

A STUDY OF THE HOLMES SCHOLARS PROGRAM

USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION FOR
AACTE 2005

February 2005

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INTRODUCTION

The Holmes Scholars Program was created in 1991 “to provide support and mentoring for talented men and women who are underrepresented in leadership positions in professional development schools and institutions of higher education” (<http://www.holmespartnership.org/scholars.html>). Originally, as partnerships joined the Holmes Group, later the Holmes Partnership, the member college or university was expected to sponsor at least one Scholar. The nature of that sponsorship, beyond funding the Scholar’s participation in the national conference, and helping the Scholar secure a faculty position upon graduation, has never been clearly articulated. In recent years, anecdotes about increases and decreases in both the number of Scholars and the number of partnerships supporting Scholars have emerged, with little empirical evidence to support either. The Holmes Partnership Board, throughout these discussions about how many Scholars exist, has consistently affirmed its belief in the value of the Holmes Scholars Program, and its desire to see better data regarding the program’s status.

At the spring 2004 meeting of the Holmes Partnership Board, the Vice President for Research, in partnership with the faculty and staff from AACTE and George Washington University who coordinate the Holmes Scholars program on behalf of the Holmes Partnership, received approval to conduct a study of current partners’ experience with running Holmes Scholars programs. This report summarizes the results of that study.

METHODOLOGY

Each of the 77 member colleges and universities was sent an email invitation at the beginning of June to participate in an interview about the Holmes Scholars program, regardless of whether or not they had a Holmes Scholar. Six institutions responded that they were no longer members of the Holmes Partnership. At the time of this draft, 40 of a possible 71 interviews had been conducted. 15 institutions did not have a Holmes Scholar program; 8 used to have one but did not at the time of the interview; and 17 were currently operating Scholars programs (See Table 1). The invitation for the interview, and the interview questions are available in the Appendix I and II.

Table 1: Respondents by Type of Program

Status of program	# of Institutions	# of Scholars now	# of Scholars Ever (Now and Before)
No HS Program	15	0	0

Used to have a HS program; none currently	8	0	10
Has an HS Program	17	35	127
Total	40	35	137

FINDINGS

Findings are divided into three broad areas: (a) for those without a current program, why that is; (b) for those with a program, how the program works; and (c) suggestions for ways the Holmes Partnership can assist in creating new and strengthening current Holmes Scholars programs.

WHY DO SOME INSTITUTIONS NOT HAVE A SCHOLARS PROGRAM?

Seven of the 14 institutions we interviewed either offer only Master’s level work, or do not offer graduate work at all, hence they have no Holmes Scholars program. Setting those seven aside, the dominant reasons the remaining eight do not have a Scholars program relate to (a) the leadership of their School of Education, and (b) lack of information about the program. Because these are also the dominant reasons for the eight institutions that used to have a Scholars program but do not now, we collapsed these two groups and will discuss their responses together first. The reasons that prevent universities from having a Scholars program are listed in Appendix III.

Leadership in the School of Education. Leadership refers to the priority the Dean places on teacher education, Professional Development Schools, the Holmes Partnership, and therefore, the Holmes Scholars program. 63% universities that don’t have a Scholars program were related to this reason. It was interesting to hear a number of campuses talk about experiencing long periods of transitional deans – having several interim deans before getting someone more long-lasting. The impact on the Holmes Scholars program was direct: if the new dean supported the program, it existed; if the program was not visible to the dean or if teacher education was not a priority for the dean, the Scholars program floundered and ended. Responses signaling the role of the Dean sounded like:

“Our PDS dissolved several years ago and with it went the Holmes Scholars program. We’re looking to hire a new Dean.”

“We have a relatively new Dean, whose priority is teacher preparation. We don’t have a Holmes Scholars program, but we may see one in the next few years. For the 4-5 years prior to this Dean, we certainly wouldn’t have had one because that Dean wasn’t primarily interested in teacher education.”

“We’re in a transition with a new Dean. It’s been a while since we’ve had a scholars program, but this Dean has some ideas for the program so I think we’ll have one in a year or so.”

“Perhaps a lack of persistent leadership has made it more difficult for the college to establish a Holmes Scholars program or become any more involved in the Holmes Scholars network.”

“Our PDS is in an on-going transition. Identifying a new Scholar has not been our number one priority. Nobody is really pushing for it to happen in a way that would make it something to concentrate on right now.”

The criteria for the Holmes Scholars Program. All of the groups, whether they had scholars or not, noted a lack of information about what makes a program a Holmes Scholars program. Most asked if there were expectations, criteria for selection, minimum support standards, etc. Several said that if there were guidelines, models, or criteria, they could then determine if the Scholars program fit with their mission, and if it matched, make a proposal to get it (re)started.

“When the Holmes Group transitioned to the Holmes Partnership, it was never very clear what would be the commitment to the Holmes Scholars. It would be helpful if we knew what expectations are on the institution if you are going to identify individuals to be Holmes Scholars—whether we are expected to provide additional resources to the individual, where assignments to the individual should be unique and in what way...”

“I think if our college knew how this worked in other institutions, we would have models to work from. We need more guidance from Holmes.”

“As we look at the (Holmes Scholars) website, it talks about the need for the Holmes Scholars candidate to be involved in the PDS. Is that the only type of assignment? There might be some confusion nationally about the requirement, like what kinds of experiences you need to provide for them, how and whether those need to be different from any other doctoral student’s experiences, and what are the special support requirements above and beyond what you normally do.”

“If the Holmes Partnership just simply put together a brief description of what are the expectations for Holmes Scholars and the institution, and what should be provided at the base, I would be happy to prepare a proposal to present to the Provost about establishing the Holmes Scholars program.”

The value of the Holmes Scholars Program and student interests. There were a few respondents who voiced concern about their Deans either not seeing or questioning the value of participating in the Holmes Partnership, and therefore the Scholars program. They questioned the value added to the universities and individuals. They wondered if it was worthwhile for an individual student to make effort to be a Scholar. Some universities experienced difficulty in attracting students’ interest. Students were concerned who was welcome in the program, or who was defined as the “under-represented.” At the same time, inequity of work expectations between Holmes and other fellowships (i.e., some fellowships had no work stipulation) made the Scholars fellowship less compelling for some students.

“I understand the importance of supporting minority doctoral students in academia -- teacher education more specifically. I think more institutions should restart the program, but before they will, we need Holmes to show us how valuable this can be back on our own campuses - or at least the potential it has.”

“We don't have a doctoral concentration that is very directly related to teacher education... Every year our doctoral students are already supported with other assistantships and many our master students are as well. So the question is, what's the value added to a Holmes Scholar or a Holmes Scholar fellowship for the student and for the institution? The usual answer is that there is not very much value unless the students are interested in teacher education or urban teacher education. Then they can meet and net work with other scholars in the country.”

“The Holmes Scholar program is not as compelling as other programs. Students prefer a generous scholarship to a graduate assistantship. We also did not get that much benefit because we had five scholars and only one out of five was very successful. Our second scholar went to the Holmes Partnership conference but did not feel welcomed as she was not African American. She did not want to be a Holmes Scholar any more.”

“We just can't find anyone to fill the position. We have a doctoral program called [name of program]. We have a lot of minority students in that program, but most of them try to go to work full time and go to school full time. They are great candidates, but we can't really have them. The university has a [name of fellowship program] fellowship and students receiving it have no work responsibilities. These are more attractive to students of color. We have limited candidates. ”

WHAT EXISTING SCHOLARS PROGRAMS DO

Selection. We asked the programs how they select, fund and develop scholars. The selection processes range from informal (8 universities), with the Dean asking for a nomination and then selecting the person, to formal (9 universities) with applications, interviews and a committee decision. Twenty-four percent of universities conduct interviews. The selection committee is usually large, including a wide range of faculty, staff and students. Typical members are the dean, directors, department chair, faculty advisor, Holmes Scholar coordinator, an alumnus of the program, and a current Holmes Scholar. The breadth of the committee imbues the Holmes Scholar position with a sense of honor.

In most formal selection process, students take initiative to apply for the Holmes Scholars. Most universities choose Scholars from current graduate students. They send out announcements, position descriptions, and advertisements. They also do information workshops. The graduate students, faculty, chairs and deans in school of education are targeted. A few universities start recruitment with admission to the doctoral program and search for scholar candidates from the doctoral student application pool. The depth of the application pool varies, with some being highly competitive and others having limited applicants. For example, one university had 20 applicants in 2004 from which they selected 6 for personal interviews and then selected 2 scholars.

“We prepare a position description and distribute that to all the faculty in the school. We post the position on internet list serves in the school and on bulletin boards. Students then prepare an application package including a personal statement that outlines their skills and experiences relative to the position, and the two faculty reference letters. A committee appointed by the Dean makes the final decision.”

“We ask students who are interested in this program to apply. They send us a resume and a statement of purpose explaining why they want to be part of the program.”

“When we recruit doctoral students, we tell them about the Holmes Scholar program. Candidates apply to the board, submit various things, go through an interview process and then we make our selection.”

“Students have to submit the regular application as well as the Holmes application. Each department will nominate one Scholar candidate. Three of us will review the nomination and make the final selection.”

In the informal selection process, the Scholars are nominated by academic leaders like the Dean, the department chair or a group of faculty. The nominee then provides the application materials. Faculty from institutions in which a group nominates the candidates noted that having the nominations come from a group seems to create a sense of investment in the candidate by the nominators – they want that person to succeed, and the student has several “champions” to call upon.

“We don't have a formal nomination process, but we try to have a continual recruitment in that faculty, program coordinators and department chairs are aware of the possibility of hiring someone as a Scholar. We are always looking for students and people who could fill these roles and add the diversity to student population. It's a kind of ongoing search.”

“They are selected mostly through faculty nominations to the Dean and then the Dean chooses and calls the student.”

“It's selected by the Dean. The Dean chose me as the Scholar after I was admitted to the program.”

“The PhD committee sent the doctoral students an announcement of the terms for the Scholar position. We also asked faculty to identify students. We also have one department that will select its own Scholar. So one Scholar is selected through a school-wide process and the other is selected by a department.”

Funding While the interviews revealed some diversity in the ways in which the programs operate, the types of support the Scholars receive are relatively consistent, in contrast to anecdotes. Variation in support may instead reflect variation in the cost of graduate school and the support of graduate students generally – from public to private institutions and from state to state.

Table 2. Holmes Scholars Program by number of scholars and type of support.

Program	# Scholars now	Type of support
A	4	\$6k/year stipend; 3 work stations; HS library; conference & summer institute travel; tuition/assistantship; job placement assistance
B	1	Assistantship; \$1200/month stipend; conference travel
C	1	Assistantship; \$22k/semester stipend; conference & summer institute travel
D	1	Conference travel support; no tuition waiver; assistantship but not because of being a HS

E	1	In-state tuition; shared office; conference and summer institute travel; ½ time assistantship
F	2	Tuition waiver; \$6k/year stipend; conference and summer institute travel
G	1	Shared office (only one to have one); tuition waiver; book allowance that is \$200 higher than other grads); conference and summer institute travel
H	2	Tuition waiver; stipend; book allowance; (amount depends on student circumstances; can be \$12k plus tuition)
I	1	Assistantship (\$25k/year stipend and full tuition) but not because of being an HS; \$5k stipend in addition because of HS; conference and institute travel
J	1	Assistantship; \$10k stipend; tuition reduction; conference and summer institute travel
K	1	Assistantship; \$ 10k-12k/year stipend ; conference and institutional travel
L	6	Assistantship; \$12k/year stipend; tuition waiver; conference and summer institute travel; other professional conferences.
M	2	\$5k scholarship; conference and summer institute travel.
N		N/A
O	4	In-state tuition waived including summer (free tuition); 50% research assistantship stipend (\$18,000 + health benefits); the HP conferences; We could not support them in Summer Leadership.
P	3	No tuition reduction; cover the regional conference, the national conference and one professional conference of their choice; the summer institute or leadership conference.
Q	1	Graduate teaching assistant (\$1,100-1,200 a month or around \$10, 000 a year); the annual conference, leadership institute, and tuition waived.

Table 3. Programs by participation in types of support

College	Tuition	Stipend	Office	HP Conference	Summer Institute	Others
A	x	x	x	x	x	work stations; HS library;
B	x	x		x		
C	x	x		x	x	
D				x		
E	x	x	x	x	x	
F	x	x		x	x	
G	x	x	x	x	x	book

						allowance
H	x	x		x		book allowance
I		x		x		
J	x	x		x	x	
K	x	x		x	x	
L	x	x		x	x	
M		x		x	x	
N	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
O	x	x		x	x	
P				x	x	
Q	x	x		x	x	
Total	12	14	3	17	12	4

Based on these interviews, the common forms of support are:

- Full tuition (71%)
- A stipend of any amount (82%)
- Funding to participate in the annual Holmes Partnership conference (100%)
- Cover the summer institute (71%)

Note that in at least two cases, students received some of this support by virtue of being graduate students, not because they were Holmes Scholars.

Professional Development.

Perhaps the greatest range was reflected in the type of engagement between the Scholar and other colleagues and opportunities on campus. Thirty percent (5) of the institutions leave scholars on their own, while 41% (7) provide periodic mentoring with mentors, and 24% (4) universities have senior Scholars mentor new Scholars. Two institutions provide special opportunities for Scholars that do not include other doctoral students.

“We don’t have any other interaction beyond the Holmes Partnership conference with other Scholars. The interaction between the faculty and student is personal.”

“There is not a lot of planned interaction with the Scholar. With only one, the professional development is left to happen at conferences.”

“We have regular mentoring meetings. Sometimes we have speakers. We always meet monthly, and then we meet between times. On holidays, I always invite them to my home. In between times, we just meet informally. Faculty members mentor the Scholars. I serve as a mentor for all the Scholars and make sure they all present at every conference (National conferences & PDS conferences).”

“The coordinator meets monthly with the Scholars. There are some Holmes Scholars alumni on the faculty, so the group sometimes meets with them, although they are not as tightly connected as they could be. The

coordinator checks in with the Scholars every month about their assistantships and their goals. They brainstorm projects for the next term, create brown bag lunches for the other graduate students.”

“We try to situate them in some experiences that would open up a vision of what it means to be in teacher education – through other faculty or the Dean. Those experiences would not naturally happen. For example, we included our Holmes Scholar in a meeting of invited state educational leaders to see how education is perceived by constituents. Other doctoral students were not included, but this helped the Scholar think about what it means to participate with policy leaders who influence and formulate teacher education.”

“We invite them to College of Education Faculty Meetings, College of Education events; seek their advice on important matters regarding our graduate program, etc.”

“We are really successful in having our second year Scholar mentor our first year Scholar; our third year Scholar mentor our second year Scholar, and our Holmes Alumni mentor all of the Scholars.”

Alumni contact. We also asked programs to what extent they stay in contact with their Scholars alumni, and whether they know of having Scholar alumni on their faculty. Few of the campuses has found a way beyond traditional alumni contact to stay in touch with their graduating Scholars, and some programs are new enough that there are no alumni yet.

“We have nothing set up yet but we like the idea of staying in touch with them.”

“Personally, the Dean will stay in touch with them. But institutionally, we don’t have anything set up yet because none has graduated yet. I hope we’ll be able to encourage the new Scholars to keep in touch with the alumni as they graduate.”

“It’s mixed. We talked about creating a newsletter to stay in touch but we haven’t done it yet. Faculty mentors and dissertation committee members may stay in touch and the coordinator keeps up with them. It’s not a formalized system but we’d like it to be.”

“We continue to keep in touch with them through email. When a person comes back into town for something, we make sure they come over and see us. We include them in our presentations for the national meeting so we can talk about generations of Scholars.”

“Contact is maintained as with all alumni through the university alumni association or the school of education alumni board.”

According to our respondents, strategies to help programs link up with their Scholar alumni in ways that benefit the programs and the alumni would be welcomed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A final area of questioning centered on ideas for helping programs create and strengthen scholars programs. Participants’ comments focused on expanding the assistance provided

by the central Holmes Partnership and AACTE offices – mostly in passive ways (posting information, providing access to lists, sponsoring workshops, etc.). These ideas are summarized below:

- Establish baseline criteria for Scholars programs related to minimum funding, and expectations for types of mentoring and professional development activities.
 - *When describing the benefits and types of support, be sure to provide support for attending the annual conference and the one-day Scholars conference that precedes it. I've know students who have been Holmes Scholars for quite a few years at different institutions. The one thing they all say is that what's more important to them than the money from an assistantship, or even tuition waivers from the university, has been the networking, the chance to know other Holmes Scholars and use the Holmes Partnership conference to network with other universities.*
- Expand the website to include a contact list of faculty “point people” – the person on each campus (where the program exists) responsible for coordinating the Scholars program. Both existing programs and campuses considering starting a program would like to connect with campuses already hosting a program to learn from them, share ideas.
- Sponsor conference sessions at the annual Holmes Partnership and AACTE conferences:
 - For faculty interested in or currently running Scholars programs to network, share ideas.
 - In particular, a session could focus on restarting a program, gaining institutional support.
 - For campuses without a Scholars program, spend more time explaining the benefits that can be gained from participation.
 - Continue the one day Holmes Scholars conference that precedes the annual conference; share accurate and timely information.
“Last year, our Scholars missed the reception on the evening prior to start of conference because the information of such activity was relayed just a few days before the conference. All travel and hotel arrangements had already been made without possibility of changes. I do want to highlight, that I know the challenges we all face, especially when coordinating conferences, and that sometimes situations as the one described above occur even if we try to avoid them. But I would suggest we need to be attentive that it can impact in depriving Scholars from productive interactions and experiences.”
- In January, send a letter to associate deans about the Holmes Scholars program that contains the baseline criteria and contact information on other campuses. This mailing could address potential costs, ways of supporting Scholars, potential benefits to the Scholar and the institution, and resources available through the Holmes Partnership and AACTE. This information may exist already but it is not located in one place on the website.
- Create a brochure (and/or a FAQ sheet) about what the Holmes Partnership and Holmes Scholars programs are. Send these to new members.

- Create a monthly email message to send to coordinators and Deans for sharing ideas and providing quick updates about what the Scholars programs are doing.
- Show Scholar programs by region on the website (with the contact information) so that if I want to find a program near me and talk with that coordinator, it's easy to find.
- Provide financial resources and incentives to encourage the institutions to support more HSs.

"I would also suggest we become very attentive to the financial demands placed on institutions. If the institution only has 1 scholar, the financial demands may not seem as significant, but for an institution like us, with 6 scholars for the next academic year, the participation in activities can become unachievable due to the financial constraints."

"The biggest thing for us is if the national organization could find a way to provide more resources to help support HS -- whether it would be the national association would go after some foundation money in general to support HS and then distribute to the institutions, or if some parts of the dues from the institutions, some small parts, could go towards supporting or encouraging the HS. One suggestion would be that there could be some support for the leadership summer institute. The national association would actually pay a certain portion of the HS's participation. For example, the national association would pay for food and hotel, and the institutions would pay for travel."

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the interviews suggest that the Holmes Scholars programs are relatively new at our participating campuses, and therefore not institutionalized. As a result, they are vulnerable to leadership turnover. Further, while members are interested in considering sponsoring a program, they know little about how to do so, and are frustrated by the lack of information or connection regarding the Scholars program. Communication and leadership, therefore, are key areas to target if the programs are to be strengthened. The good news is that the campuses are, for the most part, very supportive of the Scholars concept, and would welcome opportunities to network and learn more about how to create and strengthen Scholars programs.

Appendix 1: The invitation of the interview

Subject: Holmes scholars contact and interview

Email body:

Dear Holmes Partnership Colleague:

I hope your spring semester is winding down nicely, and that the summer gives you a chance to relax. As the research arm of the Holmes Partnership, we are moving into our next project (the first was the database). This time, we are developing a profile of the Holmes Scholars program.

We need your help locating the best contact in your partnership regarding the Holmes Scholar Program, regardless of whether you currently have or don't have a Holmes scholar. We'd like to make a phone appointment with that contact person and ask a series of questions about your partnership's experience with the program. We are interested in how you operate the program, if you have one. And if you don't have a Holmes Scholar, we are very interested in hearing the issues behind that situation, and in particular, the ways the Holmes organization could help. The details are in the attachment.

We understand that you have many competing obligations. It will be very helpful if you could email us back with the best contact person's contact information so we can set up a phone appointment in the next two weeks. We appreciate your time and effort.

Have a good summer holiday!

Appendix 2: The interview questions

Situation 1: Partnership does not currently have a Holmes Scholar and never had one.

Questions:

- a. Tell us about the circumstances around the partnership's not having a Holmes Scholar.
- b. A number of partnerships have not yet started a Holmes Scholar program. What might help you start one?

Situation 2: Partnership currently doesn't have a Holmes scholars but once did.

Questions:

- a. Tell us about why the program stopped and whether there are any plans to restart it?
- b. What support might help you get the Holmes Scholar Program off the ground again?

Situation 3: Partnership currently has a Holmes scholar.

Questions are divided into 2 sections: current status and history

Section 1: Current status:

- a. How many scholars do you currently have?
- b. What kind of support (financial or otherwise) do scholars receive?
- c. What kind of interaction do you have with scholars (i.e., other meetings or programs outside of the HS sponsored events), if any?
- d. What contact do you have with scholars post graduation?
- e. Satisfaction with the program – ideas/suggestions/areas where you could use help or think the program as a whole could use help

Section 2: History

- a. How many scholars have you had in total?
- b. For how many years have you had Holmes scholars?
- c. Is the number of Holmes Scholars going up or down? If the program has changed in size, what accounts for the change?
- d. Has the program changed (services offered, level of support to scholars, etc.) – if so, how and why?
- e. Are they aware of having ever hired a HS?

Appendix 3: The Barriers of the Program

Reasons/Number of Universities	Situation1 (Never have a Scholar Program)	Situation 2 (used to have but not currently)	Total
No doctoral program	7	0	7
Leadership in the school	4	6	10
Criteria for the program	4	2	6
No “Champion” among the faculty	3	0	3
Questioning the value of the HS program	0	3	3
Student concerns	0	3	3