that, by being involved with the group, I get a chance to look at all these widely varying fields," he said. "Putting those things together for my own education, I think it's a really great opportunity."

Reynolds fellow Brian Levine, a second-year medical student who is also involved with student government, said that it is exciting being in the first class of participants.

"I think it's always exciting to be the guinea pig," he said. "We'll learn a lot from them and they'll learn a lot from us. Our opinion will really count because it will truly affect how the program's going to run."

Shin said he is excited to start working with the other students, particularly because it can help erase the occasional tunnel-vision and insular thinking each student has with his own projects in his own graduate school.

"In each of the different schools there's always the danger ... [the] little individual projects we have going on," he said. "Already, in the interactions I've had with other fellows, I get the sense that it's a very exciting group. There's a lot of creativity, ideas and passion. Just getting the ability to interact with them will be really beneficial in the future."

Brodbar said he is excited to start working with the students next fall.

"There's great diversity which is going to make for a very rich and powerful and effective cohort of folks," he said. "The idea is that these folks will go on to be the next generation of change-makers, or play very important roles in that world."

Lane said he is excited to start next fall and he is most excited about learning from students he otherwise wouldn't be interacting with.

"I think that being a **Reynolds** scholar is by far the biggest honor I've ever received," he said. "It provides a valuable perspective because [the graduate students] are further along in their education and because they have more experience in the real world. They have a different vantage point than the undergraduates do."

Reynolds, who created an innovative privately-funded student loan program, now chairs the **Reynolds Foundation**, a philanthropic organization whose goal is to inspire young people to make a difference and reach their greatest potential as citizens in society.

According to Brodbar, graduate students were eligible to apply who were either new students accepted for Fall 2006 enrollment to any full time two-year master's degree or law degree program at NYU, or to students currently enrolled in the schools of law, medicine or dentistry and have two years remaining. Winners will receive a \$25,000 fellowship for each of their two years of study.

Undergraduate students who will complete their sophomore years in any school at NYU in May 2006 were eligible. Winners will receive a \$20,000 tuition award scholarship each year for their final two years of study and a stipend for a summer internship between their junior and senior years, Brodbar said.

Harvard University, which also received a \$10 million donation from the **ReynoldsFoundation** to start a social entrepreneurship program, chose to focus solely on three of its graduate schools -- its education, public health, and public policy schools -- and less on a university-wide approach. Their program will also focus solely on the first model, Brodbar said, referring to it as the "hero-worship" model.

At the University Senate meeting on April 20, university President John Sexton announced that **Reynolds** is now a university trustee.

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