

## 2017 Plastino Scholar Finalists

### **David Chiat**

Title: Camino de Santiago de Compostela

Major: Biological Sciences

Minor: Spanish

### **Varsha Kripalu**

Title: Health Equity for a Marginalized Population: Maternal and Child Nutrition in Bangladesh

Major: Biological Sciences

Minor: Public Health; Biochemistry

### **Francis Mahon**

Title: Set in Stone: Represented and Hidden Histories in Savannah's Public Monuments

Major: Anthropology; Art History

### **Courtney Mainwaring**

Title: Meditation and Mindfulness: Experiencing and Implementing Their Restorative Powers Personally and Communally

Major: Accounting

Minors: Entrepreneurial Studies

### **Megan Masterson**

Title: From Middle School to Malawi: My Authentic Servant Leadership Journey

Major: International Relations

### **Kira Smith**

Title: Health Promotion and Medical Care for Chinese Orphans

Major: Medical Diagnostics

Minor: Biological Sciences; History; Medical Humanities

### **Abigail Vanover**

Title: The (Green) Concrete Jungle

Major: Energy and Environmental Policy; Economics

**David Chiat**  
**Camino de Santiago de Compostela**

**Abstract**

As I begin to study for the MCATS, I cannot shake this desire to embark on a journey of self-discovery. At first glance, the Camino de Santiago may sound like an odd request. Funding for walking? But the camino is a UNESCO world heritage site and former pilgrim trail that stretches horizontally across Southern France and Northern Spain. These trails originated in the Middle Ages, and to walk them is to be transported back in time.

Self-discovery is only the beginning. As I partake in this experience, my life goal to become fluent in Spanish will become a reality. As I experience the various historically preserved treasures of Northern Spain, I will foster my compassion and love for other cultures and languages too. The third aspect of my trip will apply my expertise in Spanish to the field of medicine and give back to the trail and people that make this experience possible. I plan to distribute common medical supplies like bandages for blisters to those hiking, carry trash bags with me on my journey to keep the trail clean, and volunteer at an albergue (a hostel for hikers) for a week. This unique journey from June-July of 2017 satisfies my yearning for self-discovery while blending my two passions of Spanish language and culture and the medical field.

**Varsha Kripalu**

**Health Equity for a Marginalized Population: Maternal and Child Nutrition in Bangladesh**

**Abstract**

Located in the southeastern portion of Asia, Bangladesh is home to a diverse and culturally rich population. The International Center for Diarrheal Diseases Research (ICDDRDB) located in Dhaka (the capital), is one of the world's premier institutions for the study of global health concerns. Funded by the Gates Foundation and numerous governments (including the US), it is considered one of the top places to train in the health sciences.

As a woman of color, the study of maternal and child nutrition in a minority population is incredibly interesting and relevant to me. Through a partnership with the Maternal and Child Nutrition group at ICDDRDB, I hope to learn more about the interventions currently being studied to improve this issue. Coupled with a cultural immersion experience (planning to stay with a host family in Dhaka), my goal is to learn more about the people of Dhaka, how an institution like the ICDDRDB is able to target these large scale public health crises, gain research experience in the field of global/public health, observe women and children in the community who are facing health barriers, and gain insight into the plight of mothers and children in un-structurally sound communities. I plan to maintain an online Blog and be in close touch with my US mentors during my stay at the ICDDRDB.

I hope to pursue this life-changing experience from July 25<sup>th</sup> to August 25<sup>th</sup> of 2017 and talk about my experiences during my senior year at the University of Delaware. This opportunity is vital to quenching (temporarily) my curiosity to learn more about efforts

(specifically focused in research) being implemented across the world to solve multi-faceted health issues.

**Francis Mahon**

**Set in Stone: Represented and Hidden Histories in Savannah's Public Monuments**

**Abstract**

My project, *Set in Stone: Represented and Hidden Histories in Savannah's Public Monuments*, will uncover the hidden histories of minorities and oppressed people - not represented by public monuments within Savannah, Georgia's Historic District. Throughout Savannah's history, minority groups and people of color have been oppressed through enslavement and sociopolitical discrimination therefore rendering their voices and histories invisible.

This project is important because it will bring about conversations of oppression, equality and representation within Savannah's public history and has the opportunity to promote social change.

During the summer of 2017 over the course of eight weeks, I will create a map and catalogue of historical monuments within the Historic District that will culminate into an online interactive website. The website will digitally expose visitors to both the represented public history and invisible history of each monument.

I have chosen Savannah's Historic District as my location due to its recognized title as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. As Georgia's oldest city, it has a diverse history that is not always represented through the establishment of public monuments. I will be aided in my research by the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation whose office is located in Savannah.

The completion of my project will transform Savannah's public monuments into

structures that promote a more holistic and inclusive history of the city. The invisible histories of minorities and oppressed people that I will research and interpret will become visible alongside the already represented history of Savannah.

**Courtney Mainwaring**

**Meditation and Mindfulness: Experiencing and Implementing Their Restorative Powers Personally and Communally**

**Abstract**

Consumed by the gripping stresses of our current societal culture, young and old alike suffer. We are in desperate need of a release from fear and anxiety. It is imperative that we find the freedom and rejuvenation that coincide with an appreciation for the present, a lifetime in the here and now. Relationships can be restored by the grace of sincere attention and empathy, communal activities and projects enhanced by mindfulness-induced innovation, and the individual's mind, body, and spirit reconnected. These aspirations need not be a fleeting dream but an ever-present reality. I feel strongly about bringing meditation and mindfulness to our communities (more specifically, to the corporate world post-graduation) and hope to accomplish this goal by engaging in and studying the practices of meditation and mindfulness. If accepted into the Plastino Scholars Program, I intend to complete my project in segments beginning August 2017 through January 2018. Initially focusing on children, I hope to observe current mindfulness and meditation practices used in schools through a visit to Visitacion Valley Middle School and a school using Mission Be in the San Francisco Bay Area. To gain an understanding of the effects on adults and to further my personal growth, I will shadow Mission Be's CEO during a teacher mindfulness training in New York City and attend a Search Inside Yourself (a company offering mindfulness workshops to professionals) event in Washington, DC. I also hope to visit the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

**Megan Masterson**

**From Middle School to Malawi: My Authentic Servant Leadership Journey**

**Abstract**

Before diving into this project, I think it is important to begin with my personal mission statement. Every day I strive to use my motivation, strengths and passions to better the world around me while promoting awareness, servant leadership, and the realization that we are part of something larger than ourselves.

This mission statement has brought me to this Plastino Scholar Application. I have been researching Sub-Saharan Africa for three years now as an International Relations major here at UD. Learning about its diverse culture, lively people, and boundless potential- my desire to become a change agent has grown more than I ever imagined. Despite my research, I still feel like I am missing a connection. At this point in my life, I have enough understanding to be genuine and helpful, yet I also have so much to learn. This is where Determined to Develop comes in.

Determined to Develop is a grassroots organization in Malawi, Africa that has offered me the exceptional opportunity to work with their Women's Empowerment program during the winter of 2018. I will spend every day for five weeks working with women business leaders, students, and locals. Truly diving into my passion, I will be able to authentically experience development in a way that I have not yet been able to. Using my values as my compass and my passion as my drive, I will prove that I am more than the stereotype of "the middle class white girl who wants to save Africa," growing as a servant leader.



**Kira Smith**

**Health Promotion and Medical Care for Chinese Orphans**

**Abstract**

The first allowed adoptions to the United States from China were in 1991, with 61 children being issued immigrant visas. International adoption from China skyrocketed, and since 2000, U.S. residents have adopted more children from China than any other country. As a Chinese adoptee, I have always been inquisitive about my biological family, the orphanage that I lived in, and my original culture. Now, as a pre-medical student I am curious about how governmental policies intersect with the amount of resources and medical care that children in Chinese orphanages receive.

To carry out this project, I will be spending two weeks in China. For one week, I will be visiting my orphanage, the Jiujiang Social Welfare Home, a state-run orphanage in the Jiangxi Province of Nanchang. For the other week, I will be visiting Alenah's Home, a U.S. based non-governmental organization with a location in Beijing, China. I wish to learn about how the distribution of governmental resources affects what is done when a child needs serious medical treatment as well as how health is promoted on a daily basis. In order to discover how health promotion for these children can be most effective, I will observe them in their daily lives and record this information in a journal. To learn about the type of medical care that these children receive, I will do a literature review of governmental policies and interview caregivers with a questionnaire.

As a future physician with a personal connection, I am passionate about exploring how to enrich the lives of these children because I believe that doctors should be committed to enabling patients to live the healthiest life possible.

**Abigail Vanover**  
**The (Green) Concrete Jungle**

**Abstract**

My proposed research experience is to explore and investigate the sustainable urban environment of Singapore, collecting data from primary stakeholders in the community on how collaborations of actors from government, business, and NGO's create a beautiful, sustainable environment that operates within the boundaries imposed by available resources and geographical limits. Data will be collected via first-person interviews with relevant parties in addition to visits to the community sites and public spaces that they have affected. More data will also come from participatory observation through my experiences living in and engaging with the urban fabric of Singapore. This aspect of the data collection is to study how land-usage impacts the average resident. For example, how does the infrastructure of the built environment, including planned green space, affect patterns of movement? The aim of this research is to observe and learn from sustainability operating within constrained urban environments, and see how this knowledge can be applied to urban sustainability in the United States.

My stay in Singapore will last three weeks. I will collect data from interviews with stakeholders, undertake site visits, and engage with the urban community. I will be consulting with members of the Sustainable Living Lab, the Ground Up Initiative, a director at World Wildlife Fund-Singapore, and an urban planner from Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority - a business, two NGO's, and a government body. I will also visit the Urban Redevelopment Authority's network of museums and galleries with their extensive collection of materials on sustainability in Singapore, as well parks in the national parks service system to participate in the workshops held for community members.