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Rebecca Lauck Cleary

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Environmental Passion Earns UM Student a Udall Scholarship

APRIL 2, 2012 BY REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY

FaTvLiErCoSlPrSt



Taylor Cook (third from left) was shocked at the announcement she has received the Morris K Udall Scholarship, the second University of Mississippi student to earn the honor. UM photo by Robert Jordan

OXFORD, Miss. – When Taylor Cook walked into the chancellor’s office at the University of Mississippi, she was not expecting to see a roomful of smiling faces.

But that is what she got at a surprise reception to congratulate her on winning the 2012 Morris K. Udall Scholarship, which provides \$5,000 for one year of study. She is the second UM student to achieve this honor.

Cook is among 80 national winners of the scholarships, given annually to college sophomores and juniors who are committed to careers related to the environment, tribal public policy or Native American health care.

“This wouldn’t have been possible without the honors college and, of course, the honors college is part of the bigger university that has provided me all of these opportunities for leadership,” Cook said.

Born in Memphis, Tenn., Cook moved to Southaven when she was 14 and attended Horn Lake High School. She is a member of the Sally McDonnell Barkdale Honors College and the Trent Lott Leadership Institute, majoring in public policy and Spanish, with minors in environmental studies and sociology.

“I love to see effective passion, and you have taken a lot of good advice and you have channeled it in healthy and constructive ways,” Chancellor Dan Jones said. “Part of what our education is about is having people channel their passions. We are proud of you, and it is a proud moment for the university as well.”



Taylor Cook

Cook serves as an intern in the Office of Campus Sustainability and is the leadership behind the establishment of a Green Fund at UM. She was instrumental in hosting the Mississippi Alumni & Students for Sustainability Spring 2012 Environmental Leadership Summit, an event that brought together more than 50 Mississippi students from universities and colleges around the state. Cook has also served as the Mississippi Fellow for the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, which allowed her to participate in PowerShift 2011, a national

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Campus Briefs

Students Learn ‘Real Politics’ in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve’s

meeting of sustainability leaders in Washington, D.C.

"Taylor is not only very intelligent, which is evident in her academic accomplishments and recognition as a Udall Scholar, but she has exceptional leadership skills and a remarkable ability to inspire others with her passion," said Jim Morrison, director of strategic planning and campus sustainability. "I am confident that Taylor is one of those special leaders who will make our world a better place in the future. We are fortunate to have her as an intern in our office of sustainability and as a student leader at our university."

It was Cook's first visit to the chancellor's office, and she was elated to be there.

"I am so happy; this is not what I expected and I am shocked," she said. "One of the best parts of being a Udall scholar is being part of the Udall network. Plus, the scholarship money will pay for my fifth year of school here, giving me more time to work on my academic goals as well as sustainability projects on campus."

Honors College Dean Douglass Sullivan-González said he was pleased, but not really surprised.

"Taylor is unique in that she not only has that contagious passion to advocate for environmental and sustainability issues but also the ability and drive to empower her peers to do the same," Sullivan-González said. "And those peers are at the state, regional and national level."

Cook credited the university with developing her leadership skills.

"There have been so many opportunities that I hope students take advantage of because that's how things like this happen, just by putting yourself out there," she said. "I feel lucky to have had all the opportunities this university provides. I never would have thought back in high school that it would have been such a wealth of opportunity here, but it really has been."

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Watch a video of Taylor Cook, 2012 Udall Scholarship Recipient

Representing the university and the Udall program is a tremendous honor, Cook said.

"Part of my outreach is to wear my campaign on my sleeve," she said. "I hope by telling others what I am doing, I can inspire sustainability leadership in them."

Besides her work in the world of environmentalism, Cook fosters cats with Nine Lives Cat Rescue, serves as a Global Ambassador and is a member of the Student Vegetarian Organization, all while maintaining a 3.76 GPA.

In her Udall application, she wrote that she hoped "to be a vehicle of change for environmental and social justice both in the United States and abroad." This scholarship is a sign of Cook's dedication and potential, and will offer her unique opportunities as well.

One of Cook's mentors is Eric Weber, assistant professor of public policy leadership, who first taught her in Honors 102.



"I've watched many students explore interests and struggle to find what they want to do," Weber said. "Taylor's studies clearly struck a chord and motivated her to become a leader on campus. For her, issues of sustainability and environmental consideration quickly rose to the top of her interests. She has made a difference not only in particular efforts in the community, but also in shaping the campus culture."

Weber said he has no doubt that Cook will continue to make valuable contributions to the country's policies on energy use and environmental sustainability.

Congress established the Udall Foundation as an independent executive branch agency in 1992 to honor Morris K. Udall's 30 years of service in the U.S. House of Representatives. Students interested in pursuing the Udall Scholarship can contact Andrus Ashoo (onsa@olemiss.edu), who serves as the

university's Udall representative.

The Office of National Scholarship Advisement conducts workshops each semester to introduce students to major national scholarships. Go to <http://www.honors.olemiss.edu/national-scholarship/> for more information.

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