





Establishing the Holster Scholars program 15 years ago was a true gift. It was a gift to UConn and UConn Honors. It was a gift to the educational experiences of every single Holster Scholar, and it will continue to be a gift to all future Holster Scholars.

Today, the Holster Scholars Program is a legacy of learning, of innovation, and creativity. It provides lessons about failure as well as success. It demonstrates that an individual rarely accomplishes things alone, and that mentorship and community make our tribulations bearable and our triumphs joyful.

As we mark this milestone, we wish to share our gratitude for everything the Holster Scholars Program has provided to our students over the years, and we share our excitement for the opportunities it will continue to provide the Holster Scholars yet to come.

Dr. Jennifer Lease Butts

Director of the Honors Program and Associate Vice Provost of Enrichment Programs



The Holster experience was a turning point in my life. It took a spark of curiosity and turned it into a real research project, giving me the confidence to tackle questions that felt “impossible.” It sparked my passion for research, but even more importantly, it connected me with Dr. Dupuy, his graduate students, and a group of undergraduates who have become the most important relationships I’ve built at UConn. I’m still working in the Dupuy lab today, pushing forward on ductile ceramics, and that continuity all began with Holster.

The program showed me how to frame problems, test ideas, and keep going when things didn’t work out the first time. Those lessons have carried into everything else I do— from leading my robotics team to shaping my future career path. What I’d like the Holster family to know is simple: this program gave me a foundation of mentorship, community, and belief in myself that continues to define who I am at UConn and beyond.

Krish Bhuvu
2024 Holster Scholar



The Holster Scholars Program pointed me to a path I was initially interested in, but never imagined the future adventures it would lead to. I had always wanted to try research as a prospective physician, particularly one who wants to work in academic medicine, but to what degree was always an uncertainty. Now, with the base I was able to build through Holster, I am an MPhil Candidate at the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute at the University of Cambridge, working to better understand the underpinnings of pediatric brain cancer. Without starting my academic career as a Holster Scholar, I do not believe I would be where I am. It allowed me to understand and grow as a prospective researcher, finding a love for a rather niche subject that I want to lead a medical career in, and helped steer me on that path to go after the dreams I have had since I was 15. I could not be more grateful for the Holster Scholarship, and I will always remember the chance it gave me that has snowballed into so many amazing opportunities for my own success. Finally, specifically to Robert and Carlotta Holster, thank you so much for starting a journey I could not have imagined as a freshman. I hope there will be many future Holsters who go on to achieve a great many things as a result of the opportunities awarded through the scholarship.

Jackson Ayers
2021 Holster Scholar

The Holster Scholars program was my very first introduction to independent research, and it truly set me on the path I'm on today. As an undergraduate, having the opportunity to design and carry out a project so early in my training gave me the confidence to ask scientific questions and the skills to pursue them. Just as importantly, the program created a supportive community of peers and mentors who showed me that research could be both collaborative and deeply rewarding.

That foundation carried forward into every step of my academic journey. The curiosity and independence I first discovered through the Holster program sparked a passion for research that grew into a career. Today, I am preparing to defend my PhD in Neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania, an outcome I can directly trace back to the doors opened by being a Holster Scholar.

I want the Holster family to know how grateful I am for the experience. The program not only gave me early research opportunities but also instilled a mindset of exploration, persistence, and collaboration that has shaped the scientist and person I've become.

Sarah Ferrigno
2016 Holster Scholar





As a freshman in college, especially one trying to navigate fully online learning, it's hard to believe in yourself. But when I became a Holster Scholar, I started to really believe in myself. The confidence a young person gets from someone believing in them enough to invest in them is incredible. The Holster Scholars program taught me that I can overcome challenges, perform research that's valuable, and achieve ambitious goals. This confidence the Holster Scholar program fostered in me set me up to test my own limits and reach my potential. I will always be grateful that the Holsters were willing to invest in me as a freshman.

Lyla White
2021 Holster Scholar



Being selected as a Holster Scholar my freshman year at UConn proved to be one of the most impactful events on my career and life trajectory. Because of my early experience doing full-time research, I discovered a passion for synthetic chemistry and made connections with faculty and graduate students at UConn who have continued to be mentors and close friends (I was a groomsman in my graduate student mentor's wedding last year). Additionally, that early experience opened the door to many future opportunities, fellowships, and scholarships, eventually setting me up to do a PhD in chemistry at Harvard University and now a postdoctoral fellowship at Caltech.

I would like to thank the Holster family for supporting early research experiences for Honors students at UConn; your investment in me as an ambitious, budding researcher continues to yield dividends as I pay it forward through mentoring and training the next generation of talented chemists.

John Ovia
2014 Holster Scholar



The Holster Scholars Program gave me my first chance to do independent research in economics, which turned out to be a lot more difficult than I expected. I feel very fortunate to have had the time and resources to take on that challenge so early in college. The skills I gained during that first summer allowed me to take PhD-level courses at UConn from my sophomore year onwards, which helped me secure a job at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York after graduation. I am now finishing my PhD at MIT's Sloan School of Management, continuing the journey started during that summer over a decade ago. I will be forever grateful to the Holster family for making that possible.

Patrick Adams
2014 Holster Scholar



The Holster Scholars Program was an invaluable catalyst for my research career and personal growth. I learned from my excellent mentor in an innovative research lab through all four years of undergrad and my Master's program. Currently, I am continuing my engagement with cancer research in a physician-scientist training program at Brown University. I hope to one day execute your scholarly vision of sponsoring university students to achieve your dreams. Along my journey to understanding and treating cancer patients, I will cherish the experiences, opportunities, and friendships of the Holster community. Thank you.

James He
2018 Holster Scholar

The Holster Scholars Program started everything for me. As a first year Ecology & Evolutionary Biology major, I was taking introductory courses surrounded by pre-med students, not yet feeling immersed in the work I wanted to be doing.

Through the Holster program, I began discovering those things--studying birds, forests, and invasive species--while building a relationship with my long-term research mentor.

I published my first academic paper after my Holster experience, presented the work at my first conference, and used this work to build the foundation of an academic career focused on the feedback between animal movements and vegetation structure. I wrote my dissertation on this topic (focusing on central African forests instead of Connecticut forests), and am now conducting postdoctoral research at Harvard on similar topics to what my Holster project addressed. Thank you to the Holster family for having the vision to support students who want to build their life's work from their first year at UConn. They just might continue their Holster project forever!

Nicholas Russo
2015 Holster Scholar





I have found my purpose through Holster. Ever since I was young, I have been an intentional explorer. I also had so many questions to ask about the world, and unfortunately it was always my parents that I had to bother to ask until I was given this opportunity to do research, ask my own questions, and find answers that matter to other people too. Without my start as a Holster Scholar, I would never have met the people I have in research that motivate me to stay here. Thanks to the Holster family, I have been empowered to ask my questions and potentially help people in doing so.

Ademide Ogunsina
2023 Holster Scholar



When I was selected to be a Holster Scholar, I felt like a con man. I was fleecing a wonderful couple out of \$4,000 to watch comedy shows and take comedy classes. Looking back, I realize the Holster Scholar Program accomplished exactly what it intended. It set me on a path of taking myself more seriously in all aspects of my academics and career; if I could be awarded this prestigious research scholarship, maybe I should continue to demand more of myself. It also allowed me to lean into my interest in comedy. And ten years later, I am performing regular shows at the very same comedy theaters I once attended as an audience member and took classes as a student. It's quite the full circle moment. And in my career, I've recently started a job where I am writing for comedy videos—it's a dream come true and I'm not sure I would have ever felt like it was a valid dream to chase if not for Holster. On behalf of the many lives you've changed through your generosity – thank you.

Dylan Smith
2015 Holster Scholar



When I entered my first year at UConn, I did not know there was such a thing as research in the humanities. I found out about the Holster Scholars Program through a previous Holster scholar who did a project in literary studies. This inspired me to apply for Holster to complete a project in cultural and media studies. My Holster experience propelled me into further research as an undergraduate fellow at the UConn Humanities Institute. I am currently applying to graduate school to continue researching topics, themes, and questions that first emerged in my Holster Scholar project. The research I undertook as a Holster Scholar, and the connections I made with previous scholars who helped mentor me, have laid the foundation for my future career plans. Being a Holster Scholar was a critical point in my growth for becoming an independent thinker and lifelong learner.

Kathryn Andronowitz
2023 Holster Scholar



In my first days of undergrad, I recall the UConn Honors Program presenting research opportunities such as the Holster Scholars Program. At that time, I did not realize how this opportunity would come to help shape my future endeavors and research. I recall that obtaining positions in labs as an undergraduate researcher was very difficult, and I wondered what my research experience might look like. However, by coming to my principal investigator equipped with an idea, and by working through proposal development, I was able to formulate an independent project and continue research in a lab that I had started working in as a high schooler as part of UConn's Mentor Connection. This project developed over time, and over the years in the same lab, I won a Summer Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) Award, was named a University Scholar, and completed a thesis master's degree on Parkinson's disease built on foundational work from my freshman year of college. All these experiences strengthened my scientific research skills that have carried me through to the scholarly activity that I complete as a resident physician. My research experiences also fostered friendships with other Holster scholars and provided meaningful connections with lab mates and my principal investigator. I am grateful for the support and opportunities that the Holster Program provided.

Isabel Nip
2014 Holster Scholar



15th Anniversary Celebration





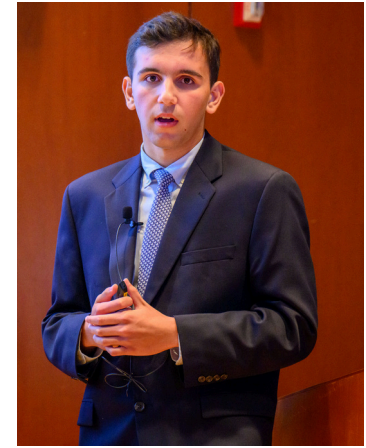
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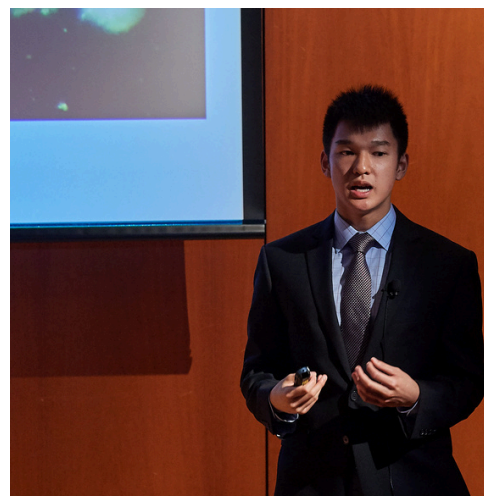
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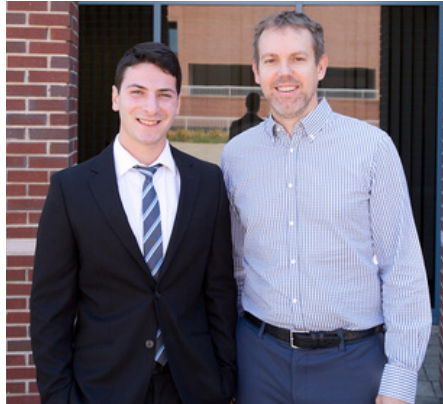
2020



2019



2018



2017



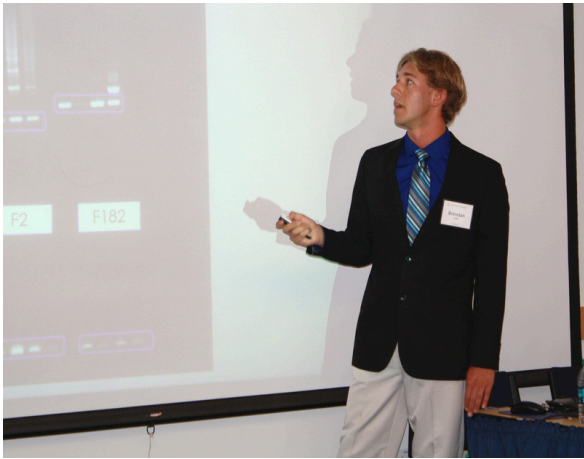
2016



2015



2014



2013



2012



2011

HOLSTER
SCHOLARS

