

PRESIDENTIAL WHITE PAPER

# Enhancing the CMC Student Experience

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## THE CAMPAIGN FOR CLAREMONT MCKENNA

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Prepared by  
**Pamela B. Gann**  
President  
Claremont McKenna College  
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## **Enhancing the CMC Student Experience**

*Claremont McKenna offers a rich array of programs outside the classroom that broaden our students' experiences and prepare them to be leaders in the public and private sectors.*

As a college president, I am always heartened by my interactions with students. This past summer, I received an e-mail from Max Wilson '09, who had just returned from a trip to Israel organized by CMC's Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights. Max was part of a group of students who traveled with CMC professors Gary Gilbert and Jonathan Petropoulos for two weeks as part of the College's academic travel abroad program. Max and his fellow students met with scholars, politicians, and social activists who offered a variety of perspectives on the complex issues facing Israel. "One of the most notable aspects of the journey was the opportunity to work at track two negotiation meetings in Nazareth with CMC alumnus David Kellen," Max explained to me. "I served the meetings as a note taker, recording ideas presented by the joint Israeli-Palestinian negotiating teams, composed of journalists, scholars, and former government officials (including attendees of the Camp David Accord meetings and both Oslo negotiations), charged with creating a guiding framework for ongoing official negotiations working towards building a Culture of Peace within the two societies. Only with the support of the center, and CMC, could I have had this incredibly unique experience. Academic travel has been one of the most valuable pieces of my CMC experience to date, if not the most valuable."

This note from Max captures the power and breadth of the educational experiences that we offer CMC students beyond the traditional classroom. Through sponsored internship programs, academic travel, and the Athenaeum program, our students have an array of opportunities to explore their interests and engage in the world of ideas.

Although internship programs are not unique to CMC, the College views these experiences as integrally tied to our mission. Through the support of the College's Kravis Leadership Institute ([KLI](#)), we have developed a sponsored internship program that provides our students with an unparalleled opportunity to gain real-world experiences and make a difference in communities throughout the world. In 2002, KLI revised the framework for its Summer Internship in Leadership program to incorporate an academic component and to enhance funding support for students. Students completing internships can earn one-half credit for completion of the academic requirements of the KLI internship. In addition to academic credit, KLI has also used student wage and research funding to support students seeking a meaningful leadership experience in a nonprofit organization. The KLI stipends average approximately \$3,000 and are essential to ensuring access to the program because most of the internships are unpaid.

Student response to the KLI program and other sponsored internship programs at the College has been remarkable. For example, the number of students participating in the KLI program alone increased from about 20 students in the summer of 2003 to more than 140 students in the summer of 2008. These students were supported by professors throughout the College who were responsible for overseeing the research papers prepared by students. CMC students went to work for non-profit organizations and non-

governmental organizations as well as companies in the private sector. Kravis interns ventured to Washington, D.C., to work with congressional staffers on sustainability issues and traveled to rural Jordan to define new strategies to empower women.

The success of KLI's internship program helped inspire a recent \$1 million gift from Robert Ho '81 to establish the Uroboros Fellowship Program, which was launched this past summer. The Uroboros Fellowships are offered to a select number of students to pursue independent projects that will be transforming experiences. The internships must include an international experience in a place with which the student is not familiar. Ian Johnson '09, one of our first Uroboros fellows, took full advantage of this challenge. He traveled this past summer to Mongolia to research Genghis Khan. Ian followed the path of Khan's armies from Warsaw to Ulaanbataar, Mongolia, and spent some time with leading scholars at the National University of Mongolia. Ian will call on his fascinating experiences over the summer as he writes his senior thesis on Genghis Khan.

The rapid growth in our sponsored internship programs, led by the KLI program and the Uroboros Fellowship, and the tremendous feedback we receive from students and parents regarding these experiences, have led us to take steps to reorganize all of our sponsored internship activities under the College's [Career Services Center](#) and embed these activities as an integral component of the CMC student experience. In addition, we also need to take steps to secure and enhance endowment support for these programs to ensure our ability to provide access to as many students as possible. The KLI program, for example, is funded primarily through unrestricted sources, and it will not be feasible to continue to provide stipends for up to 140 students per year without additional endowment support. Similarly, the College's McKenna International Summer Internship

Program, which currently provides funding for approximately 30 students per year pursuing internships in Asia and the Pacific Rim, is funded principally through a “spend-down” trust from founding Trustee Donald McKenna. Although tremendously popular with our students, the McKenna Program is scheduled to end after 2009.

Paralleling the recent growth in our sponsored internship programs, the College has also recently experienced a significant growth in what we describe as our academic travel programs. Claremont McKenna prides itself on the close relationships between students and professors, and our academic travel programs enable students to expand on the lessons learned on campus. Traveling with professors who serve as guides and mentors, our students (typically in groups of 10-15) have researched the Holocaust in Poland and the Czech Republic; they have sharpened their French language skills in Quebec; and they have traveled to remote villages in northern India to explore the themes of globalization and history. CMC’s academic travel programs differ from study abroad and internship opportunities in significant ways. Generally, academic travel programs are related specifically to one or more CMC courses-in-progress. The sites visited and the emphases of the program are related to course work, research projects, or senior theses that the students have under way at the time. And the programs take advantage of “down” periods during the academic year, including January and spring break. As is the case with our sponsored internship programs, our current funding for these academic programs relies upon unrestricted resources, and additional endowment support is necessary to ensure that future CMC students will have opportunities to participate in these powerful experiences.

While our students take advantage of sponsored internships and academic travel programs that take them well beyond the boundaries of our campus, they also benefit from unique opportunities to engage in the world of ideas on campus. As I talk with CMC graduates across the country, I hear a consistent theme—the [Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum](#) is an enduring and vital component of the CMC experience. During my years in higher education, I have not seen a public speaking series comparable to the Athenaeum. Where else can undergraduates and faculty sit down in an intimate setting four nights each week with politicians, business leaders, social activists, musicians, environmentalists, and journalists to learn about and discuss the most pressing issues of our time? Over the past few years alone, we've had presentations and discussions with an impressive array of individuals, including economist and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, political advisor and journalist David Gergen, environmentalist Terry Tempest Williams, novelist Salman Rushdie, and human rights activist and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi.

As I have observed the evolution and growth of these programs and experiences, I have become firmly convinced that they represent defining characteristics of what I describe as the “CMC Student Experience,” one that I believe is truly distinctive in American higher education. We face challenges, however, as we move forward and demand outstretches our budgets for these programs: participation in sponsored internships is growing at record levels; CMC professors are continually proposing new opportunities in academic travel; and the cost of bringing in world-class speakers to the Athenaeum continues to rise.

To ensure that internships, academic travel, and the Athenaeum will continue to thrive, the Campaign for Claremont McKenna has a specific objective of creating an

endowed Student Leadership Development Fund to support these and other student leadership development programs. Endowed support for these transforming programs will allow the College to continue to build upon our successes and offer myriad new opportunities for students and faculty. Our goal over the course of the campaign is to raise endowment contributions specifically for the Student Leadership Development Fund, and we have already made progress. Still, we must focus on securing new resources from alumni and friends—by the end of the campaign, we will complete an important legacy for co-curricular activities that will give our students enriching experiences that will remain with them throughout their lives.