

My experience as a Laidlaw Scholar

When I first applied to become a Laidlaw Scholar I never imagined I would be accepted, let alone be granted the opportunities that I have been given over the past two years. I remember spending hours looking at the stories of scholars on the Laidlaw Network and wondering if I had it in me to be one of them. I have always suffered with imposter syndrome, but this experience has allowed me to accept that we truly are all capable of anything we put our minds to.

Completing my research project titled “Examining the Success of Syntropic Agroforestry as a Sustainable Agricultural Method for Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal Two” in my first summer gave me the unique opportunity as an undergraduate student to harness and develop my skills in reading, data-analysis and report-writing. Furthermore, I was able to utilise my interests in the field of sustainable agriculture and food security in a beneficial and rewarding practice with the support of my supervisor Dr Elizabeth Orr.

My recent trip to New Zealand, to complete my Leadership in Action project with Grow Asia Pacific, was a challenging yet truly fulfilling adventure. Experiencing first-hand the challenges and triumphs of working in international development changed my view of what it means to be a global citizen. The world is really not as big as it seems and at the end of the day we are all human, all imperfect and all need to work together to achieve meaningful change. I have learnt that as individuals our strengths and weaknesses were designed to complement each other, and everyone has a different values as leaders but that doesn't necessarily make them any less successful.

Completing the Oxford Ethical Leadership Program, led by the Oxford Character Project, was incredibly interesting and allowed me to analyse my actions and thought process in a constructive way. It led me to view myself differently, but also highlighted areas in my own character which I can improve to allow me to be a stronger leader.

Taking part in the Leadership residential section of the program was a fun way to bond with my fellow Durham scholars, but also put into practice my leadership skills amongst likeminded people and contemplate the values I personally believe create an influential leader.

I hope that my experience so far as a Laidlaw Scholar has built the groundwork on my path to become a global citizen and that I will continue to gain skills and life lessons as I continue on this journey.

Going forwards...

I am now going into my final year at Durham University, with the past two years a whirlwind of learning, love and laughter. I hope to continue my academic journey following my graduation by going on to study for a master's degree in the area of agricultural science. Following this I hope to work in the field of food security and agricultural sustainability, whether that be through international development or on a consultancy level, I am not yet sure. What I can be certain is that I will channel the

Laidlaw Foundation values in these next steps of my life and will always look back on the lessons I have learnt and experiences I have gained over my time as a scholar.

We scholars are uniquely homogenous with individual expertise in every field of academia imaginable, yet the same passion, determination and resilience driving us to the same end goal. I have never felt so inspired, but more importantly encouraged, by a group of people and I truly believe that with my fellow scholars as global leaders the future of humanity will be vibrant, harmonious and sustainable.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Foundation, my research supervisor Dr Orr, Grow Asia Pacific and the Durham Laidlaw Team, with particular appreciation for Kelci Jacoby who has been incredibly supportive and helpful throughout this whole experience. And finally, thank you to my fellow scholars, you are all brilliant and I cannot wait to see what you achieve in the future...

