Each year, a select few exemplary Texas students are chosen to participate in the merit-based UTSA Top Scholar program. The program combines a full scholarship with personalized signature experiences in academics, leadership, and community service. This structure of the program allows an individualized experience for each student by providing support for internships, funding a study abroad experience, and facilitating introductions with university and community leaders. The program strives to imbue every scholar with its three pillars: Knowledge, Leadership, and Service.

Each Scholar is also enrolled in the Honors College, which allows them to take advantage of the Honors College advisors and early course enrollment. During the semester, the Scholars attend two types of meetings. Housekeeping meetings allow the group to discuss past, upcoming, and possible Scholar activities, with a decision making process that allows everyone a chance to participate in.

More importantly, the Scholars also meet to receive training in professional development. The training allows the group to build themselves in the second Top Scholar pillar: leadership. These presentations are given by prominent members of the university, and topics can range from campus opportunities to self-discovery. Every topic allows the Scholars to expand in some way, and provide a forum for discussion and exploration of new information and individual interests.

The two remaining pillars are knowledge and service, which are embodied by the Scholars’ dedication to their studies and educational growth, and a commitment to volunteering within the community. Each semester, the Scholars participate in both group and individual volunteering.

One of the unique things about the UTSA Top Scholar program is that it welcomes all majors and all eligible applicants from the state of Texas. For the 2014-2015 school year, the group includes ten Scholars, and majors vary from Biochemistry to English for a total of 7 different majors among the group.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter, and that you are encouraged to take the time to learn more about our amazing and enriching program. Although we are still considered a new addition UTSA, we strive to leave a positive impact not only on our campus, but on our community as a whole.

- The UTSA Top Scholars

From left to right:
April Munoz (administrative associate)
Education meets socialization

The first in what will become an annual event, this year’s Top Scholar orientation and retreat took place just before the start of roadrunner days this August. The event took place over three days at the DoubleTree hotel in downtown San Antonio. All ten Scholars arrived at the hotel after a morning photo shoot, greeted by director Kristi Meyer and administrative associate April Munoz, both of whom were armed with goody bags, programs, and chocolate-chip cookies. After getting situated in their hotel rooms, the scholars began a busy weekend filled with learning, school year preparation, and various bonding activities.

Guest lecturers imparted both professional and academic advice to the Scholars. The list of speakers included UTSA faculty and staff such as Mrs. Jan Kinney, who led a True Colors activity; Mr. Eliot Howard, who assisted the Scholars in various team-building exercises; and Provost Dr. John Frederick, who led a lunch discussion on Susan Cain’s Quiet. Scholars from the 2017 cohort also facilitated exercises, including an ice breaker and the creation of “Scholar Stories,” narratives that encompassed each Scholar’s passions and aspirations. Each day ended late, as the pajama-clad group packed into one hotel room to visit, snack, and play games.

Later, when asked what the best part of the experience was, Scholars agreed that they loved the “Amazing Scholar Race,” a scavenger hunt through downtown that sparked fierce competition between teams - the Class of 2018 and the Class of 2017. Though the Class of 2017 emerged victorious, the race was enjoyed by all, and the retreat was an experience that brought all of the Top Scholars much closer together.

Linda McNulty

Extreme Makeover

UTSA Extreme Makeover is an all-day event during which students and members of the UTSA community can come together and volunteer their time to beautify the campus. Coordinated by the Student Center for Community Inclusion and Engagement and Volunteer Services office in conjunction with the UTSA Grounds, Facilities, Parking and Housing departments, this campus-wide event is held annually during the fall semester. Opting to participate gives students the opportunity to work on a variety of projects.

This year, Extreme Makeover was held on Friday, September 26th and students were able to work on landscaping and trash pickup. The Top Scholars volunteered in two shifts and removed waste from different areas of campus. Through this volunteer opportunity, the Scholars were able to give back to the University which has already offered them so much.

Caroline Williamson

Clean Sweep! Scholars scoured the convocation center and recreation center parking lots, picking up trash and contributing to the yearly campus beautification effort. (From left to right: Cory Nguyen, Caroline Williamson, Eric Ficke, Bianca Pulido, and Linda McNulty)
While a nation panics
Thoughts on the Ebola crisis

Pandemics are epidemics of disease that have swept through huge portions of the human population—diseases that have taken ahold of continents, or even the entire world. They are those outbreaks which threaten the existing world order. By this definition, Ebola is well on its way to reaching pandemic status, especially if current response practices continue.

It may seem alarming to the average person that infected healthcare workers have been flown back into their home countries for treatment, but those involved in the transport process and treatment of Ebola patients know what they’re doing. What’s more alarming is that very little has been done to curb the spread of the disease proactively.

The world has seen Ebola before, and has gotten used to it being contained quickly. As a result, many have sunk into a false sense of security that with modern technologies, this outbreak cannot possibly be as dangerous as previous outbreaks have been. This is a fallacy. Ebola is just as ugly as it has always been; it is still just as gruesome, and it still leaves behind orphans, widows, and grieving loved ones. In fact, the 2014 outbreak has been the most devastating, with roughly eight times as many cases of infection.

The average American college student probably doesn’t need to worry about catching Ebola themselves, for now. The virus’s transmission through bodily fluids means that simply being near an infected person isn’t typically enough to pass on the infection. Still, it is vital to be aware of how Ebola is affecting thousands of people worldwide. Although it is easier to think otherwise, every victim of the disease has a life and a story not unlike that of a close friend, family member, or even oneself.

-Linda McNulty

All for a good cause
Class of 2018 Top Scholar holds donation drive

Bianca Pulido is currently collecting items on behalf of an organization that aims to help the victims of sex trafficking. If you would like to contribute, please contact her via her email, biancapulido@satx.rr.com

Foods such as flour, sugar, milk, fresh fruit/vegetables, salad fixings, pasta, cereals, cheese, meat (no pork, please), bread, condiments, etc.

Paper products (napkins, paper towels, toilet paper)

Woman and baby hygiene products and toiletries

Even the smallest donations are welcomed, everything counts!
Dear readers,

I couldn't tell you how excited I am to have been a part of the creation of our new newsletter, "From the Top."

My journey to this position really began six years ago in the PREP program. I studied engineering for 7 weeks and learned skills that I would be able to take with me throughout my academic career. Last year, the director of the PREP program here at UTSA, Dr. Rudy Reyna, asked me to apply to the Top Scholar program. Today, I can say that it has changed my life. The opportunities here are endless and I couldn't be more grateful to be here at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

The UTSA Top Scholar program has changed lives. This newsletter is the product of the grateful hearts that want to spread the word about what the Top Scholar program is and share what we're doing on campus with you. I sincerely hope you will take the time to read through this first issue.

In the future, I hope to keep a section for the world and community. As Top Scholars, we are studying at this university to have the tools to be able to do the most good in the world. Because of this, service is a vital part of who we are.

On a less serious note, we also have a lot of fun with this program. We learn and laugh together, and we didn't want to leave this out. So we've decided to keep the recipe section as a permanent part of the newsletter. We encourage you to try out the delicious recipes from the Top Scholar kitchen - we love them and we know you will too.

I am truly honored to be a part of the From the Top staff. The other staff members are some of the best people I know, and I couldn't thank them enough for all their contributions. As this newsletter grows and develops, I hope awareness and support of the Top Scholar program will grow even more here on campus, and throughout Texas.

With the warmest thanks,

Bianca Pulido,
Founder of the Top Scholar Newsletter