

## Reflections on my Journey as a Laidlaw Scholar

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On applying to the Laidlaw Scholarship, I was aware of the prestige and the value of this accreditation. However, I would have never guessed the vast array of opportunities, and exciting and fulfilling experiences that I was going to be a part of.

Now, after two years, I have become a leader, a multidisciplinary professional and most importantly, a part of a wonderful community of inspiring and passionate students with completely different backgrounds but who all strive towards one common goal: to push and challenge ourselves, becoming highly trained individuals ready to give back to the people who matter the most to us.

The core of my Laidlaw journey has been the fantastic and high-end research experiences in which I was actively involved, starting with the design and synthesis of light-responsive molecules used in biomaterials which allowed me to develop skills in synthetic and analytical chemistry as well as photochemistry. The second project I designed was centred on the incorporation of unnatural amino acids using novel techniques in order to make new biochemical tools for the detection and treatment of disease. Here I expanded my biochemical and microbiological knowledge to further grounds than those contemplated in my Chemistry degree. On the other hand, besides these purely research-related aspects, I had the opportunity to apply my management training by exploring the world of scientific outreach, delivering a workshop aimed at sixth form students with the aim of encouraging them to choose a career in STEM.

I have felt enriched by the workshops and interactive lectures that we received on leadership theory. The careful and dedicated mentorship provided by the Laidlaw staff at York inspired me to engage in diverse opportunities aside of the ones organised by the Foundation such as the LUUWILS Empower Conference 2023, organised by the Leeds Women in Leadership Society where I was able to meet truly exceptional people.

Not only have I learnt to be a leader myself, but also to recognise others' concept of leadership and how they act according to it. The best leaders are those who delegate tasks while recognising the difference in approaches to problem solving and work ethics. By ensuring a solid common goal, a leader can place full trust in their team, therefore providing a healthy work environment where every member feels heard and respected.

On a personal note, Laidlaw has strongly influenced my social skills as I now find myself seeking more meaningful interactions, not just in the academic sense but in a wider way that has helped me hold more productive and comprehensive conversations, gaining cultural and interpersonal awareness.

I have realised that I love taking interest in people and their different perspectives on life, and how this determines their thoughts and behaviour in certain situations. I have also acquired very useful skills to value the importance of empathise as much as possible with the people with whom I interact, both professional and personally, as it ensures that any decisions I make involving them will be fair and understanding.

With all the concepts I have acquired I find myself more identified now with the leader persona. Before embarking on my Laidlaw journey I thought a true leader was just someone who merely spoke in a louder voice and could easily move crowds. However, I have discovered that that is

by far not the only attribute. The structure of the Scholarship and its basis around the Laidlaw Attributes has been a great point of reference and has helped me organise my thoughts and address my strengths and weaknesses in a more efficient and productive manner.

Overall, I have grown a network of outstanding young researchers and future leaders of the World. Not only have I learnt from them and their fields of study, but I have also gained friends for life and have created a support system around me that will always be there for me in both my personal and professional life, and for that I will be forever grateful to the Foundation.