



For immediate release — Wednesday, October 25, 2023

## Semester at Sea experience the opportunity of a lifetime for University of Lethbridge psychology student

It was an opportunity of a lifetime that Taylor Williams initially dismissed as a longshot at best. Years later, however, the timing proved perfect when the [Semester at Sea](#) program once again caught the attention of the University of Lethbridge student.

Semester at Sea is just as it sounds. Close to 600 students set sail from Belgium Sept. 9, 2023, for a semester of learning in shipboard classrooms, through field experiences and service projects. When the ship docks Dec. 22 in Thailand, Williams and his fellow passengers will have experienced 11 cities in as many countries, covering three continents, on a journey spanning 105 days.



The excursion is made possible through the [Brawn Family Foundation](#) scholarship, which is available to ULethbridge students across all disciplines.

“This scholarship means absolutely everything to me, because I personally do not have the funds in order to be able to make something like this happen on my own,” says Williams.

Eligible participants must be a second-year undergraduate student, a Canadian resident or permanent resident and have been accepted to participate by Semester at Sea. Applicants must have successfully completed 10 courses with a minimum GPA of 2.75 and will be required to answer essay questions for consideration, focusing on how they expect their voyage will impact their education and how the experience will be translated and promoted on campus upon their return.

Williams has always loved travelling, and the fourth-year psychology student saw those opportunities smothered the last few years by restrictions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I only have a few classes left before I finish my degree, so it was that perfect combination of school and travel that really drew me in,” he says, adding once he looked closer at the international education opportunity, he became obsessed with it. “I was like, I need to do this. This is the one thing that I want in my life right now and I’m going to do everything possible to make sure that I’m going on this trip.”

Williams was beyond nervous as he logged into an online meeting which was billed as a last chance for committee members to ask a few questions of the scholarship finalists.

“They told me they were playing with me, and that I actually was the recipient of the scholarship. I was at a loss for words. It was like a dream come true,” he recalls of the surprise announcement.

Williams is looking forward to the global perspective Semester at Sea offers participants, with stops at such cities as Casablanca, Barcelona and Dubai. He sees the opportunity to experience first-hand and meet people from diverse cultures, as a real benefit for a future career in psychology. A self-described “history nerd,” Williams is also excited about visiting Ho Chi Minh City, where he hopes to gain a better understanding of the Vietnam War.

The experience awaiting him would not be possible without benefit of the scholarship, and he’s extremely thankful to the Brawn Family Foundation.

“It means the world to me. It’s really, truly something amazing that they’re giving a student an opportunity of a lifetime,” says Williams.

Kelley Buckley (BA ’84) is director of the Brawn Family Foundation, as well as a Semester at Sea participant while she was attending ULethbridge.

“Our family are strong believers in the value of Semester at Sea. We have seen how life changing this program has been for our family and want to share this experience with others,” she says. “As a ULethbridge alumni, I am proud to be able to help others experience this program. Our hope is to send off a student and bring back a world ambassador. As Semester at Sea states, “let the world be your campus”.”

Williams adds he wants his story to encourage others to consider the Semester at Sea, no matter how daunting the application process might seem.

“I’m going to be completely honest. I thought there wasn’t a chance that I was going to get the scholarship. But it’s definitely worth putting your name in the hat.”

PHOTOS: Taylor Williams in Greece; Semester at Sea logo.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/semester-sea-experience-opportunity-lifetime>

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*Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*