

Two U of I Students Named 2020 Goldwater Scholars

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MOSCOW, Idaho — April 9, 2020 — University of Idaho juniors Beth Hoots and Isabell Strawn have been named 2020 Goldwater Scholars.

The national scholarship program supports students interested in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) research careers. Each will receive a scholarship of up to \$7,500 awarded for the 2020-21 academic year through the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation.

Each scholar is selected from an estimated pool of more than 5,000 college sophomores and juniors and was one of the 461 nominated by their own academic institution to compete for the scholarships. The number of scholarships awarded since 1989 total more than \$71 million.

Hoots, from West Linn, Oregon, received the award for her work studying the health of Lake Coeur d'Alene. She is looking at the relationship between climate change and the maturation of a herbivorous caddisfly that can graze on milfoil, a non-native water plant. Hoots is collaborating with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, which is trying to remove milfoil from the lake because it tangles boat propellers, reduces property values and shades out native water plants.

A dual major in ecology and conservation biology and Spanish, Hoots is testing whether projected rising water temperatures will speed the caddisfly's development. If the insect matures earlier in the year due to warmer waters, it may be more of a threat to milfoil, which blooms in spring.

"We're inheriting a world with a rapidly shifting climate, and already, we're not going to be able to fix some of the effects from climate change," Hoots said. "Studies like this are important because we need to look at what we can change."

Strawn, a biological engineering major from Moscow, said the scholarship will be used to continue her focus on water research.

Bacteria used in the bioremediation of groundwater contaminants face harsh environments with toxic chemicals and changing pH levels. Strawn is part of a research team developing a polymer hydrogel biobead to protect bacteria from the environment, so the microorganisms can more efficiently degrade toxic chemicals.

"Access to clean water is a major challenge facing modern society, especially in the face of climate change and increasing population," Strawn said. "Researching new ways to clean wastewater and improve water quality can provide increased access."

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Media Contacts

Leigh Cooper (for Beth Hoots)
Science and Content Writer
406-781-4969
leighc@uidaho.edu

Alexiss Turner (for Isabell Strawn)
Marketing & Communications Manager
College of Engineering
208-885-7511
alexisst@uidaho.edu

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