

From Phyllis and Sidney Rodbell: Our Family Scholarship

When Phyllis and I started funding our undergraduate scholarship, we requested that it be awarded to a student from Atlanta. We wanted to take a more personal approach to giving by getting to know each recipient. Over the years, we have become friends and supporters of our scholars. Over the past 17 years we have already sponsored 4 scholars. We are now happily welcoming our fifth scholar. And we are so proud of all of them.

Our first scholar was associate editor of the Punch Bowl, on the Penn Academic Demolition Team, active in his fraternity, and was a research assistant in the pathology lab at HUP. He was also a trustee scholar and graduated Magna Cum Laude. Since graduation he has become an entrepreneur and is active in the film industry.

Our second scholar came from an extremely difficult family situation. During his first summer, he was part of a Wharton innovation program in Spain studying retail fashion. He later returned to Spain to take advanced Spanish classes. As a sophomore he was vice chair of the Pennsylvania Players. He was also a teaching assistant with his legal studies professor. After his junior year he interned at Goldman Sachs and also attended the Cannes Film Festival that summer.

After graduation he turned down an offer to work at Goldman Sachs. Instead, he decided to join Teach for American in order to give back to the community. He did this while in Providence RI completing a Masters in Urban Education Policy at Brown University on a Gates Family Scholarship. He then returned to Atlanta where he started a non-profit called Honor Code. It taught coding to 5,000 young children and teachers in underserved schools throughout Atlanta.

Our third scholar entered the School of Nursing. She served as a peer leader mentoring other nurses and was on the Dean's list. She was also active in her sorority and a member of Students for Global Health. After two years of working, she is back getting her PHD from Penn Nursing.

Our fourth scholar was the first in her family to attend college. She was a Mellon Mays under-graduate fellow, a QuestBridge scholar, PennKIPP scholar, Robeson-Cooper and the T Howard final talent pool. She studied via the Penn in London program at King's College. She was also involved with the Kelly Writer's House, a member of the African American Arts Alliance and the English Undergraduate Advisory Board. She was on the Dean's list and was awarded a Beinecke Scholarship for her post graduate work (the Beinecke Program offers 18 scholarships annually nationwide.)

Our fourth Scholar is using the Beinecke Scholarship where she is presently enrolled in a PHD program in literary studies at the University of Chicago. We have requested a signed copy of her first novel that is about half-way completed. Some of you might have met her at our 50th reunion when we dedicated our class garden.

It has been wonderfully satisfying and rewarding to watch these people flourish. Our own Penn Alum children have begun to focus their giving to the Rodbell Family Scholarship as well. Our plan is presently only a partial scholarship; therefore, it must be supplemented by other resources. But even a partial scholarship is totally appreciated by our recipients. Their thank you letters are touching. In turn it has brought us a great sense of pride to watch them all thrive. We encourage our fellow classmates to consider awarding scholarships as part of our 55th reunion. This program has become our family's legacy to Penn.