I would just like to give you a brief overview of the International Scholars Program. It is designed to attract high-quality undergraduates who would like to major in International Studies to the CoFC by providing them with certain tangible benefits. The logic behind these “top-scholar” programs is that they bring students to campus who would not otherwise consider the CoFC. We are then able to cultivate them in a way that builds the broader culture of undergraduate learning on campus. These students have a chance to win nationally competitive grants and get into Top-25 graduate schools, thus raising the profile of the entire institution.

The academic profile of the International Studies Fellows is remarkable. The average SAT score at the CoFC is 1220. The average SAT score in the Honors College is 1360. The average SAT Score of the first IS Fellows is 1420. The IS Fellows had a weighted high school GPA of 4.557 and graduated in the top 7% of their class. 3 are from South Carolina, and 8 are out of state. The out-of-staters are from NC, NJ, GA, VA, and MA. The class we just recruited has an average SAT of 1450 (which rounds to 1460) and average weighted high school GPA of 4.5. I only have class rankings for 5 of the students, but the average for them is top 3%. 4 are from South Carolina and 6 from out-of-state (TN, RI, FL, and 2 from VA).

Of course, this is the first group we have had, but there seems to be a lot of demand even though we did minimal marketing. Of the 500 students eventually accepted to the Honors college for 2012-2013, over 200 asked to be part of the IS Fellows. We interviewed about 60 of these. To get to our class 11, we accepted 21 students. The students who declined us are now attending Duke, Georgetown (2), UNC-Chapel Hill (3), University of Virginia, and the University of Florida, so the program is competitive with some of the best institutions in the US. This year we had about 450 students ask to participate in the program. About 32 students met the more stringent requirements associated with the Aiken Fellows. We invited 18 of these and 10 accepted. I do not have a complete list of where the other eight are going, but their schools include Clemson, Johns Hopkins, University of Southern California, and University of Virginia. What this shows is that the program is helping us recruit students who might not normally look seriously at the CoFC.

Once students are in the program, they must complete a double major (International Studies and something else). The 11 IS fellows are enrolled in an Honors introduction to International Studies and all live in Honors Housing, so they have a learning community they can draw on. All students participate in a May-Away at the end of the freshman year. This year’s trip is to Cuba. Doug Friedman and I took the 11 Fellows to Cuba. They spent a week in Havana before taking a trip to the southern part of the island to live with families. The trip creates an unparalleled high-impact learning environment. Not surprisingly, the students said this was the part of the program that they liked the most. The next two are scheduled for France and India. I am hoping the fourth group can go to Estonia.

Starting in their sophomore year, students are mentored by members of the LCWA Advisory Board as appropriate (this is still in the planning stage. The program also has substantial enrichment activities attached to it. For example, the IS Fellows have access to the Grant writing, resume writing, and personal statement writing workshops via the Honors College. This semester they have all met with a State Department Official Gerry Kaufman. He has served in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, and is currently housed at the passport facility in North Charleston. His next appointment will likely be Vietnam. Just last week they were able to meet with Pulitzer-prize winning author John Meacham twice; once in a classroom setting, and later in the evening at his talk. They had breakfast with Julia Sweig, a Cuba Scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, in the spring. The students get personalized advising from a teaching faculty member in the IS Program and from me as the Program Director, so we are being
careful to cultivate their intellects and provide them with as many professional opportunities as possible.

Furthermore, the program is now fused to the William Aiken Society. This provides useful synergies. We can utilize their speaker series and enrichment programs such as resume writing workshops and grant writing seminars. The IS Fellows are now eligible for named scholarships, and of the incoming group of 10, 4 received such awards (including one who received a Colonial Fellowship). The Office of Nationally Competitive Grants and the Office of Undergraduate Research are also housed in the Honors College, which is convenient for us. The Aiken Fellows has a graduate student coordinator. There are costs associated with our buy-in to the program of around $10,000.00 per year, but this would be much, much higher if we had to replicate recruiting, admissions, clerical support, and professional development on our own.

I would just like to close by letting you know a little bit about what the first class accomplished this year. One of them, Madeline Edwards, won a Critical Language Scholarship from the US State Department and will travel to Jordan to study Arabic in June. A second, Eden Katz, put together a trip to Ghana to work on water purification. Although I certainly helped, she won over $1,500.00 of scholarship to help defray the cost. This trip to Africa will also satisfy her independent study requirement in the Honors College. Three of the IS Fellows (Joseph Quisol, Olivia Ghiz, Katie Booth) went with the Dean of the Honors College (Trisha Folds-Bennett) to Honduras over spring break and did all the data collection for a non-profit group working with local schools. Dr. Folds-Bennett said she mostly stood back in awe as the students self-started, utilized their fluent Spanish, and analyzed the data to build a strategic plan for the school. Furthermore, Joseph Quisol is a Gates Scholar, and he has told me on several occasions that he would not have attended the CoFC with the IS Fellows (the Gates Scholarship pays for all four years of undergraduate education and two years of masters work at any institution in the USA). If you look at the 11 students as a group, the average GPA is 3.83 (the lowest is 3.573 and the highest is 4.0).