

Scholarship opens doors for Polish business student

Several years ago Katarzyna "Kasia" Plawiak '15 entered and won a highly competitive scholarship competition in Poland, offered by the Wasie Foundation, the Gostomski Family Foundation, and Saint Mary's University. First prize was a full scholarship to attend Saint Mary's.

"First prize was really amazing," she said.

For Plawiak, what began as a great opportunity to study in America at Saint Mary's has developed into:

- undergraduate degrees in Computer Science and International Business in 2015
- a pending master's degree in Information Technology Management
- international internship experiences
- and lifelong friendships.

And this combination has prepared Plawiak for a successful career.

"(Before coming to Saint Mary's) I had studied international business two years in Poland," she said. "When I was choosing my career path, it was a few years after Poland entered the European Union. From a global aspect, I could see changes that had occurred in my own country. I thought majoring in international business would lead to a good job that would involve travel, seeing the world, and meeting new people. Businesses want people who are able to work in a global environment."

In Poland, she attended a university with more than 20,000 students; classes were largely lecture-oriented and theory-based and stressed memorization. Plawiak said Saint Mary's undergraduate classes, in comparison, were more hands-on and provided useful, practical knowledge that prepared her for graduate school, as well as for several internships.

In the summer of 2014, she interned for J.P. Morgan in Chicago; the following summer, she interned at Credit Suisse in New York; and last summer she completed an internship at Cisco in London.

This April she will earn her master's degree in Information Technology Management from Saint Mary's, and she hopes to get a job in the software development field within the U.S. She is forever grateful for the scholarship assistance she received that has helped her dreams become a reality.

"Being educated in the U.S. opened more doors of opportunities for me," she said. "I'm very grateful for all the help that I've been given by the



Katarzyna "Kasia" Plawiak '15

Wasie Foundation and the Gostomski family. It means the world to me. It was a life-changing opportunity."

For Plawiak, meeting and connecting with her benefactors has been especially meaningful. "We meet with them on a regular basis," she said. "It was a very personal relationship. It was not only about the scholarship; they are really genuinely interested in how we're doing. I'm really grateful for their help and for everything they are doing for us. Many times they stay in the shadows, and they aren't appreciated enough. What these kinds of people do is truly amazing. They deserve appreciation."

Mike Gostomski of the Gostomski Family Foundation said his joy comes from getting to know the Polish students and following their academic experiences. "It's so wonderful to see them not only do well at Saint Mary's, but also go on to be very successful in their careers," he said. "The program is mutually beneficial because these students are receiving a great education from Saint Mary's, and Saint Mary's benefits from having these bright and talented students on campus. I look forward to hearing more great things about Kasia after she graduates."

Jan Preble of The Wasie Foundation adds, "The Wasie Foundation has been thrilled to fund students from Poland, as it honors the donor intent of our founder, Stanley Wasie, who was a Polish immigrant," she said. "Kasia is an outstanding example of the exceptional students at Saint Mary's, funded in part by The Wasie Foundation for decades. Our scholarship funds have been invested well. We are very grateful for the valuable three-way partnership with Saint Mary's and the Gostomski Family Foundation as it has been a great success."

Since 2007, the three-way partnership has benefited 13 students.

ABOUT THE LEADER

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