

Pioneer

academics

ISSUE 7 // 2020

PIONEER NEWS

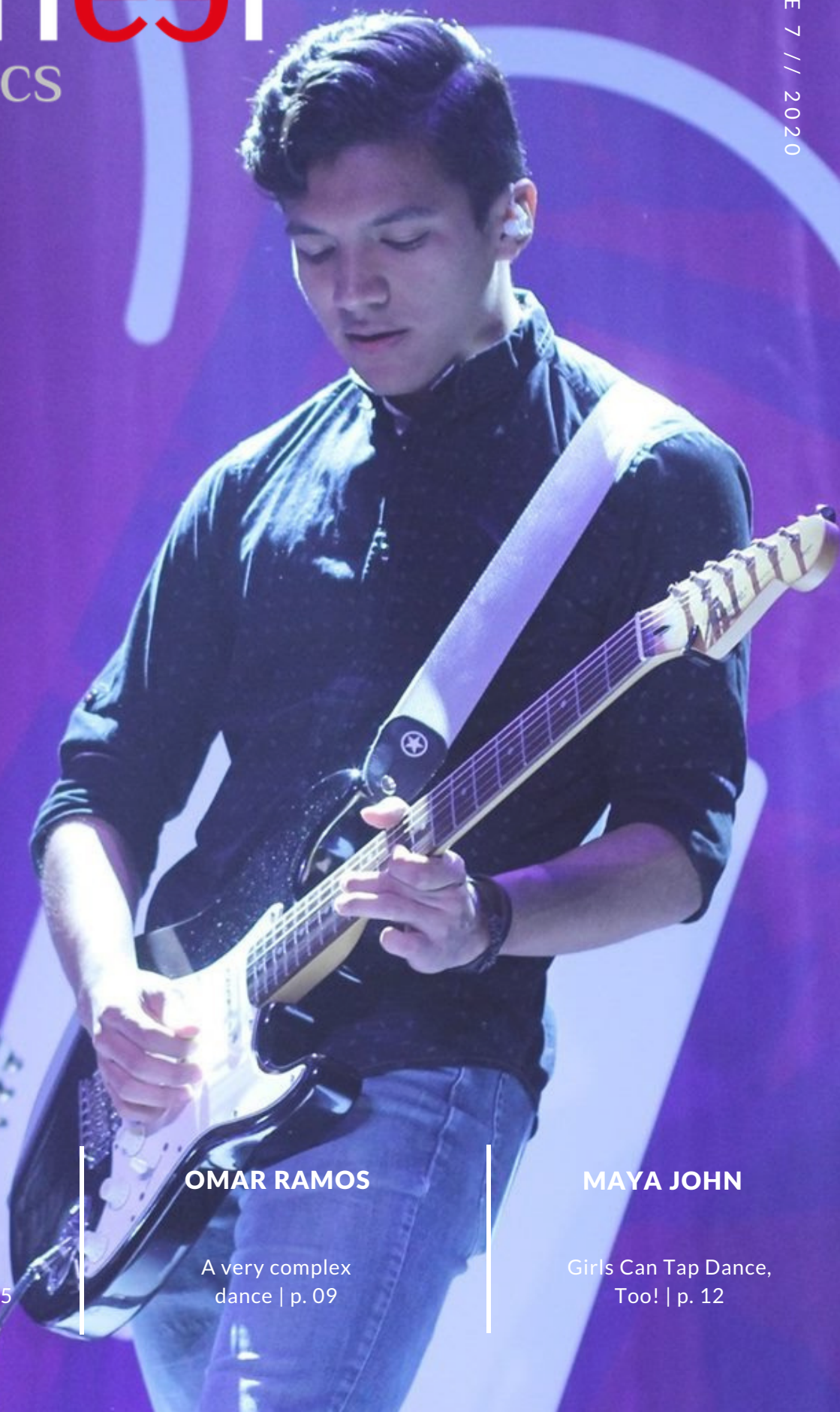
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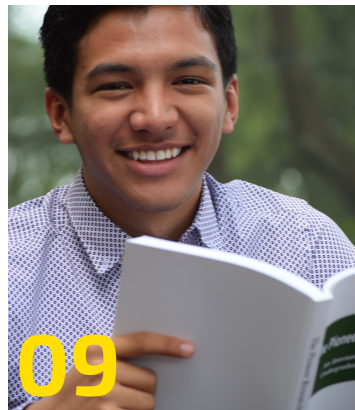
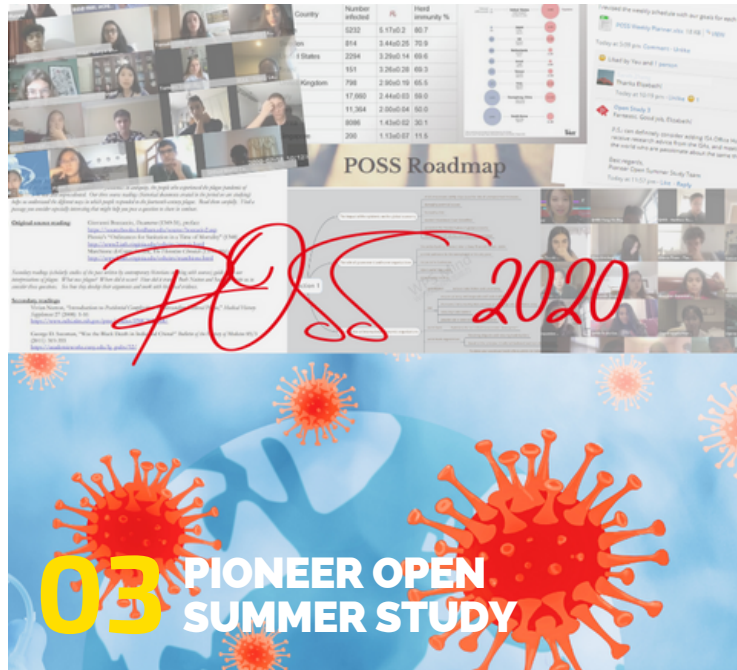
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Letter from the Director

***Pioneer believes curiosity and commitment
are unstoppable!***

Dear educators and students,

Because of the novel coronavirus, we all faced a time of unprecedented challenge. Life in so many ways came to a near halt. Students nearing college, however, couldn't stop working towards their academic goals, and educators had to continue to guide them in spite of the hardships and difficulties the virus had imposed.

Pioneer received a spike of applications to its Research Program, in part due to COVID-19. Applications made evident the anxiety and nervous eagerness of students to engage in a meaningful summer program they could do from the security of their homes. The result was that our competitive admission process became even more competitive in 2020.

With each worthy student we had to turn down or put on our wait list, our admissions team felt genuinely concerned and dismayed not to be able to offer the opportunity to cultivate academic curiosity. It was this concern that drove us to take on our own challenge during that challenging time.

Pioneer therefore put together a new program -- the Pioneer Open Summer Study (POSS) -- for every student who was interested and committed. We launched three exciting topics that Pioneer faculty hosted through workshops and which students could take on as independent summer projects.

Pioneer's Open Summer Study (POSS) was designed and was offered to help students and their counselors have an intellectual option for the summer. It was completely independent from the Pioneer Research Program.

Though clearly Pioneer's Open Summer Study (POSS) was more limited in its rigor and credits than the Pioneer Research Program, it was a most worthwhile opportunity. We worked very hard to make it so. Pioneer is determined to support today's young academic community, in both good and challenging times, by removing barriers to meaningful summer study because we believe true curiosity and commitment was, is, and should be, unstoppable.

Sincerely,

Matthew Jaskol

Pioneer Co-Founder and Program Director

PIONEER OPEN SUMMER STUDY (POSS)

An online research alternative for curious minds

Pioneer's answer to COVID-19's academic disruptions

Free to any interested, motivated high school student

For the first time ever, Pioneer offered a free alternative to the rigorous Pioneer Research Program.

A huge increase in the number of applications for 2020's Pioneer summer term made it clear that the responses around the world to COVID-19, which had shut down virtually all in-person summer study options, had left many students unable to find summer enrichment opportunities that would normally be available to them. But, as Director Matthew Jaskol said in his letter introducing this new program, "Students nearing college ... can't stop working towards their academic goals, and educators must guide them in spite of the hardships and difficulties the virus has imposed."

Pioneer's commitment to offering interested students the opportunity to cultivate their academic curiosity led to the development of a new kind of program. Pioneer's academic panel dedicated more than three months constructing a new framework and developing interdisciplinary themes, such as "The age of plague: medicine, society, and epidemics, 1348 & beyond" and "The forces driving socio-cultural revolution." This unique summer opportunity was open to all high school students looking to challenge themselves and pursue their academic passion in an engaging way.

An Adventure in Teamwork

Participants in POSS worked in teams of five to ten students with a school counselor or teacher as a project observer. Seasoned Pioneer faculty offered workshops on a variety of topics. Some groups participated in the live workshops, while others used the recorded versions to guide their work on their own schedules. Using the workshops as a foundation, each team designed and completed its own cooperative study project.

Pioneer offered POSS as its own unique response to the challenge of unprecedented times. POSS was designed to provide an enriching experience of study and teamwork to help prepare high school students for their college experience. While it was not the Pioneer Research Program, and was not regarded as Pioneer work for college applications, POSS provided an opportunity for students to acquire such valuable skills as time management and an understanding of the process of doing independent studies and academic research. And it was available, free, to any high school student around the world! 1078 students participated.

POSS is completely independent from the Pioneer Research Program. Students who participate in POSS CANNOT list POSS as a Pioneer Research Program credit on their college applications because POSS students do not go through Pioneer's admission system and their work is not scrutinized through Pioneer's academic procedure and standards.

What is going on? An emergency in slow motion

How do we know plague?

Historical evidence
Classics
Medical treatises
Legislation
Records of Deaths
Manuscript records

Great Recession v. COVID-19 Pandemic

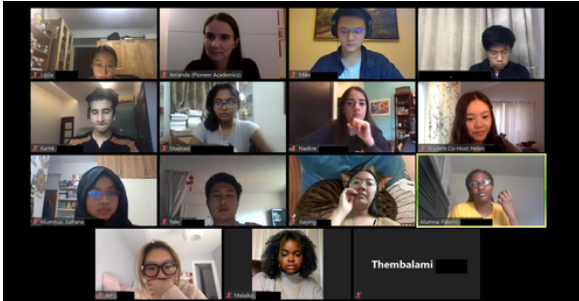
Herd immunity levels are country dependent

Country	Number infected	Herd immunity %
Spain	5232	5.17x10 ² 80.7
Sweden	814	3.44x10 ² 70.9
United States	2294	3.29x10 ² 69.6
Brazil	151	3.26x10 ² 69.3
United Kingdom	798	2.90x10 ² 65.5
Italy	17,990	2.44x10 ² 59.0
Iran	11,364	2.00x10 ² 54.0
Korea	8086	1.43x10 ² 30.1
Singapore	200	1.13x10 ² 11.5

POSS Roadmap 2020

PIONEER NEWS

SUPPORTING ALUMNI TRANSITION TO COLLEGE AND BEYOND: THE PIONEER ACADEMICS ALUMNI NETWORK



Caption: A small group session with 12 current Pioneer scholars and two alumni. Eight alumni served as participants at a recent Pioneer Alumni Panel, which was attended by over 50 current Pioneer scholars from around the world.

There are currently over 2000 alumni of the Pioneer Research Program, from countries all around the world. In order to give our alumni more opportunities to connect to each other and to academic, research, and professional opportunities, Pioneer Academics has started an Alumni Advisory Board. This Board is made up of eight alumni who range from current high school seniors to current college juniors who come from Turkey, Botswana, China, Canada, and the US.

When our spring-through-summer and summer cohorts finish this year, an additional 800 Pioneer scholars will become alumni. As a way of enriching our academic program, Pioneer Academics also launched a Student Advisory Board. This board, is made up of ten current scholars from six different countries: Turkmenistan, China, the US, Canada, Zimbabwe, and South Korea. The group facilitates opportunities for students to exchange ideas and perspectives across countries and academic disciplines, leveraging their talents and intellectual curiosity to be actively engaged participants and contributors. We hope that these events help provide an exciting platform to connect our scholars to each other and to new ideas and ways of thinking, and help prepare them to become dynamic members of our Pioneer alumni community.

MASTERING THE RESEARCH AND WRITING PROCESSES: 2020 PIONEER SCHOLARS EXPERIENCE A REVAMPED AND CAREFULLY RECONSIDERED CURRICULUM

A critical part of Pioneer's academic development is the design and enactment of a curriculum focused on preparing students for the research and writing process. This curriculum, part of a dedicated effort to identify students' academic needs and construct effective solutions around them, provides an essential structure and framework that allows high school students to conduct advanced, independent academic research at the undergraduate level. Pioneer has always offered a research training program to address this need, and this year has accomplished a new milestone in upgrading the research methodology curriculum and the way it helps our diverse scholars achieve their goals.

The newly re-designed research training program, now called "Research Seminar," uses a mixed format approach to help students develop the variety of skills they need in order to write an excellent original research paper. Students attend live sessions conducted by a member of the Pioneer Academics team specialized in facilitating the research seminar sessions. These live sessions focus on higher order critical and analytical reasoning skills and give students the opportunity to connect with their peers across research fields. They also provide an overview of the main topics students need to successfully manage the research and writing processes. Before and after the live sessions, students have access to a variety of multimedia materials that provide foundational knowledge as well as extension and examples of each key skill, allowing each student to learn at their own pace, including reference handbooks and worksheets. Together, these resources provide students a strong platform for succeeding in the Pioneer Research Program.

Introducing Pioneer Admission Officers

Pioneer Admissions officers are a unique team with diverse, highly specialized capabilities. They need to understand students from around the globe. They need to decipher, from the materials in an application, the nature of an applicant's interest, and they need to be experts on the variety of research concentrations available through the Pioneer Research Program. What is this unique admissions team like? For the first time, we are featuring our admission officers.

Many members of the Pioneer admissions team have a strong background in the field of college admissions. They are experienced in reading student essays and conducting student interviews. They include former college admission officers from Vassar College and Pomona College, as well as a former investment banking recruiter. In speaking of their work, all our admissions officers comment on the holistic nature of Pioneer's admissions process. One reader put it this way: "We are aware of each student's educational and social background going into the application and we try to find glimmers of potential in different pieces of the file."

Here are a few of our admissions staff members, and some of what they have to say about their work.



Lara, Pioneer's Associate Manager of Admissions

Lara, Pioneer's Associate Manager of Admissions, finds she learns most about a student through the long essay. "Each student has a unique story to tell and this can be the component that gives the most insight about a student's personal and professional motivations." She is passionate about helping students reach their goals, and this, she says, "is exactly what Pioneer Academics is doing and doing well."



Pioneer Admissions reader Sarah

Admissions reader **Sarah** looks for authenticity. “Applications are always exciting when you feel like students are being authentic. It’s a great opportunity for us as admissions professionals to learn more about young adults who have incredible potential in their lives—academically, psychologically, and emotionally.” When a student’s genuine interests are clear, the ability to connect that student with just the right research concentration is very satisfying.



Pioneer Admissions reader Kira

Kira, another admissions reader, appreciates the process that matches students’ interests with research areas. She praises Pioneer’s “fair, thorough, and compassionate evaluation practices,” and enjoys Pioneer’s online landscape, “which allows students to think about their academic interests almost in a vacuum, with laser-like focus.” She finds it exciting that Pioneer’s framework allows applicants to exercise their research skills and gain access to sophisticated research resources “without geographical obstacles.”



Pioneer Admissions reader Molly

Reader **Molly** describes Pioneer’s holistic admissions process in a nutshell. “Our goal is to fully get to know you and not just send students through an assembly line. As you complete the application and interview it is important to stay true to yourself and not just answer questions in a way you think we want them to be answered. One of the greatest things about joining a cohort is to bring your own unique history and perspectives to a process so that every dimension of the research can happen. A strong candidate is one who knows who they are and is willing to share that with our team.”

Expanding Our Commitment

Given the number of applications, our dedicated staff are working around the clock to make sure each student is given our rigorous, high quality evaluation. We have added readers and added times for interviews for students who move to the interview stage. We retain our commitment to discerning whether students are sufficiently interested in their chosen research areas to be “set up for success” when placed in their cohorts. We look for an openness to new experiences that will be essential to participate fully in an international cohort. We look for students who can think on their feet, reflect critically, and present themselves as mature and professional. And we look for students who are genuinely excited about intellectual pursuit and about the prospect of becoming a Pioneer Scholar.

Pioneer, Respect, and the College Admissions Process

A FORMER COLLEGE ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR TALKS ABOUT THE ADVANTAGES PIONEER RESEARCH SCHOLARS HAVE WHEN APPLYING FOR COLLEGE

Matthew Pohl, a former assistant director of admissions for the University of Pennsylvania and Wharton, recently discussed the college admissions process and the particular respect given to Pioneer Research Scholars in a brief video presentation. Three particular aspects of the Pioneer program set its students apart, he says.

ACADEMICS

Because Pioneer partners with Oberlin College, one of the top liberal arts colleges in the country, highly respected for its emphasis on critical and creative thinking, the Oberlin credits earned by Pioneer Research Scholars are automatically regarded with respect.

"Credibility is there—automatically," says Pohl. Top colleges "don't just partner with anyone."

SELECTIVITY

Since there are very few selective research-oriented programs, college admissions officers are aware of the high quality of the Pioneer program. Pioneer Research Scholars are respected for having done real college-level work, expressing themselves clearly in English, and demonstrating excitement for doing independent research.

LEADERSHIP

According to Pohl, colleges find that Pioneer Research Scholars "already had the recipe for success." The curiosity that led them to participate in a Pioneer program extends into their college experience, making it very likely that they will be among the natural leaders in their class.

MATTHEW POHL

Former associate director of admissions at the University of Pennsylvania and Wharton

The full interview, with more details, is available on our website. Find us at <https://pioneeracademics.com/>, and scroll down for the video.



2019 Pioneer Research Program University Acceptance Statistics

We are proud of all Pioneer scholars because of their curiosity and endeavors. The following statistics are shown to give prospective students a sense of the caliber of scholars selected into the program and as one measure of the recognition of the work they did through Pioneer's rigorous research program. While this helps to provide perspective, we recognize that genuine intellectual passion and dedication are measured by far more than the colleges to which students are admitted.

Average SAT Statistics: Evidence-Based Reading=734, Mathematics =790

Average TOEFL Score (International Students): 113

Average ACT Statistics: 34

Average IELTS Score: 8

U.S. Universities/Colleges

Agnes Scott College	Georgetown University (11)	Reed College (8)	University of California—Santa Cruz (15)
American University	Georgia Institute of Technology (40)	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (5)	University of Central Florida
Amherst College (5)	Grand Valley State University	Rhode Island School of Design (2)	University of Chicago (25)
Arizona State University (2)	Grinnell College (2)	Rice University (24)	University of Colorado Boulder (2)
Augusta University	Hamilton College (4)	Rochester Institute of Technology (4)	University of Connecticut
Babson College (5)	Harvard University (8)	Rochester University	University of Denver
Barnard College (6)	Harvey Mudd College (6)	Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (7)	University of Florida
Bates College (2)	Haverford College (4)	Rutgers University (6)	University of Georgia (4)
Baruch College-CUNY	Howard University	Salisbury University	University of Houston
Baylor University	Hunter College – CUNY	San Diego State University	University of Massachusetts Amherst (5)
Binghamton University (4)	Indiana State University	San Jose State University (2)	University of Miami (3)
Boston College (9)	Indiana University Bloomington (4)	Santa Clara University (7)	University of Michigan—Ann Arbor (44)
Boston University (21)	Indiana University Bloomington, Kelley School of Business	Sarah Lawrence College	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities (7)
Bowdoin College	Ithaca College	Savannah College of Art and Design	University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Brandeis University (3)	Johns Hopkins University (21)	School of the Art Institute in Chicago	School of Management
Brevard College	John Jay College of Criminal Justice – CUNY	School of Visual Arts	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Brown University (9)	Kalamazoo College	Skidmore College	University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill (48)
Bryn Mawr College (2)	Kansas State University	Smith College (16)	University of North Texas
Bucknell University	Kenyon College (2)	Southern Methodist University	University of Notre Dame (9)
California Institute of Technology (4)	Lafayette College	Stanford University (8)	University of Oregon
California Northstate University	Lake Forest College	Stevens Institute of Technology (2)	University of Pennsylvania (24)
California Polytechnic State University (5)	Lamar University	Swarthmore College (10)	University of Pittsburgh (4)
Carleton College (4)	Lehigh University (5)	Syracuse University (2)	University of Portland
Carnegie Mellon University (44)	Loyola Marymount University	Texas A&M University	University of Richmond (4)
Carthage College	Loyola University Chicago	The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science & Art (2)	University of Rochester (26)
Case Western Reserve University (19)	Macalester College (2)	The George Washington University (5)	University of San Diego (3)
Chapman University	Macaulay Honors College – CUNY	The Ohio State University (10)	University of San Francisco
Claremont McKenna College (2)	Manchester University (11)	The State University of New York at Albany	University of Southern California (73)
Clark University	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (5)	The State University of New York at Buffalo	University of the Pacific (2)
Clemson University	Mercer University	The State University of New York at Stony Brook (2)	University of Washington (32)
Colby College (3)	Miami University	The University of Arizona	University of Wisconsin—Madison (31)
Colgate University	Michigan State University (3)	The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (93)	Vanderbilt University (19)
College of William and Mary (11)	Middlebury College (8)	The University of Maryland, College Park (3)	Vassar College (12)
Colorado College (4)	Minerva Schools at KGI (2)	The University of Texas at Austin (15)	Villanova University
Colorado School of Mines	NYU Stern School of Business (2)	The University of Virginia (23)	Wake Forest University (6)
Columbia University (19)	Northwestern University (19)	Trinity College	Washington and Lee University
Cornell University (31)	Oberlin College (4)	Trinity University	Washington University in St. Louis (11)
Dartmouth College (10)	Ohio Northern University (2)	Tufts University (7)	Webster University
Davidson College (5)	Parsons School of Design	Tulane University (4)	Wellesley College (10)
Drew University	Pennsylvania State University—University Park (10)	University of Alberta	Wesleyan College
Drexel University (6)	Pepperdine University (2)	University of California—Berkeley (55)	Wesleyan University (9)
Duke University (16)	Pitzer College (2)	University of California—Davis (44)	Western Michigan University
Durham University (18)	Pomona College (6)	University of California—Irvine (65)	Wheaton College
Emerson College (5)	Pratt Institute (2)	University of California—Los Angeles (79)	Williams College (2)
Emory University (22)	Princeton University (9)	University of California – Riverside (3)	Worcester Polytechnic Institute (2)
Fordham University (14)	Purdue University—West Lafayette (11)	University of California—San Diego (120)	Yale University (18)
Franklin & Marshall College		University of California—Santa Barbara (98)	Yale-NUS College (7)
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering (2)			
George Mason University			

Non-U.S. Universities

Curtin University	McMaster University (2)	The University of Birmingham (2)	University of Cambridge (10)
Ecole Polytechnique Paris	Monash University	The University of Edinburgh (32)	University of Groningen
Eindhoven Institute of Technology	Queen's University	The University of Hong Kong	University of Ottawa
Griffith University	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University	The University of Manchester (9)	University of Oxford (8)
Imperial College London (26)	Sciences Po	The University of Melbourne	University of Southampton
Jacobs University (2)	SOAS University of London	The University of New South Wales	University of St Andrews (18)
King's College London (20)	The Australian National University	The University of Sheffield	University of Toronto (33)
Lancaster University (2)	The Chinese University of Hong Kong	The University of Sydney (4)	University of Warwick (14)
London School of Economics and Political Science (22)	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	Tsinghua University (2)	University of Waterloo (5)
Macquarie University	The University of British Columbia (12)	University College London (56)	Utrecht University
McGill University (9)		University of Bristol (3)	York University

Admission results should not be construed as a direct outcome of any one program. Colleges and universities use a holistic application process to evaluate all aspects of an applicant, and while experience in a particular program may distinguish a student, no single credential will determine admission results.



Pioneer Alumnus
Omar Ramos

A VERY
COMPLEX
DANCE

OMAR RAMOS

Stanford University

Pioneer Research Topic:

Astor Piazzolla's ibertango:
Musical Analysis of a
Contemporary Epitome of Tango

"My Pioneer experience taught me many things that I can apply to my life on a daily basis." -- Omar Ramos

When Omar Ramos began to work on his Pioneer research paper, "Musical Analysis of a Contemporary Epitome of Tango," little did he know that the process of research and writing would be as challenging in its way as the steps of this most complex dance. His previous interests were concentrated on STEM subjects, and he admits to thinking only those areas were subjects for serious research. His project expanded his views considerably, at the same time that his paper suggested how complex the background of something as seemingly straightforward as a musical composition could prove to be.

Intricate Interactions

Beginning as an analysis of Astor Piazzolla's "Libertango," Omar's research led him beyond straight music theory into the fields of humanities, math, sociology, psychology, history, politics and even neuroscience. "Music theory involves everything you've ever studied in your life," he says. A piece of music such as "Libertango" has a cultural history in its country of origin and a place in the development of classical music from its earliest

days to the present. Its complexities require mathematical precision in writing down the notes so musicians can perform the piece, and its rhythms both come from and affect what happens in the brain as it responds to different meters through hearing and movement. The relationship between men and women at any given cultural moment are reflected in the evolving steps of the dance. And one of Omar's conclusions is that the tango could only have developed in Argentina, where its complexities and musical and physical suspensions reflect the tensions of the country's political uncertainties.



International Connections Step by Step

Pioneer's emphasis on international communication was a supportive background for Omar's work.

Born in El Salvador, Omar became interested in Argentina as a young soccer fan. (He played some soccer as a child, and is still a fan.) He moved to the United States when he was 14, and immediately faced the international challenge of getting his minimal English up to speed so he could have a successful social life and do well in school.

Omar's multi-cultural Pioneer cohort were studying Mozart and Chinese traditional music, encouraging him to follow the interest in different rhythms that grew from his class experience.

He notes that the tango's origin in Argentina comes in part from the country's unique combination of instruments from Germany and African rhythms, gifts from immigrants of past generations. But coming to this conclusion involved a great deal more international work. Omar's research materials drew on his language skills and improved them. Of the five or six books and 20 or so journal articles he used, many were in Spanish, which he reads fluently; some were in Portuguese, which was more challenging; and a few were in African languages that he had to try to translate. He also spent many hours watching videos of people doing the tango, trying to understand the language of the dance and the interactions of the dancers.

Omar is clearly a self-motivated young man, with a drive toward excellence. He says this was not always the case. When he was a child, his mother had to push him to study. However, once they escaped the violence and poverty of daily life in El Salvador, he was so grateful that he felt an obligation to apply himself to his studies as a way of expressing his gratitude. And once he began to experience academic success, he gained self-confidence.

Nevertheless, a major research paper was a new and challenging experience, and the successful completion of this daunting project required the support of Omar's Pioneer research team. His professor was particularly helpful, encouraging Omar to develop his own ideas, and also suggesting other avenues to explore. Omar clearly remembers the individual session with his professor when the professor began the conversation, but before long Omar noticed that he was doing the talking, one expert explaining an aspect of music theory to another. It was then that he realized he could make a contribution of real value to the field.

In addition to the subject matter, Omar's professor helped on what Omar calls a psychological level, assisting him with time management and organizational skills that took away the fear of tackling such a large project. He calls working with his professor "one of the best parts of the program," and hopes to find more like him in college.

Omar's student cohort provided a different kind of support. Joint review sessions with his fellow students, who were "very sincere and sometimes funny," were a "very enriching experience." Their different cultural backgrounds led to stimulating conversations about exciting ways to analyze music. It was through the interactions with his cohort that Omar developed his paper topic.

Next Steps

Omar's Pioneer research experience was a major factor in his college application process and, he believes, in his acceptance at Stanford, where he is now a student. He shared that his music theory research offered an added dimension to his previous work in STEM subjects, and, he says, "helped me stand out." He mentioned his Pioneer research in all his applications and talked about it in all his interviews. In addition, he was able to stay in touch with Pioneer and his Pioneer professor.

When asked if he thought anything about his Pioneer experience would be useful in his life beyond academics, he replied that it had "taught me many things that I can apply to my life on a daily basis." From time management skills to an appreciation of how culture impacts every facet of life to the ability to hear the influence of classical music on any piece he listens to, Omar sees his Pioneer experience having a lifelong benefit.

And some day, he may even learn to dance the tango!



Pioneer Alumna
Maya Johns

GIRLS CAN
TAP DANCE,
TOO!

MAYA JOHN

Yale University

Pioneer Research Topic: Gender Sociolinguistics in a 2nd Grade Classroom

When Maya John of San Francisco, now a student at Yale University, did the field work for her Pioneer research project—an analysis of the social interactions in a tap dance class for second graders—she noticed something significant. In a class with three times as many girls as boys, the teacher spent proportionally more time with the boys, helping them, asking them questions, and calling on them. In her Pioneer research paper, “Gender Linguistics in the Second Grade Classroom,” Maya offers a possible societal reason for the discrepancy. Although dance as a whole is a female-dominated field, tap dance is traditionally a more male-dominated activity. Nevertheless, the gender bias was clear. In this classroom, with a female teacher, boys got more attention than girls.

However, this was not precisely the question that Maya had set out to ask and answer.

Fancy Footwork

Unlike research projects that can be done entirely by consulting written sources, projects like Maya’s that require live observation are open to technical glitches. She was halfway through her first attempt, recording a session of a multi-ethnic classroom, when the recording equipment



broke down. It was the last session of that class, so she couldn’t try again. It was the time of year when many programs were ending, and not many of those still holding sessions were willing to be recorded. Maya chose the tap dance class from a very small number of possibilities.

Acquiring the raw material she needed required several steps. She attached microphones to the teacher, one boy, and one girl. She set up a video camera in the back of the room and recorded every word and action during the class session. Then she made a written transcript of

everything that had been said and done, noting in particular how much time the teacher spent with each student. Working from the video, the transcript, and the other materials she had read for her Pioneer class work and as background for her inquiry into gender bias, she used all this material to write a Pioneer research paper that won high praise from her professor.

How did Maya, as a high school junior, become so light on her feet,

Beginning with the Basics

Maya is an only child, the daughter of immigrant parents who are both doctors. Rather than feeling pressure from them to do well or follow their profession, Maya was raised understanding that her parents felt that “we have done well, and you can do better.” To help her discover and develop her potential, she says “They inspired in me the joy of learning.” Trips to

grades, and to pursue any profession that appealed to her, offering her a model of how to be flexible during a learning process.

Maya says she has always been an empathetic person, and is particularly interested in the general field of psychology and, more specifically, studying education, people and society. When she saw the Pioneer class “The Politics of Language in Societies” it seemed a great opportunity to explore her interests



adjusting literally on the spot to a situation that could be daunting to a professional with far more time and resources available? The answer would seem to begin with her family, her personality, and her Pioneer research team.

interesting places such as science museums and aquariums, help with homework when she asked for it, and above all encouraging her to find something that could be fun even in classes that weren't very interesting, all helped Maya find learning enjoyable. Her parents also encouraged her not to worry about

in a focused way. That proved to be true, and Maya's professor, whose interests are in the same field and who has done her own field work, helped her through the technical problems, drawing on her expertise to help Maya find her last-minute substitute class.

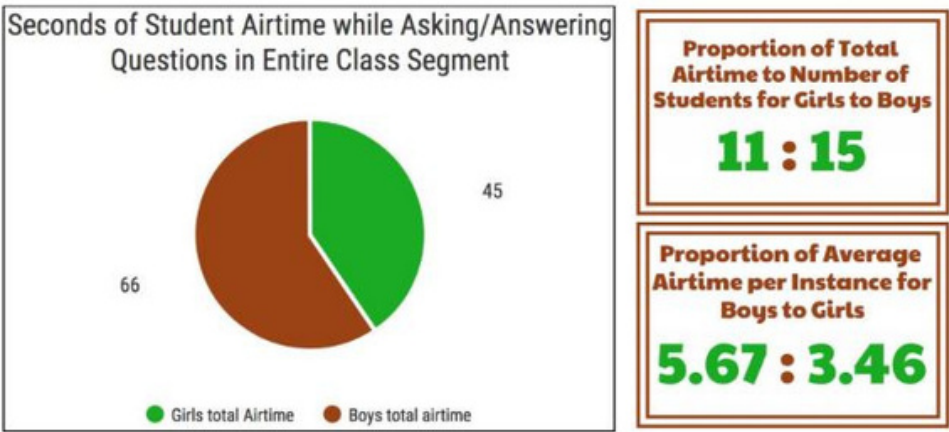
Being flexible in her expectations, knowing how to look for something positive in any situation, and having the self-confidence to ask for help when she needs it all contributed to Maya's ability to bring a difficult situation to a positive conclusion.

Taking Each Next Step

The story of Maya's Pioneer experience is a story of identifying opportunities and taking advantage of them. Maya came to Pioneer in much the same way she chose her field work experience. Emails from the organization "A Better Chance" described a number of different study opportunities, and Maya considered them all. She chose Pioneer because she really wanted to do research, something that would strengthen her college application. And she liked the idea of working with a college professor.

The relationship between Maya and her professor was very supportive, and continued through the college application process, with her professor writing recommendations. Because their fields of interest are so similar, Maya hopes her professor might be a mentor again if they can work together on another research project.

Maya found working with her student cohort one of the most enriching parts of her Pioneer experience. The other students were from China, "people I would



Maya noticed something significant. In a class with three times as many girls as boys, the teacher spent proportionally more time with the boys, helping them, asking them questions, and calling on them. (A chart in Maya's research paper)

never have met in any other way." She really enjoyed learning about other cultures. One eye-opening moment remains one of her best memories from her Pioneer days. One student from China who had been educated in an English immersion school had the opportunity to participate in a debate in Chinese, her native language—and found she did not have the technical vocabulary to express her ideas as fluently as she could have in English. Maya was surprised to learn that such a thing could happen, and the story led to a memorable discussion about English as a colonial language.

Maya "fell in love with research" through her Pioneer program, and sees herself continuing to do research in social studies and social sciences. Her love of helping people and working to understand them makes her think that college professor might be a good choice of profession. Another of her interests, film making, could also be incorporated into her research.

When asked what advice she might have for students beginning or considering a Pioneer program, her answer clearly came from her own experience: "Take advantage of every opportunity."

**"Take advantage of every opportunity."
- Maya John**



Reimagining Community Building in Education in the Time of COVID-19

Celebrating her eighth year mentoring at Pioneer Academics, Professor Colette Mazzucelli has a surprisingly upbeat assessment of the potential outcomes of the current pandemic crisis. “It’s certainly a crisis, but it is also an opportunity,” she said in a recent seminar addressing the impact of the pandemic on the broad field of international relations. Dr. Mazzucelli, who has taught International Relations as a member of the Graduate Faculty of NYU since 2005, was addressing questions from a group of close to two dozen Pioneer students from around the world. Organized by the Pioneer Academics Student Advisory Board, the seminar was facilitated by co-hosts Evelyn from Beijing, China, Vinh from Houston, Texas, and Annie from Hangzhou, China. Participants came from four continents, and were dialing in to the Zoom seminar from Nigeria, Cameroon, Pakistan, India, England, Canada, and several places each in the United States and China.

Dr. Mazzucelli’s remark was in response to a question about incorporating the work and

ideas of a large range of disciplines into discussions about international relations. Specifically, she was reflecting on the opportunity this crisis presents to begin to work together more intentionally in the all-important field of public health.

“I think,” she said, “we see that this pandemic brings concepts such as health security, Global Public Health, to the forefront of our thinking.” She reimagines the relationship between the fields of public health and international relations as one that brings into the conversation “the voices of those who are global public health specialists, who are practitioners in medicine, who have backgrounds in infectious diseases.”

The intransigence of this pandemic, “the way in which it continues to challenge us...makes the academic world much more aware that there is no place for disciplinary divides. We have to be more holistic in our thinking and we have to allow public health conversations

and research to impact international relations in different ways.” For instance, since the pandemic will affect each continent differently, each continent will need to respond differently, and “we have to understand these differences” and what they mean for the field of international relations.

Global health is just one example of the opportunities for reimagining the world that the pandemic is creating. Dr. Mazzucelli also spoke about education, which is her own passion as well as her profession, and, in response to participants’ questions, areas of life as diverse as identity and gender issues, war and peace, and a new vision of our global interdependence.

Dr. Mazzucelli did not set out to be an educator. Because of her great interest in travel and international relations, she trained and planned to be a diplomat. However, a wise professor noted her particular interest in



It’s the mentoring, the ability to help young people find their own passion, that she finds most satisfying. “I would say the most special thing is to bring young minds together with those who have already established themselves and their careers, and to see how these young people come into their own, recognizing their own vocations through the experiences they have with established colleagues.”

“we can imagine the community in different ways.”

Europe and counseled her to become an academic instead, so she could focus her attention on her area of interest rather than move from place to place depending on the needs of the Foreign Service.

It proved to be good advice and a wise decision. The academic trajectory she chose allows her to have the best of both worlds: hands-on experience in the field of international relations; and the joy of mentoring students who share her interests. “You have to reach out as a professor to just about every part of the world. You have to communicate with many different peoples and groups and communities.” The academic world “gives us an opportunity to be responsive in very specific ways, through our mentoring, through our writings, through the different networks and communities that we can bring together.”

The pandemic and its disruption of the ordinary patterns of education have made this, Dr. Mazzucelli said, “without a doubt the most memorable semester in my experience, in large part because of the way in which the students have demonstrated their commitment and their dedication to studies in a very surreal time.” Although the in-person educational experience is invaluable and irreplaceable, in this time when it is not available, “we can imagine the community in different ways.”

Today’s students are, in her opinion, ideally equipped for this work of reimagination. “You are coming into a world which is challenged in many different ways,” she says, “and you are digital natives, whereas my generation are immigrants to that world. We don’t know it from the inside out. We learned it from the outside in.”

Before the pandemic, Dr. Mazzucelli appreciated the flexibility she was given to use technology in her teaching. Once technology became the only tool for teaching, she became the learner, relying on her students for feedback as to what works and what doesn't. Her seminars are now "student centric endeavors." And the idea of "classroom" is being reimagined in terms of "community." "A classroom has walls, a community is expansive." The frontiers are pushed out and "inclusion becomes central to the experience."

This new focus on inclusion brings a new set of challenges. "How does one build a community now that can mean going in and connecting to a local classroom in Nigeria, in Kenya?" The "digital divide" is experienced particularly acutely when learning opportunities become almost entirely digital. Conversations about, for instance, Europe or Asia can happen in multiple places at once, but "whatever the dialogue is, it means reaching into the local to make the world learning experience more relevant...So the challenge in our world is to make that local experience one that we can share." The digital divide complicates this effort by reinforcing a level of exclusionism. "Inclusionism is the basis for everything that we do, and in learning today, inclusionism is about mitigating the digital divide."

Once again, Dr. Mazzucelli sees this challenge as one for today's students. Before long, "your generation will come into the positions of responsibility, and it will be in those positions of responsibility that that digital divide is addressed."

Asked about how people who are drawn to work in the field of international relations identify themselves, Dr. Mazzucelli suggested that many of them see themselves as "citizens of the world." She also suggested that this is a field where reimagining one's identity is encouraged, "because one in this world does not necessarily have just one identity. One is from Asia. One is from India. One is female. One is a climate activist. There are so many different ways

that your generation has to identify oneself that there is no need to narrow down to one. Identity today is plural, and should be plural, because we live in a plural world."

In response to a question about whether it is more important for a "global citizen" to accept or to influence society, Dr. Mazzucelli turned to philosophy, citing the Aristotelian idea that "the acorn wants to become a tree." Society is always becoming, always reimagining itself, always evolving. Sometimes evolution is the result of revolution, a word that implies violence, and she notes that "the pandemic is introducing a certain type of violence into our societies," the violence of "its ability to kill the innocent and the defenseless." This calls upon us to reimagine our commitment to society and, as citizens of the world, "we are beholden to use our talents to influence society proactively."

The pandemic has exposed the asymmetries and vulnerabilities of virtually every nation in the world, affecting most particularly those that have previously felt themselves to be invulnerable.

"The outcome of the pandemic, I believe," says Dr. Mazzucelli, "as we return to a new normal, whenever that is, will mean a redefinition of social movements." The asymmetries will need to be addressed. The world order will need to be reimagined. It will be the work of a generation. "It is a process, and it's incumbent again on your generation to influence that process."

Dr. Mazzucelli sees the Pioneer experience as ideal preparation for this work. **"In community building in the academic world, I would say that Pioneer Academics is the most innovative, the most inclusive, and the most engaged in terms of bringing young people together, allowing them to realize their own passions and their dreams of studying."** And that, she says, is why she has, since 2013, returned year after year to work with Pioneer Scholars.



More than an activity, Pioneer is counted as a credit-bearing college course on college applications

Pioneer alumnus: Mpilo M.

Students who complete the Pioneer Research Program can list that they received two college course units from Oberlin College on their applications through the Common Application, the University of California system, and the Coalition Application



"If you have ever taken coursework at a college or university, please indicate the number of colleges."

Students who have completed the Pioneer Research Program can list their Pioneer experience by choosing "Oberlin College" as the credit-granting institution in the college course section.

Students can further describe their Pioneer Research Program experience and research paper in the activities section.



"Have you taken college courses or earned college credit?"

Students who have completed the Pioneer Research Program can select "yes" and then list Oberlin College in the "College Information" section.

Students can then further describe their experience in the Activity Resume section.



"Academic History - Colleges Attended While in High School"

Students who have completed the Pioneer Research Program can enter "Oberlin College" in the "Academic History - Colleges Attended While in High School" section.

Students can then use the "additional comments" section to describe the Pioneer Research Program, their professor, and their research paper topic.

Upon completing the program, the team of program coordinators at Pioneer Academics work with each student to provide resources and advice on the specifics of inputting the Pioneer Research Program into the form of application students are using. While most of our students attend US universities, each year our students also receive offers from top non-US universities, including the University of Cambridge and University of Oxford. Pioneer therefore also provides guidance on how to discuss the Pioneer Research Program on applications to non-US universities.



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