Rory Jones—a history and German major—was active academically, especially in his Paideia cohort, as well as outside the classroom. His intentional integration of academic with extracurricular activities left him with a desire to tell incoming students to “take time to find yourself—it’s worth it.”

While Rory’s main focus at Southwestern was academics, he was also able to try different things, “many of which I would never have gotten to do at a bigger school,” he says. “I played an NCAA sport (tennis); anywhere else, I would not have been able to say that … Southwestern is just a completely different experience.” He advises new students to get involved early on, saying, “You’ll have more regrets about the things you didn’t do than the things you did.”

He was also involved in campus organizations like Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society and Student Foundation, where he led a team of five in promoting and fundraising for the Pirate Bike Program. Meanwhile, he cultivated his passion for history as an intern with both the Williamson Museum Collections and the Dallas Holocaust Museum.

But the highlight of Rory’s Southwestern Experience, he says, was his trip to the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico with the Destination: Service (alternative Spring Break) Program. He says, “Going in, I knew maybe five of the group of 20 … I feel like we all became a family through the work we did, cooking all our own meals, camping out under the stars in 30-degree weather—it was awesome!”

Rory is currently living in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany and is an English teaching assistant at the Ganztagsschule Friedrichstadt. As a Fulbright Scholar, he is also continuing research he began when working on his German honors thesis.

Following his Fulbright commitment, Rory is considering becoming a high school teacher, but is “keeping his options open.” Whatever he chooses to do, he feels highly prepared by Southwestern. “I know how to read critically and write analytically, which, if you break it down, is the essence of many jobs today,” he says.

He also hopes to compete on an Ultimate Frisbee team when he returns to the U.S. “I bleed Ultimate!”

Sprechen sie Texan?

Prestigious Fulbright Teaching Assistantship awards provide recipients with an initiation into the idea of cultural ambassadorship. They emphasize understanding cultures in depth and inspire the same kind of curiosity about and respect for others that we are working toward at Southwestern.
Nekia Tharps
Education Major, Track and Basketball, EBONY, Elementary School Mentor

While education major Nekia Tharps spent much of her senior year student teaching, she had the opportunity while at Southwestern to pursue her passions both in and outside of the classroom.

The highlight of Nekia’s Southwestern Experience was playing sports at the collegiate level. “I am a very competitive person and it was such a great feeling to get a ‘W’ with my basketball girls or win a relay with my track team,” she says.

What brought Nekia to Southwestern? “I knew Southwestern was for me,” she says, “but the deciding factor was the school’s ability to help make college affordable for my family and me.”

Nekia was also involved on campus in the EBONY organization and was one of the founding members of the Coalition for Diversity and Social Justice. In the community, she was a Partners in Education mentor with Georgetown ISD and volunteered with Agapé Christian Ministries.

“I loved the atmosphere at SU,” she says. “I got to know a lot of people and established quality relationships; something I don’t think would have happened had I gone to a bigger university.”

Through all of her activities, Nekia learned the importance of networking. She says it’s important to “make meaningful connections, because you don’t know where they might take you in the long run!”

Some of the connections she made were with her faculty advisers. “Whether I had a school or personal problem, they truly cared about my success,” she says. They also encouraged her to go above and beyond the minimum requirements in all that she did. “That advice truly made me standout while student teaching!”

She advises incoming Southwestern students, “Get involved! It will make your time at SU more memorable if you are active and make a difference while you are here. Make someone remember your name!”

As a student, Nekia also learned that there are no limits. “I had never been challenged the way my courses challenged me at SU,” she says. “As a result, I have become a much more determined person, and I know that I can achieve anything if I just put in the time and work.”

And work she did. “I graduated feeling very prepared; while student teaching, I used the valuable knowledge I gained in my classes and was offered a job.”

Nekia is now teaching fourth grade math and science at Pillow Elementary School in the Austin Independent School District.

Books before boards
As a Division III university, Southwestern places the highest priority on the overall quality of the educational experience and on the successful completion of all students’ academic programs.
After seeing a few simple snap shots of campus, Eric Godat decided a visit was in order. “I fell in love with the campus,” he says. “And scholarships didn’t hurt either.”

However, Eric quickly realized that life at Southwestern wasn’t going to be as easy as high school was for him. “I realized that the professors here expect the best and are willing to go above and beyond to challenge you,” he says. His mom’s advice after he failed his first test in Calculus III? “It’s college; it’s supposed to be hard.” Eric ended up with an A in the class.

Now, after graduating from Southwestern, the physics and mathematics major (and avid Dallas Cowboys fan) believes he is significantly more mature and independent. “I feel like I can function in the real world now.”

In class and around campus, Eric participated in a variety of activities and organizations that lead him to believe that he can “contribute to the world both in my field and outside it.” For example, Eric says he became something of an expert on campus for renewable energy.

His involvement in Math Club, Physics Club and Pi Mu Epsilon, as well as the King Creativity Symposium (for which he presented the solar collector and thermal battery he created), allowed Eric to take what he learned in the classroom into the “field,” so to speak. In true liberal arts fashion, he also spent several summers as a camp coordinator and instructor at Art Splash Summer Camp in Dallas.

These experiences are all likely to enhance his time at Southern Methodist University, where he is now working on both masters and doctorate degrees in high-energy theoretical physics, as well as working as a teaching assistant for the SMU physics department.

Eric credits his faculty and staff advisers with always being available to talk and to providing invaluable help for both his projects and life in general, and says the best lesson he learned as a student was that “research is never finished; you just work hard, and hope to make deadlines and stay under budget.”

What will he miss most about Southwestern? “…the campus atmosphere, the relationships I built with professors and my peers, and (of course) the Saturday morning research doughnuts in FJS (A.K.A. Fondren Jones Science Hall)!”
Kristen McCollum

Sociology Major, Paideia Scholar, Resident Assistant, Student Peace Alliance, Volunteer

Kristen McCollum says majoring in sociology was one of the best things about her Southwestern Experience. “The sociology faculty is top notch.”

In fact, Kristen says her major was the result of advice she received as a first-year student having an “I-don’t-know-what-to-major-in crisis.” She made an appointment with the Office of Career Services, told them that she loved people and numbers, and they suggested that she check out sociology. “So I did,” she says. “And here I am.”

She also enjoyed being a Resident Assistant (RA). “I really enjoyed being a resource for new students. My favorite part about living in the first-year halls was the community atmosphere; it was part of my job to build that community. Of course, living in the same building with 100 other people has its challenges, but ... I felt so comfortable that I didn’t even mind wearing my footy pajamas around the building”

Kristen’s advice to those first year students? “Don’t be afraid to take courses in things you know nothing about. You may not know what you’re passionate about, so keep exploring until you find something that clicks.”

When she wasn’t relaxing by playing piano, Kristen was involved in the Student Peace Alliance and was a member of a Paideia cohort. “Paideia helped me see the connections between my academics and the real world,” she says. Off campus, she worked for the Georgetown Project and volunteered for the Migrant Student Office at Georgetown High School.

“I worked a lot with the homeless ... and helped set up the first youth homeless shelter in Georgetown—The NEST.”

After researching the process of community-building among the homeless, Kristen presented her capstone paper at the Southern Sociological Society conference in New Orleans, where she received the top award for undergraduate research. Kristen says receiving the Odum Award for her paper was the highlight of her Southwestern Experience, and that the award “affirmed that I had presented quality work with value; it was the first time I could see how my academic work could really make an impact.”

After spending a summer in Peru for her intercultural experience (a Paideia requirement), Kristen decided to continue her humanitarian work as the volunteer coordinator for a community development organization in Peru called SKIP (Supporting Kids in Peru). She is working in the organization’s economic development department, which gives micro-loans to the families of the children they support.
Harrison Glaser
Environmental Studies Major, Head Resident Assistant, SEAK, Clusterfest Coordinator, Volunteer

Harrison Glaser, an environmental studies major with a minor in communication studies, grew up in nearby Austin. Some expected him to go to The University of Texas, Austin. Others thought he would go to school far from home. Harrison says, “I wanted to be close without being too close. Southwestern stuck out as being really personal and a cool community.”

After four years, he says his classes were all great, but by far the best parts of his Southwestern Experience were extracurricular. “A great thing about Southwestern is that it’s really easy to get involved in projects that are real and impactful. I was able to participate in, and often lead, efforts that truly affected people and made a difference.”

As a Resident Assistant (RA) and Head RA, Harrison had the opportunity to help many students adjust to college, which can be a tough transition. He says of the experience, “I always say that I learned more from being an RA than I did in any of my classes, and I stand by that. I learned how to work with people—how to talk and, more important, how to listen.

Harrison was a member of University Programming Council, Students for Environmental Activism and Knowledge (SEAK) and the SU Garden Club. Off campus, he volunteered at the Georgetown Animal Shelter.

With his self-proclaimed “obsession with music,” it’s no wonder Harrison was also the co-chair of Clusterfest, an large-scale music festival held on campus.

His philosophy and advice to new students is that “You can figure out a lot more about what you’re interested in by actually doing things instead of just learning about them ... you have to stretch yourself and try a lot of things...”

Harrison says the thing he will miss most about Southwestern is the ability to walk out of his room and find someone to hang out with pretty much instantly. He also says of his time at SU, “I’ve become more confident and more interested in trying new things.” Maybe that’s due in part to the fact that he never expected to be so close to faculty and staff. “I knew Southwestern was going to be a close-knit community, but I didn’t think it would be close-knit between students, faculty and staff.”

Following graduation, Harrison served as conference assistant at the Austin Film Festival, even moderating one of the panels of writers. He says, “It was crazy and frantic and non-stop and one of the most amazing experiences I’ve ever had.” He is also an operations specialist for KIPP Austin Public Schools, a district of charter schools in East Austin.

Live music... suburb

From weekly events featuring nationally touring artists and performers to frequent student organization-sponsored events—including Clusterfest, an annual music festival held on campus—there is always an entertainment outlet. Austin, the live music capital (20-plus miles due south), is a big one.
Jenna Mozingo

Political Science Major, Transfer Student, Student Congress, Korouva Milkbar

When political science major (with french and environmental studies minors), Jenna Mozingo left Maryland to attend college in North Carolina, she was disappointed to find that her chosen college was largely a “commuter” school. When she visited a friend at Southwestern, she found a vibrant campus community. That, along with her financial aid package, made the distance from her family worth while.

On campus, Jenna was involved with the French and political science honor societies, Students for Environmental Activism and Knowledge, Student Peace Alliance, Student Congress and the Progressive Student Alliance. And for hanging out with friends and discussing their lives, Jenna says Korouva Milkbar was the place. “It was a little funky, but a staple of the ‘alt-western’ experience.”

The highlight of Jenna’s Southwestern Experience was getting to know certain professors. “I’m sure I wouldn’t have received so much feedback on my schoolwork (and lifework!) from friends and teachers if I had been on a larger campus.”

At Southwestern, the biggest lesson Jenna learned was to think before you speak. “You never know how someone will hear your words, so it’s important to be genuine,” she says. She advises others, “Don’t act like a fool just because it’s the first time you’re away from home and you’re around lots of interesting people. You have four years to live with the reputation you make for yourself.”

Personally, Jenna says she lives her life with intent. “I always try to be conscious of what I’m doing, and how, why and what implications my actions have for others.” She says she feels well prepared for life after Southwestern, but perhaps not in the way that she expected to be. “In a lot of ways, my Southwestern Experience changed what I thought I wanted in my life.”

Since graduation, Jenna has traveled in Europe, where she worked on a vineyard in southern France and learned about straw-bale building and beekeeping in Denmark. Since her return to the U.S., she has built a greenhouse in Pennsylvania, a composting toilet in Tennessee and a geodesic dome in Oklahoma. She says, “It feels really great to help people make environmentally conscious changes to their daily lives.”

To those who ask Jenna why she isn’t going straight to graduate school, she explains, “My work comes straight out of what I learned at Southwestern about who I am and what kind of world I want to live in. Honestly, I think this is the most valuable thing for me to be doing right now—experimenting.”

Black, gold and green

At Southwestern, students take the lead in environmental activism, with initiatives ranging from the installation of LED lighting in a campus theater to mapping the solar potential of the campus in the University’s advanced GIS laboratory to a year-round community garden with a greenhouse and on-site composting of campus food waste.
“Paideia” (pronounced Pie-DAY-uh) is a word the ancient Greeks applied to an approach to education that was holistic in its scope and that prepared students for a life of productive citizenry. In their first year at Southwestern, students are introduced to an array of themes from which they choose a Paideia Cluster—a series of three interconnected courses, culminating in a fourth—the Paideia Seminar. Along with interdisciplinary courses, Paidiea integrates civic engagement and intercultural learning into the academic experience.

**Civic Engagement:** More than 70 percent of Southwestern students volunteer on campus or in the community—a rate that is twice the national average. Students give more than 23,000 service hours annually in community-based learning projects, long-term partnerships, and volunteerism in more than 100 local non-profits and agencies.

**Study Abroad:** More than half of Southwestern students take advantage of diverse study abroad experiences around the world, including a semester in London, Washington, D.C. or New York, as well as a variety of approved semester-long or summer programs in Europe, South America, Africa and Asia.

**Living-Learning Communities (LLCs):** In conjunction with First Year Seminars, LLCs are designed to help students connect in-class and out-of-class experiences by fostering an element of intellectual curiosity within the residence hall.

Sixty percent of the Class of 2011 reported completing at least one internship experience. Twenty-nine percent of the class reported completing two or more internships.

**Where are they now?**

The Class of 2011 reported their primary activity after graduation:

- **60.9%** Employed
- **34.5%** Graduate/Professional School or Advanced Coursework
- **4.6%** Other (Seeking or Volunteering)

**Prepped for any destination**

Ninety-one percent of Southwestern graduates’ first destination is employment or graduate/professional school. This year, some of those destinations have included:

**Recent positions accepted:**
- Disney’s Animal Kingdom Park, Animal Behavior Intern
- CIEE China, English Teacher
- Deloitte & Touche LLP, Auditor
- Hewlett-Packard Company, IT Developer/Engineer
- Capital Area Food Bank, Program Coordinator
- Caritas of Austin, Case Manager
- Charles Schwab, Broker Trainee
- National Instruments, Global Database Marketing
- Houston Museum of Natural Science, Information Coordinator
- Midland ISD, 12th Grade English Teacher
- Scott & White Healthcare, Dementia Care Specialist
- New York Life Insurance Company, Financial Adviser
- PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP, Staff Auditor
- YWCA Austin, Youth Specialist
- Steger Bizzell Engineering, Project Manager
- Teach for America, Bilingual Education Teacher
- Tesco Corporation, Field Sales Representative
- Human Interfaces, Inc., Usability Specialist
- SafePlace (via AmeriCorps), Case Manager/Life Skills Teacher
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Air Quality Investigator

**Graduate/Professional programs:**
- Rice University, Ph.D. in Applied Physics
- Columbia University, Ph.D. in Historical Musicology
- Georgetown University, Ph.D. in Neuroscience
- Boston University, M.A. in Public Relations
- The George Washington University, Ph.D. in Political Science
- California Institute of the Arts, M.F.A. in Theatre Management
- Johns Hopkins University, M.H.A. (Master of Health Administration)
- Tulane University, M.P.H. (Master of Public Health)
- University of California, Davis, Ph.D. in Animal Behavior
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Juris Doctor Degree
- Vanderbilt University, Master of Accounting (M.Acc)
- The University of Texas at Austin, MSSW
- University of Wisconsin, Madison, Ph.D. in Computer Science
- The University of Texas School of Law, Juris Doctor Degree
- The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, M.D.
- The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, M.D.
What will your story be?

To find out (all) about Morgan (left) or Zoe (on the cover), as well as others, go to www.southwestern.edu/seniorstories2012.

For a snapshot of what it takes to be a Southwestern student, visit www.southwestern.edu/admission.