Off the Shelf

How can business leaders build organizations that create economic and social value in today’s fast-moving globalized economy? That is the central question Nathaniel Foote and co-authors try to answer in Higher Ambition, a different kind of business book published by the Harvard Review Press in 2011. The authors’ approach was to seek insights from CEOs of vanguard companies – including firms as diverse as Standard Chartered Bank, Infosys, Volvo, Cummins, IKEA, the Tata Group, and Campbell’s Soup – that have demonstrated the distinctive ability to do good while also doing well. The result, according to one review, is a book “brimming with powerful stories and thoughtful advice” about how to: (1) Build enduring enterprises that simultaneously solve for people and profits, (2) Forge winning strategies that leverage their companies’ unique cultural and human capabilities, (3) Dramatically raise the aspirations and ambitions of their people, (4) Energize and align their diverse global firms, and (5) Relentlessly upgrade leadership capabilities throughout their organizations. Nathaniel Foote is the Managing Director of TruePoint, a consulting firm, and has 30 years of experience helping companies all over the world improve their performance. He was Fiske Scholar at Trinity College in 1978. Higher Ambition is available in hardcover or for Kindle from Amazon.com.

2012-2013 H-C Scholars Report from Cambridge

“A Year of Grace”

These are the words Eva Gillis-Buck, the Charles Henry Fiske III Scholar, uses to describe her year at Trinity College so far. Free to “study and do exactly what I want,” Eva has been dividing her time between academics, rowing, socializing, and traveling. As she describes it, “Every morning (usually quite early thanks to rowing) I wake up to a view of the backs: the beautiful river Cam, punters drifting by, perfectly manicured lawns spotted with willow trees and purple and yellow crocus, the University Library topped with the Cambridge flag in the distance.” Rowing has been a major focus for Eva; having won a seat in Trinity’s Second Rowing Club, she is eagerly looking forward to competing in the May “bumps” (races).

When not on the river, Eva has been busy completing research essays on the history of unex lab coats, the use of mammalian parthenogenesis in genomic imprinting experiments, and the popularization of ‘gender specific medicine.’ She’s currently working full time on her dissertation, which will investigate the use of parthenogenesis in genomic imprinting and stem cell research and explore its implications for gender, parenthood, and the definition of life’s beginning. As a historian of science, Eva has found it particularly thrilling to work next to the famous old Cavendish laboratory, relax in the same pub frequented by Francis Crick, and sign her name in the same matriculation book as Isaac Newton, right next to his original copy of Principia.

Other highlights of Eva’s term so far have included trips to London and Paris, the chance to visit many museums and attend talks on a wide variety of subjects, and the experience of attending Sunday Evensong services at many of the different college chapels in Cambridge – not to mention the chance to learn new, uniquely Cambridge traditions, try new food (haggis, anyone?), and pick up a new vocabulary (‘tracky bumbums’ for ‘sweatpants’ is a particular favourite).
through philosophy, smooth our shiny dresses before heading out to formal halls, make sweeping claims about humanism over communal dinners, and have spontaneous and wholly embarrassing discussions off-campus songs from the 90s whose lyrics we thought we’d forgotten.”

Despite her full schedule, Abbie has found time to go horseback riding once a week, host a few wine tastings in her room, and do a bit of traveling. One particularly memorable trip involved a mud dash through the tangled heather of Dunwich Heath on the easternmost “wild” beach and sea, and a seven-mile trek through seemingly endless fields of sheep and deep mud “nervously watching rain clouds sweep toward the ruined castle of Orford on the horizon.”

In December, Abbie and a friend made a whirlwind weekend trip to Gdańsk, Poland and in May, she and fifteen other Emmanuel students are planning a trip to Norway for festivals and glaciers. As Abbie puts it, “each time I leave, the remaining closeness of Europe is delicious and it liberating it makes me giddy – I start to realize that the paths to the rest of the world lead right up to my door.”

Other plans for the rest of the term include learning as much as she possibly can about 17th and 18th century religious history, picking up good-on-a-winter-long boast that she’s an expert about 17th and 18th century religious history, lead right up to my door.”

In December, Abbey and a friend made a whirlwind weekend trip to Gdańsk, Poland and in May, she and fifteen other students are planning a trip to Norway for festivals and glaciers. As Abbie puts it, “each time I leave, the remaining closeness of Europe is delicious and it liberating it makes me giddy – I start to realize that the paths to the rest of the world lead right up to my door.”

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Update on the Scholarships

The first time Jacqueline Osherow and I found ourselves stranded together in a snowstorm so fierce it caused both Harvard and Massachusetts to close, we were seniors, it was the Blizzard of ’78, and we had both just been told we would be going to Cambridge – Jackie as the Fiske Scholar at Trinity and I as the Lionel de Jersey Harvard Scholar at Emmanuel. The second time it happened, 35 years later, was this past February, when Jackie was the chair of our Selection Committee and our annual dinner was to be followed by our all-afternoon discussion and selection session, capped by late afternoon or early evening interviews. We had planned our weekend meetings before Friday, February 8, an afternoon meeting of the Governance Committee was to be followed by our annual dinner for members of the Selection Committee, guests and local former scholars, and on Saturday our all-morning interviews of the 12 finalists were to be followed by our all-afternoon discussion and selection session, capped by late afternoon or early evening interviews.

It was a return and a continuation: a chance to relax in the familiar space of the Charles Hotel in February and choose from literally every part of the globe.

Through Wind and Snow…
Ten members of the Selection Committee battled the fifth largest blizzard in Boston’s history to meet at the Charles Hotel in February and choose next year’s scholars. Cross-country skis belong to Nathaniel Foote who skied in from Newton. From left to right: Liz Reynolds, Adam Stonegard, Rob Shapiro, Jackie Osherow, John Gilmore, Marc Granetz, Amanda Pustilnik, Josh Goodman, Dai Ellis and Nathaniel Foote.

Emmanuel ‘79, Chair, Governance Committee

Ambassador Reynoso

It’s safe to say that Juliesta Reynoso, the 1997-98 Harvard de Jersey Scholar at Emmanuel College, has traveled an unlikely path: a path of stark contrasts, a path that has taken her very far – from humble beginnings in the Dominican Republic to the upper echelons of Harvard Law School. She was the first one that has also stayed close to her roots and brought her full circle in many ways. As the current United States Ambassador to Uruguay, Reynoso has carved out a unique position to forge the issues that have long been central to her academic and professional career – education, development, political reform, to name just a few – while bridging the two cultural identities, American and Latina, that she calls her own. With her Senate confirmation in March 2012, Reynoso became one of the nation’s youngest ambassadors and the first Dominican-American to serve in that capacity in our nation’s history.

Born in the rural village of Salcedo, Dominican Republic, Reynoso emigrated to the United States with her family in 1982. She settled in the South Bronx, New York City where she has described her first encounter with the American “dream” as “tremendously shocking” and profoundly disillusioning because of the poverty, violence and inequality she encountered there.

Despite these challenges, Reynoso graduated valedictorian from Aquinas High School in the Bronx and headed to Harvard in 1993, with “no clue” at all about the history or prominence of the institution that awaited her.

From the Bronx to Harvard Square, the setting couldn’t have been more different, but Reynoso found herself asking and being asked some of the same questions: What did it mean to be from the Dominican Republic and the Bronx? And how did her sense of self and these distinct worlds fit with the unforgettable experiences and new opportunities she was encountering in Cambridge, Massachusetts?

From the beginning of her undergraduate career, Reynoso was interested in different cultures and issues of international development. “My year at Harvard,” she has said, “was spent exploring the world, traveling through Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe – all in search of understanding.”

The next step in that exploration came after graduating from Harvard, in 1997, with a BA in government. As a Harvard-Cambridge Scholar, Reynoso embarked on a year-long Masters of Philosophy program in Development Studies at Emmanuel College at the University of Cambridge. There, “she met dreamers from other worlds” and experienced yet another level of diversity, learning from and connecting with students from literally every corner of the globe.

Having completed her masters at Cambridge, Reynoso crossed the Pond to enter law school at Columbia University in 1998. Coming “home” to New York was both a return and a continuation: a chance to relax in the familiar rhythms and scenes of her pre-college years and a way to deepen and extend her engagement with questions of international law and development.

Reynoso’s years at Columbia Law School (where she received her J.D. in 2001), were followed by a clerkship for U.S. District Court Judge Laura Taylor Swain handling a wide range of civil and criminal cases. Her career turn, from 2003 to 2009, took Reynoso into the private sector, practicing international arbitration and antitrust law with the New York law firm of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett. During this period, Reynoso continued to pursue her personal interests and extend her professional experiences to new areas. As a fellow at Columbia Law School (starting in 2005) she continued researching and writing and published numerous articles in the areas of regulatory reform, housing reform, and community organizing. In 2006, Reynoso left private practice for one year to serve as Deputy Director for the Office of Accountability within the New York City Department of Education, exploring new approaches to promote and measure student achievement. Another position, as a part-time legal fellow at the Institute for Policy Integrity at the New York University School of Law, followed from 2008 to July 2009.

Another life-changing juncture came in 2009, when Hillary Clinton recruited Reynoso to the U.S. State Department to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central America and the Caribbean in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. It provided a base position as a liaison during events – from the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti to a coup in Honduras and momentous elections in Guatemala and Nicaragua – shook the region.

Serving in this new role proved an amazing learning experience. So too did working with Secretary of State Clinton, which Reynoso describes as “a tremendous privilege.” But Reynoso could also draw on resources of her own, personal as well as academic and professional. She particularly credit her first-hand experience living from the bottom up and developing country-to-country relationships, as well as the development of countries, to one of the biggest, most complex, and most urban cities in the world as a life event that uniquely equipped her to navigate jarring extremes and deal with the complicated nuances of U.S.-Latin American bilateral relationships.

The same complexities and the same skills remain very much part of Reynoso’s new day-to-day reality. As Ambassador, her job is to represent the United States in Uruguay and build a stronger U.S.-Uruguayan relationship. The range of issues to be addressed as part of that relationship is vast, from energy to poverty, from human rights to religious freedom and international trade. And in practice, the job of ambassador entails a...
offered tangible evidence that young scholars were here, centuries ago. 

In the Chapel, evensong voices mixed with voices from the past, as names etched into wood panels challenged and inspired me to discuss subjects outside my intellectual comfort zone. With Pembridge teammates, I played an international group of students from a variety of disciplines. I learned to don a bow tie for formal dinners, at which friends witnessed the Tour de France, and cheered Olympic marathoners – all as part of a global community. And I found out the best way to learn a new language is to develop a big crush on someone who speaks that language.

The freedom of the Harvard-Cambridge Scholarship enabled me to make an otherwise improbable transition from the study of life sciences to semiconductor physics. My daily bicycle ride from Town Centre to the Optoelectronics Group of the Cavendish Laboratory took me past the lovely Clare Fellows Garden, behind the University Library, and alongside an immense field of grain that looked different under each new day. At the Cavendish, the desk of Prof. James Clerk Maxwell, who understood the nature of light a century and a half ago, and the apparatus of Prof. J. J. Thomson, who discovered the electron in 1897, at bedside modern labs. With the enthusiastic guidance of my supervisors and colleagues, I studied the interaction of light and electronics for new sustainable energy technologies. Our experiments illuminated processes a trillion times faster than human senses can perceive. At 3:30 pm each day, I enjoyed afternoon tea with researchers and students from all over the world. My time at the Cavendish blended history, science, and community.

Tastes of Cambridge included tikka masala and elderflower water, as hot and cold as the left and right turns of a traditional English sink; bacon and mushroom cheeseburgers and chips from the Trader of Life, prepared with precise motions and a smile; and Chelsea buns that reflected solid candle flames through Firezillies windows as rain puddles accumulated under cloudy skies. On a memorable tour, my visiting grandparents and I gazed downriver, past the moonlit Mill Pond breakwater, searching for ghosts as Queens and Kings Colleges loomed beneath the stars. At the reconstructed Globe Theatre, I stood alongside groundlings at the foot of the stage and pretended Shakespeare observed from the balcony as Henry V urged us on. Beside the Globe, I examined a diamond encrusted skull in a small black window within an enormous hangar in the basement of the Tate Modern.

Family and friends joined me on diverse adventures. Curious cows in pursuit, I rambled through the woods towards Grantchester with my sisters. Several days later we visited Barcelona, where in Gaudi’s famous cathedral, La Sagrada Familia, those cozy trees became massive pillars that merged in a rock canopy overhead, and the sun filtered through kaleidoscope windows. At Stonehenge, I learned to appreciate the enormous size, the construction, and the mystery of these stones; at Sassiugoli and Windsor Castle, I marveled at magnificent architecture. I skied in the Italian Alps, climbed in the Pyrenees to witness the Tour de France, and cheered Olympic marathons – all as part of a global community. And I found out the best way to learn a new language is to develop a big crush on someone who speaks that language.

To the Scholarship Program, thank you very much for these memories – each is an incredible gift from the Harvard-Cambridge community. The year offered opportunities, freedom, and time to transition from chromosomes to organic semiconductors, to appreciate connections between past and present, to experience life in new places and cultures, and to develop new friendships. I miss Cambridge but will hold its sense of adventure and community. Thank you very much for a special year!