

Researching

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“GOING FORWARD WISELY”:

**ABF Research Professor James J. Heckman Addresses
the White House Summit on Early Education**

“Going Forward ABF Research Pro the White House Sum



James J. Heckman,

a Research Professor at the American Bar Foundation, is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at The University of Chicago, a Nobel Laureate in economics and an expert in the economics of human development. In his ABF-supported projects, Heckman has researched the origins of racial disparity, methods and models for measuring discrimination, the economics and psychology of social capabilities such as self-control, and the effects of self-control on crime and health. His current ABF project is entitled “Analyzing the Influential Early Childhood Policies that are Proven to Promote Human Flourishing: Understanding Which Strategies Work (Including a Cost-Benefit Analysis) and Why.”

On Wednesday, December 10, 2014 Professor Heckman addressed policymakers, advocates, philanthropists, scholars and members of the media at the White House Summit on Early Education. Below is the transcript of his speech, “Going Forward Wisely.”

It is an honor to participate in this summit.

A large body of evidence shows the benefits of investing in early childhood stimulation and nurturing for disadvantaged children. Numerous rigorous empirical studies, including those of the Perry Preschool program, the Abecedarian program, Head Start and the Nurse Family Partnership program, consistently show the value to the economy and society of investing in the human capital development of children from birth to age five. Many studies of the features of family life that contribute to developing children who lead

flourishing lives point in the same direction, and show the harm that ensues when such investments are not made.

This gathering shows that policymakers, business leaders and philanthropists are now embracing the evidence-based wisdom of investing in high-quality early childhood programs and bolstering American family life. Today, I want to review the strong evidence supporting these initiatives to address how we can make a fairer, more productive society.

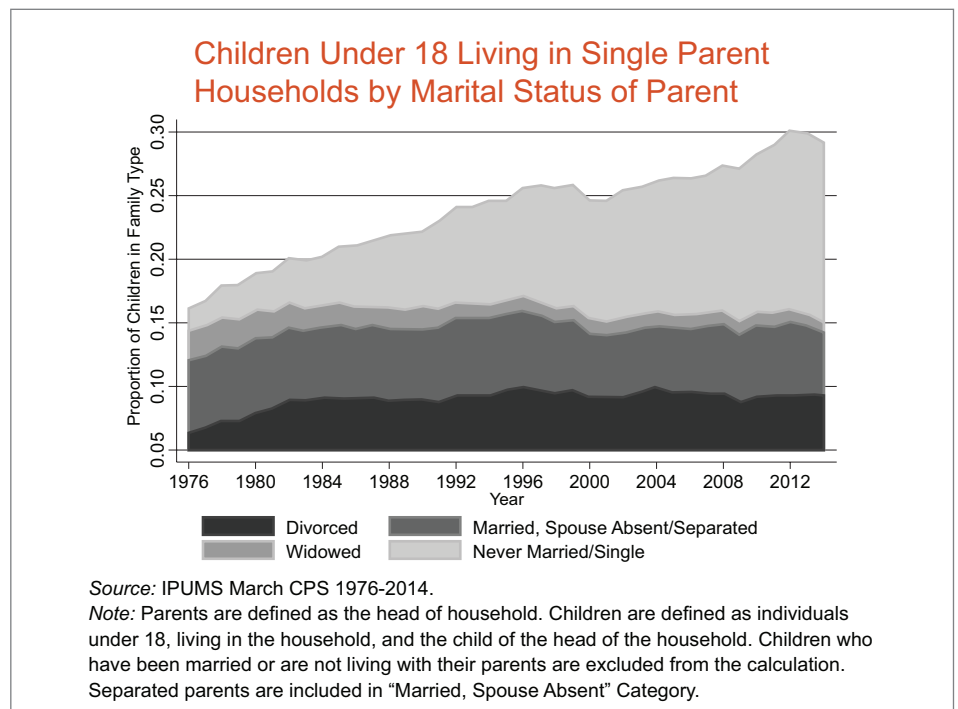
The data provide clear guidelines for action. First, American policy should

Wisely”

Professor James J. Heckman Addresses Summit on Early Education

acknowledge the power of the accident of birth. A child does not choose the family he or she is born into; but society can enrich the opportunities of disadvantaged children to flourish. We can do this by supplementing the parenting resources available to children and scaffolding the lives of children by approximating the nurturing and stimulating environments available to children in more advantaged families.

Society and the programs launched by today’s initiatives should recognize that good parenting is paramount to life success. Without doubt, the family is the greatest contributor to the success of children and to upward social and economic mobility. And, without doubt, in many quarters of our society, the American family is under great stress. The way parents interact with their children, the amount of time they spend with them and the resources they have to



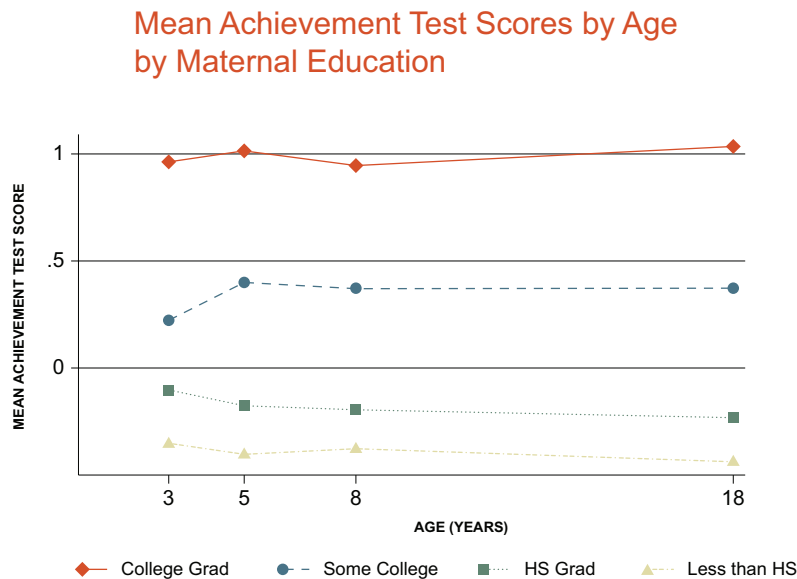
provide intellectual and social stimulation greatly affect their children’s potential for leading flourishing lives.

The evidence shows dramatic differences in achievement test scores and in social and character skills across children from different economic and social groups. Children of college-educated mothers achieve at a far higher rate than children whose mothers have a high school degree or less.

These gaps emerge long before children enter kindergarten.

Twenty years ago, the developmental psychologists Hart and Risley showed that the achievement gap opens as early as age three. In a typical hour, a child living in a disadvantaged family hears roughly 600 words. By contrast, in that same hour a child in a professional family hears over 2,100 words. By age three, the cumulative vocabulary of a child living in

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a disadvantaged family is 500 words, far below the 1,100 word cumulative vocabulary possessed by a child from a professional family. This early inequality of basic skills tends to persist throughout life and leads to economic and social inequality in the capacities to act that are difficult to close later in life.

Taking the long view, Americans can most effectively address inequality in society with a strategy of predistribution—by enriching the parenting resources for young children in disadvantaged environments, not by redistributing income to adults. Child disadvantage is not properly measured by a lack of money available to the parents of children. Unconditional income transfers to poor families are not nearly as effective in producing upward mobility and lifetime success of their children as is a strategy of enriching the nurturing environments available to young children that promote a child's physical, mental and social development. Investments that bolster the parenting capacities of families are the most effective way to promote social mobility and foster equal opportunities for all. They empower children with the capabilities to flourish as dignified and engaged citizens

and workers throughout their lives. Such investments provide significant returns to individuals and society, provided that we invest in quality systems throughout the critical years of birth to age five.

Early investments are important because skills beget skills. Does preschool have a positive effect in promoting skills? Yes, according to analyses of Perry Preschool, ABC and other quality programs. But the study by Hart and Risley also shows that the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children are already large at age three. Skill building begins at birth and each skill learned provides a foundation for other skills.

Recent research also documents that multiple skills are important for life success. For too long, the conventional wisdom has been that I.Q. and cognitive skills as measured by achievement tests like PISA were the major social and economic determinants of life success. In the past, early childhood interventions were judged by their success in boosting I.Q. On this dimension, many fail. Yet disadvantaged children participating in quality early childhood programs have had far better life outcomes on a number of measures than children who didn't. We have

Hart & Risley, 1995

Children enter school with "meaningful differences" in vocabulary knowledge.

1. Emergence of the Problem

In a typical hour, the average child hears:

Family Status	Actual Differences in Quantity of Words Heard	Actual Differences in Quality of Words Heard
Welfare	616 Words	5 affirmatives, 11 prohibitions
Working Class	1,251 Words	12 affirmatives, 7 prohibitions
Professional	2,153 Words	32 affirmatives, 5 prohibitions

2. Cumulative Vocabulary at Age 3

Cumulative Vocabulary at Age 3	
Children from welfare families:	500 Words
Children from working class families:	700 Words
Children from professional families:	1,100 Words

learned that I.Q. isn't everything and it doesn't explain very much of the difference between those who succeed and those who do not. For many tasks in life, both in the economy and in larger society, socio-emotional skills—character skills—are as important or more important for success. Socio-emotional skills are highly malleable, especially at a young age. Impulse control, persistence,

“grit,” self-awareness and sociability can and should be taught at the very earliest ages—and throughout the school years. These skills drive the engagement, motivation and achievement that promote successful lives as measured by full-time employment, higher wages, healthy lifestyles, less participation in crime, and engagement in a variety of socially productive behaviors.

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Essential elements for successful childhoods include engaged, supportive parents and teachers, and early health, nutrition and learning. We should not underestimate the role of the parent and the power that comes from providing parents with information, resources and choice. Ensuring that parents have the knowledge and resources for providing a stimulating home environment is just as important, if not more important, as anything that happens in the classroom when children enter school. This is where home-visiting programs and other efforts to productively engage the parent in the life of the child come into play. They foster parental attachment, positive interactions and hence greater parental investment in children.

It has long been established that programs such as Abecedarian

and Perry Preschool produce better educational, social and economic outcomes for the children enrolled in them. More recent evidence shows that quality early childhood programs can also prevent chronic disease and substantially lower healthcare costs.

Until recently, nobody had analyzed the health effects of the Abecedarian program for its participants who are now at or approaching age 40. From birth to age five, treated children in the Abecedarian program received nutrition, early learning and health services in the form of periodic check-ups

Abecedarian Project Health Effects at Age 35 (Males)

	Treatment Mean	Control Mean	Treatment p-value
Systolic Blood Pressure	125.79	143.33	0.018
Diastolic Blood Pressure	78.53	92.00	0.024
Pre-Hypertension	0.68	0.78	0.235
Hypertension	0.10	0.44	0.011
HDL Cholesterol	53.21	42.00	0.067
Cholesterol/HDL-C	3.89	4.69	3.89
Abdominal Obesity	0.65	0.87	0.136
Metabolic Syndrome	0.00	0.25	0.009

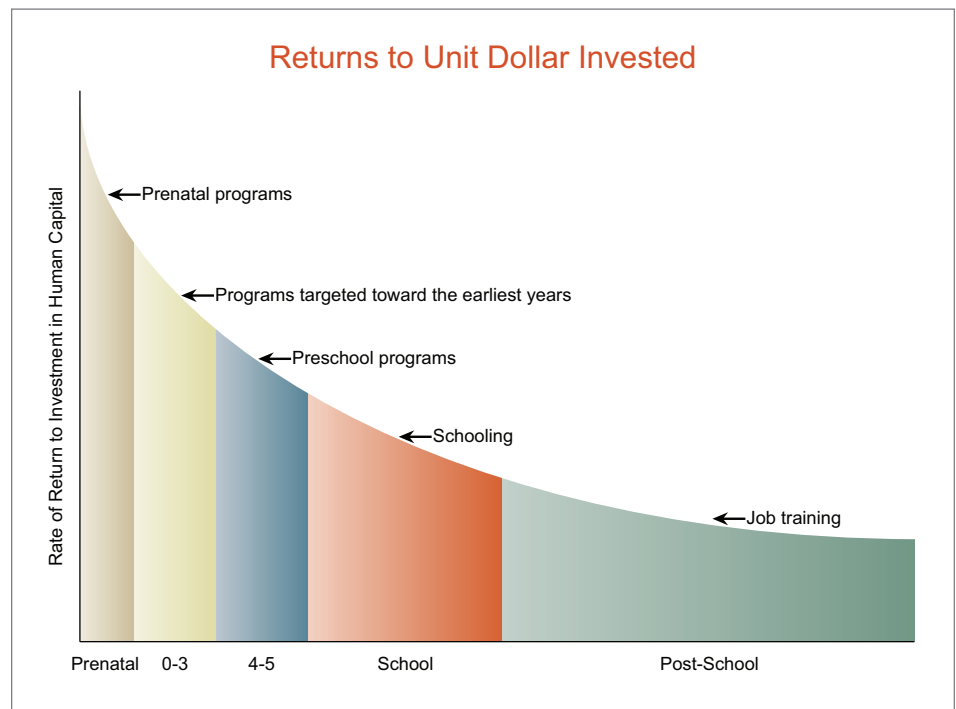
Source: Campbell, Conti, Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Pungello and Pan (2014).

and health screenings, referral for treatment and management of compliance with medical protocols. Through center visits, their parents received advice on how to create a nurturing home environment, and there is evidence that parents of participants did so. There is similar evidence from other studies.

The effects on adult health of a program originally designed to boost cognition are remarkable, particularly among males. This evidence shows the benefits of boosts in character, self-control and cognition that percolate across all domains of life. Treated males had higher “good” HDL cholesterol and substantially reduced levels of hypertension, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and metabolic syndrome, which dramatically increases one’s risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Treated males had no metabolic syndrome. None! Zero! Incidence among males in the control group was 25%. There were also positive effects for women in the treatment group. They were less likely to suffer from pre-hypertension and obesity and were at significantly lower risk for total coronary heart disease than those in the control group.

A program originally designed to boost I.Q. worked, in fact,

Investing in the lives of disadvantaged children is a strategy that...fosters social inclusion and the productivity of the American workforce, and creates a healthier society for all.



by boosting both the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of participants, giving them greater control over their lives to make healthy lifestyle choices. It started shortly after birth and also created permanent gains in I.Q.

The evidence shows that it is much more effective to invest in high-quality early childhood programs than to

remediate later in life. For early childhood programs targeted to disadvantaged children, there is no trade-off between equity and efficiency as there is for most other social programs. Every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children produces a 7–10% annual return on investment through increased productivity and lower social costs. This

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estimated return accounts for all of the social costs and distortions that arise in taxing people to raise revenue, and passes the market test of even the most fiscally conservative.

Quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children are not entitlements or bottomless wells of social spending. They are not government boondoggles. The investments we make today in disadvantaged young children promote social mobility, create opportunity and foster a vibrant, healthy and inclusive society and economy. Investing in the lives of disadvantaged children is a strategy that appeals to Americans across all economic, social and partisan lines. It promotes family values. It strengthens the American family by offering voluntary programs that enrich the lives of children and builds in them the skills that create successful lives, while at the same time

respecting diverse cultural and religious values. It fosters social inclusion and the productivity of the American workforce, and creates a healthier society for all.

Thank you.



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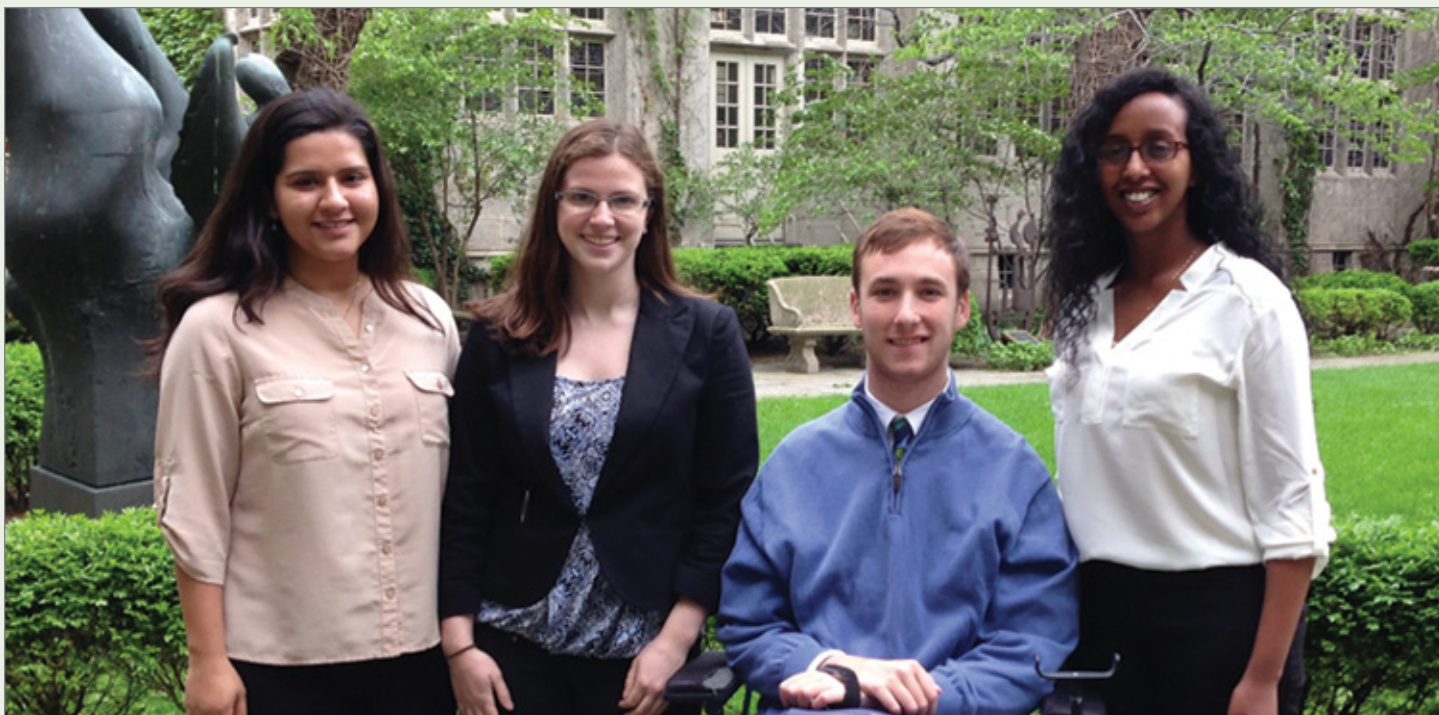
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¹ U.S. Social Security Administration, Fact Sheet, February 7, 2013.

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American Bar Foundation Hosts 2015 Summer Research Diversity Fellows



The 2015 Summer Research Diversity Fellows: Left to right: Maritza Navarrete, Meagan McKinstry, Jay Ruckelshaus, Winta Yohannes

The 2015 Summer Research Diversity Fellows arrived at ABF on June 1 to begin their eight-week residencies, studying law and social science. Chosen from a very competitive field of undergraduates from across the US, the four finalists spent their summer working on research projects with ABF faculty and participating in an integrative seminar led by ABF Research Professor Stephen Daniels. In addition, the Fellows undertook a number of field trips to Chicago law offices, law schools, judges' chambers, the criminal courts and other real-world venues that were the object of their studies.

Now in its 28th year, the program introduces a select group of talented undergraduates from diverse backgrounds to the rewards and demands of a research-oriented career in the field of law and social science. Most of the over 100 alumni to date have graduated from law school, and gone on to successful careers in law, academia, government and business.

For its generous financial support of the program in 2015,* ABF gratefully acknowledges the Law School Admission Council and AT&T. ABF is also grateful to receive funding from the Kenneth F. and Harle G. Montgomery Foundation, the Solon E. Summerfield Foundation, and the National Science Foundation in support of the program.

*As of July 2015

Winta Yohannes, born in Eritrea, is a rising senior at Reed College pursuing a B.A. in psychology. She started her undergraduate career at Lake Forest College before transferring to Reed in 2013. The summer of her freshman year, she was selected as a Richter Scholar and conducted research on how homeless, abused women found stable housing in Chicago. She continued this research and co-authored a manuscript, “The Role of a Home: The Child-Centered Concerns of Homeless Abused Mothers,” which has been submitted for publication. Since then, her academic interests have expanded to include immigration policy, minority rights, and the intersection of psychology and the law. She was able to explore all of these interests through a Reed College President’s Summer Fellowship last summer, which allowed her to travel to Uganda, Italy, and Switzerland to interview Eritrean refugees about their journey to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, Winta introduced a social justice-themed dorm to Reed, helped first-generation, minority, and non-traditional students navigate college as a coordinator of the Peer Mentor Program, and served as a tutor in the Writing Center at Lake Forest. Now, she is learning about alternative detention

programs through an internship at Youth, Rights, and Justice, a Portland-based nonprofit law firm, while writing a thesis about how adolescents perceive risk in the justice system, particularly while making plea bargain decisions. She intends to pursue a JD/Ph.D. in Psychology and is grateful for this opportunity with the American Bar Foundation. Winta worked with Research Professor Janice Nadler this summer.

Jay Ruckelshaus, a native of Indianapolis, IN, is a rising senior at Duke University, where he majors in political science and philosophy and minors in English and history as an Angier B. Duke Scholar. He is particularly interested in minority rights, criminal justice reform, voting rights, disability theory/law, and the role political theory can play in direct matters of public policy. He has worked as a research assistant on democratic accountability for Duke Professor Herbert Kitschelt and as a Research Fellow for the Indiana Governor’s office. Jay is heavily involved on campus at Duke, serving as an undergraduate representative to the Board of Trustees, a Student Government Senator, and student representative to the faculty curriculum committee. He is also co-editor-in-chief of *Eruditio*,

Duke’s undergraduate humanities academic journal, and an editor of the *Duke Political Review*. A Truman Scholar and elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior, Jay won the Faculty Scholars Award, considered the highest academic prize bestowed by Duke’s faculty. Jay is a passionate advocate for disability rights, founding and serving as president of Ramp Less Traveled, a national disability and education nonprofit. He also planned the inaugural Beyond Disability, Beyond Compliance Retreat (a national conference designed to promote student interests to the center of college accessibility conversations), serves as Director of Outreach of the Accessibility Matters disability awareness campaign, and has been invited to give keynote presentations at numerous regional and national conferences. He hopes to pursue a JD/PhD in either political science or political theory, and spent the summer working with Faculty Fellow Christopher Schmidt.

Maritza Navarrete, a native of Evanston, IL, is a rising senior at Vanderbilt University. She is double majoring in economics and mathematics with a minor in Islamic Studies. Maritza is particularly interested in international law, development economics, and immigration and

refugee rights. In the fall of 2014, Maritza studied abroad in Amman, Jordan, where she conducted an independent study project examining the financial and Sharia-compliance regulations of Islamic banks. Maritza was an intern at the City Manager's Office in the City of Evanston, where she collaborated with community leaders to plan events and provide services to increase outreach to the Latino community, including citizenship workshops, computer classes in Spanish, educational activities for Spanish-speaking elementary school students, and cultural events. In Nashville, Maritza is involved in the Latino and immigrant communities through AMIGOS, an organization dedicated to connecting Vanderbilt students to service opportunities including medical translating, teaching ESL classes, tutoring, and translating for non-profit organizations serving immigrant communities. In addition, Maritza enjoys volunteering with her service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega. She has collaborated with the Nashville Rescue Mission, Second Harvest Soup Kitchen, and American Red Cross Blood drive to sponsor fundraising events across campus and in the Nashville area. In the future, Maritza plans to pursue a graduate degree in Economics and hopes to be able to research the

interplay of economics and public policy. Maritza worked alongside Research Professor John Hagan this summer.

Meagan McKinstry, a native of St. Louis, MO, is a rising senior at Grinnell College, where she is majoring in sociology. Her primary fields of interests include social inequality, as well as gender and sexuality studies. Last summer, she had the opportunity to intern at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City, where she helped conduct research on government misconduct, racial justice, and international human rights. The summer before that, she worked as an Assistant Team Advisor for the National Student Leadership Conference on Law and Advocacy, a summer program for high school students interested in pursuing law as a career. Both of these positions helped to invigorate her longstanding interest in law. At Grinnell, Meagan has involved herself with LGBTQIA advocacy whenever possible, and during her sophomore year, she directed Grinnell's newly-formed Queer Mentor Program, which enables students to speak confidentially with a mentor about issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. She also has served on the Queer Leadership Council, which plans and organizes events intended to

increase campus awareness of LGBTQIA issues. Aside from queer advocacy, Meagan is a member of the varsity swim team and club water polo team and sings with an a cappella group called Noteworthy. Additionally, she is one of the leaders of a Christian student group called Grinnellians Seeking Christ. Meagan is considering a number of post-graduate options, including the pursuit of a degree in law, social work, or divinity. Meagan worked with Research Professor Tom Ginsburg this summer.

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