

Nutrition Junior Named Truman Scholar

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AUSTIN, Texas—Marissa Duswalt, a junior nutrition and Plan II honors major at The University of Texas at Austin, has been selected as a 2009 [Truman Scholar](#).

This year, the 60 scholars were chosen from among 601 candidates representing both small and large universities across the United States—the state of Texas is home to three Truman Scholars this year. After a rigorous application and interview process, those who have advanced to the national level of consideration are interviewed by independent panels and are chosen on the basis of “leadership potential, intellectual ability, and likelihood of ‘making a difference’.” Duswalt found the selection process “exciting;” “I had the opportunity to answer questions I had already thought a great deal about: who I am, things I love.”

The 2009 Scholars were announced this year by Truman Scholarship Foundation President, Madeline Albright. Having been named Truman Scholar means that Duswalt will receive up to \$30,000 in funding to attend either graduate school or law school, receive priority admissions and supplemental financial aid at premier graduate institutions, and be given assistance with career counseling as well as internship placement. In return for funding for her graduate education, Duswalt pledges to serve for three to seven years in the public service sector after receiving her graduate degree. Considering the shape of her future career, Duswalt would like to address societal issues about which she is passionate, particularly the obesity epidemic among children in the United States.

Preparing to graduate from The University of Texas at Austin in 2010, Duswalt has a bit more time to consider her future plans, “This opportunity opens new doors. I want to pick the right graduate program, and that task demands more research. The difficulty is finding a degree that combines all of the concerns surrounding nutrition, which simultaneously involves cultural, global, economic, scientific, and political issues.” When asked who at The University of Texas has served as a mentor, Duswalt responds without hesitation, “Lea Gebhardt, Health Education Coordinator for Nutrition with University Health Services, who has a holistic understanding of Nutrition. She is extremely well-versed, progressive—she knows her discipline. And I found a mentor in Susie Jastrow, who was then working at the People’s Community Clinic. She was the first dietitian I’d ever seen in action, and her work was my inspiration for pursuing a second degree in the Coordinated Program [in Dietetics].”

When asked what advice she would give to any University of Texas student interested in competing for the Truman Scholarship, Duswalt suggests, “Think and read extensively about



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your passions. You will find that there is so much more there than what you see on the surface. My advice to people would be to become intellectual explorers.”

Among the 2,670 past Truman Scholars named since 1977 are two cabinet-level federal public servants, Susan Rice, current United States ambassador to the United Nations, and Janet Napolitano, current United States Secretary of Homeland Security.

The Truman Scholarship Foundation was established by Congress in 1975 in memory of President Harry S. Truman.