

AFTERWORD

The Carnegie Scholars Program, 2005-2009: A New Vision of Study and Outreach for Scholarship on Islam by Patricia Rosenfield, Director, Carnegie Scholars Program

The profiles in this volume bear witness to the promise and progress of the last five years of the Carnegie Scholars Program. Particularly since 9/11, national and global developments have posed significant and sobering challenges to our society. One way that Carnegie Corporation responded was by funding a significant cohort of scholars who can make—and in many cases, have already made—a critical difference in helping us understand the complex issues that we face in the present as well as those likely to confront our nation in the future. It is notable that for the last half of this decade, the Carnegie Scholars Program was the only broad-based national fellowship program that focused exclusively on scholarship related to Islam and the modern world. Among its top goals: excellence. Scholarship free of constraints. Supporting work that could make an impact on national policy and decision making. And creating a platform for sharing information with the public.

How were these vital goals met? Here are some insights into the Corporation's inner workings and guiding principles:

Excellence. The fluidity and speed with which information is presently conveyed within and across societies demands that scholarship be innovative, fresh and creative. As Vartan Gregorian, president of the Corporation notes earlier in these pages, his founding of the Scholars Program in 2000 was meant to continue the Corporation's long-standing support of gifted individuals in their ability to address pressing problems facing modern society. The more relevant and creative the scholarship produced by these exceptional individuals, the greater the likelihood that their findings will be important and consequential to American foreign policy and public understanding alike.

The Corporation identified the first step in achieving excellent scholarship as selecting and funding creative, innovative scholars whose work addressed essential themes surrounding the study of Islam in today's world, such as *jihad*, Islam and law, gender, civic participation and religious minorities. Hence, external and internal members of Carnegie's

Selection Committee were particularly drawn to scholar candidates who demonstrated commitment to sustained study that promised to far surpass surface understanding. These individuals embodied the best potential for addressing critical issues, meeting intellectual demands, tracking broader trends and producing excellent work. As Shibley Telhami writes in his introduction, the Scholars Program has changed the vista of this country by helping to broaden the picture of Muslim societies beyond the narrow prism through which they have been viewed in recent years.

An excellent example of this is seen in the Carnegie Scholars' widening scope of influence. Many of the fellowship recipients are linked to scholarly networks in Europe, the Muslim world, and across the United States. A notable example of this kind of collaboration was a three-day meeting in Moscow, held in 2007, that brought together over 60 Russian participants drawn primarily from the Corporation-supported Centers for Advanced Study and Education based at a number of Russian universities with a group of Carnegie Scholars for discussions that included a focus on issues related to Islam.

In addition, a number of Carnegie Scholars have reached out to share insights and information with influential, non-scholarly groups such as Philanthropy New York (formerly the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers), the Peace and Security Funders Group and the Women's Foreign Policy Group. Some scholars have worked with the FBI and local police departments to reduce the negative impact of profiling on citizens in their communities. And several have been responsible for starting programs of Islamic Studies in their universities. One such example is Bruce Lawrence who, with his colleagues at the University of North Carolina—as noted earlier in this volume—started the first Islamic Studies Center in the U.S. in 1997. These study centers are helping to sustain excitement and dynamism around the study of Islam and encourage expansion of similar programs. Significantly, Islamic study centers also promote the interaction of younger scholars with their more senior colleagues. Rippling outward from these study centers, then, will come new generations of scholars who have been influenced and inspired by Carnegie Corporation's commitment to excellence.

Scholarship free of constraints. The pressures of tenure and continual fundraising impose major restrictions on scholars all along their intellectual journeys. The Carnegie Scholars Program was therefore designed to support the work and aspirations of a wide range of scholars, including both independent scholars and those based in traditional academic settings and think tanks. It allowed these gifted scholars to pursue their research without institutional or departmental constraints. It freed them from time and resource worries, giving them the means to independently pursue innovative perspectives, get additional language training,

track cultural trends, and meet firsthand with members of Muslim societies.

Younger scholars were the beneficiaries of an uplift in their status. Senior scholars were free to shift the focus of their scholarship, retool, and address new issues. Is it any wonder, then, that these scholars are building a body of thoughtful and original scholarship?

Making an impact on national policy and decision making. The profiles in this volume—along with the list of the 101 Carnegie Scholars who focused on Islam over the past five years and the descriptions of their projects—attest to the active involvement of fellowship recipients in shaping the critical thinking of our time. Vali Nasr, for example, writes memos to President Obama in his new job in the State Department. Amaney Jamal, amongst several of the scholars including Nasr and Feldman, is an advisor to the Council on Foreign Relations. Noah Feldman was among those who framed the transitional Iraqi constitution. Many Carnegie Scholars continue to advise or testify before Congress and share ideas with policymakers in organizations such as the Center on Law and Security at the New York University School of Law. Younger scholars report that as a result of attaining a Carnegie fellowship, they are now invited to high-level policy meetings that once would have been closed to them.

As this nation charts its course toward the future, there is more of a need than ever for the involvement of first-class analytical scholars with a deep grasp of history, economics, politics, culture, religion, gender, international law and other areas of study. In that regard, Carnegie Scholars have taken the pulse of Muslim societies here and abroad. They are the antithesis of the glib instant experts with “arm-chair reflections” who sprang up after 9/11 and now seem to appear nightly on the cable television stations and talk radio. In this environment, the Carnegie Scholars bring a clarity and depth of knowledge that is as welcome as fresh air.

A platform for sharing information with the public. Often working in tandem with the Corporation’s Dissemination Program, the Carnegie Scholars Program emphasized efforts to help provide its fellowship awardees with a platform for continuing outreach. Winning “The Carnegie” has in itself been a good start because the award has come to be widely recognized in both academic and policymaking circles and has opened many doors for its recipients. As a result, several have reported receiving tenure, a promotion, or being selected for a new position as a result of their heightened visibility and achievements as Carnegie Scholars. Individual success, however, was only part of the goal: more specifically, each scholar was expected to produce a book or series of articles stemming from Carnegie Corporation’s support. The Corporation, in turn, worked to ensure that each scholar’s output

was disseminated as widely as possible, including beyond the academic realm.

The Corporation has actively encouraged Carnegie Scholars to share their ideas across many platforms including film, blogging, webinars and other new uses of electronic media. Corporation-sponsored communications workshops have also brought the scholars together to share strategies and gain new skills such as writing opinion pieces. For example, Brian Edwards in particular—as noted in his profile—has honed his abilities as a public scholar and is also sharing public dissemination strategies with colleagues in Egypt to help them develop more visibility and achieve wider outreach.

Indeed, Carnegie Scholars are well represented in the pages of prestigious publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. They often speak to the public via panels, bookstore appearances, television and radio. Jen'nan Read, for example, became a bridge between Muslim-Americans and the rest of America during the last presidential election, when she was often called on by the media to address questions about Muslim-Americans' actions and aspirations.

Overall, the Corporation and the staff of the Carnegie Scholars Program recognize what a rare privilege it has been to identify and assist outstanding individuals in the pursuit of their intellectual passions. Our contribution has been to support work that has opened up an all-too-rare but necessary intersection between those passions and ideas that may present solutions to some of the most contested problems of our time. We are proud of our part in this undertaking and prouder, still, of the rich body of knowledge about Islam and the diverse mosaic of Muslim societies that our Carnegie Scholars have helped to create.