May 16, 2020

I want to personally congratulate all current students and alums who applied in 2019-20 for competitive national fellowships and awards. Fellowships are rare opportunities. Many who are exceptionally well qualified seek them, and relatively few are awarded. Here’s to our exceptionally well qualified applicants! You have no chance to secure an award unless you put yourself forward. Bravo! We always hope you will receive the awards you seek. This celebration recognizes that you all took that first and most important step: you applied.

This year at least 106 Smithies applied for nationally competitive awards – we know of 24 alums and 82 current students who made their applications. Completion of a nationally competitive fellowship application is no small feat. It represents your thoughtful summary of achievements, hopes, and dreams. I know you have worked hard to ground your applications in a clear statement of your values and ambitions for rich and productive experiences, graduate school, and lives of impact in your fine careers, your communities, and your families.

- Our Fulbright Program continues to be very strong with Smith recognized again this year as one of the Fulbright US Students Programs “top producers.” Twenty-three students in the class of 2020 and two alums applied for fellowships in 18 countries to work as English teaching assistants, conduct research, carry out an arts project, and complete a one year study program.

- Our Fellowships Program based in the Lazarus Center for Career Development encourages and supports individuals who apply for a wide range of fellowships and competitive awards. This year, 75 current students from all years and 22 alums applied for 23 separate programs.

- For some awards, candidates must first complete a campus selection process. We salute our eleven Smith College nominees for graduate fellowships, including Beinecke, Churchill, Marshall, Rhodes, and Truman. Our six nominees for the Goldwater Scholarship and Udall Scholarships have already distinguished themselves with their STEM research and deep commitment to the environment.

- We applaud the students and alums who submitted applications to highly competitive programs like the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, the Knight Hennessy Program at Stanford, the Soros New Americans Fellowship, and the Boren Scholarship and Critical Language Study Program for US Department of State sponsored intensive summer study abroad.

Fifty Smithies received external recognition from award programs, including 28 who received awards. Twenty-one of our Fulbright applicants were semi-finalists and 15 were selected for awards. Thirty-one individuals were honorable mentions, semi-finalists, and finalists in other programs. Fourteen individuals were offered competitive national awards, including a Truman, two Goldwaters, and eight NSF Graduate Research Fellowships. All external recognition reflects
exceptional success in crafting plans and articulating the readiness and requisite qualities for particular awards.

- In any other year, we would be wishing those who receive awards our “congratulations” and, for those leaving Smith to take up their awards, “good luck” in their summer and fall programs.
- This is an unusual year: some awardees will be unable to take up awards or will have their programs deferred and shortened. For those affected in this way: We are sorry you will not get to enjoy all of the usual benefits of your programs, but we celebrate you and your success.

A celebration is an opportunity to say thank you to the members of the campus community who supported the applications of students and alums with letters, advice, conversation, and encouragement. Members of the Smith community are integral to the success of all of your applications. By that I mean, success in learning from the application process, success in clarifying your thoughts and plans about the future, and - for the lucky few - success in receiving the awards for which you applied.

The end of an academic year is also a time to recognize our staff fellowship advisers. Four individuals worked closely with many applicants to ensure that the applicants were aware of the opportunities available, those that best fit individuals, selection criteria, and how best to approach the daunting tasks of completing applications and – for some – preparing for selection interviews. Don Andrew and Andrew Dausch worked with Fulbright applicants and their advisers and mentors. Margaret Lamb and Stacie Hagenbaugh worked with applicants for other fellowship and competitive award opportunities. Individual applicants point to the ways in which each of these four individuals advised and shaped their experience of the fellowship application process and contributed to positive outcomes.

Smith College takes pride in all of the Smithies who sought competitive fellowship awards this year. Well done everyone! Awards as competitive as these demand thoughtful reflection and imaginative planning from applicants. The process of application is a powerful learning experience. Thank you to all of those in our Smith College community and elsewhere who have supported you and contributed to the richness of your learning about yourselves, your ambitions, and how to plan your futures.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Etheredge ’77
Dean of the College and Vice President for Campus Life
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