Oxford Begins Innovative New Curriculum

With the start of spring semester, Oxford College launched a new curriculum that was two years in the making. Referred to as the General Education Program or GEP, this academic program aligns with Emory College’s general education requirements but has additional emphases and characteristics that are unique to Oxford.

The GEP’s basic structure is traditional, with course requirements organized into five academic areas:

- History, society, cultures
- Humanities, arts, language
- Humanities, arts, performance
- Mathematics and quantitative reasoning
- Science, nature, technology

During their time at Oxford, students will select a variety of courses from these areas to complete the requirements in at least three of them. In addition, they will take any courses required to prepare for their intended majors. They will also take two one-hour courses in the area of personal health, physical education, and dance.

Within each of the five academic areas, Oxford classes employ an innovative teaching approach, “ways of inquiry” (INQ), an element of the GEP that is unique to Oxford. All Oxford students must complete a minimum of three INQ courses. More than two dozen such courses are offered this spring, and the number of INQ offerings will increase in future semesters.

“The INQ pedagogy gets to the very heart of liberal arts education and deepens Oxford’s commitment to liberal arts intensive education,” says Dean Stephen Bowen.

INQ courses are not primarily lecture-based or survey courses, although they teach the fundamental concepts, principles, assumptions, and terminology of their particular discipline. Students are also engaged in learning through discovery by applying the ways in which scholars and researchers in that particular discipline ask questions and create knowledge.

If they are studying history, they will learn to think and conduct research the way historians do. In a biology course, they will learn to approach the creation of knowledge as a biologist does.

Using these methods of the discipline, they will be in some meaningful sense a historian or a biologist by the end of the course. The aim is to create much deeper, more durable learning.

Students in INQ courses will also consider issues of ethics and social responsibility and make connections across disciplines.

Classroom learning will be augmented with hands-on, real-world experiences. To be designated an INQ course, the course must require reading critically, communicating effectively, and pursuing knowledge independently through inquiry.

GEP’s next phase, the General Education Honors Program, will be implemented in the fall. This opportunity will be available competitively to the most academically accomplished sophomores.—Cathy Wooten

Oxford Outlook is now online. Visit www.oxford.emory.edu/oxfordoutlook.
Memoirs Class Teaches Students Literature and Life

Students may sometimes joke about being captive in their classes, but in an innovative course that has been offered at Oxford for the past two spring semesters, a prison is the actual classroom setting. The instructor is Stacy Bell 87OX, lecturer in English. Bell had an interest in teaching the incarcerated long before creating her Oxford class for spring 2010. She investigated some of the courses across the country that already were bringing together inmates and students in the same classroom, and in summer 2009 completed the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program’s training program for instructors. Through a family connection, she also met Julio Medina, who is the director of Exodus Transitional Community, a 501c3 organization based in Harlem that offers transitional assistance to men and woman after release from prison. Medina invited her to accompany him to a New York Theological Seminary class at Sing Sing, the infamous prison in Ossining, New York, where she was able to meet with inmates and get their reaction to her ideas for a class.

With this research under her belt, she set out to design a course for Oxford. The result is English 389R, Special Topics in Literature: Memoirs. Designed for approximately twelve Oxford students, the class meets twice a week, once on the Oxford campus with Oxford students only, and a second time, when the Oxford students board a van and ride with Bell to the Metro Women’s Prison in southwest Atlanta. There they meet in a classroom with up to twelve inmates, all of whom have been selected and approved for participation by prison officials. As a part of the course requirements, Oxford students complete the Georgia Department of Corrections’ volunteer training, orienting them to the prison environment. They learn that on the one hand they will interact with the inmates much as they do with other students, but on the other, there are differences. They must not touch inmates. They cannot exchange gifts or information with them. They cannot take notes during the class and must keep in strictest confidentiality anything the inmates share about themselves.

All of the class participants read literary and historical memoirs, such as The Narrative and Life of Frederick Douglass, a collection entitled Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives, and more recent works, including Lucy Grealy’s Autobiography of a Face and The Only Girl in the Car by Kathy Dobie. But the students do not only read and discuss the memoirs of others; they also write about their own lives in the memoir genre and share what they write with the other students. In some ways this is like all class discussions.

But, says Bell, “I remind my students that there is no way for this to be just a literature course. We are in prison, and we must talk about context. The main guiding question this semester is, ‘What [in our reading selection] is accurate, and what is true?’”

The class has a profound effect on most of the participants. One Oxford student wrote, “We see ‘truth’—true human potential, human nature, bare and spare, stripped down, no shields.” Bell adds, “They meet people who have been forced to reflect deeply because the only thing that they have control over is their personal narrative.” And another Oxford student wrote that the class “helps you think about your life in a different way—you consider the paths you have taken or the trajectory [you] have followed so far and you ask why?”

Bell is connected to an international network of those involved in similar work. Last summer she attended the Reading and Writing in Prison Conference at Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland, and presented a paper entitled, “Reflecting on the Self Where There Is No Self: Reading and Writing Memoirs in Prison,” a description of her Oxford course.

Because the class is conducted in a prison setting, there are always many references. They must not touch inmates. They cannot exchange gifts or information with them. They cannot take notes during the class and must keep in strictest confidentiality anything the inmates share about themselves.

As their teacher, I would say that students can learn in their classes what is accurate—e.g., incarceration rates, recidivism rates, minority over-representation—about incarceration and the criminal justice system, but they don’t really understand what is true about it until they sit in a prison classroom.”—Cathy Wooten

Grant Allows Kell to Make an Impact

Stephen Kell 12OX is poised to make an impact on the world. A first-year student from Suwanee, Georgia, Kell decided to work in cancer research when he was nine, when his grandmother learned she had the disease. He hopes his contribution to research can lessen the number of people afflicted with cancer every year. “I would like to make it so no one else has to go through the same suffering,” he says.

Before he can enter a research lab, however, Kell has to tackle his freshman and sophomore years, a chemistry major at Emory, and then medical school, and he almost missed his first step—enrolling at Oxford. After adding up the tuition expenses, his family realized they couldn’t meet all the costs of attending Oxford, in particular the added cost of the required textbooks. Fortunately Kell qualified for a Jack Oscar Gilbert Book Grant, which paid for his books. The grant made a difference to Kell. “I don’t need to sell my old textbooks for money to buy new ones. Because of this, I have decided to keep my old math and science books for future reference in higher-level courses,” he says, with an eye to his future.

Ian Gilbert 88OX, who established the Gilbert book grant, understands the value of a textbook. When he created the grant at Oxford to cover the cost of textbooks for two incoming first-year students annually, he wrote a letter to future grant recipients saying, “Books are heavy, but the information carried inside will help you forever.”

Kell is going to take him up on that notion, as he rolls up his sleeves to dig in to his studies. He sees Oxford as important preparation for his career in helping others. “I like the small class sizes at Oxford, which give you the ability to really connect with your professor,” he says. “And, I have been exposed to different ways of looking at the connections between science and the humanities. I feel that this has enriched me by encouraging me to be more well-rounded than I was prior to coming to Oxford.”

And well-rounded he is, as one of Kell’s current projects is to start a campus band. “Oxford needs an official jazz band,” he says. Before Kell makes an impact on the world, he’s going to start with Oxford, giving back to the place that is giving to him.

A grant made it possible for Stephen Kell 12OX to come to Oxford, where he will begin to make a difference.
Making an Impact on Oxford:  
Supporting the college’s renewal and growth

By most measures, Oxford College is thriving. The campus is vibrant this year with a fall enrollment of nine hundred students including 16 percent from overseas. We do not want to grow larger, but this full enrollment makes efficient use of the Oxford campus and creates possibilities for new faculty, new courses, and new campus life programs that we have never had before. The faculty and students report that they like this sense of campus fullness, and we have set an enrollment of nine hundred as our continuing, long-term target. Applications for next fall are on course to achieve an all-time record number with even stronger credentials than last year’s applicants, so this goal seems to be realistic.

Oxford’s ambitious new curriculum is detailed elsewhere in this edition of the Outlook. Faculty on the Atlanta campus have described the Oxford students as more intellectually mature: they know how to ask good questions and how to go about answering them. The new curriculum promises to deepen this attribute of our graduates. More specifically, individual Oxford students continue to win many accolades for their academic accomplishments and social contributions including a few that are cited elsewhere in this newsletter. Oxford’s academic and student development programs have never been stronger.

Then there is our physical plant. Oxford is both blessed and cursed with a historic campus. It creates a palpable sense of history and high purpose that can be achieved no other way, but it will always demand inordinate maintenance and renovation. The challenges of maintaining Oxford’s historic campus were amplified by decades of penury in which partial temporary solutions were the only possibility. Today, only a few buildings meet contemporary indoor air quality standards. The Seney Hall and Branham/East roofs leak, the utility infrastructure requires continuous attention and is very inefficient, and the library and Pierce Hall provide 1970s instructional environments for innovative 2011 instruction. Oxford needs a physical plant that is consistent with the quality of its students and its educational programs.

We are working on it. The University is doing its part in funding several projects including providing half the costs of the proposed science building and the library addition. But at private colleges, the expense of annual operations typically is covered by tuition and fees, and the cost of capital projects is met by gifts from alumni and friends. In the past, Oxford has not had a tradition of philanthropic support but in the past few years we have made important progress. Our development team led by Kevin Smyrl has reconnected many alumni and friends to Oxford and helped them discover the gratification they can gain from supporting the college’s renewal and growth. The opportunities are legion. The next time you are on campus, look around and talk with one of us about where we are in creating the environment Oxford’s students and faculty deserve.

There is sure to be a place for you to get involved.

Stephen H. Bowen  
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Dean’s Message

Oxford Outlook Is Moving to Emory Magazine

From now on, you’ll find Oxford Outlook twice a year in the pages of Emory Magazine, beginning with the special fall 2011 issue commemorating Emory’s 175th anniversary.

Gates Scholar Finds a Good Fit in Oxford

I knew it was the best fit for me.” Nearly all Oxford students would probably sum up their reason to come to Oxford that way. But the statement takes on special significance coming from Robin Walker 12OX of Valdosta, Georgia. As a Gates Millennium Scholar, Walker could likely have been admitted to and enrolled in nearly any college in the country. Emory via Oxford was her ultimate choice.

Walker was a member of the 2010 cohort of one thousand students nationwide who received the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which is awarded to students for the duration of their undergraduate studies. The Gates Millennium Scholars Program (GMS) was established in 1999 with the goal of developing the next generation of America’s leaders, and it gives special emphasis to empowering minority students. It is funded by a $1.6 billion grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. More than thirteen thousand students have received GMS scholarships, attending more than 1,500 schools, including Ivy League colleges, flagship state universities, and historically black colleges. In addition to financial assistance, Gates Millennium Scholars receive academic support, mentoring, and leadership training.

Walker found out about the Gates Scholarship through her participation in the Student Mentoring in Life and Education (SMILE) program at Valdosta High School (VHS). John Miller, a retired VHS teacher and coach, is director. Miller brings juniors in the SMILE program to Oxford every spring. Although he is not an alumnus himself, he is very familiar with Oxford as the son of John M. Miller, MD 47OX 49C and cousin of Willis L. (Wyn) Miller 67OX 69C 72L and Dutton Miller Sr. 71OX 73B. Miller says that Walker was an outstanding student who graduated with a 3.9 grade point average. “She enjoys life, is always upbeat and optimistic, and has a great ability to adapt.”

When she came to Oxford with Miller and the SMILE group in 2009, Walker says she liked the size and intimacy of the campus and right away put Oxford on her short list. Now that she is here, she is pleased with her choice, saying that she finds the classes challenge her in the way she wants. Having been very active in organizations at VHS, she decided to wait to get involved at Oxford during her first semester. “I wanted to focus on my grades,” she says. “I am now getting involved in Volunteer Oxford.”

There are seven other Gates Scholars currently enrolled at Oxford. One of them came through the recruitment efforts of alumna Helen Fogle Jones 64OX 67C. “The prestige of the Gates Millennium Scholarship by extension the Gates Foundation accrues to Oxford,” says Jennifer Patil 98OX 00C, associate dean for enrollment services, who oversees scholarships and other financial assistance. “It is a great honor to have these scholars choose Oxford.”

—Cathy Wooten
Alumna Turns Idealism into Realism to Help India’s Poor

Sreeratna Kancherla 96OX 98BC (center), pictured here at Lohia Little Angels School, in Hyderabad, India, is working to eradicate global poverty.

“Love marriages were not common in that day in India, and neither family approved. Still they got married and in the end it was a forty-four-year successful marriage,” she says. And now Kancherla, born and raised in West Point, Georgia, is defying her generation’s cultural norms in Western society. She’s abandoned a traditional legal career, where she worked for top-notch human rights institutes and peace strategy groups in London, New York, and Washington, D.C., to fulfill her vision of eradicating global poverty.

“Our is so large that there is no reason this many people should be suffering,” she says. Kancherla started by moving to India where she could observe issues on the ground” and quickly encountered the concept of social entrepreneurship, which uses business practices to solve societal problems with the goal of generating social value rather than profit.

During her four years in India, she worked for Social-Impact International to assist local social entrepreneurs and also started her own social business of providing leadership and life enhancement skills to victims of child labor trafficking.

Now back in Atlanta, Kancherla continues her mission as the inaugural director of the IDEX Social Enterprise Fellowship, based at Oglethorpe University. She selects, prepares, and then sends recent college graduates to Hyderabad, India, to help children in low-income areas by improving their schools.

With eleven fellows serving eleven schools, the program is affecting five thousand children a day, most of whom have never left the one-mile radius of their slums. “Just having a fellow there provides exposure to a world outside their own,” she says.

One fellow, for example, recognized there were no extracurricular activities but plenty of inequalities between girls and boys in her school, so she started a co-ed cricket league that requires at least four team members to be girls. “This was met at first with resistance, but now has proven to be so successful that the school owners are buying the balls and bats,” Kancherla says.

“The beauty of IDEX is that twenty-one-year-old American fellows can put the idealism they gained during college to use, but without the challenges of seeing the realities of working with Indian people who’ve lived with limitations throughout their lives,” she says.

Kancherla credits her own college experience at Oxford for instilling her idealism and shaping her life’s work. From literature classes that “allowed her to see life was bigger than just me,” to the school’s teaching methodology that showed her the importance of creativity, collaboration, and service to others, Oxford encouraged her to push her boundaries and find her own voice.

“There is no experience in the world like the Oxford experience,” she says.—April L. Bogle

Zoe Hicks Named Unsung Heroine

Oxford Board of Counselors chair Zoe Hicks 63OX 65C 76L 83L has been named the 2011 Alumna Unsung Heroine by the Center for Women at Emory (CWE). The Unsung Heroine Awards are given annually by CWE to honor women who have “demonstrated extraordinary dedication to issues that affect women at Emory or in the larger community, but whose efforts heretofore have not received accolades or formal recognition.”

Hicks is an attorney with the Atlanta law firm Hicks and Hicks. She lectures on estate planning and charitable giving and is author of The Women’s Estate Planning Guide. She is also author of three books on inspiration and faith—Dream Catcher, The Power of Faith, and Abundant Living—as well as numerous articles. She and her husband, Charles F. (Smoky) Hicks 62OX 64C 67L, established Encouragement Unlimited, a foundation with a mission to empower, equip, and encourage marginalized women to succeed.

She is a member of the Emory Gift Planning Advisory Council and the North Georgia United Methodist Foundation Board; an advisory board member of Action Ministries, Breakthrough House, the Women’s Resource Center of DeKalb County, and the National Museum of Patriotism; and a founding faculty member of the American Institute for Philanthropic Studies. She has served as chair of the Fiduciary Law Section State Bar of Georgia, president of the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Federal Tax Conference, president of the Atlanta Estate Planning Council, and member of the Board of Regents of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.

Zoe Hicks 63OX 65C 76L 83L

Emory Homecoming Weekend:
Catch the Spirit

Save the date for September 22–25, 2011. Emory Homecoming Weekend will feature the Homecoming Parade, Tailgate Party, Campus Tours, Faculty Lectures, and more! For more information, visit www.emory.edu/homecoming.

Zoe Hicks

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Alumnus Looks to Past to Keep an Eye on the Future

ike most little boys, Nicholas D. Pyenson 00OX 02C fell in love with dinosaurs when his parents read him stories about the “gigan-
tic, terrifying beasts that you don’t have to be afraid of because they’re all gone.”

But unlike the other boys, Pyenson turned his fascination into a career as a paleontologist for the Smithsonian Institution, complete with an “Indiana Jones compo-
nent,” thanks in large part to his experience at Oxford.

“At Oxford, I realized it’s not geeky kid stuff to be interested in that world,” says Pyenson, cura-
tor of fossil marine mammals at the National Museum of Natural History.

“That world” now takes Pyenson to “crazy, far-out places” on fossil digs, often in remote deserts where he must plan for the trucks, food, and water his team will need to survive in extreme conditions—and how to transport back any treasure they may find.

His greatest find was in the des-
ert of Peru—he and his colleagues discovered the hand bones of a whale in the transition from life on land to life in the sea some 40 million years ago. They’ve shown that the whale is the oldest such fossil in South America.

“Fossils are evidence of extinct life. If you ask a rock the right question, it can tell you something important about life,” Pyenson says.

What he hopes to learn is how marine mammals evolved to meet the challenges of life in the water—their locomotion, reproduction, and feeding. And as a curator at the nation’s foremost natural science museum, he feels the responsibility to help other people understand “the deep history of life so that we can better understand the long-term consequences of our actions for different species’ survival in the future.”

“Being a paleontologist has given me a view of the deep past. I can see the major cataclysms, such as the day a giant rock fell from the sky and ended the age of the dinosaurs, and how it changed the earth,” he says, warning, “We are modifying our ecosystems so rapidly that we’re going to see the outlines of such a cataclysm.”

Pyenson’s appreciation for the science of the earth began at Oxford. He fondly recalls Eloise Carter’s field botany course, where he learned to identify the trees in the area, Steve Baker’s ecology class that took him wading through the streams of North Georgia, and Stephen Henderson’s geology class that introduced him to the magic of fossils.

“I learned science isn’t limited to the laboratory. It’s outside, and it’s tremendously fun,” he says.

Oxford’s own Indiana Jones hopes his work will help people realize how they fit into the tree of life.

“We’re related to other organisms, we’re all linked. The human world may consist of freeways and movie theaters, but we all must have water to drink and food to eat to survive,” Pyenson says.

—April L. Bogle

Giving with Impact

Your gifts make a difference at Oxford, providing important tools for learning. Take a look at what gifts of $25, $50, and $100 can do for the college.

A gift of $25 can provide
• Prepared slides for anatomy, physiology, and zoology
• CDs and scores for the library collection

A gift of $50 can provide
• Books for the library collection
• Monthly charges for phone line for Volunteer Oxford student leader office

A gift of $100 can provide
• Casts of fossil primate skulls for the anthropology lab
• Math calculators

Sophomore Bioc Receives Humanitarian Award

Catherine Bioc 11OX, a sopho-
more from Marietta, Georgia, has been selected as a recipient of a 2011 Emory University Humanitarian Award.

Harold McNaron, of Emory’s Division of Campus Life and coordinator for Volunteer Emory, says of the award, “Recipients are held in the highest regard. Unlike other honoraries, students are not selected solely on high academic achievement, leader-
ship positions held, or partici-
pation in numerous activities. Rather, the selections focus on honoring those students who, in various ways, have exhibited extraordinary leadership and have enhanced the Emory community as well the community at large.”

Bioc is a member of Alpha Epsilon Upsilon Honor Society and an Oxford Bonner Leader. In the latter role, she volunteers at Project Renewal, a domestic violence shelter for men and women. She has also held leadership roles with the Oxford chapters of National Association for Asian American Professionals and Oxfarm Oxford, and serves as a resident assistant in Branham Hall. Bioc also dances with the Oxford Dance Company and assisted in campus efforts to raise money for Haiti in 2010.

Oxford Connection Lasts a Lifetime for Many

When Oxford freshmen arrive on campus, they should take a good look at the students around them in class, at the dining hall, and on the green. There are 319 Oxford alumni married to other Oxford alumni, showing that the bond made at Oxford can last forever.

Chris 02OX 04C 10M 10PH and Cecilia Griggs 02OX 04C of Boston, Massachusetts, are one those Oxford couples. They met at Freshman Luau, were good friends at Oxford and Emory, and started dating when Chris was in medical school at Emory. Today Cecilia is pursuing her master’s degree in nursing at Northeastern University, and Chris is in the first year of his emergency medicine residency at Boston Medical Center.

Oxford holds a special place in their history and their hearts. Chris says he and Cecilia would “love to see our future children go to Oxford.”

Chris and Cecilia Griggs met at Freshman Luau, and the rest is history.
P R I O R  T O  1 9 7 0

Lucy Clare Hine 39OX 42G was honored by the Clayton County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for her work for civil rights.

Wallace Lail 59OX was named 2011 Outstanding Alumnus by the University of Tennessee Health Science Center School of Dentistry.

Max Austin Jr. 61OX 63C 69MRR gave grand rounds to the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics at Emory Midtown Hospital with a presentation entitled, “The Management of Complex Atypical Endometrial Hyperplasia.” He and his wife, Nancy, reside in Birmingham, Alabama.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal named J. Grant Lewis 66OX 74M 78MRR to the State Board of Education. Lewis is married to Barbara Lewis 70OX 70C.

The Rev. Edward B. Hanson 70OX 74M 61OX and his wife, his nine-month-old son Anders, recently moved to Washington, D.C., where Nick works as a paleontology curator at the Smithsonian Institution.

In Passing

Frederick Burr Clifford

Former Oxford professor Frederick Burr Clifford died on January 6, 2011, in Georgetown, Texas, at the age of ninety-six. Clifford taught at Oxford from 1953 to 1958 in the Departments of Classics and English. He received a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1943 and began teaching at Adrian College in Michigan before coming to Oxford. In 1958, he moved to Texas where he taught in the English department at Southwestern University in Georgetown and served as academic dean from 1962 to 1977. After retirement, Clifford and his wife, Doris, continued to live in Georgetown. They have three children, Rev. John Clifford, David Clifford, and Jeanne Ellen Weiss.

Oxford’s 166th Commencement

Bob Pennington to Speak at Commencement May 7

Bob Pennington 74OX 76C 81L 81B, president and CEO of Willis Investment Counsel, an independent investment management firm in Gainesville, Georgia, will speak at Oxford’s one hundred and sixty-sixth commencement. Before joining Willis in 2004, Pennington served as vice president of institutional advancement at Emory for four years.

Pennington’s postgraduate service to Emory began in 1987 when he was invited by then Emory President James Laney to serve on a blue-ribbon committee that was appointed to study and restructure the Emory Alumni Association. He served four terms as a member of the Emory Alumni Board of Directors before becoming a chartered member of the Committee on Traditions and Community Ties at Emory from 1998 to 2000. He has been a member of the Emory College Council of Advisers, the Executive Committee of the Emory Law Alumni Association, the Barristers Committee of the Emory Law School Campaign, and the Emory Board of Visitors. He served as national chair of the Emory University Annual Fund from 1995 to 1997 and was chair of the Goizueta Business School Partners Campaign from 1997 to 2000.

Pennington is a member of the Oxford College Board of Counsellors and chairs Oxford’s Emory Advantage initiative.

Golden Eagles Reunion Is May 7

The reunion for Oxford Old Timers, who are now known as Golden Eagles, is May 7. The Golden Eagles include the classes of 1960 and earlier, and they enjoy special seating at commencement as well as gold cords to signify their status. Golden Eagles can register at the gates across from the AMC from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. on May 7. After commencement, Golden Eagles are invited to a lunch in the Dining Hall honoring former Oxford professors Wilbur “Squate” Carlton and E. Walton Strozier.

Strengthening the Oxford Experience

Campaign Emory Progress

$1.16 Billion
Total Goal $1.6 Billion
$274 Million
Total Goal $40 Million

You can be part of the Oxford experience with your gift to Campaign Emory. Strengthening Oxford’s commitment to undergraduate education, the campaign will double the endowment for scholar- ships, help build a facility for science education, and fund a new Library and Academic Commons.

To support Campaign Oxford, visit www.oxford.emory.edu.