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Student to Attend Clinton Global Initiative University

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Student to Attend Clinton Global Initiative University

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Monday September 25, 2017

University of Dayton alumnus Drew Formentini is providing current senior Abby Kowalczyk with the opportunity to attend the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) conference to address issues on campuses, in local communities or around the world.

The conference, Oct. 13-15 at Northeastern University in Boston, engages students in leadership on college campuses to pick a pressing global issue and present their ideas to solve it.

“It’s really amazing having that support and not just financially, but being there to answer questions and help me through the process,” Kowalczyk said. “He’s been so helpful and been so open with sharing his experiences.”

Formentini participated in this conference in 2010 as a graduate student thanks to the Fitz Center, so he wanted to give another student the same opportunity. Formentini partnered with the Fitz Center this year to provide Kowalczyk airfare.

“I got a lot out of it,” Formentini said. “The whole experience was very impactful for me.”

Kowalczyk, an international studies major from Ann Arbor, Michigan, applied for CGI U to address the gap between campus and the international community in Dayton and their language barriers.

“Immigration is something I became really passionate about and it shows in all my classes and my studies,” said Kowalczyk, who focuses on global migration and economic development. She had volunteered at Catholic Social Services in Dayton and Ann Arbor, with refugee resettlement.

Kowalczyk also studies French, which has helped engage the international community in Dayton. She was able to help refugees on where to live, translate, and help them build a resume.

“While it would be super difficult for anyone who just spoke English, it became a lot easier to bridge that language barrier and it ultimately made me form a a lot of meaningful relationships with refugees who I never would have gotten to talk to,” Kowalczyk said.

Her experience with refugees and immigrants made her want to make others aware of the large international community in Dayton.

Kowalczyk hopes to execute her commitment to action by using campus resources such as second-language speakers, classes and different world languages to help the international organizations.

“I’m hoping to meet with a lot of people who are involved with the international community, on campus and off campus to get some feedback and see what their needs are,” Kowalczyk said. “It’s easy to say that I see this as a problem but sometimes you have to listen first before you go out and make a difference.”

This year’s conference will bring together more than 1,100 students to make commitments to action in five focus areas: education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation and public health. More than \$750,000 in funding will be available to select students to help them turn their ideas into action.

- *Clare Gallagher '18*