2017 – 2018 Gussin Spiritan Division Students (partial roster)

Ameya Ranade, an alumni and native of Mumbai, India, began working as a math-science tutor for the Gussin Spiritan Division (GSD) in 2010 while in graduate school. In 2012 he was promoted to ACT 101 program advisor, and in 2013 he was appointed assistant to the director of retention and evaluation. In this capacity, Ameya is responsible for compiling student performance data and generating the majority of the statistical analysis documenting the achievements of the GSD, the M.P. Weber Learning Skills Center’s Student Success Courses, and Pennsylvania Acts, Duquesne’s ACT 101 program.

Ameya earned his bachelor’s degree in engineering from Mumbai University and since his arrival to the U.S. in 2010, he has earned an MBA with a concentration in human resources and information systems from Duquesne University. He is also an adjunct faculty member teaching Research and Information Skills in the GSD’s summer semester. During fall and spring semesters, he serves GSD students and others as a calculus workshop leader.

Regarding his employment with the GSD, Ameya states, “I don’t say it often, but working at the GSD gives me the feeling of being in a family.”

During his free time, Ameya enjoys reading, swimming, watching sci-fi movies, playing tennis and listening to Bollywood music while drinking coffee and snacking on sweets.

Brandon Keip, a junior double majoring in international security studies and political science, is the 2018 Gussin Spiritan Division Student of the Year. Brandon hails from Allentown, Pa. and graduated from Allentown Central Catholic High School. As a high school student, Brandon was an active member of the lacrosse team, and the Central City Project, a community uplift organization that serves the homeless and sponsors social justice projects in the Allentown area.

When asked why he chose to attend Duquesne, Brandon states, “I consider Duquesne the Ivy League school of western Pennsylvania,” and its location in downtown Pittsburgh was also a selling point.

Brandon currently works on campus as a resident assistant and raises funds for Save the Child. He also organizes clothing drives for the St. Vincent DePaul Society. As Student of the Year, he plans to assist students new to the Division by sharing his experiences as a high performing student leader.

Regarding the Gussin Spiritan Division, Brandon states, “The Division steered me in the right direction and kept me on a path that my parents can be proud of... I am eternally grateful.”

After completing his undergraduate studies, Brandon intends to apply to the U.S. Army’s Officer Candidate School with the hope of working in an intelligence gathering capacity. Later he plans to attend graduate school to earn an MBA.
Standing as a hallmark of Duquesne’s dedication to education for the mind, the heart and the spirit, named for the Spiritan congregation and endowed by alumnus, Dr. Robert Gussin and his wife, Dr. Patricia Gussin, the Gussin Spiritan Division of Academic Programs specializes in helping students of varying backgrounds develop their full potential as students and citizens of the world. The Division’s performance-tested system of personal guidance and learning assistance supports the student’s transition from high school diploma to college degree.

The Gussin Spiritan Division helps freshmen and other students new to Duquesne maximize their chances of college success. While there are many factors that will impact that success, chief among them is a solid transition to college life. Successful college transitions are made when the student:

- Adapts to new learning environments and new learning situations.
- Understands the role of personal responsibility in college, career and life success.
- Refines the academic skills necessary for college success—reading, writing, editing and critical thinking.
- Relies on high-quality academic support such as tutoring, counseling and other interventions should problems arise.

The Gussin Spiritan Division of Academic Programs operates on a cohort model. While the Division freshmen are immersed in the same core curriculum as other Duquesne first-year students, Spiritan Core courses are taught by University faculty hand-picked by the Division because of their commitment to the Division’s approach to student development.

The Gussin Spiritan Division student’s transition from high school to college begins with a summer semester during which the student is registered for Core English 101, University 101, Research and Information Skills and Academic Strategies. The student returns to campus for the fall semester with a University transcript showing six earned credits and with an armful of friendships developed during the summer semester.

The academic year continues this development through coursework, academic advisement, tutoring when needed and counseling. It culminates with an end-of-year review during which assessment of academic and affective growth is discussed with the student. Assuming all Division requirements are completed and all prerequisites for the intended major are satisfied, the student transfers to the college or one of the schools to pursue that major. Otherwise, the student is retained in the Division until all requirements and/or prerequisites are met.

That many Division students have gone on to complete their degrees at Duquesne or elsewhere—and some have pursued or are pursuing graduate degrees—attests to the soundness of our approach to academic and affective development. Obviously, the transition Gussin Spiritan Division students make during this first-year lays the foundation for their progress toward their degree.

Our work is intended to help the student selected for admission to the Division accept personal responsibility for academic success or failure. Their success is our success.

On December 4, 2017, Gussin Spiritan Division (GSD) UCOR 102 faculty members Gregory Chwala, Sean Martin, Samantha Rump, Michael Saldana, Kayla Sargeson and James Talerico along with Public Speaking instructors Felix Okeke, Blake Playchak and Autumn Redcross facilitated the Fourth Annual UCOR 102 Colloquium. The Colloquium is an educational forum where select first-year GSD students share selections from their UCOR 102 research papers with an audience of University faculty, staff and students. Six students were selected to participate in the 2017 Colloquium: Nick Aregnano, Natalie Conroy, Timothy Criss, Daniel Gault, Gabrielle Lapointe and Kyle Leon.

Conceived by the GSD faculty in the fall of 2014, the Colloquium is billed as “A Celebration of Excellent Student Writing,” and is an opportunity for the Division to promote academic research and showcase the superior writing skills of GSD students.

The mission of the Gussian Spiritan Division is teaching, caring and building futures through a community of excellence.