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Hillsdale College Graduates Awarded Fulbright Scholarships

Ethan Bourgeois and Phaedra Kelley will continue their academic careers abroad.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Two recent Hillsdale College graduates, Ethan Bourgeois '26 and Phaedra Kelley '26, have been awarded Fulbright scholarships for the 2026-2027 academic year. The awards will enable them to continue their academic careers abroad.

“A Fulbright scholarship is an exceptionally selective and prestigious award that offers life-changing experiences and opens the door to many future opportunities for young scholars,” said Fred Yaniga, chairman and associate professor of German, who serves as Hillsdale’s Fulbright advisor. “Hillsdale is strong in providing what the Fulbright program looks for: a broad foundation in the liberal arts and the ability to think and communicate well.”

The U.S. Department of State’s Fulbright U.S. Student Program offers awards to graduating college seniors, graduate students, and young professionals to pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad.

Bourgeois, a history major, intends to study abroad in Hungary, where he spent the past two summers researching Cold War-era correspondence between European statesman Otto von Habsburg and prominent American conservatives. During the coming academic year, he will study at Ludovika University of Public Service under the auspices of the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics. Working with Richard Gamble, professor emeritus of history at Hillsdale College, he will co-edit a collection of letters between historian John Lukacs and American ambassador George Kennan. After the project is complete, he plans to apply to graduate school for history either in Europe or the United States.

Phaedra Kelley, a double major in art and German, will serve as a Fulbright English teaching assistant in Germany for the 2026-2027 academic year. She will support English instruction at Winfriedschule Fulda, a college-preparatory secondary school in central Germany. She will help lead English conversation practice, pronunciation, and cultural discussion. She also hopes to share her academic interests through extracurricular opportunities such as discussions on American art, drawing instruction, and an English conversation table.

“It is truly an honor to have even been considered for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant grant,” Kelley said. “I owe much of my gratitude to my professor and Fulbright advisor, Dr. Yaniga, who encouraged me to apply last spring and guided me through the application process in the months that followed. To me, Fulbright was once a dream I never expected to realize, and now I will be flying to Germany in September. I am incredibly excited to gain experience teaching in the German school system, as well as sharing my love of American culture and the English language, all while immersing myself in and learning from German culture. I anticipate that this year will fly by, but I have no doubt it will be an experience I carry with me long after.”

At least a dozen Hillsdale students have been awarded Fulbright scholarships, including seven since 2019.

The class of 2026 also included Hillsdale’s first Truman scholar, Ashley Poole of Houston, Texas. The Truman Scholarship is a graduate fellowship awarded to college juniors pursuing careers in public service. It is awarded by the Truman Foundation, which was created by Congress in 1975 as the official memorial to America’s 33rd president.

Poole ultimately plans to use her scholarship funding to attend law school with the goal of prosecuting federal sex trafficking cases. Meanwhile, she will serve as a research associate with the constitutional litigation firm Consovoy McCarthy. She has spent the past seven years engaged in anti-trafficking efforts through both direct services and policy work.

“My education at Hillsdale introduced me to historical figures in our tradition that share and inspire my desire to defend human dignity,” Poole said. “The prose of figures like Bartolomé de las Casas, William Wilberforce, and Frederick Douglass grounds my work. Furthermore, as an applied mathematics major, I learned to think critically, build precise arguments, and accept wrong answers with humility. Hillsdale allowed me to pursue my interdisciplinary interests in concert, and in turn, I leave able to see alternative perspectives, argue for a purpose, and serve with conviction.”

For headshots of the scholarship winners, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its

classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, Imprimis, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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