

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

Activity	Role	Dates	# of Weeks Active
Leon County Board of County Commissioners			
City of Tallahassee Communications Department			

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

Type of Work	Employer	Dates	Average # of Hours/Week
Charity: water			
Earth Day Network			
Harlem Success Academy			
Children's Environments Research Group (CERG)			
WE ACT for Environmental Justice			

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

New York Life Undergraduate Fellowship  
 Rosenberg-Humphrey Program in Public Service  
 Harriet Browns Social Change Scholarship  
 Rangel Scholar in Public Service  
 Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellowship  
 Goldsmith Scholar  
 Revson Scholar

7. Describe one specific example of your leadership. (The writer of your letter of recommendation re: Leadership Abilities and Potential must confirm this experience.) Limit 2000 characters including spaces.

Spring semester of my freshman year I decided to accept a challenge that I had given to so many other students around the country: organize a benefit concert to give clean water and sanitation facilities to schools in developing countries. As an intern for *charity: water* my main project was promoting our Water for Schools initiative which encouraged U.S. students to become advocates for clean water and sanitation in schools where providing these services is a challenge. One of the activities we wanted our WATSAN (water and sanitation) warriors to participate in was Live Campus, a student led fundraising initiative for various nonprofits, including *charity: water*. It was the nearing the end of March when I decided to take on this challenge myself. Time was of the essence, however, because many events take place near the end of school leaving competition for space, fierce. I approached the **director** of Student Life at CCNY about sending out a collaboration proposal I had drafted to student clubs. Unfortunately, I did not get any response but after approaching the International Studies Director who told me about the Student Association for International Studies plan to have a benefit event, I had a club on board. I pitched the idea of donating funds from the concert to *charity: water*, which took some persuading for some cabinet members. By far, the most difficult task was finding a school venue during a time of event madness. At one point we thought the concert would not happen because the only dates available were during the week before finals. Fortunately, a positive attitude and negotiations with Student Life made the event possible. I held tabling sessions during club hours to sell tickets and take donations and in the end with the help of teachers, fellow classmates, and friends we raised over \$400. At the event I gave a presentation on the water and sanitation crisis and the work that *charity: water* was doing. Having an event where students and professors from my university could come to learn about a pressing issue and be a change in the world was rewarding to coordinate, and gave me confidence to carry forward the initiative to raise awareness for WATSAN issues on my campus, even after my internship ended.

**8. Describe a recent particularly satisfying public service activity (do not repeat experience described in 7). Limit 1700 characters including spaces**

If someone would have asked me senior year whether I would ever be an SAT tutor, I'm certain I would have said, "If I can't even tutor myself in the SAT, how could I possibly tutor another individual in one of the most important tests of our lives!?" Though an over dramatic reaction, emotions and anxiety ran high when I was preparing for a test that I felt would determine whether I would get into my dream college and not for nothing: I was a poor test taker. However, when the opportunity presented itself to prep low-income students of color in my Harlem community I full heartedly accepted knowing that believing in someone is worth more than transferring Kaplan test taking skills.

Students of color in low-income communities are at a disadvantage when it comes to pursuing higher education for a multitude of factors, but one constant is the lack of resources, either at home, at school, or both. When Kaplan partnered with New York Cares to give students free test prep materials, New York Cares needed individuals like me to rise to the occasion to tutor. Saturday mornings from October to April I worked with two students to not only be their SAT Tutor, but also their mentor. We discussed their college and career aspirations, what college was like, and fears and goals related to the SAT. At times there were moments of tough love when assignments I had given were not completed or when the focus wasn't there, there were moments of disappointment when scores dropped, and there were moments of triumph when 'aha' moments happened over tricky problems or concepts or there were improvements on the practice tests. The last session of tutoring I organized a college entrance presentation where I discussed various programs and scholarships, scores and GPA's for different types of colleges, personal statements and answered other looming questions.

Though I was not able to remain in touch with my mentees due to liability reasons, I know they have a burning desire to succeed and become victorious over a test that is in my view, is not equitable. In the end I learned that one of the most important tests in life is not the SAT, but whether one will rise to the challenge to assist others with a need greater than their own.

**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.) Limit 1500 characters including spaces** Water & Sanitation

Every 45 seconds a child in Sub-Saharan Africa dies of diarrhea. The first time I learned that fact was when I began researching the water and sanitation issue after landing an internship at charity: water. Then I was hit with the reality that over 1.1 billion people don't have access to clean water (Unicef) and over 2.4 billion don't have access to adequate sanitation. A public health problem of this magnitude will further be exacerbated by climate change as water sources in some areas shrink,....and yet world leaders have not taken this problem seriously.

**10. What are the three most significant courses you have taken in preparation for your career? Briefly explain why these courses were most significant.**

Principles of Epidemiology introduced me to epidemiological tools (research methods, designs, etc.) and taught me how to analyze epidemiological data that will be especially useful for a career in public health.

Environmental Public Health Problems – though I have had environmental science classes, this class really highlighted the relationship between environmental issues and public health, which helps me to evaluate environmental problems more critically.

Public Policy Internship – I now understand the complexities of the policy cycle, which will help me to be better prepared for proposing and advocating for various policies.

**11. 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 no, what are your plans for the summer after you graduate?** I would certainly consider applying to the Washington Summer Institute and use my involvement in the program to pursue an opportunity at the Organization of American States-Office of Sustainable Development. After attending a presentation by employees of this office on sustainable development in the Caribbean and their overall 'Payment for Environmental Services' initiative for all of the Americas, I would like to work on these issues under the umbrella of the Office of Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management. Additionally, I would like to work on environmental health issues, specifically 'Children's Environmental Health,' which would be very helpful preparation for my future MPH.

**12. Describe the graduate education program you intend to pursue if you receive a Truman Scholarship.**  
Limit 2000 characters including spaces

**13. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have upon completing your graduate studies?** Limit 900 characters including spaces

**14. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have five to seven years later?** Limit 900 characters including spaces

**15. What additional personal information do you wish to share with the Truman Scholarship Foundation?** Limit 2000 characters including spaces

For those who knew me before I made the decision to dive into the world of public health and the hard sciences (biology, chemistry, etc.) that support it, they would validate that science was never my favorite subject. I did well enough in my chemistry and biology courses, but I left the world of science to my father, a chemist and my brother, an engineer. No matter how strong the push from my father to pursue medicine, engineering, or the sciences, I maintained my love for history. But in 2006, my view of “hard” science changed after a trip to my father’s homeland. I became sick from the air pollution of Lagos and began to imagine in what ways could this pollution affect the health of a population constantly subjected to it. When I returned after the summer to my junior year, the environmental chemistry component of my chemistry II class set me on a path that I have since, not shied away from. Learning about the ways in which humans affect the environment and then later, in an AP Environmental Science class, the ways in which the environment affects humans, I began to piece together the ways in which the world’s development is based on these human-environment interactions. While this may sound self-explanatory, it is only now with the climate change debate that we are really beginning to pay attention to these relationships. In terms of international development, my key interest, I would like to use what I have learned about human ecology to improve the health of children in developing countries, which has a major impact on their education and overall development. Education has been a constant throughout my short life, and without it I would not be filling out this application today. Therefore, I believe that education and safe environments to learn should be available to all children for their personal development and for society’s own development.

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

<u>Type of Work</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Number of Hours/Week</u>
Intern, Office of the President, Office of Strategic Development	Institute of International Education	6/06	8/06	50
Dance Teacher	Dance Image Studio	6/04	8/04	20

## AWARDS & LEADERSHIP

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

Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship

Women's Day Magazine "Women Who Inspire Us" award

CUNY Honors College, full merit scholarship (4 years)

Thomas Hunter Honors Scholar, interdisciplinary studies

Goldsmith Fellowship

Kenan Fellowship

7. Describe one specific example of your leadership. (The writer of your letter of recommendation re: Leadership Abilities and Potential must confirm this experience.) 2000 character limit.

"Why do you care about cancer?" I stood in the lobby, and in lieu of pamphlets, passed out crayons. In a whirlwind of color and chaos, students traced their hands, wrote their names and why they cared about cancer, and made a connection with the cause. Each individual had joined, literally hand in hand, to form a community. When I first learned about Relay for Life in spring 2005, fewer than 50 students were involved. As Chair of the CUNY Honors College Community Service Committee, I initiated and coordinated service projects across CUNY, and in doing so, met a group of discouraged students who were, at that moment, ready to cancel the overnight fundraising event after five months of fruitless efforts. I listened to how cancer had affected their lives, thought about its impact on mine, and learned about the critical work of the American Cancer Society (ACS). I resolved to support ACS by leading this group and making Relay at CUNY a success. I orchestrated meetings of volunteers, served as a spokesperson for ACS, and oversaw the leadership development of participants. Four hundred students, staff, cancer patients, and survivors participated in that first Relay, raising over \$47,000 for ACS. Soon after, I was asked by the American Cancer Society to provide insight to fellow Relay leaders through online discussions and regional conferences, and by the following semester, I had counseled four other Relays in New York City. Preparations quickly commenced for the 2006 Relay at CUNY, inspiring a contagious spirit and the participation of more than 700 people from three colleges. We had increased cancer awareness on our campuses, raised another \$77,000 for ACS, and earned the title of largest student fundraiser in memory. But more important, those who participated in Relay remain involved, are empowered to take part in campus events, and have even organized new service projects; these

individuals are now a community inspired to affect change.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE**

**8. Describe a recent particularly satisfying public service activity (do not repeat experience described in 7). 1700 character limit.**

Leaving the passages of my textbooks, this past fall I embarked on comparative studies of cities in Argentina, China, and India, where landfills were my lecture halls, streets were my guides, and people I encountered were my teachers. Through the International Honors Program, I gained knowledge as a student, but more important, I gave voice to the struggle of a community and gained experience as an advocate. With the Environment Support Group (ESG), a nongovernmental organization concerned with environmental justice in Bangalore, India, I spent a month researching the environmental, economic, and social impacts of a proposed infrastructure project. But little could prepare me for the case study which would introduce me to the community that was to be affected. After a two-hour drive to the city's periphery, I stood in the center of a small, one-room asbestos roofed house and listened as an Indian woman described her imminent displacement, the third in a series of government decisions that had drastically changed her life. Even as I was overwhelmed by her story, I was inspired by her final translated remark: "You must fight for me." I listened to many similar stories throughout the area, documenting the impact of the project that would needlessly subsume land and livelihoods. I compiled and articulated these stories and included them in the testimony ESG had prepared for an upcoming court trial. Although the case has yet to be decided and the outcome may be distorted by local politics, by including these stories, I was able to give voice to this unheard community and the struggle for inclusion.

**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.) 1500 character limit.**

More than half the world's population now lives in urban areas, but as the rates of urbanization increase exponentially, so do the inequities of urban development (State of the World's Cities, UN Habitat 2001). Cities are where some can find the center of politics, trade, and culture, but for more than one billion urban dwellers, cities are the slums, ghettos, and squatter settlements that confine them to a life of hardship (ibid). Rife with unemployment, environmental degradation, and deteriorated infrastructure, poor communities lack access to basic services, are menaced by crime, and are excluded from much of the city. These disparities are certainly not limited to developing nations. Racial and socio-economic barriers continue to concentrate, isolate, and segregate cities of the United States. Until 1996, residents of public housing in Atlanta were 3 to 4 times more likely than other residents to be the victims of violent crime. New policies further isolate residents by authorizing higher fences, literally gating the community (ibid). In New York City, low-income communities are disproportionately vulnerable to sickness and injury. It is estimated that the number of hospital visits in East Harlem, for example, is 75% higher than the city average (Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene 2003). Through participatory urban planning and inclusive policy, I hope to bridge urban spatial and social divides to create equitable, diverse, and inclusive communities around the world.

**10. What are the three most significant courses you have taken in preparation for your career? Briefly explain why these courses were most significant.**

- Politics and Development: provided a lens through which I explored comparative perspectives

- on urban issues, governance, and economy during study in Argentina, China, and India
- Science and Technology in New York: allowed me to initiate original research on the effects of income on access to adequate nutrition and corresponding health conditions in targeted neighborhoods of New York City
- Plans and Policies for Contemporary Urban Community: exposed me to the multifaceted challenges US communities face and enabled proposals for and evaluations of subsequent policy measures

## GRADUATE STUDIES & BEYOND

### **11. Describe the graduate education program you intend to pursue if you receive a Truman Scholarship. 2000 character limit.**

Studies of American cities and experiences abroad in cities of Argentina, China, and India have exposed me to the myriad challenges facing urban regions around the world and affirmed that urban planning and public policy can be used as tools for change. Through interdisciplinary graduate education that combines international studies, urban planning, finance, and public policy, I hope to continue to examine critical urban issues and to explore strategies and solutions that support the development of cities. I am particularly interested in the dual-degree in International Affairs and Urban Planning offered by the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation of Columbia University. International studies provide a context to understand the forces that impact the global community at present, while advanced study in finance, planning, and policy provide tangible means to shape its future. This rigorous program integrates both academic and practical experience and utilizes the resources of both schools as well as the many institutes and centers of Columbia University. Specifically, I am interested in the Earth Institute's Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD), which shares the vision that social, environmental, and economic sustainability are essential for equitable urban development. I aspire to build on past work with developing cities by participating in CSUD projects like the Nairobi Planning Studio, which partners dual-degree students with community groups and faculty to propose initiatives for the improvement of urban regions. Following an internship in Africa through the Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship this summer, I plan to take graduate courses on urban development during my senior year of undergraduate study to fully prepare me for future studies and a career in urban planning.

### **12. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have upon completing your graduate studies? 900 character limit.**

As a member of the Housing Policy and Development Section of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), I hope to shape inclusive housing policies that sustain the equitable development of cities around the world. Located in the UN Habitat headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, the Housing and Policy Development Section researches international housing rights, land tenure, and governance and proposes policies and initiatives to advance the broad mission of providing adequate shelter to all. To best provide for cities, we must involve citizens, and by focusing on inclusive and participatory planning measures, I hope to empower all community members in visioning and advocating for the future of their cities. Through this position, I hope to support effective housing policies and to demonstrate that inclusion and participation are vital to international urban development.

### **13. What do you hope to do and what position do you hope to have five to seven years later? 900 character limit.**

Through a position with the Cities Alliance, a coalition of cities and development agencies including UN Habitat and the World Bank, I hope to promote partnership as a tool for development and the reduction of urban poverty. Facing the effects of immigration, the impacts of the global economy, and the concerns of the environment, we must recognize the regional, national, and global implications of urban development. Cities must work collectively to answer these challenges and share their experiences and approaches to urban disparity. I would like to be part of the Washington DC based team that defines the vision and strategy of the agency and oversees the implementation and evaluation of initiatives in each city. By imparting my experience with housing and with cities in the US and abroad, I hope to foster a dialogue that will improve cities around the world.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**14. What additional personal information do you wish to share with the Truman Scholarship Foundation?** *2000 character limit.*

Few were surprised when I left my homogeneous, suburban town in New Jersey at age 14 to pursue Design at a high school in New York City. I learned to sew before I could read, and after 5 years of intense dance training and performance that brought me all over the tri-state region, my family had already seen where passion could take me. I arrived expecting to meet runway models and fashion designers, but instead met students from an inner city public school. I was considered the only white girl by demographers: 45% of the students were Hispanic, 45% African-American, 9% Asian, and 1% me. But these numbers soon became the people who would influence my life and include me in the quinceañeras, the West African street dances, and the celebrations marking classmates' attainment of US citizenship. By the end of freshmen year, after an internship with a couture designer, I realized that fashion wasn't for me, and instead, pursued my passion for helping others. I founded Fashion Cares to empower students to explore the ways we could collectively affect change, and, in doing so, I learned from my peers about discrimination—based on race, religion, gender, sexual preference, and socioeconomic class. I learned about the many diverse and thriving communities in New York City. I learned from my own family's experience: from my father, a taxi driver, who had grown up in public housing in Brooklyn and from my mother, a waitress, who was raised by immigrant parents. By examining the context that cornered many of my classmates in particular neighborhoods and the circumstances that informed my own upbringing, I became interested in the history of inequity. Motivated by my experiences in college and in public service, I soon realized my desire to change these histories and to create inclusive and diverse communities, a passion that has most recently taken me to the shantytowns of Buenos Aires, the hutongs of Beijing, the high rises of Shanghai, and the urban villages of Bangalore.

## POLICY PROPOSAL

**To:** Alphonso Jackson  
**Office Held:** Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development  
**Issue:** Affordable Housing

**Problem Statement:** *1800 character limit.*