Madelyn Fife Wins Truman Scholarship

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Madelyn Fife, an Honors student and Huntsman Scholar double-majoring in economics and political science, is one of only 54 students nationwide to win a 2016 Harry S. Truman Scholarship. Madelyn is only the fourth Utah State student to receive this prestigious scholarship in the last 36 years, and she is the only student from Utah to be selected this year, having competed against 775 applicants from 305 institutions for the honor. The Truman Scholarship Foundation supports the next generation of public-service leaders, and Madelyn is well prepared to join the ranks of these “change makers.”

Madelyn has been interested in law since she graduated from Logan High School in 2013. She hopes eventually to focus on the intersection of law and education as an attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice. Her policy proposal for the Truman application advocated for using disparate impact theory to enforce anti-discrimination laws in public schools. Speaking about discrimination and school discipline reform, Madelyn says, “Broadly, I get infuriated, whether it’s blatant or more unintentional in nature, to see inequality and injustice. It makes your palms tingle. You want to do something.

And so she did. Near the beginning of her career at USU, she began researching Civil Rights Data Collection numbers on her own high school’s rates of suspension and expulsion. She discovered very different outcomes for students on the basis of race under the school’s disciplinary procedures. Her research showed that the problem was systematic among minority groups across the nation and that suspension and expulsion often lead to students dropping out of school altogether. Her goal in education reform is to keep kids in school by changing exclusionary approaches to discipline.

In the meantime, Madelyn mentors and tutors underrepresented high school students in Cache Valley by providing free ACT test preparation, FAFSA help, and general college guidance. She also serves as a member of the USU Student Advisory Board for the Institute of Government and Politics, a research assistant in political science, a teaching assistant for the Huntsman School of Business, and the president-elect of the Huntsman Scholar Program.

To read a brief bio on Madelyn and the other winners of the Truman Scholarship, please click here.

To read the USU Today article about Madelyn’s Truman Scholarship and her reaction to the news, please click here.