

## Cassandra Wiley, Biology and Spanish, Class of 2024

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*“Try to find ways to use the language outside of the classroom. Go to a Mexican restaurant and try ordering in Spanish, it is extremely rewarding and memorable.”*



Cassandra Wiley is a sophomore from Hodgenville, KY, majoring in biology and Spanish. The second-year Hilltopper plans to work in an aviary or zoo post-graduation, but is expanding her skillset by taking Spanish at WKU. “I always liked learning Spanish,” Wiley said, “but I never imagined myself actively pursuing a language in college.” Nowadays, that path has changed for Wiley and she continuously searches for ways to augment her language skills by participating in on-campus activities and finding other ways to use what she knows outside of the classroom. Most recently, she has found a way to immerse herself in the Spanish language and culture—in January 2022, it was announced that Wiley is a recipient of the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship for International Study which she will use in Costa Rica towards her coursework in biology in Spanish and gain valuable experience communicating with locals.

Although Wiley comments that memorization of vocabulary words is a downside in language learning, it is the usage of such vocabulary in a real-life context (such as going to Mexican restaurants and ordering in Spanish) that Wiley finds most rewarding. According to her, “I occasionally refer to my computer in Spanish without realizing it.” She also comments that there are many ways to make the learning process fun, such as finding on-campus activities and opportunities to use her Spanish. One organization that has given her a fun and exciting opportunity to use Spanish is the WKU Spanish Club. Wiley recalls last semester getting to use Spanish while making authentic dishes, which helped her increase cultural as well as linguistic awareness.

To all incoming language majors, Wiley recommends that the best thing to do is to find ways to use your language skills and apply them to your own life. It is through her

usage at organizations, restaurants, or in the city that she has found the experience of learning the Spanish language and culture to be extremely rewarding, memorable, and valuable.

