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Mitchell Scholar Seeks To Study Public Health Issues

BY LUCY QIU

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■ Majzner's interest in medicine has taken him to clinics around New York and New Jersey, and now to Ireland.

Robbie Majzner, CC '03, one of this year's twelve recipients of the prestigious George J. Mitchell

THREE SCHOLARS

*Part 1 in a series
Parts 2 and 3 will focus on
Rhodes Scholars Jonah
Lehrer and Cyrus Habib.*

Scholarship, has always wanted to be a doctor.

With his interest in medicine and health policy

in mind, Majzner will be using the scholarship to attend a year of post-graduate studies at the Public Health University of Galway in Ireland.

The Mitchell Scholarship was established in 1998 and named after the US Senator who negotiated a ceasefire in Northern Ireland. Funded by the US-Ireland Alliance.

the scholarship awards its winners with tuition, room, and a stipend of \$11,000 during the year, in addition to travel expenses to and from the United States and Ireland.

The scholarship was founded with the hope that students will strengthen ties between Ireland and the U.S.

According to the scholarship's web site, the recipients "have a demonstrated record of intellectual distinction, leadership, and extra-curricular activity, as well as personal characteristics of honesty, integrity, and fairness, and unselfish service to others which indicate a potential for future leadership and contribution to society."

During his year in Ireland, Majzner intends to pursue his interest in public health by earning a Masters in Health Promotion. At the university, he will not only attend classes daily, but will also be completing a public health internship at the school.

Majzner is currently a pre-medical student in the College majoring in computer science. After his year abroad, he plans to attend medical

school and hopes to one day receive another degree in international health policy.

Majzner's interest in public health was influenced by his service with two local pediatric HIV clinics. Last summer, he worked for the Bellevue Pediatric Infection and Disease Department in New Jersey, and this year he has been working for the University of Medicine and Dentistry's Pediatric Immunology Clinic in New York.

"I used to see medicine in terms of direct care with patients, but as I gained more experience in these clinics, I realized that medicine is really a multi-faceted discipline," Majzner said. "Not only is it important to treat the patient, but it's also important to look into the community for clues about why people are getting sick. Research on the national and state level for prevention of diseases such as AIDS is necessary."

His experience at the clinics got him interested in particular with HIV/AIDS health policy. He believes that to battle epidemics like AIDS, strong public health policies are paramount. He hopes to one day pursue a career concerning international HIV/AIDS health policy.

"Many infected with HIV are underprivileged. Dealing with the issue of HIV/AIDS involves many aspects outside of just solely treating the patient, such as resource management and effective prevention and intervention," Majzner said.

He also has personal reasons for his interest in public health.

"My family were survivors of the Holocaust. After the Holocaust, the Jews were left devastated, and their communities were left completely defenseless. Responsibilities were left solely to individual families. I

think, coming from such a background, I see the importance [of] a community or a state ... when it comes to health issues," Majzner said. In fact, he wrote his personal statement for the Mitchell scholarship on how his Jewish background shaped his outlook on public health.

According to close friend Jeremy Tallent, CC '03, Majzner cares deeply about public health policy.

"Many times, Robbie and I get into inflamed discussions on health issues. ... He's always thinking about how medicine can save lives, and I can tell that he's genuinely concerned with helping people and genuinely interested in public health policies," Tallent said.

Lavinia Lorch, assistant dean of the Scholars and Fellowships Office, describes Majzner as a very passionate person. "He is extremely focused on his interests but also incredibly grounded and mature," she said.

"Robbie is interested in expanding his horizons and exploring new possibilities, but through it all he has always kept his eye on the ball ... and has been true to himself and what he sincerely cares about," Lorch added.

Lorch first met Majzner his junior year when he applied for the Truman Fellowship, which he later received. She said she has gotten to know Majzner well, and was not surprised that he also received the Mitchell Scholarship.

“The Scholars and Fellowships Office has been a great help to me, helping me search for scholarships and guiding me along the application process,” said Majzner.

As for why he received the award, Majzner believes he “represents American ideals,” is very “open-minded,” and “presents a good case of a responsible leader.” After spending a semester abroad last spring in Prague, he has become increasingly aware of the importance of global health, and looks forward to studying health policies and issues around the world.

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