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Final Report

Final Report for WashU

I would first like to thank the Garwin Family Foundation for giving me the incredible opportunity to attend WashU for five weeks. I appreciate all of the support throughout, not just the program, but also the process. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of Vanessa Sneed, Dr. Ryan, and the rest of the board. I will forever be deeply grateful and thankful to all of you for giving me a life-changing experience.

It's sad to be home and writing my final report. Every time the week at WashU came to an end, I would be sitting at my desk in my dorm, smiling and reminiscing over each week as I wrote my weekly report. Taking the time to look back each day made me realize how lucky I am. My experience at WashU has been truly life-changing—from learning new, challenging, and stimulating topics to all of the strong bonds I have created. I will forever be thankful for the time and memories I have created at WashU.

When I first arrived at Nemerov, the smiles and laughter filled the atmosphere, especially in my dorm. I think what helped me settle in and feel okay when my family left was my roommates. We all just clicked in an instant. I was so glad we did because that was my main fear. I also loved how the dorms were set up. I had three other roommates. The dorms had a bathroom, a living room, and four suites. It was nice having my own personal space. Outside of my dorm, there was a lounge, a kitchen, and study rooms. I loved how the floor was set up. It made everything easily accessible. The first night, we had a campus tour. The WashU campus was absolutely stunning, and I was constantly in awe of its beauty. The combination of historic

charm and semi-modern touches made the environment perfect. I loved how I felt like I was walking in the yard of a castle. Overall, the living aspects of WashU were perfect and felt like a dream. I never thought of a perfect campus, but WashU wins my heart.

My academics were the most rewarding part of my time at WashU. I have always been the type of person to focus mainly on my studies and excel in any way possible. Biomedical ethics overall wasn't hard, but it involved lots of critical thinking and was rooted in many philosophical ideas. When I first accepted my place at WashU, I was nervous about this class. I was not a philosophy person and didn't think it was for me. I quickly found out that it just took the right topic. I quickly discovered that I had a new passion for medical philosophy. I was fascinated by the ethical questions we explored and hearing the opinions of classmates and my teacher. Going from classes that have right answers to a class that doesn't have a defined right answer was new to me. It was all ethical and opinion-based. Over five weeks, we discussed topics including euthanasia, disability, right to healthcare, and genetics. These discussions challenged my morals and deepened my insight into the future of medicine. At the same time, I took an online class called the Biological Basis of Human Disease. This class was difficult. The physiological components challenged me and pushed me at the same time. Learning about how complex systems work when a disease is presented is captivating. I loved diving deeper into the mechanisms and treatments of diseases like cancer, HIV, and diabetes. I also got to do case studies for each topic, which was fascinating. The case studies connected to the lectures, but also went more in-depth, especially with treatments. Both courses were challenging and exciting in different ways. They both gave me a better understanding of medicine from scientific and philosophical perspectives. I am thankful that I had the opportunity to go to WashU and study these fascinating topics, and I am stoked to make these topics part of my journey of life.

Although the academic part of my experience was unforgettable and exciting, my social experience was one of the best parts at WashU. I was nervous that I wouldn't enjoy my time because of my dedication to my academics and also life back at home. It was hard leaving my friends and family behind, and trying to make time for school, home, and the students at WashU was a concern to me. I made it work, though! Every day I started my morning with a smoothie from the dining hall, and Connie and Shay, the workers there, instantly became my best friends. They were the reason I started the morning off with a smile on my face. We had conversations every day, and learning about them and their life was nice. Overall, the whole WashU staff was enjoyable to be around. They were polite and always had a smile on their faces. I never once had a bad experience at WashU with any of the staff. On top of that, all of the nightly events made socializing and bonding easier. I feel like everyone in the five-week program clicked in a day. We were all friends instantly and always planned dinners or outings to do together. There are so many events and plans we had, I can't name them all, but I know that each one keeps a special place in my heart. I enjoyed learning about soccer from Grace and spending the day with Anna for her birthday. I loved going thrifting with Journeih and seeing her in her element. I miss the late nights in the lounge or being downstairs for the social events. Each day was filled with laughter and smiles, and I am so truly thankful that I got to grow in a community that felt like home. As the days passed and I knew the time was coming to an end, I could feel my heart breaking. I didn't want to leave the people I valued and loved. But of course, life still goes on, and I had to pack up my bags and say goodbye. WashU has become the greatest memory, and I am glad that I still get to be in contact with everyone, even from afar.

When I arrived home, nothing felt different. It was the same house, same bed, and same town. The first thing I did when I walked through the door was clean. I am a person who likes

the house and my surroundings to be neat and clean. Luckily, at WashU, my roommates were all clean and tidy, and I appreciated that. I thrive in order and structure. So that being said, when I was greeted by my brothers and father's mess, it freaked me out. I scrubbed in spots that one wouldn't think about cleaning. I would just also like to add that my house is usually clean, but living with two boys isn't fun. Besides that, I am happy to be home. I missed my job and the people at home. It was nice to jump back into my usual routine quickly because it helped keep my mind off WashU. I work at the Harrison Bruce Aquatic Center (Park Pool) and The Hub as a lifeguard. I made lead guard at the park pool this summer, so I have been working almost every day. Being back in the sun and water has made me feel grounded again. Pulling myself out of my WashU routine and back into my normal summer routine was difficult at first, because I just wanted to continue to be challenged academically. But I've been reading and researching in my free time. I started "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which has been thought-provoking. I also researched more into CRISPR, deepening my insight into disease modeling. WashU has pushed me more into academics and created a new passion for me. I think about WashU almost every day. I am also still in contact with Grace and Ryan, mostly. I am excited to watch Grace grow into the amazing person she is. She is going to make a great lawyer one day. As for Ryan, he is such a comedian and will thrive in any environment he decides to choose. I miss WashU and all my friends dearly, but I am happy to be back home and back in my routine.

I would highly recommend the High School Summer Scholars program at WashU to anyone looking for an academically enriching and personally transformative experience. From the moment I arrived to even after the program, the community and staff at WashU were extremely supportive and motivating. Mrs. Becki Baker always had a smile on her face, and she was helpful throughout the whole program, no matter what the situation was. She listened to

what we needed, like essay workshops or financial aid workshops. She also did one one-on-ones with us if we wanted help on building our resumes or realistically anything in general. She was a friend and a mentor. I look up to her, and I am thankful for her and her wisdom on college applications. Also, the program assistants (PAs) were a blast to be around. They were only a couple of years older than us, so connecting with them was easy. They all had different hobbies and future plans, so it was interesting hearing about how their journey through college has been. We had meetings on Monday with our assigned groups from the first day, and we discussed events happening each week. On top of that, we also learned about each other in these meetings. My PA was River. She is planning on going to law school. All the PAs were supportive and fun to be around.

Outside of the people, there were rules set to ensure our safety and make sure we get the best experience, while being responsible. Monday through Friday, we were allowed to leave campus from five P.M. to nine P.M., which confused me at first, but I ended up seeing why it was set towards the middle of the program. St. Louis temperatures rose significantly as time went on, and it was almost suffocating to be outside for long periods of time. Other than the torturous heat, it also gave us time to do our homework without feeling the pressure to go out. On the weekends, we were allowed off-campus hours from nine A.M. to nine P.M.. There was one weekend we weren't, but there was a heat advisory, and you could see the heat waves rising off the pavement, making the air shimmer. Other than off-campus hours, the rules were basic. They enforced kindness, which nobody had a problem with, and no cussing, which is another story for some. Overall, even though you have limited time to leave throughout the week, I felt that I truly had the college experience. I would recommend this program to anybody who is

looking for a supportive, immersive environment to build strong connections, explore campus life, and grow both academically and personally.

In pursuit of my future academic endeavors, I want to extend my deepest thanks to the Garwin Family Foundation. Without their support and generosity, this transformative experience would not have been possible. Their lifelong commitment to empowering students, like myself, has made a long lasting impact, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity they provided for me and other students wanting to pursue higher education and their academic goals.