

DELMER DEWEY/JULIA MCCULLOCH SMITH OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARD

Aliyah Favela '22

The Delmer Dewey/Julia McCulloch Smith Award, presented each year to outstanding students, is named for former Dean of Men Delmer Dewey, who died in 1953, and in memory of Julia McCulloch Smith, who died in 1930. The awards were first presented in 1954.

IT WAS WITH A little trepidation that Aliyah Favela '22 of Ontario, Oregon, took a chance on Western – a school far enough away to be in a different time zone on the other side of the state. She'd really connected with the student guide who led her campus tour, but it was a handwritten note from her future RA that sealed the deal.

"She told me, 'I'm really excited to see you are studying political science. I can't wait to hear more about that!' And she ended up being one of my best friends too," recalls Favela. "I could just tell there was a different kind of community here. I felt like I could succeed."

Favela is graduating with a degree in Social Science with a concentration in Political Science and minor in Psychology. She is a first-generation student who completed her studies in three years as Diversity Commitment Scholar with a 3.94 GPA. Favela says she is approaching what would be her fourth year of college as a kind of gap year, with plans to study for both the LSAT and GRE while she decides on her next steps.

"My long-term goal is to be an attorney or political journalist, which are kind of different from each other," she says with a laugh. "But really, I'm interested in advocacy, working with people, hearing, and defending people."

Engaging with the community in meaningful ways has always been important to Favela, who grew up volunteering with her parents. Though they didn't call it that, to her family it was doing just what came naturally – helping out.

At WOU she worked as a Campus Ambassador and found numerous ways to jump headlong into volunteerism, working at the campus food pantry, vaccine clinics, and on environmental projects on and off-campus. She also dedicated time to the Multicultural Student Union, Unidos Club, MEChA, and Model UN, among other campus groups focused on cultural advocacy.

Favela says her favorite opportunity was participating in Western's Discover

Leadership program, where she received the Student of the Year award as a freshman and Mentor of the Year award as a senior. It was through those service projects and mentoring that Favela says she found her personal voice in leadership.

"I learned about tuning into my own skills and sense of leadership," she says. "I think that's a strong skill to have—to know how you operate as a leader. I learned that leaders come in all

shapes and forms."

Favela says she credits her family and their support as a main motivator throughout school, and though she's graduating college, she's looking forward to a very specific mentoring opportunity on the horizon.

"My younger brother, RJ, is 13 and I'm really excited to be able to help him when he starts his process of applying to colleges," she says.

"I'm ready to take the knowledge I've gained and experience from my time at Western and apply that to my own family."



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