

## 2020 Department of Biology Awards

### IVAN G. PALMBLAD SCHOLARSHIP

*Blake Nielson, Human Biology*



I was born and raised in Boise, Idaho and am the youngest of four children. My hobbies, service, employment, and education have shaped me into who I am today. My childhood involved participation in community activities such as involvement in Boy Scouts of America, club and school sports, and traveling with my family. I learned the joy of honest

labor early as I grew up spending many weekends, holidays, and summer months in central Utah working on my family's ranch. I most recently spent the summers of 2018 and 2019 as a traffic safety flagger, standing for hours upon end in the summer heat on the side of the road. These grueling jobs have deepened my gratitude for the endless possibilities that are opened to me because of my education. I have also learned that I can do hard things. My love for music has caused me to play both guitar and piano for well over a decade. I've earned two gold cups for piano performance from Idaho's Music Festival. I've continued to maintain my skills by being an organist for my church congregation, and by plucking my guitar on the couch at home and doing Journey song covers with my roommates. I hope to further develop these interests as I only consider myself as being decent/average at both instruments. After dabbling with everything from soccer, basketball, baseball, wrestling, and rugby, I stuck with football and tennis the longest, for which I earned 2 and 3 varsity letters respectively. My achievement of becoming an Eagle Scout can in part be attributed to my respect for and fascination of the natural world, and the fun that I have in it with my friends and family. I attribute much of my friendships to the time we've spent together hiking, camping, and fishing. I've ridden hundreds of miles of single track on my mountain bike in the Boise foothills, Cache Valley's canyon trails, and on the slickrock in Moab and St. George. When my legs get tired, I enjoy going fast through

the desert, or going on long scenic trails on my dirt bike. What started for me as a childhood animosity, eventually melted away into a deep affinity toward skiing. I was involved in my high school's snow team for 4 years and was the captain of the team my senior year. I helped my team win 3 valley championships, while also coming home with medals myself for slalom and nordic skiing. During my first winter at Utah State, I worked as a lifty for Cherry Peak Resort but was often jealous of those skiing. After recertifying as a Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician, I achieved a goal of mine and became a ski patroller at Snowbasin Resort in November 2019. I volunteered 9-10 hours almost every Saturday during the 2019-2020 season working and training as a ski patroller. I was regularly involved in setting up and maintaining mountain safety features, practicing avalanche rescue techniques, and especially responding to and treating injured guests. I will continue to patrol therefor the next 2-3 seasons. After graduating from Centennial High School in 2016, I crossed the big pond and served the people of Estonia as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In addition to the religious aspects of this position, I spent my two years teaching English classes almost every week, assisting several families with various house remodeling and landscape projects, regularly distributing food at a local food bank, walking dogs at an animal shelter, playing soccer with local kids, and training other missionaries. I became fluent in the Estonian language and intend to maintain my grasp on it by working as an Estonian member services representative for doTERRA which I have worked as beginning April 2020. I developed a real interest in biology during my sophomore year in high school thanks to my wonderful AP Biology teacher, Mrs. Tideman. I took 3 years of sports medicine classes and became President of my school's HOSA chapter, earning 3rd place in Sports Medicine, and 1st place in Parliamentary Procedure events at the state competition. My interest in medicine grew as a senior in high school when I was 1 of 10 students selected from the Treasure Valley to volunteer at Idaho State University's After School Anatomy Club. I volunteered in ISU's cadaver lab about 10 hours a week for 3 months during which I was instructed and supervised as I and other participants dissected cadavers. Initially became certified as an EMT through a high school course. I find my college courses fascinating and don't find studying to be much of a bore because I enjoy

learning about the wonders of life. Volunteering as a ski patroller has allowed me to care for patients directly, which I find mentally stimulating and rewarding. However, I am not content with the minimum level of care that I am able to provide to others due to my lack of training/knowledge in advance treatment techniques. I want to be the guy people transfer patients to. From my time serving as a boy scout, missionary, as ski patroller, and in my interactions with those around me, I realized I'm happiest when I am helping others. For these reasons I am pursuing a career as a physician. My goal is to initially become an Air Force physician through the Health Professionals Scholarship Program because of the service aspects, financial benefits, quality of training, and adventure appeal. I am proud to be an Aggie just like my older siblings, parents, and even some of my grandparents are. I take pride in my academics and feel honored to be obtaining an education from the university I grew up picturing myself at. After returning from my mission in Estonia, deciding on a degree in biology with an emphasis in human biology seemed natural, logical, and intriguing. I hope to become involved in undergraduate research in one of the many labs on campus. During the Fall 2019 semester, I enjoyed being a tutor for an elementary microbiology course. I hope to find open tutoring positions that I can fill for my upcoming semesters. I was a speaker at the "Voices of USU" conference and I hope to be able to find more opportunities on campus that most students don't take advantage of. I have been on the Dean's List for the Fall 2018, and Spring 2019 semesters, and was awarded an "A" Pin in the Fall of 2019. Throughout all of my semesters at Utah State, I've worked hard to maintain a 4.0 GPA. I cherish my time and education at Utah State and will always hold a special place in my heart for the place where the sagebrush grows.