



The inaugural 2019 Roosevelt Scholars at Olana, Hudson Valley

# 2019 Roosevelt Scholars Summer Trial Final Report



Harvard University  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
Educational Research and Evaluation  
Harvard College Institutional Research

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November 6, 2019

Dear Michael and Bob,

We are pleased to send you a copy of the Roosevelt Scholars Summer Internship report. You should be very happy with the results. The pilot program should be commended in what it has been able to accomplish in this short amount of time. Both mentors and scholars were very enthusiastic about their experiences. Noteworthy were the program's design, including its pedagogical features (which represent some of the best in class mentoring techniques that have been shown to lead to meaningful, authentic and effective learning) and its intentional formative monitoring of both mentors' and students' experiences throughout the program. We believe that given the program's short-term wins that there is clearly a solid foundation for subsequent iterations, and we encourage you to continue to scale up this work.

Sincerely,

Jenny Bergeron  
Director of Educational Research and Evaluation  
Harvard College Institutional Research

Jeff Solomon  
Qualitative Research Analyst  
Harvard College Institutional Research



To: Michael Weishan, President & Founding Executive Director, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Foundation, Inc.

From: Jenny Bergeron, Director, Educational Research and Evaluation, Harvard College Institutional Research and Jeff Solomon, Qualitative Research Analyst, Educational Research and Evaluation, Harvard College Institutional Research

Re: Evaluation Report on the Summer Internship

Date: October 10th, 2019

## **INTRODUCTION**

As stated on the program’s website “The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Foundation seeks to provide students with a humanities-driven framework for developing the knowledge, skills, values and professional connections necessary to pursue socially responsible work and increased civic engagement that will have the potential to last for their entire lives. Students in this program will be exposed to a structured curriculum that combines readings from American history and philosophy, as well as screenings from film, which will provide continual reference to the many examples of how the Roosevelts addressed a wide array of social problems in the United States during the 1930s-1950s. Additionally, there will be an eight-week summer internship in which students will be paired by interest with a mentor from Harvard University’s Advanced Leadership Initiative to work together on a mentor’s chosen social improvement project”.

As a result of participating in this program, students will:

- Develop an understanding of American History when FDR and ER had significant impacts on the fabric of U.S. society and beyond (1930s-1950s).
- Develop an appreciation for the arts and humanities and their role in solving social issues (i.e., how history can be used to frame and address social problems of today).
- Learn to frame creative and practical solutions to current and future social problems.
- Develop a sense of civic self-efficacy (belief that one’s civic actions will lead to change). Civic self-efficacy has been shown to lead to life-long civic action.
- Develop ongoing relationships among the Scholars cohort and ALI mentors that continue after the conclusion of the program year, giving students ongoing access to social support and networking opportunities similar to those provided by Harvard’s private clubs.

The participants in the program are students from lower-income backgrounds who are receiving Harvard Financial Aid and engaged in work-study. The Foundation chose to focus on this population to address the documented barriers these students face in accessing resources and professional networks, barriers which diminish their ability for civic engagement and the doing of social good.

In Summer 2019, the inaugural cohort completed its first eight-week summer internship. Four Harvard undergraduate students were paired with 4 highly accomplished and experienced leaders from the fields of Medicine, Retail, Engineering, and Global Entrepreneurship. Students worked on projects related to

- Uncovering the otherwise hidden records of the contributions women in history have made to medicine;
- Deepening the understanding of the gig economy in the United States;
- Building programming to support women, especially women of color in tech careers and;
- Developing methods for funding water infrastructure projects through innovative financing.

This report presents findings from the second of three planned rounds of interviews with Roosevelt Scholars Program (RSP) mentors and students (or “Scholars”), respectively. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information as part of an evaluation of RSP’s effectiveness—as viewed from the perspectives of its participants (mentors and Scholars)—in its first year of operation. The evaluation is intended to provide RSP leadership with insights about program implementation.

### **KEY FINDINGS:**

Overall the pilot program succeeded in meeting its goals for the eight-week summer internship portion of the experience. Both mentors and Scholars were very enthusiastic and positive about their experiences. This is particularly noteworthy given the program’s nascency. Also striking were Scholars’ descriptions of the pedagogical features of the programming that reflect well-known principles of the educational research literature that often lead to meaningful, authentic and effective learning. In particular, was a scaffolded approach to learning where mentors worked side-by-side with Scholars in setting clear goals for the summer and then breaking down tasks associated with conducting research into component parts. Mentors provided feedback and opportunities for Scholars to ask questions as they gradually transferred responsibility for managing learning to the Scholars. As a result of such an approach, Scholars developed research skills and self-confidence. The experience also allowed Scholars to forge new friendships with both Mentors and their peers in the program as well to reflect upon their own academic trajectories and career paths. Scholars also spoke highly about the program’s field trips which allowed them to learn about U.S. history while in the context of visiting historical sights.

Mentors also reflected on their positive experiences in the program in which they forged strong relationships with Scholars while tackling new problems in the social sector. In particular, through this partnership mentors learned to adjust their expectations from mentoring adult professionals (their sole experience prior to the program) to working with Scholars who had differing levels of maturity, work experience and social capital. Given these findings there is clearly a solid foundation for subsequent iterations of the program.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Members of Harvard College Institutional Research’s Educational Research and Evaluation (ERE) group designed and conducted the interviews. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the four Scholars and three of the four mentors in the program. All Scholars, plus two of the three mentors, were interviewed in person. One mentor was interviewed by phone.

Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Both Scholars and mentors were asked about their perceptions of how well the mentoring process was going, which aspects of it were going well, and which aspects of it were challenging (and why), and what suggestions they might have for improving mentoring. All interviews were audio recorded with consent from the participants and then transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription agency.

Interview transcripts were uploaded to a qualitative data management program (NVivo 12). ERE members with expertise in qualitative data analysis conducted an inductive line-by-line content analysis of each transcript.

## **LIMITATIONS**

One key limitation of the analysis is the small number of participants ( $n=7$ ), even by the standards of qualitative research<sup>1</sup>. Due to the small number of participants there were several cases when content was in fact articulated by just one person. Although studies with small numbers of participants can certainly result in rich, informative and insightful findings that impact program design and practice, they cannot be assumed to be generalizable to a larger population. More specifically, the findings in this report cannot be generalized to mentors or Scholars in subsequent iterations of the RSP.

There was an additional limitation to the evaluation. One of the mentors, at the relatively last minute, pulled out of that role. The compromise developed by the program was for a subordinate of the original mentor to oversee the Scholar's work but in the capacity of a supervisor rather than a mentor per se. A program staff member volunteered to be available to the Scholar for any "life mentoring" matters that arose. However, the Scholar had relatively limited interaction with this staff member because the Scholar's project was in an area beyond the staff member's area of specialization. Moreover, the project the Scholar had hoped to work on with the person originally designated as his mentor disappeared with the mentor's withdrawal from the role. Instead, the Scholar was offered a different project—and not one he was very enthusiastic about—by his newly assigned supervisor. It is for these various reasons that most of the findings from our evaluation are actually derived from three, rather than four, sets of Scholar-mentor pairings. For obvious reasons, this introduces yet another limitation of the findings reported here.

## **RESULTS**

### **SCHOLARS**

#### ***Roosevelt Scholars: Positive Views of the Program and Working with Mentors***

##### **Opportunities for collaboration and self-guided work**

The most frequent positive comments pertained to the pedagogy in the program. Specifically, the scholars commented on a scaffolded approach to learning, one in which Scholars and mentors set clear goals for work, mentors aided Scholars by breaking down projects into component pieces and provided Scholars with opportunities to ask questions and brainstorm solutions. The responsibility of managing learning was gradually transferred from the mentors to the Scholars.

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<sup>1</sup> Guest G, et al. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.

Scholars appreciated this instructional approach. They liked having the opportunity to have a greater sense of agency in their learning, which they cited as being different than many of the ways in which they were learning in previous educational contexts which they described as being overly “top-down.” Scholars highlighted their excitement to work aside and collaboratively with mentors while in the process of developing their own ideas. The quotes below exemplify Scholars’ references to this mentoring style, in some cases noting needing to make a mental shift from considering themselves as the receivers of “orders” to the role of more active agents in managing their learning. As they explained:

- But I really enjoyed it a lot, because it was like, a combination for me of having someone who gives you assignments, but also values your input as well. And you guys work kind of collaboratively, instead of them telling you just what to do. You guys kind of work together to figure out what you're doing. And it feels definitely more like a team effort than it does me just being kind of just producing everything exactly like what she wants me to do....I think in our initial meetings, I was kind of just a little bit confused because I was thinking it was going to be more of the traditional way. I was like, 'What do you want me to do? What do you want this to be? How do you want' ...—and then she kind of explicitly told me, 'We're working together.' ....[Adjusting to working more collaboratively] ....wasn't that challenging, because even though I was accustomed to working for a boss, I still had my own ideas about the stuff. I would just think about it to myself, or like, 'Oh, what if we did this?' But I never really thought that it would be valued. Or I thought that we're doing this for a certain reason. I'll maybe not know it. I'm just doing it. But then I was able to vocalize it, which was the main difference with the relationship with the [INAUDIBLE].”*
- “I think [name of mentor] definitely has a main idea what we would be talking about, but then I also report back on what else I've been working on and seeing if there's any other questions that I need addressed, and then she'll ask for my input: 'What are the goals that you want to get done between this frame of time,' [the mentor] ask me. And so I'll say, 'Does this look good, and if you have any feedback,' but it's usually good.”*
- “It's definitely a combination [of responding to assigned tasks and working collaboratively]. Of course, in the beginning it was more like, of course, I had to figure out what I was going to start with. So, [the mentor] give me a task. But throughout the meeting after we discussed everything that was on our agenda, we usually had action items for both of us that we should complete by the next week. And these are either like, I write them down in my Google Keep, or I'll send the email out or [the mentor will] send the email with me. Throughout the week, [the mentor will] send several emails. If, like, something new comes up, [the mentor] wants me to look at it or something like that. So usually, they're decided at the meetings. And sometimes throughout the week [the mentor] sends additional follow up emails.”*
- “So initially, the purpose wasn't for me to ask questions. But once we started going back on the interviews and going back a second time, I was able to bring up questions that I had about it. And if I wasn't even able to make it, I'd send the questions to [the mentor] and be like, 'These are some questions I had about the interview when you go back for the second time.' ....[the mentor is] definitely open to hearing them [Scholar's suggestions]. [The mentor is] definitely like, 'Let's meet all the time.' And [the mentor] values my suggestions and everything that I contribute. I'm like, that's what kind of makes this, takes the project to the next level, these inputs. If it's on more than one person.”*

- *And what had happened is that [name of mentor] had wanted me to do some research into looking towards ways to publish the paper that I'd like to do. And so, [the mentor] had asked me to look through some journals and some organizations that might have options for students. And so, I don't know, I hadn't really taken this more for me, and said, 'OK, this is how to go about it.' .... [the mentor] wanted me to explore for myself, and to get a lot out of them. And I think that just came from the conversation, and from realizing that it's—I think that was also a big moment for me, in saying, [name of mentor] isn't just my boss, that [the mentor] is my mentor.*
- *For example, I would think of like the [name of professional resource/database], that's something I'm working on right now, and if there's something that I don't quite understand, then [the mentor] kind of tries to have me solve it for a little bit and I really appreciate that, because then I can kind of try to see what a possible solution would be, and then [the mentor] would address it afterwards and say, 'OK, I like this, and then maybe this is another way to go about it as well.'"*

When taken together, Scholars' comments reflect a "cognitive apprenticeship"<sup>2</sup> approach to learning, which is a set of highly regarded constructivist strategies that have been shown in the teaching and learning literature to lead to deeper levels of cognitive processing<sup>3</sup> (Schunk, 1996; Hennessy, 1993). The remaining various positive views of mentoring described by the Scholars can be seen as naturally occurring extensions of this approach.

#### Feeling trusted and motivated by mentors

As a result of having been granted more agency and intellectual input, Scholars described feeling trusted, supported and motivated by their mentors.

- *"I think there's a lot of trust in the work that I'm doing. And I really appreciate that, because I think that going in, at least from the beginning, there were these set tasks, that I at least have that mentality for, that I need to get these done. And then afterwards, [name of mentor] gave me some general, I guess broader tasks that I could work on. And then, I think it kind of developed in smaller, baby steps. But then from that, I would get the work that I needed to finish. We would go and meet again. And we would discuss what that work was. But I think all along, there's been a lot of trust."*
- *"[I]t makes me excited to see that we'll be continuing working with each other. I think that also [the mentor] just like has a lot of faith in me, and I think that that's something important to have in mentorship as well. And yeah, I'm very, very happy with the mentor."*

<sup>2</sup> Schunk, D.K. (1996). Learning Theories, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Merrill.

<sup>3</sup> Cognitive apprenticeships begin with a competent other person — the tutor — making explicit their tacit knowledge or modelling effective strategies through demonstrating desirable ways of problem solving in an authentic activity. It then continues through the social sharing of tasks, supporting the learner's attempts to execute the task, and allowing knowledge to build up bit by bit. Fading then occurs as tutors gradually withdrawal help and the learner's participation increases — according to the needs and learning pace of the individual — as independent thinking and practical skills are developed. From Hennessy, S. (1993). Situated Cognition and Cognitive Apprenticeship: Implications for Classroom Learning. *Studies in Science Education*, 22:1:1-41.

Developing or modifying ideas about potential Harvard concentrations and/or professional goals

Scholars emphasized that their experiences working with mentors helped them develop or modify potential Harvard concentrations and/or career goals. For example, Scholars reported:

- *“[Name of mentor] has been great. [the mentor has] been giving me the space to kind of discover and play with my work, to see what works and what doesn't work. And that space that [the mentor] is giving me has allowed me to figure out what I really enjoy doing and what I don't enjoy doing, and what works for me and what doesn't, and stuff like that. So, the summer has really shown me what kind of style, I guess, career-wise, I think I would thrive in. And it has also shown me potential concentrations that I could do here at Harvard.”*
- *“So, I guess this particular time, I feel like this project was really a research one, that was based on data. But at the same time, I had a little bit of government incorporated into it. So, I checked the list of the concentrations here on campus, and I found a couple that kind of fit into that criteria, that I think I would do best with, that I think fit me pretty well. That I was kind of looking forward to looking more into, and maybe scheduling my classes this fall around those....So there is one where it's in the government department [and] data science. So, it's combining. So, it's kind of up my alley. And there's another one called—I forget the name. It has something to do with tech science. I forget the second one. But those two are basically what I think I might be going into as a concentration here on campus.”*
- *“But I let [name of mentor] know, ‘I'm very grateful to you and I've gotten a lot out of this summer.’ And I think that, I know it sounds just so cliché, but it really is that journey that has to do with it. And I think that that's meant a lot to me too and seeing a lot of the simple messages that I've gotten from along the way. One big thing for me was that role as a physician. And I think that it's just inspired me even more. I know that there's a ton of work to do afterwards and that a life of physician is going to be a process of learning forever, for a very long time. But it's still something that I respect a lot. And I think that I have gotten that from [name of mentor]. And I think that that's very inspiring.”*
- *It [work on the summer project] definitely has left me, I guess, it has left me more confused about my future. I'm meeting with—my interests were listed as biotech—and I'm personally meeting with or talking with a biotech leader who's going to be coming in the next program. [Program staff] set that up for me. But over the summer, I haven't been that much biotech-focused. And that's very different from my last summers. Like, I've worked in labs for the previous two summers, or done a science/chemistry kind of course. And this summer, I haven't really done anything with that. But I still think I—I don't know. What spoke to me about the project was that there was a passion for helping out communities or women of color who need it. And that's something that I'm also very passionate about. So, I guess I'm trying to meld or mix the things that I am passionate about in trying to figure out what I want to do as a future career more. It definitely has put that more into my view and helped me realize what's important to me and what's not....I won't say things have majorly changed, but I would say I have just become more inquisitive within myself about what I really want to do in the future. And so, there's definitely been a change, but I don't know if it's been super specific and it's just been more of a thought process.”*



### Viewing mentors as authentic role models

Scholars noted that they had come to view their mentors as professional role models worthy of emulation. One mentee explained, for example:

- *“I think that something else that has really been inspiring for my mentor is that the way that [the mentor behaves] is very professional and that—from the first time we met, I noticed that [the mentor] was very eloquent, very well put together in [their] speech, and I think that that has been very inspiring for me, too, to see how I can better try to also be that way when I'm speaking and have that [quality]. But then also when we've had our trips to like, say, Texas or Florida when we're just able to speak more between us, too, I can see that there's a difference between speaking professionally and speaking outside of that as well. And so, it's given me a good idea of how I can also balance my own way of putting myself out in the world, too, and saying, I'm being very, I guess, particular about how I present myself, and then also being able to know when to switch and such. So, I think that's another thing that I learned.... Looking up to someone like [name of mentor] who has done that and also balanced [parenthood], which is something that I think that has also been at the back of my mind thinking what—especially like looking at [the mentor's] own work with women in [name of profession] and seeing all of the other women, too, who we've had the opportunity to interview or to learn more about through their—like for me, it's through their biographies or such. And seeing the sort of work that they've done and noticing that there's not at least one cookie-cutter way to do things, but learning about how it's all very complex, but that there's also hope behind all of that, I think that's really important and it gives me at least a good sense of reassurance that it's going to be OK.”*

### Developing and being exposed to a variety of skills and strategies through guided discovery and scaffolding

The skills and strategies Scholars mentioned developing and being exposed to included working more independently, time management, content area knowledge, learning about the uncertain beginning phases often inherent to research projects, and being taught about soft skills including professional email communication etiquette. Turning first to learning to work more independently, Scholars described doing so in the context of developing ideas from scratch—with little guidance—and developing schedules best suited to their needs. Scholars said:

- *“And I guess the independence of the project, what I learned was the ability to kind of come up with something from scratch. Because initially, in the beginning the project, it wasn't something that I had checkmarks I had to hit. It was kind of, here's a guiding overview, and try to craft something behind that, or something that would work. And I guess what caught me by surprise was that now, looking back at the entirety of the summer, I only saw, like, pieces here or there. But now, after kind of seeing my [INAUDIBLE] of work, it seems like in a broad sense I was able to do that, without really knowing what or how I did it. So, I guess that was something that caught me by surprise.”*
- *“[The schedule the Scholar has designed has] been a good fit. I think it's definitely taught me how to be more independent, and more on top of my own schedule. I think throughout the school, yes, we have at least a little bit—of course, it's not the same as other years in high school and such, when we have a more defined schedule, but I've been given a lot of flexibility with this internship. And so, that's why I think maybe that first week I wasn't quite sure when should I do*

*my work and best balance it out. But then I noticed I tried to get on the schedule, starting that second and third week, and then I realized, 'OK, this is what works for me.' And having that schedule, even if it's not quite—it's probably not perfect, but I think that it's something that works well for me."*

- *"I think the most important thing I've learned working on this project is time management. Especially working independently, making sure things get done on a timely matter. And if I do end up missing something, letting [name of mentor] know in advance, so [the mentor] can prepare for it. And I can kind of compensate for it as I do more work, or I know the changing deadlines, and stuff like that."*
- *"I think the biggest thing I learned would be the time of day I function best. What works for me. For example, I tried a very early start, and then I tried very late starts. And I think both of those didn't feel like my most productive self. So, kind of altering that and figuring out, 'OK, this is the time of day that I think that I'm most alert, I thrive in. And this is the time of day where I get most of my work done. And this is the time of day where I relax.' And just building an impromptu schedule—nothing too set, but for sure nothing too loose at the same time."*

One Scholar in particular described having learned content area knowledge pertaining to her project:

- *"One big thing is that we've been working on ways to see what sort of paths women have taken throughout history and seeing if there are certain patterns and trends in the work that they've done to reach their high achieving status that they have now in medical education or in positions on state and federal medical boards. And that's been one big thing that I've noticed, is looking at those patterns and trends, there have been big movements in women's rights, or in I would just say societal changes in general. And there's definitely been shifts."*

Another Scholar discussed having come to the realization that the beginning phases of research projects often entail some uncertainty as the team seeks to gather sufficient background information to further define research questions. As she noted:

- *"One of the big things that I've gotten out of my conversations with [name of mentor] is that a lot of it [the project] is still in the beginning stages, as far as the research goes....I think even though maybe there's not been that clear-cut set goal of what this research is going to be like, I understand that that's just how kind of research is as well. And that sometimes you won't have everything put into place until you've seen many angles of what you're doing."*

Finally, another Scholar mentioned learning email communication etiquette for professional settings, explaining:

- *"So, when I'm sending out emails to people, I'd cc him [mentor] on it. [The mentor would] tell me, 'OK, so this is how, especially when we're doing a project like this, where people don't get compensated for their time that they give to us,' [the mentor] said, 'this is how you would phrase an email, or this is how you approach them, this is how you get them to talk to you,' essentially."*

### Program leadership filling a mentoring role

Although Scholars indicated coming to appreciate program leadership's depth of knowledge about U.S. history, one Scholar in particular spoke of the program director in mentor-like terms. This points to the fact that not all mentoring in the program was necessarily confined to relationships with the official mentors. In the quotation below a student explains the mentoring-like relationship with program leadership:

- *"But I think one thing that's really stuck with me is like on our field trip to Hyde Park was something that [the program staff member] said, is that many of the times when we have—at least one life lesson that he has learned—is that most times when people want or have a goal in mind—there's usually just no direct way of finding that goal. It'll usually happen through a sideways approach. And many times—I've kind of tried to parallel that to some of the other things that I've had, maybe in high school or in other experiences. But I've noticed that as well. And I think that it just kind of clicked when [the program staff member] said that. But I can also say that that reflects a lot of the summer, too. Maybe I didn't have quite that set goal with the work that I've been doing at the very beginning, but then I've kind of made a goal out of it. And then I've also realized that there are a lot of other things that I gained from this experience as well, through this sideways approach that [the program staff member] was saying, like traveling, or like having an amazing mentor relationship and things like that."*

### Field trips

#### *Developing bonds with program participants*

Scholars spoke in very positive terms about the field trips, including having the opportunity to forge stronger bonds with other Scholars, learning about U.S. history, and coming to appreciate program leadership's knowledge and leadership abilities. Turning first to forging bonds with peers, Scholars commented:

- *"And all of my friends and I, we had a really good time. Spending time with each other, I think that also created a huge bond. So that was really nice."*
- *"I think most importantly it allowed me to connect with the other mentees. So, kind of get us closer together, because it's a field trip. So, we didn't really have work in the way, where you had to get things done in a timely matter. But here it was just kind of us interacting together. I think that was something that really helped, really kind of set the tone for the summer. And allowed us to work better with each other and get to know each other, stuff like that."*
- *"I have some other friends from campus I usually tend to spend my weekends with. But then, I think especially after the field trips, we [the group of Scholars] wanted to see each other more. And so, I think that's become more frequent."*
- *"Yeah, we [Scholar and other mentees] have [spent social time together]. We have. Last night we went to a salsa class, and the other week we went to another—I think it was a swing class, dancing class. We went to Escape Room in Central [Square], and we went to a Chipotle in Central. We've, a lot of times, interacted more because of that, and have little social events. Or, something's happening, we'll put it in our group chat and be like, 'Oh, if you guys are interested"*

*in this,' and we'll end up going. A lot of times, our schedules conflict. But a lot of times, when we're all in the office or when we're all present wherever we plan to be, we could [INAUDIBLE] 'Oh, you guys want to go to this? Like, you guys want to go kayaking?' And then we went kayaking. So, it's a very fun experience when we're all together. And I think that's definitely helped foster community, which I feel like would be very—it's a very integral part of the program as well, even if it's not something that's, I guess, as structured as the rest. Because a lot of times, people are not working in the ALI office, or people are not in our building except for us, so we have to create community within each other."*

### *Situated learning of U.S. history*

Along with forging strong relations with peers, Scholars referenced learning about important aspects of U.S. history during field trips. As opposed to the typical kind of abstract, context-free learning that occurs in traditional history courses, Scholars were able to learn about U.S through exploring Hyde Park and the former mills of Lowell with the guidance and interpretations of the program director and local staff as highlighted in the quotes below.

- *"And I think, though, my favorite trip, and probably, I'm sure the other mentees would say the same, was that trip to Hyde Park. It was very amazing seeing the home and the Museum of President Roosevelt. And it really gave me a lot of respect for him and his wife, Eleanor. And I think that was another big thing for me to have seen, all the work that she did as well. And I think it was a very big connecting moment for the four mentees, but also for [the program staff member], since they went with us. It almost felt like [the program staff member] was our [parent] on the trip, and I think that was really nice."*
- *"Maybe that first trip, it felt almost a little bit forced, like we just kind of had to go. But after that second trip, we all really wanted to go, we all really wanted to be there. And then, that sort of spirit that we got from that trip, like doing everything from the Sorry board games, and card games, and charades, and all that was really fun. But getting a good mixture of that and this educational aspect too, I think that was just such a good balance for the program, for doing that for us. And then after that experience, going to our next field trip at the Little Museum was, I think, having that same spirit was very helpful, because we all wanted to be there. And we all wanted to have time to spend together, but also to learn about the museum."*
- *"Our first trip was to the Plymouth Plantation. And I think that was really an interesting trip....I think that the content that we got out of it was very meaningful. And I gained a greater appreciation for the Native Americans who are on this land, and especially being in Massachusetts. Like I hadn't really—maybe at the back of my mind I realized, 'OK, yes, this and this,' but I hadn't really put one and one together until that field trip, which was very meaningful."*
- *"Oh, they [field trips] were absolutely fun. Very valuable, actually. Oh yes, I learned about a lot of history, we went to Hyde Park, we visited the presidential library, we went to Lowell to learn more about the immigration, also the industry....The mills in Lowell. That was really cool, cool, very valuable, too. I think during school days, you can learn about that through a textbook but*

*going there in person, actually looking around, that's very valuable. So that was a fun time, I had a great time.”*

Although briefly mentioned already, field trips also offered an opportunity for Scholars to be exposed to the highly developed leadership skills and knowledge of program leadership. As Scholars described:

- *“And I think the four of us can probably say the same thing, that we really love [the program staff member]. [The program staff member] is an awesome director. And we have a lot of respect for [the program staff member]. And he is also very knowledgeable about the content, but that he also wants us to get something from the experience, which I think is not always the case in many experiences. Sometimes you'll just go, you'll visit around, and sometimes I'll go to a museum, not really knowing a lot. But when you have someone who is so knowledgeable about it, then you get something more out of that experience. So, I really enjoyed that.”*
- *“I think that [the program staff member] has been a really great person to look up to. I think at the beginning, I just kind of saw [the program staff member] more as our director and the person who is in charge of running most of the program in that sense. But going on the field trips that we did, and then seeing that [the program staff member] was also very helpful in answering all of our questions, I think that he's been just so amazing. And I think all of the mentees can say the same. We really appreciate all that [the program staff member] has done for us. And I think that we've also found more of a connection with [the program staff member] thanks to our field trips.”*
- *“But the field trips, especially the first one, learning about just the history of the entire country, which I haven't been too familiar with, just because I came from a STEM school that didn't really value history at all. It's definitely been a rewarding experience usually. And the thing that made it different from just going to a regular museum is [the program staff member's] and other experts there, you just ask them a question, and they give you a whole entire interesting story about the history, or a book they might have read, or the news that came out during that time. And it's just like, usually you don't have that: the people who really care and show that they have the knowledge and make it personable to you. So, I think that definitely it has also not only helped me learn a lot about things that I didn't even know that I was interested in.”*
- *“I think at the beginning, I just kind of saw [the program staff members as] more as our director and the person who is in charge of running most of the program in that sense. But going on the field trips that we did, and then seeing that [the program staff member] was also very helpful in answering all of our questions, I think that [the program staff member] has been just so amazing. And I think all of the mentees can say the same. We really appreciate all that [the program staff member has] done for us. And I think that we've also found more of a connection with [the program staff member] thanks to our field trips.”*

### ***Roosevelt Scholars: Challenges and Suggested Changes***

There were very few challenges and suggested changes cited by the Scholars. The key challenge mentioned by a couple of the Scholars was contending with a sense of isolation at the very beginning of the program, due both to not yet having gotten to know their peers and the absence of a full cohort of students living in Adams House. A proposed solution, they explained, was to have, prior to the initiation

of field trips, regularly scheduled events that would provide Scholars with structured opportunities to interact. As they explained:

- *“So, if you're working from the morning until the night, and it's just working straight there, something that would allow you to take your mind off of it. Maybe something as simple as if I were, like, hosting some sort of treats, or ice-cream party, or something, especially with 15 kids [the estimated number of Scholars in next year's program]. Yeah, something where whatever happens, you make sure the group of kids always manage to like meet, or something like that. Or kind of get together, or see each other, so then in that case to let them—because the isolation. It would help combat the isolation, and stuff like that....I guess a solution for the isolation, or the feeling of isolation you felt in the beginning, would be having a set schedule for the mentees, whether or not like their mentor requires it or needs it. But just for the beginning, maybe the first two weeks, or week and a half. After that, if their mentor needs it, they can continue on. But if they don't, they can do something else. But it's still giving them that beginning of the opportunity to kind of—I feel like it would help with the isolation just a little bit.”*
- *“And I think with more people [in next year's program], there will be more opportunities for social engagement.... At first, it felt a little quiet, because we're the only people, I think, on our floor in the building.”*

## MENTORS

Like the Scholars, mentors had decidedly positive views of their experiences working with Scholars. In this section we will describe the types of positive views the mentors held including learning to work with a younger more diverse group of mentees.

### *Mentors: Positive Views of Working with Scholars*

#### Surpassing mentor expectations

Mentors noted that Scholars surpassed their expectations during the summer. For example, mentors reported:

- *“And I don't think I expected to be as intrigued and challenged by some of [the Scholar's] questions. And so that was—I mean, that's not a mistake. There's just been a delight.”*
- *“But phase 2, I asked [the Scholar] to do more things and phase 3 asked [the Scholar] to do more things, and they have been able to. [The Scholar] wanted to do more....So one type of thing [the Scholar] would say is that they were not putting in the amount of time. Now, I think [the Scholar] did put in the full time because I always got more than what we had agreed. And OK, [the Scholar] could be super at what we were doing, but [the Scholar] did do more than what I had expected.”*

### Positive Scholar characteristics

Mentors also commented that Scholars had several positive characteristics, which made working with them pleasurable and satisfying. These included: being easy to work with, being a good person, possessing a strong intellect, having an interest in the project, being willing to offer ideas, demonstrating motivation/follow-through, having a good attitude/not being defensive, taking direction well, possessing good organizational skills, and being responsive to the mentor. Example of some of these are as follows:

- *“Very easy to work with. So, it's been a pleasure, actually.”*
- *“And you know, [the Scholar] a great kid.”*
- *“And the other thing is...[the Scholar]is just wicked smart.”*
- *“[The Scholar]is interested [in the project].”*
- *“I don't think [the Scholar] has been shy about pushing back and making a suggestion or saying, ‘Could we do this?’ Or having another idea. You know, [the Scholar], I think, has certainly felt free asking questions, providing an opinion. You know, oftentimes the conversations will veer off in one direction or another.”*
- *“[The Scholar is] very industrious. And he's very open about, ‘Oh, OK, well I don't know how to do that. So, I'm going to make the appointment with the research librarian,’ which I suggested, ‘and figure out how to get that data.’”*
- *“[The Scholar is] very—[the Scholar] takes direction very well. [the Scholar] is not one of these people who's defensive or anything like that. [The Scholar is] very eager to improve. And so, when I make suggestions, particularly about process, what I call ‘working smarter, not harder,’ and I give [the Scholar] suggestions about how to do that, [the Scholar is] very open to them. And so that has made it easier than sort of having to beat around the bush and figure out how to say something that you know [the Scholar] could be offended by because I'm worried about [the Scholar's] feelings. [the Scholar is] really very, very easy to coach....Yeah, and [the Scholar] has a great attitude, about not being defensive about the things [the Scholar] doesn't know.”*
- *“[The Scholar] has helped me get organized because I was doing many interviews of women of color in tech, so they were all in voice memos on my phone and notes and all this. And what was needed is getting all that organized, put on a drive, tagged, stories pulled out of the long one-hour interviews, all the work that had to be done....And [the Scholar] tackled that. And [the Scholar] good at computers, and [the Scholar] likes doing that type of work. So, [the Scholar has] done that. [the Scholar] organized them into slides so that we may change them, but at least they got it done in a way that it's clear what's in there.”*
- *“I did gently want to get into one area where I felt she could do a little more. And I wasn't sure if, for freshmen, even saying it in a subtle way can be a put off, maybe, because I'm so direct and I'm so much older. But I did do that, and [the Scholar] responded really well, and so I think [the Scholar] learned something in that process. So as a mentor I feel good about the strategy.”*

### *Mentors' Strategies for Identifying and Addressing Scholars' Needs*

Mentors referenced two key ways of identifying and addressing Scholars' needs. In the first, Scholars themselves explicitly articulated their needs to mentors, and mentors in turn sought to address those needs. The second strategy used by mentors entailed the mentor's own assessment of what type of "scaffolding" would best serve the mentee in moving to the next stage of development. Mentors thought about the unique goals of their mentees (developmentally and personally) and considered ways of introducing them to contexts and potential pathways to add nuance and sophistication to how Scholars approached and thought about their career paths and project work. For example, a Scholar indicated to her mentor that she was concerned about pursuing a very demanding profession because she was unsure whether she would be able to balance her personal life—the desire to get married and have children one day—with such a profession. Her mentor, who was in the very profession the Scholar was considering entering, responded to the Scholar's concerns by going out of her way to introduce her to those in the profession who have successfully balanced professional and personal lives. As the mentor explained:

- *One of the things I think [name of Scholar] is trying to work through or think through, [the Scholar] is a member of the Latter Day Saints Church, and I think one of the things that [the Scholar] is thinking through this how do I manage what I see my family life as and being a doctor?...Having a family and managing a career....Juggling balls, being a parent, being a [spouse], being a successful doctor....I was able to introduce [the Scholar] to another—a young Harvard mom of seven who's on faculty as a physician over at Harvard Medical School while we were at the conference. And so, they all followed up."*

The second strategy mentioned by mentors—assessing what type of "scaffolding" would best serve the mentee in moving to the next stage of development—is exemplified in the following quote:

- *"Well, I'm just trying to think of how, when I worked with my mentors, what I would do. And I always went in with a whole bunch—I set my goals higher than what the mentor asked me to do. You know what I'm saying? So then when I went in, I was already saying, 'As I was reading this, I felt that we should do x or y. But I'm not sure how to go about it, so that's one thing I want to talk to you.' So that endears you to your manager or mentor because you are pushing for a higher level of—and you are willing to make a higher level of commitment than anyone has asked you to do. And I think that's a good personal strategy, is to aim higher than whatever you are expected to do. So, I haven't talked to my [Scholar] about that. But I did not see [the Scholar] come in and say, 'As I was going through this, I was thinking we should do x or y.' But I thought first, if [my Scholar] were to write down, from an efficiency perspective, how we would conduct our meetings, it might appear at the end of that list that [my Scholar] has been thinking of things and might write a few. And if [my Scholar] does, then I can tell them, that was great. 'You wrote it, you organized it. But because you're well organized, you also thought of additional things. If you hadn't written it, maybe it wouldn't have occurred to you.' And then I can tell [my Scholar] that that's a good practice, that whenever you're meeting with a mentor or a manager, to have some asks. It doesn't have to be an ask on how do I do what you asked me to do. That's one level of ask. Another level of ask is you want to take this thing further, and your ask is around, 'Should we be doing this?' I mean, you are almost acting as a co-owner of the project and not as a delegatee. You know what I mean?...So that's very sophisticated thinking. So, what I'm saying is these people, the mentee, is an undergrad. So, I do not expect them to think that [yet] ....So, this is what I was thinking, because just last week is when [my Scholar] did this other one that I had asked them to do where they wrote everything down, and got efficiently organized. So now today, I'll see whether [my Scholar] comes in with today's thing organized for today....So I will see if they have*



*created the same type of thing again. And I would love it if they got one or two things already in there, which are halfway to what I want to tell them because then I'll seize on it and I'll take it to the next level. I guess I don't want her to [my Scholar] every time that I'm raising the bar of what a good mentee is, and so if [my Scholar] doesn't do it, they feel like less of a mentee. See, this is the risk as to how much to raise the bar. But I will find the right time. Either it will be today or it could be after [my Scholar] comes back after the summer, but I will get these things across to [my Scholar]. But I want to do it in a way that is seizing on something they just did and saying, you know what you just did? This is great because what this will allow me to do is to write in a letter of recommendation, if I ever write one for you, that outlines how you did this....But I want to do it gently. Otherwise, I feel it can be misinterpreted.”*

### **What Mentors Learned About Working with Scholars**

All three mentors explained that the Roosevelt Scholars Program was the first opportunity they've had to mentor people of undergraduate age and, in one case, from a less privileged socioeconomic group. Although, as we show in the quotations below, this represented some initial challenges to the mentors, they also gained insight into some of the needs and concerns that are specific to this population. For example, a mentor expressed frustration that his mentee wasn't as communicative and proactive as he had hoped, but concluded by realizing his expectations might not have been realistic in light of the life challenges the mentee has endured:

- “I think that [my Scholar] could have gotten more out of it had they had been a better communicator and had been more—had taken greater initiative to learn about what I was doing. I mean, for instance, [my Scholar] has missed an opportunity to learn some stuff about municipal finance, which is really important. And finance is important in every aspect of life, in my view. And nothing happens if you can't figure out how to pay for it. And so, if you're interested in this particular issue, if I were [my Scholar], and I were their age and working with somebody my age with my level of experience, I would have asked a bunch of questions about that, even if that wasn't my assignment. Which they never did. And I never said, 'But what about, how come?' I did offer, I did invite [my Scholar] to ask me questions. And I did invite [my Scholar] to join me on calls. But they didn't. So, you can lead a horse to water....I have mentored many, many—it's what I do for a living, is I mentor entrepreneurs in startups. And so, I take the view that it's a two-way street, there are two parties involved in this. You as the mentee have a responsibility to get the most that you can out of this experience....Are you maximizing this experience? And here are some examples of what that means. That means coloring outside the lines and going above and beyond the actual text of the assignment. But here you are working with somebody whose background you should have studied and know, and now you're working with them so you're getting to know them really well. Are there things in their life that you could learn [from]?...But I know I was the Chief Operating Officer of [name of company]. It's in my bio, ... most people, because it's the [type of] business and everything, it's kind of sexy, most people at least say, 'Gee, what was that like?' [My Scholar] never asked me a question....I tried to get us to have a shared Dropbox right at the very beginning, at our very first meeting. That never really happened. And frankly, for somebody who is a rising sophomore at Harvard and is interested in computer science, you ought to be able to figure out how to sync a Dropbox. So that was disappointing....“I've never mentored a Harvard undergraduate, and I guess I had drunk the Kool-Aid about, 'Gee, if you're a Harvard undergraduate, you must be really special.' I mean, to be perfectly honest, [Scholar's name] is not particularly special....I have taught 100*

*undergraduates, mostly at Tufts and Georgetown, and I would say that [my Scholar] would be in the middle of the pack of all the undergraduate students I've taught. I expected more. I expected [my Scholar] to be at the top of the pack. So, I went into this maybe with an inflated expectation ....I presumed that [my Scholar] was going to be doing more things. I presumed [my Scholar] would be more proactive. And [my Scholar] wasn't ....[my Scholar] comes, obviously from a very particular background, [name of country] refugee family, seven kids. So, he didn't have—which is part of the reason why I guess this program exists, frankly. Help even the playing field, which I'm a huge believer in, which is, frankly, one of the reasons why I did it. So, because I worked in developing countries, and so I'm very sensitive to that and a big fan of that. But by the same token, it's a double-edged sword. Because it makes you think that they may have more skills than they do.”*

Another mentor commented that her only previous mentoring experiences had been with adult professionals, not college-aged students. Although this didn't appear to become a hinderance to the mentoring process, the mentor did speak of realizing upon meeting her mentee that she had to adjust her standards from a professional adult population to a young adult population. She noted:

- *“I don't think [my Scholar] needs more time than other students or the like, but [my Scholar] needs a certain amount of time. I think that [my Scholar is] young. [My Scholar] just turned 19. [W]hen we went to New York, for example, I knew that I was not going to be able to be with [my Scholar] the entire time. And I also knew that probably wouldn't be terribly much fun for either of us if I was with [my Scholar] the entire time. So, I told [my Scholar] that they could go, but that they would have to bring a friend. And I would pay for the friend, but [my Scholar] would have to bring a friend. So that's something I would never do with a medical student or someone else. They [? tend ?] to be on their own. But it's also very interesting. And also, I think [my Scholar's] life experience has not taken them a whole lot of places. And so, I think [my Scholar] had, frankly, I suspect much more fun sitting on the back of a steer in Fort Worth, Texas than [attending a conference]-- [LAUGHS] --you know? Things like that....But building in those things, I think, are something that I have paid more attention to with [my Scholar], because of their age and because of their state in life than I ever would with, you know, I mentioned last time, I'm used to mentoring much older people.... Oh, yeah. I mean, I think I presumed a level of maturity earlier on than possibly is there. And I'm not in any way being critical. I mean [my Scholar] very mature for their age.”*

A third mentor voiced the same experience of having to adjust from a history of mentoring adults to mentoring undergraduate students. She reported that:

- *“Well, what I've learned is that I have put in a lot of time in the mentoring. Normally, up to now when I mentored, I didn't put in any time in the sense that mentees would make an appointment to see me. I had 30-plus women that I mentored, you know, in the last few years, last 39 years of work. So, they would make an appointment to see me. And then I would say, ‘Oh, on my calendar I'm going to see person x.’ Then I just turn up. I don't do any thinking before that. And then that person would come in and say, ‘There's a job open and I think I'm a good candidate, but nobody's considering me for it.’ They'd bring up whatever their issues were, and then I would mentor that person during that time as to what might be good strategies. And then if I had to do a phone call to somebody or do something, I would. But I never spent any time outside of the one-hour meeting thinking about mentoring....Now it's almost flipped because the one hour is a small part because I write email, I put things on the shared drive. During the week we have many interactions, email interactions. And I also think about, ‘I'm coming into today. What do I want to achieve in this*

*meeting? How do I want to start the conversation?' ...I do have the time. I'm not so scheduled as I used to be when I was at work. So, this is a different kind of mentoring arrangement than what you normally have at work, where people just come in and they have a question....So it is different. It's a totally different—I mean, they're calling it 'mentoring.' But to me, this is a very different type of mentoring than the mentoring that you normally do."*

### ***Anticipated Mentoring Challenges for the Fall Semester:***

One mentor expressed concern over getting her project work completed when her mentee was going to be restricted to 10 hours a week during the fall semester.

- *"Now, the experience I don't have yet is, what happens when after the summer they're only supposed to work 10 hours a week? I may not get much value from that because if I don't know what 10 hours we'll do....10 hours a week in the fall, I'm a little not clear if I'll be—how do I keep it interesting for [my Scholar]? Because there will be more interviews. And for me, it's very efficient to have her keep doing the interviews, which again I would think [my Scholar] will be able to do. But that won't be interesting for [my Scholar] because that's what they know how to do. It'll be much more interesting for [my Scholar] to do some of the more creative work. But for 10 hours a week, the creative work will have to be delivered. Otherwise, I'd be waiting for it. And when [my Scholar] has five classes and things like that, I don't want this to be the pressure."*

Another mentor and the only one claimed to be unaware that there was a fall component to the program, despite numerous emails sent out by program staff letting mentors know about their time commitment in the fall. While emails were sent out to mentors during the course of the summer semester, program staff noted that they were not overly prescriptive about how mentors and Scholars chose to organize the fall semester. Therefore, the onus was on mentors and students to develop their workplans for the year. In the quote below this mentor explains that they would have been more prepared for the fall if they had developed a workplan for the entire term.

- *....I have a complicated fall. So, I'm going to do it. [My Scholar] going to do it. We're going to extend the workplan [through the fall] ....[W]e would have done the workplan for the entire term [summer and fall] of the project had we known that was the term of the project....[W]hen they gave out the calendar dates[for the summer internship portion], for instance, move in and move out, and holidays, it stops in August. So, it wasn't until we were already well into the program [late August] that we got a calendar from [the program staff] that said here's what the fall looks like....[W]e [the mentor and mentee] both laughed, and we both took it in stride. [My Scholar] was wonderful about it, as they have been about everything. [My Scholar] has this great attitude, as I said right from the get-go. And they said, 'This is wonderful because I love this work.' I asked [my Scholar], I said, 'I don't know what your course load is going to look like, but obviously the fall is a very different schedule and course load for you than the summer. So, when we come up with the plan for the fall, I just want you to know I'm expecting it to be very different than the summer work plan. Because I'm expecting you to have much less time.' And they said, 'Well that's probably true, but I still want to do it.' And I said, 'Wonderful, I would love to do it too'".*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The program should be commended on its success this summer in delivering a top-notch learning experience to Harvard undergraduates especially in light of the fact that this was the first iteration of the summer experience. Based on the findings from this evaluation, we recommend that subsequent iterations of the program build in trainings for mentors that focus simultaneously on working with a college-aged population (as opposed to mentoring professionals in a workplace) and with those from traditionally underrepresented groups. Although there are developmental needs that are unique to those in late adolescence/early adulthood (compared with post-college adults), these needs cannot be isolated from the cultural and socioeconomic contexts of students' lives. Training with this focus in mind will help mitigate both the challenges of working with college students for the first time and help to establish more realistic expectations of them.

## RESOURCES TO CONSULT ON MENTORING COLLEGE STUDENTS

ASHE Higher Education Report. (2017). Special Issue: Mentoring Undergraduate Students. 43(1): 7-103.

A good overview of the broad issues and challenges that need to be taken into account when mentoring undergraduate students.

Biswas S. (2019). Advice on Advising: How to Mentor Minority Students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. March 13, 2019. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Advice-on-Advising-How-to/245870>

A college mentor shares tips and advice on mentoring minority students.

Campbell CD. (2007). Best Practices for Student–Faculty Mentoring Programs. In Allen TD & Eby LT, eds., *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring*. Blackwell Publishing: Malden, MA.

A good discussion of some of the best practices specific to student-faculty mentoring. Has some important implication for the type of mentoring provided in the Roosevelt Scholars Program.

Chan A. (2018). Trust-building in the mentoring of students of color. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*. 26(1): 4–29.

Based on research, this article reveals the key elements needed to establishing trust with students of color.

Finkelstein LM & Poteet ML. (2007). Best Practices in Workplace Formal Mentoring Programs. In Allen TD & Eby LT, eds., *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring*. Blackwell Publishing: Malden, MA.

A good discussion of some of the best practices specific to workplace mentoring. Has some important implication for the type of mentoring provided in the Roosevelt Scholars Program.

Shanahan JO, et al. (2015). Ten Salient Practices of Undergraduate Research Mentors: A Review of the Literature. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 23(5), 359–376.

This article provides some background information on mentoring and then offers 10 very concrete steps for mentoring, with accompanying explanations and examples. Among the most application-focused resources listed.

The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Brown University. Inclusive Mentoring. <https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-mentoring>

Brief but helpful overview of some of the basic considerations one needs to take into account when mentoring a diverse array of students.