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Kyle Poyar '10, a new Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholar

Two undergrads win generous green grants

By: Juliana Friend

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Two Brown students have won \$16,000 scholarships from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which announced its 100 undergraduate award winners earlier this month.

Both Brown recipients said they were surprised to receive the congratulatory phone call.

"It was like, 'Oh, wow, I didn't expect that!'" said Kyle Poyar '10, after hearing that he had received the award at 4 p.m. on the last possible notification date. Kelsey Lane '09.5 said she was also resigned to not receiving the scholarship after she received an ambiguous voicemail message.

However unexpected, the call from NOAA brought good news to the two undergraduates. As Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholars, Poyar and Lane will each receive \$8,000 per year during their junior and senior years.

In the summer before their senior years, the two students will have the opportunity to choose a 10-week summer internship from a diverse list of research options around the country, according to NOAA's Web site. The internships will pay \$650 per week. This summer, Poyar will work on sustainability issues for the city of Cleveland and Lane will do coastal ecology research on salt marshes.

Both students said they were drawn to NOAA's emphasis on merging environmental research with public policy. Double concentrating in environmental science and economics, Poyar said the organization fit his goal of analyzing the changes in how society values the environment.

And even if Lane, a geology-biology concentrator, decides not to pursue public policy, she said gaining an understanding of the organization and making connections within the federal system will be very valuable.

NOAA "is the federal agency to go to," said Lane, who is considering becoming a marine ecologist.

The summer of independent research is one of the key benefits of the scholarship, said Poyar, who hopes to study natural resource extraction at NOAA's research facility in Boulder, Colo., in 2009.

The Hollings Scholarship selected award recipients with the research opportunity in mind, "looking to train the next generation of scientists who will consider NOAA's mission and the greater environmental issues we face," said Jacqueline Rousseau, program director of the Educational Partnership within NOAA's Office of Education.

The program has also become extremely competitive, Rousseau said. She said the program received more than 600 applicants and no competitive applicant had a GPA below 3.3.

Lane and Poyar aren't the only Brunonians to receive the Hollings Scholarship in recent years. Adam Greenbaum '08 received the scholarship in 2006, followed by Shane Schoepfer '09 in 2007.

Greenbaum worked in Boulder last summer, applying his mechanical engineering expertise to measuring the effects of aerosol on radiation. He happily recalled the chance to work with an electrical engineer who did drag racing on the side - "one of the coolest people I ever met," he said. He encouraged this year's recipients to make the most out of the opportunity.

"That was probably the best summer of my life," Greenbaum said, "and the money doesn't hurt."

Poyar and Greenbaum said they only wish that Brown had better publicized the program, which is only in its fourth year.

"It's very obscure," Poyar said.

Added Greenbaum, who found out about the scholarship just a week and a half before the deadline: "I would have applied a lot sooner if Brown had advertised."

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