November 9, 2012

Dear NJGSS Alums and Supporters,

Well, it is November, and NJGSS 2012 is pretty much history. Our twenty-ninth summer was another success. The NJGSS scholars of 2012 did stellar work in their core courses, laboratories, and team projects. There were new laboratories in forensics and psychology, and a new team project in ecology that studied the potential effects of global warming on plant growth. The team project in anthropology established that it was possible to identify different tree species from the charcoal found in the fire pits of an ancient civilization, thereby laying the groundwork for a new area of research at Drew. Other scholars used sophisticated molecular modeling software to calculate reaction parameters during RNA cleavage; while in the neuroscience project, scholars created an artificial neural network model that then examined how random synaptic failures affected the ability of the system to recall visual patterns. Dr. Jim Supplee returned to teach his physics core course in special relativity and we were all thrilled to have Dr. Adam Reiss share both his Nobel Prize and the research for which he received that prize with the scholars. This, in addition to the other core courses, laboratories, team projects, career day, college fair, and talent show, made for a very busy and productive summer. All was made possible by the work that Myrna Papier and Anna Mae Dinio-Bloch did for the program. Even though Myrna’s last day on the job was supposed to be the end of June, she stayed to help on a part-time basis through the summer, while Anna Mae, our new administrative manager, did a marvelous job in keeping everything going smoothly and handling a set of unanticipated crises in the midst of learning the business of NJGSS during our busiest time of the year.

Equally important was the support, both in time and funds, which you, the alumni of NJGSS provided. The time that alumni spent in sharing their life experiences and careers had an important impact on the thinking of our scholars. Your financial support makes it possible for us to house, feed, entertain, and keep 85 students busy for three intensive weeks. Now, having finished mailing scholar letters and CD’s, and finalizing the budget for the 2012 program, we begin the exciting process of doing it all over again, for what will proudly be our 30th summer. In preparing for the 2013 program, NJGSS needs your help, even more than ever before. Last year, we had the largest increase (18%) in the cost of housing and food in ten years. This coming summer, we are anticipating an increase of over 50% for feeding and housing our students. The donations from corporations and foundations declined last year (~10%) and we are only getting $50,000 from the State of New Jersey. Consequently, the balance is coming from you, the alumni of NJGSS. Last year, we spent $283,000 to run the program. Next year, we are currently estimating a total budget of nearly $330,000, to be able to accommodate the same number of students (85) for a three-week program. This means we need to raise an additional $50,000 just to stay in place.

The State of New Jersey, like many states everywhere, continues to face difficult economic times, but we are trying to make the case that NJGSS, and the Governor’s School in Technology and Engineering, the only two Governor’s Schools that remain, are not only a good investment, but are valuable programs for the state to continue supporting. To make that case, we need to provide data about our alumni. In particular, we need information on what has happened to them since NJGSS and where are they are currently living and working. Since the commencement of the 2012 program, we currently have 2,671 NJSSS alumni, but we only have email addresses for about half of you in our database. We need to update the information we have on file to make sure it is current. In addition, it is
important that we find those alumni who are not in our database, so we can include them in our data reports. So, we are appealing to you to go onto our website and update your information. Also, we are asking that you spread the word to any and all alumni you may have kept in contact with, or know how to get in contact with, who may not be in our database, or have outdated email addresses, to urge them to go and update the information needed. This can easily be done by going to our website at http://www.drew.edu/govschool/alumni/alumni-keep-in-touch and filling out the short form provided. If you should have any problems completing the form online, you may also email the information directly to govschool@drew.edu.

The corporations and foundations that have been our major sources of financial support have remained fairly constant since our need to seriously raise funds for the program. While they remain strong supporters, the total amount we receive from this group has sadly declined. In order to increase the dollars we get from this source, it is imperative that we tap new sources. Therefore, if you work for a company that could be a potential supporter of NJGSS, we need to find a way to get our foot into their philanthropic door. If you are willing to be a contact, or can direct us to the people who are involved with donations, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you. To start that process, please contact Anna Mae by sending an email to govschool@drew.edu, or calling (973) 408-3605.

Finally, we need your donations. The one area that we saw an increase in donations last year was in the alumni component. There are nearly 2,700 of you now and while I really love the big gifts (which I hope will continue), all of those small donations really do add up, and if each and every one of you contributed something, no matter the amount, big or small, this would help the NJGSS program greatly. I understand the economy is still tough and I appreciate the demand on your resources to contribute to other charitable institutions, but I hope that NJGSS did have an impact on you and that you will consider us favorably. To make a donation online, simply follow the link on our website http://www.drew.edu/govschool or you can mail the check directly to us at Governor's School in the Sciences, Drew University, 36 Madison Ave. Madison, NJ 07940. Checks are made payable to Drew University and please be sure to include “Governor’s School in the Sciences” in the memo line. All donations are tax-deductible, which is a great benefit to you.

You should know that this will be the last time that I will be asking you for your help. I am retiring from Drew University this coming June 2013 and Dr. Adam Cassano has accepted the task to work with Steve Surace in directing the program next year. Many of you know Adam, since he has been a team project leader in NJGSS for several years now and is a strong supporter of the mission of the program. So, I am very happy to be leaving the leadership in his, Surace, and Anna-Mae’s competent hands. As for me, I plan to be “around” this summer (after all I can’t miss the 30th program), most likely as an instructor in a laboratory or team project leader.

Thank you again for your continued support of NJGSS. Please understand that it continues to make a big difference in the development of these young scientists’ minds, their career goals and life choices.

Sincerely,

David M. Miyamoto
Director, NJ Governor’s School in the Sciences