

Truman Scholarship Application

I, Christina Nielsen have read and understand the conditions of the Truman Scholarship as explained in the current *Notes to Candidates for Scholarships* and the current Bulletin of Information. I affirm that I plan to pursue a career in public service as defined in those documents. I give permission to officials of my institution to release transcripts of my academic record and other information requested for consideration in the Truman Scholarship program. I understand that this application will be available only to qualified people who need to see it in the course of their duties. I waive the right to access letters of recommendation written on my behalf. If selected as a Truman Scholar, I agree to attend the Truman Scholar Leadership Week and Awards Ceremony, in Liberty and Independence, Missouri. I affirm that all of this application, including the policy proposal, is my own work for formally cited from other sources. I affirm the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date 10/17/2018 Signature Christina Nielsen

Legal name in full (Print/Type)	<u>Nielsen</u>	<u>Christina</u>	<u>R</u>
	Last Name	First Name	M.I.
Permanent residence	<u>953 W Devonshire Road</u>		
	Number, Street, and Apartment Number		
	<u>Delafield</u>	<u>WI</u>	<u>53018</u>
	City	State	ZIP
Your address at school (if different)	<u>1400 Greene St.</u>		
	Number, Street, and Apartment Number		
	<u>Columbia</u>	<u>SC</u>	<u>29208</u>
	City (if studying abroad, add country)	State	ZIP
How is permanent residence established? (At least two must apply.)	Home telephone	<u>(262) 853-8105</u>	
X Home address for school registration	School telephone (if different)		
X Place of registration to vote	E-mail address	<u>nielsenc@email.sc.edu</u>	
X Family's primary residence			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Date of birth	<u>09/05/1997</u>	Age <u>21</u>
		Month/Day/Year	

(Check one) I am a ☒ U.S. citizen ☐ U.S. national ☐ Resident alien expecting citizenship by the date of award

Will you be studying in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, or India during the Spring semester? ☐ Yes ☒ No

(If yes) Where? _____

Name of nominating institution University of South Carolina

Current cumulative GPA 4.00 on a scale of 4.00

Your undergraduate major(s) Public Health

Number of college credits earned to date 102 Total number of credits required for graduation 120

Expected date to receive baccalaureate degree 2020 Degree you will receive B.S. in Public Health

Graduate degree(s) sought MPH, M.D. Concentration(s) Public Health and Neuroscience

If selected as a Truman Scholar, would you apply for the Washington Summer Institute? If yes, where would you like to work and what issues would you like to address?

If selected as a Truman Scholar, I would apply for the Washington Summer Institute and I would like to work as a health policy intern for the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) looking at a variety of health policies in Washington, DC. However, if I am hiking through Nepal to Mt. Everest base camp with my mentor, Dr. Hickey, and a group of University of South Carolina Students, I would not be able to attend the Summer Institute. As a part of the Outdoor Adventure and Recreation (OAR) Living Learning Community (LLC) I have founded, we are offering a Mt. Everest base camp trip as an educational and recreational experience in May 2020. If I cannot go on this trip for some reason, I would plan on attending the Washington Summer Institute.

1. List the secondary school from which you graduated, and all higher education institutions attended. Include summer, study-abroad, exchange programs and your nominating institution (up to six).

School	Location	Dates Attended
Kettle Moraine High School	Wales, WI	2012-2016
University of South Carolina - Columbia	Columbia, SC	2016-present
University of Alicante/University of Nevada - Reno	Alicante, Spain	Spring 2018
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater	Whitewater, WI	Summer 2018

2. List college and high school activities (student government, sports, publications, school-sponsored community service programs, student-faculty committees, arts, music, etc.). List in descending order of significance. You will have space for eight college and four high school activities.

College Activity	Dates	Offices
Service Learning in Nicaragua	Spring 2017	Participant
Service Learning in Spain	Spring 2018	Member
St. Jude Up 'til Dawn	Fall 2018 – Present	Side Events Chair
Mountaineering and Whitewater Rafting	Fall 2018 - Present	Member
Alpha Epsilon Delta (Pre-health Honor Society)	Spring 2017 – Present	Member
Amigos del Buen Samaritano	Fall 2016 – Fall 2017	Volunteer
Reach the World	Spring 2018	Blogger
International Justice Mission	Fall 2016 – Fall 2017	Member
High School Activity	Dates	Offices
Key Club	2013-2016	Secretary, Vice President
Student Senate	2013-2016	Vice President
Track and Field	2012-2016	High Jump Captain
SMART Team	2014-2016	Member

3. List public service and community activities (homeless services, environmental protection/conservation, advocacy activities, work with religious organizations, etc.). Do not repeat items listed previously. List in descending order of significance. You will have space to list six.

Activity	Role	Dates	# of Weeks Active
Carolina Clemson Blood Drive Volunteer	Volunteer	Fall 2018	1
Young Life - Camp Volunteer	Server	Summer 2015	4
Bible Club Assistant	4-7-year-old teacher	Spring 2015 - Present	>104

4. List government activities (internships with government agencies, partisan political activities, ROTC/military, municipal boards and commissions). List student government under Item 2.

of Weeks Active

Activity

Role

Dates

5. List part-time and full-time jobs and nongovernment internships since high school graduation.

**Average # of
Hours/Week**

Type of Work

Employer

Dates

Resident Mentor

University of South Carolina

2017-present

10-15 hr/w

Peer Tutor

University of South Carolina

2017-present

8 hr/w

Restaurant Server

The Lumber Inn

2016-2018

16 hr/w

Bar Tender

Panga Bar and Grill

2017-2018

22 hr/w

6. List awards, scholarships, publications or special recognitions you have received. List in descending order of significance.

Gilman Alumni (Scholarship) – \$2,500 national study abroad scholarship awarded to students who receive a Pell Grant

Magellan Apprentice – \$1,000 research grant for Capstone Scholars

Carolina Global Study Award – \$1,000 financial award to help fund a study abroad experience

Capstone Fellow – Fellowship program for Junior and Senior Capstone Scholars who have embodied the motto “Dream big, impact the community, leave a legacy.”

Affiliate Scholarship – \$500 study abroad scholarship awarded to students who participate in a partner program

ELKS Club Most Valuable Student (MVS) Scholarship (High School) – national scholarship competition that awards 500, four-year scholarships each year to the highest rated applicants

7. Describe one specific example of your leadership. (The writer of your letter of recommendation re: Leadership Abilities and Potential must confirm this experience.)

As a first year Resident Mentor (RM) in Cliff Apartments I was determined to make the water stained halls of the 3rd floor the best place to live. I yearned to make a positive and lasting impact on the Carolina Community. I also longed to escape the dingy old apartment building and venture out into the nature of the South Eastern United States. I had an idea rumbling around in my mind. What if I could foster a community and fulfil students' desire to get out of Columbia simultaneously through implementation of a new LLC? I mentioned this to my boss, and at first it seemed unattainable. I was leaving for Spain, the process took nearly 2 years, not to mention the uncertainty of what would happen after I graduated. These minor bumps in the road did not dampen my spirit as I knew that this type of community was easy to corroborate and would yield lifelong benefits for those who joined. When I met Erin Smith, the Residence Life Coordinator at Park Place, I was exuberant. She too had dreamt about connecting students with the natural environment and was dedicated to support me through every step of the process, including giving the new LLC a home at Park Place. Preliminary meetings with housing staff included ironing out logistics of student interest, space needed, intended student population, and educational programming. The student interest was easily quantified as every year hundreds of students like me joined USC's Mountaineering and Whitewater Rafting Club (MWW) with hopes of leaving Columbia to explore the outdoors and create lasting friendships. After creating a cohesive proposal and presenting to the housing leadership team, Outdoor Adventure and Recreation (OAR) is now an official LLC at the University of South Carolina. In its first year it will host 10 upperclassmen and 40 first-year students at Park Place and offer these students everything from Congaree river clean ups to a Mt. Everest base camp trip. OAR will be an inclusive LLC that will develop active citizens and environmental stewards that have a strong connection with the natural and built environments.

8. Describe a recent particularly satisfying public service activity (do not repeat experience described in 7). (The writer of your letter of recommendation re: Public Service must confirm this experience.)

Traveling to Ticuantepe, Nicaragua with a group of 35 Capstone Scholars my first year at USC was one of the most rewarding and eye-opening experiences I have had in college. This trip confirmed my interest in public health and medicine as I got hands on experience surveying and assessing the needs of a community, practicing primary care medicine, and seeing an operating room and surgeries I would not have been exposed to until several years later in the United States. There are so many moments from this trip that have impacted me to this day. After seeing a girl my age give birth and helping a severely dehydrated child drink water, I truly understood the importance of access to healthcare and health education in every community. A clean water source can be the difference between disease and depravity and health and success. I saw firsthand the effects of the Somoza dynasty, a family dictatorship from 1936 to 1979, on the levels of education of all members of the community. After such an enlightening trip, perhaps the most important thing I took away was the power of empowering a community and the importance government and policy plays in this. Implementation of antiparasitic treatments from the age of two and up, water treatment, and operating room standards are just a few health-related behaviors that policy and governmental agencies have a role in that I directly observed. Although governmental action is important, now more than ever, health education is important in the small villages of rural Latin America as political strife plagues many countries taking medical mission trips, and governmental health policy implementation and enforcement off the table. Therefore, health communication and education efforts, along with more accessible healthcare would be a great place to start in reducing the health disparities in a community like the little town of Ticuantepe, Nicaragua.

9. Describe the problem or needs of society you want to address when you enter public service. (If possible, use statistical data to define the magnitude of the problem.)

Even with the high healthcare standards of America, there are still health disparities that need to be addressed, especially within the mental health sphere. In study done at Emory, it was determined that 85% of the at-risk population for depression was not receiving proper care. Of this at-risk population, 11.1% had current suicidal ideation and 16.5% had experienced suicidal ideation or self-harm at some point in their lives (Garlow, 2007). This trend is not unique to Emory or even colleges students. Suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death of people between 10 and 34, and overall was the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, claiming some 45,000 lives in 2016 double the amount of lives claimed by homicides (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). After many recent suicides on college campuses and the de-stigmatization of mental health disorders, collegiate organizations that advocate for better mental health awareness and self-care practice have begun to mobilize. However, in the larger population there are not as many organizations advocating in the way these collegiate groups are for mental health disorders. Primary care physicians can act as the front line in mental health advocacy for their patients by providing specialist referrals and treating the patients holistically – not simply prescribing an anti-depressant to hide the symptoms. Primary Care intervention of depression can be effective, however in a review of healthcare team training programs aimed at improving depression management in primary care the best results come from multi-component interventions and training based on local needs (Vöhringer). Therefore, the overall mental health of the American population can be improved, and suicide mortality rates reduced by providing comprehensive and community specific physician training and seminars to improve treatment and referral of mental health disorders.

10. What are the three most significant courses you have taken in preparation for your career?

In Introduction to Public Health, I learned the historical underpinnings of public health (from cave men to John Snow), about healthcare systems around the world, wrote a memo describing the opioid crisis, and learned to look at daily news through a public health lens.

In Introduction to Health Promotion and Education, I learned what it takes to plan a Health Promotion program through a program planning project on Colorectal Cancer (CRC). For CRC I worked with a team to perform a needs assessment, identify the risk factors, write objectives, and develop an intervention strategy.

In the service learning course in Spain I partnered with DASYC, a local non-profit that strives for inclusion of marginalized groups. Each week I volunteered with a foster home, working with the children ages 4 – 18. I gained valuable cultural competency, non-profit experience, and built strong relationships with community members outside the university.

11. Describe the graduate education program you intend to pursue if you receive a Truman Scholarship.

I intend to pursue a combined MD/MPH program like the one at George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences (GW SMHS) which would allow me to complete both degrees in 5 years and concentrate in environmental health science and policy (or a variety of other areas) that would combine my interest in the built and natural environment's effect on health. The Milken Institute School of Public Health is the school that provides the MPH program at GW SMHS. I would complete the public health courses after my first or third year of medical school. This program's location is ideal as it will put me in the heart of where policy is written and GWSOMHS clinical public health curriculum made this program stand out among the growing number of MD/MPH programs. Both the 'Culinary Medicine Elective' (which teaches students how to use healthy eating as disease treatment and prevention) and the 'Experiential Learning in Community Health Elective' would reinforce and deepen my public health knowledge. In the latter elective I would directly create a health program and policy proposal for an area of interest. GW SMHS also provides public health summits which extend medical knowledge to clinical public health in multi-day field projects. I intend to complete this dual degree because medical practitioners are those who have expertise on patient behavior and the topic areas that health policy addresses. They are the ones in the trenches that can act as advocates for their patients and inform politicians on what is working and what needs improvement in the healthcare system. They have a knowledge which equivalates to a power that is currently underutilized. Thus, after my MD/MPH, I hope to act as a catalyst amongst this community to change the lack of physician leadership and current apathy towards public health and healthcare policy.

12. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have upon completing your graduate studies?

Upon completing my graduate studies, I hope to practice medicine as a physician in either pediatrics or family medicine and work as a public health professional helping guide policy. I believe lifestyle medicine can be better implemented in both rural and metropolitan environments. In either location, I would look to partner with local governments as a healthy policy advisor to help develop policy regarding built and natural environments to foster a better space to practice lifestyle medicine, maybe even incorporating healthy cooking strategies into my primary care practice.

13. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have five to seven years later?

Five to seven years after beginning to practice medicine I hope to serve in a not yet established leadership role within a hospital or healthcare system in which I can interact with many types of doctors and healthcare professionals to observe what motivates medical professionals to act as advocates for their patients and leaders in their community. Collaborating with motivational psychologists and other physicians I would create leadership and advocacy seminars related to a variety of specialties from how to better identify and treat mental health as a primary care physician to how to be a policy advisor as a physician. Eventually I would hope to reach several healthcare systems and implement similar seminars to increase physician engagement in community leadership.

14. What additional personal information do you wish to share with the Truman Scholarship Foundation?

As a child I was always outside, climbing trees, riding my bike around my neighborhood, hiking or running through the woods. I was adventurous and driven. When my older siblings were going to school and I was three, I pouted in my stroller because I wanted to go to school too. Similarly, I have been a natural leader since Kindergarten, acting as the substitutes' assistant any time the teacher was gone. However, this seemingly positive childhood was riddled by family addiction, depression, and struggles to get by financially. Growing up seeing the devastating effects of addiction and poor lifestyle choices first hand, I have been brutally aware of the consequences that ineffective support systems and mental health can play in a person's success. However, this has also made me grittier than most. Watching a father go from successful business owner, registered nurse, and loving father of four to a drug addict with volatile relationships and the inability to provide for his daughters catalyzed my passion to serve those in need and lead me to my pre-med, Public Health/Neuroscience studies. Having a mother who must deal with the financial and emotional stress that comes along with this abandonment and seeing the physical health side effects of this stress makes me passionate about both physical and mental health. Now that the immediate stress has been removed, I have observed my mother, seeking medical help to develop positive relationships, a healthy diet and good physical activity habits. Alongside my parents, watching my sister struggle with depression throughout youth and ultimately into college, and losing a good friend to suicide my freshman year of college have guided my research and interests beyond the classroom. This anecdotal experience is why lifestyle medicine, the outdoors, mental health, and health policy are all important to me. I can use the drive that these challenges have instilled to positively impact the United States and global population to improve lifespan and health span through adaption of lifestyle medicine. This task may seem overwhelming to many; however, I believe with good planning and enough grit, one person, one government, one nation, can achieve anything.