

## Meet the new RPLP Undergraduate Research Fellows: Colleen Fugate (continued)

Colleen continues to pursue several social issue interests in addition to her academic ones. She has worked with the Houston Interfaith Worker Justice Center to combat workplace injustices. She currently interns at Planned Parenthood and is part of the Gateway Study of Leadership Program at Rice.

Eventually, Colleen hopes to pursue a PhD in sociology with a focus on gender and immigration. She is excited to improve her research skills as a RPLP fellow while working under the mentorship of program director Elaine Howard Ecklund.

## Scholars Meet to Discuss International Study of Religion and Science

*By Kelsey Pedersen, Undergraduate Student, Rice University '13, Religion and Public Life Program Student Reporter*

On September 10 and 11, the senior research team (Prof. Elaine Howard Ecklund, Prof. Steven Lewis, and Dr. Kirstin Matthews) met with eight members of the Religion among Scientists in International Contexts (RASIC) advisory board, including religion and science scholars from around the world with research experience in the regions and nations that are part of the RASIC study. For two days, the scholars offered intensive feedback on both methodological and substantive issues associated with executing an ambitious, cross-national study in Asia, North America, and Europe, involving multiple methodological approaches and diverse cultural contexts.

After discussing and refining project objectives, the team spent considerable time assessing the survey sampling process to ensure that the data collected will be representative of the target population of working scientists and suitable for answering overriding research questions about their understanding of the relationship between science and religion.



The advisory board spent the second day assessing and improving the survey questions. The great challenges proved to be clarity and concision. For all of the fascinating topics that could be explored in the survey instrument, only a select few fit precisely with the goals of the project and could accommodate the intent to limit the length of the survey to fifteen minutes.

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As the meetings concluded, the board members emerged with new appreciation for the nuances associated with the study of religion and science across such different national contexts and substantial enthusiasm for the methodological process of the RASIC study. Jared Peifer, a postdoctoral fellow who is a key member of the RASIC research team remarked, "We were lucky to have the ear of so many bright scholars for a couple days in one small room. Tapping their wisdom and expertise has been immensely helpful for the project."