CROSSIN
Since 1987, the very best students of each graduating class at the University of Hartford have vied for an extraordinary experience: a full scholarship for two years of study at the University of Oxford in England.

How is it that students at a mid-sized, private university in Connecticut have a space reserved for them each year in the entering class of such a prestigious foreign university? It is the story of several people’s personal commitment to the University of Hartford and their belief in the value of broadening a student’s education through exposure to different cultures. It’s also about the group of top-notch scholars who have participated in the John G. Martin Scholarship program.

The nine men and nine women who have become Martin Scholars share certain important characteristics while remaining...
distinct individuals. Winners have included a painter, a physicist, an oboe player, three engineers, a philosopher, and two politics and government majors. They have come to Hartford from places like Maine and New York, but also from Ecuador and Uzbekistan.

Their common ground is that they are exceptional students who stand out from the crowd. All of the recipients have graduated either summa cum laude or magna cum laude from the university. Half of the Martin Scholars participated in the university's Honors Program. Faculty members consistently use superlatives when describing them. For example, Laurence Gould, professor of physics, calls his former student Jessica Dunmore '98 "one of the 'crown jewels' of the University of Hartford."

How It All Began

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, president of the University of Hartford from 1977 to 1989, became intrigued in the late 1980s by the fact that one of the nearly 40 colleges at the University of Oxford was named Hertford College. Although the spelling is different, Hertford and Hartford are pronounced the same, and this fact led him to propose a relationship between the two institutions. Around 1986, the hunt began for an endowment to fund a Hartford graduate to study at Hertford College.

As it happened, John G. Martin, president of the Heublein Corp. in Hartford, had died in 1986. Belle K. Ribicoff, then a development liaison to the Office of the President at the university, contacted the late Daniel Flynn, then president of Resources Management Corp., in Farmington, with an idea. "I said to him, 'There's nothing in Hartford to commemorate John Martin. Couldn't we ask the family to give us something in his name?'" Flynn liked the idea and agreed to approach Martin's sister, Helen Moor Martin of Kenilworth, Warwickshire, England. Ribicoff then wrote the proposal for what would become the John G. Martin Scholarship to the University of Oxford, and Helen Martin accepted it.

Since 1986, the selection of the Martin Scholar has been coordinated by Associate Provost Guy C. Colarulli. It is a rigorous process that includes a demanding application comprising essays, transcripts, and faculty recommendations as well as an interview with a panel of faculty and deans. The panel nominates up to three graduating seniors, and the faculty of Hertford College review the applications and choose one Martin Scholar.

Imagine giving Hartford students the eye-opening experience of spending two years studying at the oldest English-speaking university in the world, where international students make up approximately 25 percent of the student body. The results are quite remarkable.

Breaking New Ground

In the fall of 1987, David Casavant of Lewiston, Maine, was the first to experience the Hartford-to-Hertford link. Casavant, a politics and government major, went on to earn a bachelor's in law and jurisprudence at Oxford in 1989. He received a law degree from the University of Maine in 1993 and later earned a CPA license. Since 2001, Casavant has been the assistant dean of the School of Business at Husson College in Bangor, Maine, where he is also the director of the Frank M. Carter Tax Institute and secretary/treasurer of the New England School of Communication. Today, he looks back with gratitude for an opportunity that continues to shape his life.

“My studies and experiences at Hertford College broadened my cultural perspective and enhanced my intellectual abilities; the care and concern of those at the University of Hartford provided a model for my efforts as assistant dean at Husson College. I am grateful for my time at Oxford University, and I truly appreciate the efforts and support of those who made it possible.”

When contacted by The Observer, the Martin Scholars relayed fond memories of their years at Oxford. They reminisce about time spent in the pubs, talking with the eclectic mix of interesting people they met at Hertford College. One recipient, Tina Cook, found she couldn’t bring herself to leave the culture she had come to know. She continues to live in Oxford to this day.

A Transplant That Took Root

Tina Cook ’94 was a gifted student even as a child. She came to the university from Hurst, Texas, on a Regent’s Scholarship, which is awarded to first-year students in the top 10 percent of their high school class with an SAT score of 1270 or higher. Two years later, she received the Herbert P. Schoen Scholarship, the university’s highest academic scholarship, which pays full tuition for the junior and senior years.

While at Oxford, Cook threw herself into Hertford College life, becoming social secretary of the Middle Common Room, which is the graduate student government, and captain of the ice hockey team.

“Oxford is a great place to try something new,” she says. "There's a society for everything from Tiddly Winks to Tolkien. I could ice skate, so I decided to have a go at ice hockey and joined the women's ice hockey team. We ended the season on a high by beating Cambridge [University] in the Varsity Match.”

Cook did well at Oxford and stayed on past the two years funded by the Martin Scholarship. An Overseas Research Studentship from the British government helped fund the remainder of her studies. In 1999 she became the first Martin Scholar to receive a doctorate (in experimental psychology) from Oxford. She followed that up with another first for the Martin Scholars: from 1999 to 2002, Cook was a college lecturer in psychology at Hertford College.
“Oxford is a great place to try something new.”

—Tina Cook ’94

Cook says her undergraduate degree prepared her well to carry out the independent research for her D.Phil. “There were many times during my postgraduate work where I found myself relying upon the basic skills that I acquired at the University of Hartford.”

In the 10 years since she first arrived there, Cook has enthusiastically embraced England. The bearer of a slight English accent now, she reports that she feels very comfortable in her adopted home. Currently, she is a business research manager at Fast Track, a research, publishing, and networking events company that is sponsored by Richard Branson, billionaire founder of Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic Airways. The company tracks Britain’s fastest-growing companies not listed on a stock exchange and publishes four annual reports that appear as supplements in London’s Sunday Times.

Mixing Business with Pleasure

Not all Martin Scholars have found their rewards in academia. In his two years at Oxford, Mark Paretti ’96, a special education major with a penchant for community service, obtained a Master of Science in Comparative Education Administration and a Master of Science in Management. He describes the degrees as equivalent to our M.A. or M.Ed. (each required a substantial thesis) but says the educational experience was totally different from the more lecture-based courses with periodic exams that you find in the United States.

“At Oxford, graduate students are asked to do it alone. They are given reading lists, told when the final exam will be the next year, and, by and large, set off. There are weekly tutorials that are designed to help students stay on task and challenge their developing assumptions,” says Paretti, who notes that he focused on academics the first year because he found the transition a bit tough. Martin Scholars have reported varying degrees of difficulty in adjusting to this more independent system.

Asked how he felt upon hearing from Associate Provost Colarulli that he had won the Martin Scholarship, Paretti recalls his euphoria. “My initial reaction was joy. I felt like someone let me out of a tiny cage. Going global was nothing that I had prepared for prior to the decision on the scholarship, so I also felt anxious. But I think the overwhelming feeling of that day was that something unique was happening to me.”

Recently, Paretti joined Fish and Neave, an intellectual property law firm in midtown Manhattan—not as a lawyer but as a business analyst. He continues a lifelong commitment to volunteer work by teaching and planning for Literacy Partners, a national organization dedicated to helping adults who are functionally illiterate. Paretti says his long-term goal is to run an organization that delivers human services or relief assistance, such as the American Red Cross.

Speaking about the Martin Scholarship, Paretti says, “I will never take [it] lightly, even if I choose to crush grapes in the mountains of California. I feel honored to have been part of a tradition that few experience.”

“A High-Energy Person

It’s not just that Jessica Dunmore ’98 is currently doing research in nuclear physics at three different institutions simultaneously. From her undergraduate years on, Dunmore has filled her schedule with multiple interests and projects that would have the average person gasping for air—or sleep.

A December 1998 graduate of the university, Dunmore immediately went to Argonne National Laboratory on an eight-month internship funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. That September she left for Oxford, where she spent the first year taking undergraduate courses “to get up to speed with the UK undergrads because their bachelor’s degree is more advanced and specialized than a U.S. degree (more physics).” Dunmore is
referring to the fact that undergraduate degrees outside the States tend to focus on one or two subject areas rather than a broad-based, liberal arts program.

Dunmore reports that her adjustment to Hertford College went well. One big difference at Oxford is that the material is not textbook centered. “You learn the subject matter from many different angles, not from just one point of view. It is more difficult this way, I think, but you get a much better understanding of the material.”

Several Martin Scholars mentioned that their Hartford and Hertford educations were complementary halves that worked very well together. In Dunmore’s case, she feels she was somewhat disadvantaged by the relatively small size of the physics department at Hartford. At the same time, she recognizes the value of the personalized attention she received here. Going to Oxford as a Martin Scholar opened up bigger opportunities for her. “The department [at Oxford] was really fantastic and provided me the chance to go to many conferences to present my research and to summer schools all over the world.”

Like Tina Cook, Dunmore stayed on at Oxford to complete her D.Phil. in particle physics in May 2004. Never one to rest on her laurels, she began a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, Irvine, in June. Her current research involves a neutrino experiment in Japan. And when she’s not traveling back and forth across the Pacific, she works on another neutrino experiment at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory outside Chicago. Dunmore reports that both experiments are “to determine the properties of neutrinos [uncharged elementary particles] and their interactions with matter.”

Looking back on her experiences at Hartford and at Oxford, Dunmore says she’s very happy with the choices she made about her education. “The scholarship was hugely beneficial to me. It was amazing to have the opportunity to study at Oxford. I enjoyed every aspect of being there. Getting the scholarship to Oxford made everything work out better than I could have ever imagined.”

Hartford to Oxford to Yale

After completing a dual degree in music composition and politics and government at Hartford, Richard Owen Morgan went to Oxford in 2002 to complete a third bachelor’s, this time in philosophy, politics, and economics.

Morgan agrees that studying at Oxford is a challenge, but says he enjoyed it. Like Dunmore, he saw a good fit between his graduate and undergraduate experiences. “I actually think that having come from the University of Hartford gave me an advantage over the other students in my degree program at Oxford. Because I had the liberal arts education, I was able to place the material studied at Oxford in a wider conceptual context. The two degrees were nicely complementary in that way.”

Once back in the States, Morgan completed a few weeks of Naval Reserve duty over the summer and then began law school at Yale University in September. He says he’s not sure what he will do professionally after law school. He’s considering working in the public sector or possibly going on active duty with the U.S. Navy as a Judge Advocate General’s Corps lawyer (called informally a J.A.G. lawyer).

Urging other Hartford students to consider studying at Oxford, Morgan says the Martin Scholarship and Hartford’s relationship with Hertford College are two of the best attractions of the university. “I think all students at Hartford should try to avail themselves of the Hartford-Hertford link….”

“The scholarship was hugely beneficial to me.”
—Jessica Dunmore ’98

“I think all students at Hartford should try to avail themselves of the Hartford-Hertford link….”
—Richard Owen Morgan ’02
On Oxford’s Doorstep

Last but not least in this litany of high achievers is the 2004 Martin Scholar, Nicole Saad, who began her studies at Oxford in September. She joins Sarabeth Grant, the 2003 Martin Scholar, who is at Oxford studying modern history and English.

Saad, a native of Windham, N.H., graduated with a bachelor degree in chemistry/biology last May. Like nearly half of the Martin Scholars, she participated in the university’s Honors Program. Interviewed before she left the States, she says the program was well worth the extra work. “I feel that writing an honors thesis and going through the Honors Program gives you something different. I think doing my thesis gave me an advantage for the Martin Scholarship.”

Looking Backward—and Forward

Along with a number of faculty members who have stayed in contact with the Martin Scholars over the years is Charles Condon, university secretary and secretary to the London-based trust that administers the scholarship funds. Condon can reel off the list of Martin Scholars in order and knows well their achievements, current locations, and endeavors. “They are bright, industrious, and highly motivated scholars,” he says, “who immerse themselves in the transforming experience of studying at one of the world’s great universities and testing their intelligence against a broad range of experiences.”

There can be no doubt that the John G. Martin Scholarship has provided rare opportunities to Hartford graduates over the years. Currently, the university is seeking funding to create undergraduate scholarships for incoming students with high academic potential—students who will become the Martin Scholars of the future. Belle Ribicoff, now a life regent at the university, is interested in supporting new programs that will attract these academic superstars to the university.

“Colleges and universities today are competing aggressively to attract excellent students. In order for us to be competitive in this limited pool, we need to expand and enhance our Honors Program, but more importantly, we need to build endowments specifically for honors scholarships,” says Ribicoff.

“Toward that end,” she continues, “we have begun to enlist donors, each of whom will support one or more top students through four years at the University of Hartford. If enough donors can be persuaded to support the effort, the resulting scholarships—need-blind and offered competitively—should grow participation in the Honors program, create intellectual excitement, and raise the academic sights of the entire student body.” ■
O to Be in England!

A&S Students Study at Oxford

by Lynne Lipkind

Boots? Cornmarket? Carfax? It would be a day or two before the 17 University of Hartford students newly arrived in Oxford, England, would grasp the meaning of these names for a drugstore chain, a nearby thoroughfare, and a busy crossroads at the center of town, respectively. This past July, the students and two faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences went abroad as part of another University of Hartford–Hertford College connection, a six-credit course called Discovering Britain: Fantasy and Reality, 1760–1900.

Inaugurated in 1993, the program this year was co-taught by Mark Blackwell, associate professor and chair of the Department of English, and April Oettinger, assistant professor of art history. Oettinger’s husband, Max Tondro, an architectural historian with a doctorate from Cambridge University, also accompanied the group.

This was no fluffy summer tour. Each student faced copious required reading, two sets of daily journals, and a lengthy take-home final. The class explored the impact of industrialism on Victorian Britain by studying Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*, discussing the development of cities and factories, and reading child labor reports. Students also read Gothic fiction, toured Oxford’s Gothic Revival buildings, and traveled to two cathedrals to view the medieval architecture on which 19th-century Gothic Revivalism was modeled.

The course’s exploration of industrialism and Gothic style led to a broader discussion of the Victorian interest in both the new and the old. Students saw this 19th-century tension emerge in Thomas Hardy’s 1895 novel, *Jude the Obscure*. They also traced this theme in visits to Oxford’s Museum of the History of Science and Museum of Natural History, as well as in their study of Pre-Raphaelite painting at Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum and London’s Tate Gallery.

The reading list looked a bit daunting at the start of the course, but the students were more than up to the challenge. Soren Marra ’04, who had previously taken courses with both Blackwell and Oettinger, said, “The amount of reading will create a feeling of real immersion in the subject.” Sophomore Kristina Mazzarelli agreed without hesitation: “I think the work is great, and it will all be worth it in the end.” Mike Murray ’06 said, “The reading is up my alley.” Despite the workload—and a spate of chilly weather that justified the purchase of many an Oxford sweatshirt—the students’ eagerness to explore and positive energy were palpable.

For Marra, who plans to graduate in December, the Oxford program was “a great opportunity to finally visit the nation that has created so much of the literature that I love and have spent much of my college career studying.” She described a moment that occurred after reading *Frankenstein*, when the course and city intersected. “We were going through the Bodleian Library exhibit [at Oxford University], and they had Mary Shelley’s manuscript in her handwriting. It was really wonderful. Her handwriting was actually legible.”

During their free time, the students explored Oxford—the green Isis River, the bold bicyclists, the free museums, the local pubs. Some visited London. Another group went to Düsseldorf over one weekend. The last night of the trip, students and faculty enjoyed dinner together, took photos with old and new friends, and then headed to the Turf Tavern, one of Oxford’s oldest pubs and a place visited by the stonemason, Jude, in Hardy’s novel.

At the end of the trip, Blackwell was pleased with the achievements of what he called the “unlikely, ragtag collection of unique personalities” within the group. “They learned to tolerate and even respect each other. That’s the sort of lesson you can’t build into a syllabus.”

Lynne Lipkind, a freelance writer who is married to Mark Blackwell, went with the group to Oxford. Her photographs accompany the article.
The final week was spent in London, where students attended performances of Agatha Christie's play, *The Mousetrap*, and *Phantom of the Opera*. They also saw Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* at The Globe Theater. Other excursions included visits to the British Museum; Westminster Abbey; Bevis Marks Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Great Britain; and the underground Cabinet War Rooms that Churchill used and where he and his wife lived during World War II.

Camp, who is also the chair of the humanities department at Hillyer, sought to communicate his enthusiasm for British history to the students. He said he also hoped to impart “the desire to travel and learn more about other cultures.”

—Lynne Lipkind

In the previous pages is just one of the University of Hartford’s links with England. Each summer, Discovering Britain, a College of Arts and Sciences, brings Hartford students to Hertford College. This past summer, Hillyer College students also had an opportunity to study in Oxford as part of a special-topics course on the history of Britain.

**Oxford, a Crossroads for Hillyer Students**

While others sunned themselves or mowed lawns for extra cash this summer, eight students from Hillyer College set out in July for England to participate in a hands-on, crash course in British history and culture called Special Topics in the History of Britain. Created by Hillyer to offer high-achieving students an opportunity to experience a new culture, this study abroad program benefits increasingly from scholarships available through alumni support. About this year's trip, Dean David Goldenberg said, “I could not be happier with the outcome.”

J. Holden Camp, associate professor of history, led this summer's trip, accompanied by Joan O’Mara, associate professor of drama. The three-credit course is a combination of required readings and excursions in London and Oxford, so that, as Camp says, “students could see what they were reading about.” Participants kept a journal during the trip and completed a take-home exam upon their return.

The students began by spending about eight days in Oxford studying British history, then setting out on a series of field trips also attended by the members of the A&S Discovering Britain trip. The combined group went to Salisbury and Stonehenge and to Bath and Wells, as well as to the Ironbridge museum complex in Derbyshire, which illustrates the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Tours of Oxford included the Sheldonian Theatre, the Bodleian Library, and Christ Church College, where scenes from the Harry Potter movies were filmed.

Asked for her reaction during the Oxford leg of the trip, Sarah Wolfe ‘07 said, “I’m excited. We’re going to see three different plays, and I’ve always wanted to see Stonehenge.” Keith Gareau ‘07 also found Stonehenge impressive. The city of Bath fascinated him as well, particularly “the wonder of how they got water to flow to different pools without the use of electricity.” Andrae Cameron ‘07, a native of Jamaica who now resides in Massachusetts, was intrigued by the contrast between the pleasant, small-town atmosphere of Oxford and its booming nightlife.

Hillyer College students with faculty members J. Holden Camp and Joan O’Mara at Bath Abbey