

CSAHS Awards Enable Students to Improve Life

Students in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences (CSAHS) don't wait until they graduate to put the University motto "Improve Life" into action. They are encouraged from day one to make a difference in their school, community and around the world. Courses are designed around this concept, faculty lead by example and resources are used to support students in making a difference.

Halle de Valk-Zaiss is a third-year student in CSAHS International Development program – a program that tackles the big issues like poverty, food insecurity, the humanitarian crisis and climate change. Halle worked four jobs over the summer of 2019, so that she would have the money to study abroad for a semester, somewhere where she could make an impact.



But it was the Jean Rich Travel Grant – a grant awarded by CSAHS – that finally allowed her to go to the South Pacific and work with an NGO dealing with women's rights and climate change.

Below is an excerpt from Halle's thank you letter:

When I found out I won this award it was like a huge weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. Being constantly burdened financially is exhausting and made me feel like I wouldn't be able to do much with my life or future. Awards like this help people like me more than you could ever imagine, and I just want you to know how incredibly grateful I am for it.

It's always been my dream to do a study abroad and when I found the program I'm currently in, I knew I had found the perfect fit. I used the money from the grant for my trip and was able to fly to Fiji in mid-September. I'm currently in Suva (the capital of Fiji) and have been working at a women's rights NGO called Femlinkpacific for the past two-and-a-half months. We work on bringing local women together through a radio channel where we broadcast women's perspectives on situations and weather updates.

Women in Fiji are usually the first responders in severe storms and disasters, but they're not given the tools or information needed to successfully do the job. Femlink works on letting women know if there are storms coming, if they need to evacuate, or whatever needs to be done to help them.

I have also been able to attend classes at Fiji National University and learn about how climate change is affecting pacific islands such as Fiji. I plan to use these skills later when working at another NGO in the future. After volunteering for a few years at several NGOs, I really want to go to grad school and try to get my masters.

I want to thank you again for choosing me to be the recipient of this award, it completely changed my life and allowed me to do something that I wouldn't have been able to afford all on my own.

Thank you so much,

Halle

Every year the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences makes available over \$40,000 in scholarships, awards and travel grants to undergraduate students. These awards have a meaningful impact on the lives of students like Halle. They enable students to broaden their horizons, pursue their academic and career goals and take advantage of opportunities they wouldn't otherwise be able to.

The majority of these scholarships and awards are funded by donations from alumni and community members who also believe that in working together we can improve life.

If you would like more information on how to support scholarships and awards, please visit [our giving page](#).