



Reflections on my Laidlaw Scholarship Experience

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The Laidlaw Scholarship has been a transformative experience for me, and I will cherish its teachings and benefits as I progress further into academia and the workplace. This reflection is a summary of the individual, team, and community impacts the scholarship has had on my professional development.

Before I began the Scholarship in May 2022, I lacked confidence in my academic and leadership abilities, having come straight from school and a global pandemic into a fast-paced, independent university life. However, from the first days as a scholar, I've felt at home in the Laidlaw global community. Being surrounded by fellow driven, energetic scholars has inspired confidence and provided an excellent foundation for my own growth.

The first year of the Scholarship was defined by my independent political philosophy research paper on Hegel's struggle for recognition. For my project, I examined how it could be applied to modern liberal democracies as a new way of analysing the origins of class-based conflict. Through this, I learned a great deal about researching and writing extended pieces of work, as well as good etiquette for academic research and proofreading. This project has been immensely helpful, directly contributing to my degree and influencing my proposed dissertation subject. It has equipped me with the tools to write authoritatively and confidently as a final-year student. This academic benefit is complemented by the connections I made with professors in my department, who have become great allies whenever I have questions or concerns about my degree.

Last autumn, I was invited to the Laidlaw Conference in London, where inspirational speakers and scholars shared their experiences and causes they were championing. Hearing from Gina Miller and Lord Laidlaw himself was especially enriching. Furthermore, meeting my fellow scholars, and learning about their research and leadership projects contributed to my own confidence about my work. I hope to maintain the connections I made with other scholars to continue my growth beyond university.

Ultimately, my growth through the Laidlaw Scholarship Programme is perhaps best shown through my resilience in my approach to my Leadership-in-Action project and the challenges I overcame in completing it. In June 2023, just before beginning my planned project, I broke my neck and shoulder in a cycling accident. This led to a change of project, but the enduring support of the Scholarship team, as well as my fellow scholars, helped me realize I could still push myself to complete it. While battling the effects of a long-term concussion, I completed six weeks of volunteering for my local history museum's archive office. This work, a collaboration with other volunteers, was an excellent way to give back to my local community and it was an opportunity I would not have been able to pursue without the Scholarship.

Overall, the Laidlaw Scholarship has defined my time at university, and I know the development and skills I have learned from it will continue to contribute positively as I progress through life. I cannot express enough gratitude to the Laidlaw Foundation and the Scholarship staff at York, who have truly shaped the person I have become. I am now an academic and a leader, and I am confident that the Scholarship is chiefly responsible for this.