

Neuroscience junior is called to serve others

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Isabel Arrarás, a Tulane junior majoring in neuroscience, has been recognized with a national scholarship that rewards her public service. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

Junior Isabel Arrarás López arrived at Tulane University with a great desire to learn from the city of New Orleans, and the second home she found at Tulane helped her develop a variety of interests on and off campus.

Now a neuroscience major with the goal of a career in medicine, Arrarás enjoys public service projects, pursuing new activities and generally making the most of her

time on the Tulane campus.

For two years, she worked with a student group that studied and promoted health equity events. Then, she joined Tulane's Food Recovery Network, a group that packages food that would otherwise be thrown away on campus, for which she is volunteer coordinator. Arrarás is also a resident advisor in her residence hall.

Arrarás, whose parents had political and government careers in Puerto Rico, was raised in a tradition of service to others, she said.

"I really saw them work with people and for people, and that's just something that stuck with me," she said, adding that their service influenced her career path.

"I chose medicine because it's something where I (would) have direct contact with people and make a meaningful change in their lives. My life's purpose is to help people. My calling is to serve."

For these efforts and her selfless activities, Arrarás received the Voyager Scholarship: The Obama-Chesky Scholarship for Public Service, a service-oriented scholarship that provides part of Arrarás' tuition costs and also allows her to pursue a summer work-travel experience, as well as networking events based on public service.

"It feels fulfilling, and because it's something that I wanted with all my heart, and something that I am called to, it just felt nice to be recognized ... (to have) the acknowledgment and the opportunity to continue."

Arrarás credits her mother as well as Martin Luther King Jr. and activist Malala Yousafzai as inspirations. On campus, Arrarás has enjoyed classes taught by "Dr. V" -- Meenakshi Vijayaraghavan of the School of Science and Engineering.

"She's so hard-working, she's just so passionate about her work — and that was very inspiring to me," Arrarás said.

Arrarás spends much of her time reading — she founded a general-interest campus book club — and enjoying New Orleans' temperate climate, liveliness and resilience, all of which remind her of San Juan. She is also pursuing a French minor.

“I always wanted to be a polyglot,” she added.