

2018 \$7,500 Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship Winner: Emma Barker



Emma Barker (Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship Winner), 2018

An undergraduate student at Pitzer College (one of the Claremont Colleges) Emma Barker carries a 3.96 GPA in her environmental analysis studies (with a minor in sustainability and the built environment). And few things hold and have held greater import in her life than her desire for this particular school of knowledge. “I have always been inspired by thoughtful design and sustainability. At the age of 15, I designed and constructed a tiny house in my backyard in order to fully understand the intricacies of sustainable materials, efficient use of space, and thoughtful, intentional design. In high school, I led the Environmental Interest Group, where I worked to increase awareness of sustainability. Growing up in an urban environment like Seattle, my life was shaped by transportation. I did not have a driver’s license in high school, which meant all of my commuting happened on the bus, bike, or on foot. It was only when I was forced to use these systems that I became fully aware of their inadequacies.”

Staying true to her original obsessions, Ms. Barker had an epiphany at Pitzer. “My passions for sustainability and design collided in college, where I discovered urban planning and public transportation...I see sustainable urban planning and adequate public transportation as crucial to the future of the world. So often poor design can reinforce existing inequalities while putting further strain on the environment. I see an alternative, where thoughtful design is used to combat environmental degradation and social inequalities. This is what I want to do with my life, and while I am not sure exactly what form that will take, I am excited by the possibilities.” Naturally, wanting to change the world has garnered Ms. Barker some attention.

“I know Emma through her active participation in my course at the Claremont Colleges titled, ‘Bicycle Revolution’ in spring 2018,” explains Paul Steinberg, Professor of Political Science and Environmental Policy at Harvey Mudd College. “This very challenging course attracts a unique kind of student who is prepared to go beyond the normal expectations for a college course. The class takes place on bicycles, as students ride to various cities around the Los Angeles area to learn about transportation policy and politics of urban social change.” Professor Steinberg reports that Ms. Barker worked directly with “clients in city governments and the nonprofit sector,” delivering work that was singled out for praise by all. In addition, evaluation forms completed predominantly by juniors and seniors (Ms. Barker is a freshman) in the course proclaimed her as “the powerhouse of this group” and commended her for her “great leadership” and ability to keep the group focused and together. He goes on to state that, “Emma has precisely the sort of qualities that [WTS-LA] has so successfully fostered and supported in its work. You have before you an exceptional candidate for support, and I give Emma Barker my highest recommendation, with no reservations whatsoever.”

Without question, Ava Doner would have been proud to meet and work with Ms. Barker, as she embodies so many of the qualities Ava Doner possessed. For these reasons and many more, WTS-LA proudly awards her the 2018 \$7,500 Ava Doner Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship.