Alumnus Name: Julia McAulay

Title: From Honors mentoring to Fulbright: How NISO and faculty support guided this alumna’s journey

With Fulbright Week happening now, we want to highlight the experiences of alumni who have successfully navigated the application process—just like you can! Did you know you can apply for a Fulbright as an alum? While most applicants apply within five years of earning their bachelor’s degree, the Fulbright U.S. Student Program welcomes grantees from a wide range of graduation years—so long as they have not yet attained a PhD. If you’ve ever considered applying, join us this week for Fulbright Week activities or reach out to Lindsay Sheedy to learn more. Purdue Honors alumna Julie McAulay took full advantage of this opportunity, using Fulbright to propel her research in forestry and cultural engagement in Honduras.

A 2024 Fulbright U.S. Student Program grantee from Dallas, TX, McAulay earned her undergraduate degree in Environmental and Ecological Engineering from Purdue’s College of Engineering. Now, having just completed a master’s degree in forestry at The University of British Columbia, she is set to embark on a Fulbright research project titled Restoring Honduran Pine Forests: Post-Disturbance Regeneration and Management Strategies. Working in collaboration with faculty at The National University of Forest Sciences in Siguatepeque, Honduras, Julie is focusing on seedling regeneration following wildfires and beetle outbreaks—an extension of her master’s research on Douglas fir regeneration in British Columbia. For Julie, this research is just the beginning of a career that merges applied forest management with research across North and South America. Beyond academia, she is eager to immerse herself in Honduran culture, particularly through her passion for dance.

Julie credits Purdue’s John Martinson Honors College and the National and International Scholarships Office (NISO) for broadening her academic perspective and introducing her to Fulbright. “The Honors College allowed me to take really interesting classes outside of my engineering major, like one about Hitchcock movies and another called ‘The Animal,’ which opened my eyes to new perspectives and led me to pursue a minor in Spanish,” she said. "NISO was incredibly helpful to me. They are the reason I even knew the Fulbright program was an option and that I could apply as an alum, which made the process so much easier because Lindsay [Sheedy] is just so amazing.” Reflecting on the mentorship she received, Julie expressed deep gratitude for Lindsay’s guidance, as well as the support from faculty members who helped her through the application process. Her journey from Purdue’s Honors College to Fulbright is a testament to how faculty support and interdisciplinary exploration can shape a meaningful international career.