

Local student awarded Boren Scholarship

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A local student was among five Western Kentucky University students who were awarded \$20,000 David L. Boren Scholarships to fund intensive language study in the U.S. and abroad during the 2020-21 academic year. All five are students in the Chinese Flagship Program.

Allison Hohenstein, economics, applied data analytics and Chinese, is the daughter of Shannon Hohenstein of Radcliff. She plans to study in Taiwan. Her future plans include working with the U.S. Department of State, using her knowledge of Mandarin and economics in matters involving intellectual property rights and international trade.

The Flagship Capstone Year is the culminating experience of intensive language study intended to advance students to a level of fluency required to operate in a professional environment — often from zero experience at the beginning of their undergraduate career. Reaching ACTFL Superior proficiency standards, the goal of the Flagship curriculum, requires an extraordinary commitment from students as well as the faculty and staff who support them; in addition to intensive language study, Flagship students pursue majors across a variety of colleges and departments. These students have had no shortage of mentors to support them toward their goals.

Hohenstein acknowledged Dr. Brian Strow in the Department of Economics in particular for “all of the knowledge and assistance he has given me during my four years at WKU; with his support I am prepared to leave school and chase my dreams.”

Given the unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic, the earliest possible overseas start date for Boren Scholars’ programs has been pushed back to January 1, 2021. The awardees for 2020 will be given some flexibility to ensure as many as possible are able to proceed with their overseas language study when it is safe and feasible to do so.

While everyone involved hopes students are able to carry out their language study plans, the application process itself has been valuable. “This application process has taught me that my dreams are never too big to achieve, and there is always someone out there that can help me if I just look,” said Hohenstein.

The David L. Boren Scholarships and Fellowships are sponsored by the National Security Education Program, a federal initiative designed to build a broader and more qualified pool of U.S. citizens with foreign language and international skills. Boren Awards provide U.S. undergraduate and graduate students with resources and encouragement to acquire language skills and experience in countries critical to the future security and stability of the United States. In exchange for funding, Boren award recipients agree to work in the federal government for a period of at least one year.