

Dear Donors,

First and foremost, thank you. Having been selected to receive The Difference Undergraduate Scholarship was a defining factor in my decision to attend university, and start a new career. Being the recipient of this scholarship has not only given me the opportunity to pursue a job within the NHS as a paramedic, but it has allowed me to move home and begin a more settled, stable life.

After leaving school I decided to join the military, and in particular the Royal Marines. I have always been active, and the prospect of a physical challenge that, to most, seemed unattainable for someone of my stature was huge motivation. Upon joining I, like a lot of others, began to have doubts. I was very abruptly thrust into an alien environment, living away from home with sixty other recruits. As time went by recruit numbers started to dwindle, through injury, or simply not being able to keep up with the training tempo. It was sad to see people with who I had developed a strong bond leave, but it also gave me hope, I had not fallen behind, and my confidence began to grow. Before I knew it training was over, I had made it to pass out with my fellow recruits, and we were welcomed into the family of Royal Marines.

I joined my first Commando unit and immediately found myself deploying on a three month exercise in the Mediterranean. As a young Marine this was an unbelievable experience; I was doing a job that I loved and travelling the world at the same time. The next few years followed a similar pattern with long periods overseas, and very little time at home.

As I became older my priorities changed. Leaving home, bound for some far away destination was becoming less appealing. I decided it was time to leave the military and pursue a different career. I had always been highly interested in the medical aspect of our training, and after some further research opted to pursue a career as a paramedic. I discovered that the University of East Anglia was running a new paramedic science degree, and was delighted that I might have the opportunity to move home after so many years away.

After a lengthy process I was finally offered a place at the university and started my academic studies in September 2016. University is a completely different environment to my previous career, but one I am enjoying hugely. I am desperate to join either the running or cycling sporting societies, but due to our first semester being extremely busy I opted to leave sports until after the new year. I have been interested in completing an ultra marathon for a while now, hopefully I can find the time and some willing volunteers from the university running club to join me. I was unable to fully pull myself away from military life entirely and transferred into the Royal Marine Reserves, this is something that I hope I can continue throughout my time at university and beyond.

It has been very interesting getting to know my cohort. A similar experience to when I first joined the Royal Marines, a group of people thrust together, slowly getting to know one another, a mixed bunch of people, life experience and personalities, but we all have the same goal; to pass our course and become paramedics. I have found the academic aspect very challenging, I have been out of education for quite some time. However, the challenge is one I look forward to conquering. We are rapidly approaching our first placement period, and due to leave the classroom behind, for a brief period at least; something I, and the rest of the course, are really looking forward to. For most this will be the first glimpse into the real life work of a paramedic, and I want to use the opportunity to absorb as much information as possible.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity you have afforded me. The scholarship will be immensely helpful during my three years of university study, and I cannot imagine how different my situation would have been if I was unsuccessful. I look forward to thanking you in person in the near future.

Yours faithfully,

James Ryan.

Dear Donors,

My name is Jasmin Marie Plant, I am twenty years of age, soon to be twenty-one! I live in Norwich and have done so for my whole life. I live with my parents, brother, and my boyfriend. I am the first person in my family to go to university. I have started university a little later than most. When I was at the end of my AS exams my father fell very ill. I didn't know how to cope with the situation and became unable to carry on with my studies so I had to take a year out of education due to the difficult time. After one year, I enrolled into City College Norwich and started my A levels again with different subjects, except Psychology which I carried on from my previous sixth form. I found it difficult to adjust at first, however the subjects I took I thoroughly enjoyed. Especially Law and Psychology. I became very determined to succeed and really pushed myself. I ended up achieving three A*s, an A* in Law, Psychology, and Sociology.

I chose to study at UEA mainly due to not wanting to move away from my home and all my family. I am very family orientated and I love my life in Norwich. I did not want to move away from everyone I love and care about. I knew moving away wasn't for me. UEA also has a great reputation, especially for Psychology which is the subject I chose to do my degree in. Psychology has always interested me. I have a great curiosity for how mental illnesses occur and how to relieve people of the illness. As my interest has grown, I began to develop an interest for forensic psychology. I am looking forward to learning new areas of psychology which I haven't yet come across and widening my knowledge and developing a deeper passion. I am undecided on what career I wish to take after university, I would either like to work either in the field of clinical psychology or forensic psychology or even food psychology.

In my free time, I like to watch TV crime series, as well as real life documentaries on prisons, crime, psychopaths, and mental illness. Another hobby of mine is cooking, I am a big foodie and enjoy trying lots of different foods and going out to different restaurants. I spend a lot of time going out to for meals.

Now near the end my first semester at UEA I can say that the choice I made to stay at home whilst studying was absolutely the right choice for me. Being at UEA is definitely the best and most enjoyable place I have studied. The subject is fascinating and I feel extremely comfortable there. The only struggle I have at the moment is the work load, it is more work than I have done before and the style of writing is a skill which I'm learning, is hard to adjust to but I am throwing myself into it and I am seeing improvements in my time management and writing style already.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for supporting me with The Difference Undergraduate Scholarship. Before I began university, I was very worried about the debt I would have after graduating and this was a factor which made me consider if I should go to university or get a job instead. However, thanks to you, I do not have to worry about the debt after graduating because a large part my tuition fees are being paid for. You have given me the opportunity to go to university without the worry of debt above me. I am still shocked and overwhelmed that I was given this opportunity and I will always be very thankful to you. Helping me with the cost of university is such a great privilege and I will put every ounce of effort in to prove that the kindness you have given me, has made a great difference to my life and my future.

Thank you,

Jasmin Marie Plant.

Dear Donors,

I will start by introducing myself; my name is Maisie Chadwick, I am 19 years old, and a first year at UEA. Born and raised in Leeds, I was slightly worried about moving so far away from home to start university. Not to mention, I was terrified my very strong northern accent would scare people off and leave me friendless. Luckily, I needn't have worried, as I have made a lovely group of friends who, despite all being from down south, have been incredibly welcoming, with only the occasional mimic of the way I speak.

I grew up with my mum, sister, and of course my dog, Nellie. Despite growing up without a father, I had a wonderful childhood and I am grateful for everything I was lucky enough to experience. Things grew difficult on 6th April 2013 when my mother tragically passed away after a long battle with cancer. The weeks surrounding her death remain a blur; in order to stay at the same school, I had to move in with a family friend, who lived a five-minute drive from my old house. After an emotional, nostalgic year and a half of living there, I eventually plucked up the courage to express my unhappiness. I spent my last two years before moving to university living with my Godmother, Karen. We built a very strong bond and finally, I had somewhere to call home.

Whilst studying for my A-levels I decided that university would be a great opportunity for a change of scenery. UEA is perfect for me; it is one of the only universities in the country to offer my course. Plus, I have family that live in the city, meaning that if I ever need support (or someone to do my washing), help is never far away. When my university offer was upgraded to unconditional, I was over the moon, and couldn't wait for a fresh start. I chose to study Geography and International Development with overseas experience. I have always enjoyed geography, but international development was completely new to me. I knew it involved attempting to improve other people's lives, which was ultimately what drew me to the course. So far I am thoroughly enjoying my studies, and we have recently been discussing a geography field trip to India or Chile, which I greatly look forward to.

We are expected to treat our studies like a full-time job, which leaves me with a relatively small amount of time to relax when not studying. Nevertheless, my first semester has been great, as there are so many other opportunities and activities available at UEA. I have joined the Development Society which hosts a number of socials, including a pub quiz, which my team managed to lose. In December, they will also be hosting the annual DEV Christmas Ball, which is exciting because I am looking forward to having a proper three course meal, which will make a change from pizza and ready meals, which I seem to have lived off for the past couple of months.

I could go on all day about how much fun I'm having and how lucky I am to be here, but of course, I couldn't have done it without your kindness and generosity. You have given me the opportunity to learn, meet new people, face new challenges, and ultimately, become a better person. I hope that one day I can help someone as much as you have helped me.

I want to conclude by saying thank you, and that I am so grateful.

Yours faithfully,
Maisie Chadwick

Dear Donors,

I'm 19 years old, and the eldest out of five however they are all my half siblings. I'm from Southampton but thanks to efforts such as yours I am able to afford to study at UEA and live in the lovely city of Norwich. Being the first out of my family to attend higher education is a wonderful feeling but also a lot of pressure, it has been a hectic journey but UEA have made that journey easier since starting my studies.

UEA in my opinion really stands out from the crowd in comparison to other universities, the staff go a long way to make you feel welcome and at home. Overall I could not have chosen a more perfect place. My heart, for a while has been set on UEA as I really took interest in the language degrees offered, one which I had never heard from anywhere else in the UK. I also applied because after many family issues I faced in the recent years, I knew I wouldn't be able to study back home without having things on top of me daily so I thought it was time to really find a university where I could escape from home life, to stop being relied on to do things that were not for me to be doing, as well as finally gain some independence and better yet, to take control of my life without being told what I should and shouldn't be doing.

I originally applied to do a Double Honours in Interpreting, Translation with Spanish and Japanese, however UEA required an A grade with a double distinction from the Business Diploma I was doing. After a long 3 years of college I came out with a D*D* (double starred distinction) in business and a C in Spanish (bearing in mind I had only been studying the language for 2 years which delighted my teachers) as well as passing Japanese and English Language. UEA, with special considerations after events this year, allowed me to do Translation, Media and Spanish. I also finally get to study Greek too which despite speaking for a long time with many gaps I am now able to learn to my full potential.

I'm happy to be doing this because languages are my life, I have been speaking Greek since I was 7 just for taking pure interest in the language. From that point is where my languages took root and today with self-teaching as well as college studies I am competent with speaking and writing in Greek, Spanish, a little Farsi, French, Japanese and with many people I meet from other countries I will learn what I can with whatever free time I have. I love to make others smile and because we are becoming more multicultural there are more opportunities to meet other cultures and engage. I really hope to become an aspiring translator/ interpreter and the aim is to travel and finally make my dreams a reality.

My favourite memory from first semester really was when it finally sank in that I was at my top choice university doing what I've always wanted to do. I have also made many friends of many nationalities here which I didn't expect so quickly, I'm so content here, and once I am more settled I will hopefully have the courage to join some societies.

I honestly can't thank you all enough for the support you have given me and will continue to give for the next three years. It really has made a real difference to my life and knowing I'll have financial support behind me means I can be a little braver in taking opportunities that I couldn't do before and being able to live stress free. So THANK YOU for changing my life and allowing others to understand that IT IS possible to go to university despite being from a low income background. Words will never be enough to express my gratitude for your generosity.

Kind Regards,
Yasmin Gorman