

# 2 ASU students with a passion for public service receive prestigious Voyager Scholarship

**Only 100 students nationwide are in 2024–26 cohort, receive \$50K in financial aid plus a travel stipend**

By Dolores Tropiano, ASU News  
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A \$50,000-plus scholarship that can set a student on the path to a successful future in public service was awarded to two Arizona State University students this fall.

[Sierra Jones](#) and [Sage Furr-Johnson](#) were among a select group of 100 students from across the country to receive the prestigious [Voyager Scholarship](#), aka the Obama-Chesky Scholarship for Public Service.

The 2024–26 cohort represents 35 states and territories, and 60 colleges and universities in the U.S.

Former President Barack Obama announced the third cohort of “Voyagers” in August.

“They make me more hopeful than ever that our future is in good hands,” he said in a statement.

The Voyager Scholarship helps students with a passion for public service by providing access to travel and education. The needs-based scholarship enables recipients to seek internships or mentorship opportunities around the world to broaden their horizons and prepare them for careers in public service.

It is a perfect fit for Jones.

“I believe that meeting new people and experiencing things outside of your comfort zone is one of the most important steps in your education,” said Jones, who has previously volunteered at a day

care center in Tanzania, Africa, and was involved in ecology-related work in Costa Rica. “It enables a person to find ways to be of service.”

Jones is currently helping children at the International Rescue Committee in Phoenix, which assists migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The experience sparked her interest in immigration and human rights.

“It’s been life-changing for me,” said Jones, a global studies major in The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “It’s made me really interested in learning what I can do to support them and their processes.”

Voyager Scholarship recipients receive a generous travel package in addition to \$50,000 in financial aid. Between their junior and senior years, they will design their own “Summer Voyage” to gain exposure to new communities and experiences in a chosen field, and receive a \$10,000 stipend and free Airbnb housing for summer work and travel experiences.

After graduation, Airbnb will provide the students with a \$2,000 travel credit for 10 years, totaling \$20,000. This will allow students to continue to expand their experiences and forge new connections through travel.

The scholarship is funded by a \$100 million contribution from Brian Chesky, Airbnb co-founder and CEO of the Voyager Scholarship. Jones experienced a range of emotions after learning she was selected for the award.

“I was just shocked and overwhelmed, and just super excited to see what it’s going to bring me,” she said.

She plans to focus on providing intervention services to victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, child abuse and human trafficking, with an emphasis on women and girls victimized by these gender-based crimes.

“It’s kind of a driving force in my academic and professional journey,” said Jones, who is minoring in justice studies and plans to get a human rights certificate and attend law school. “I want to leverage public service in a way that can create change.”

Furr-Johnson’s life of public service began when she was a sophomore in high school and her close friend died by suicide.

After that, she joined an organization to raise awareness of teen mental health. After she graduated from high school, she took a year off to volunteer for AmeriCorp, a national organization that addresses the country’s most urgent challenges through service and volunteering. Her work with the federal agency was focused on gender-based violence prevention.

Furr-Johnson’s volunteer work continued at ASU, where she joined clubs that were raising awareness of unhealthy relationships and educating teens about dating violence.

The ASU junior spent a year interning with the Arizona Department of Justice, where she continued to learn about domestic violence awareness and prevention, and how to help survivors of intimate partner violence.

“It was definitely eye-opening,” Furr-Johnson said. “It helped me figure out my call to public service and my career goals. So when I came to ASU, I knew exactly what I wanted to study.”

Furr-Johnson plans to work as a social worker in the criminal justice system. More specifically, she wants to be a victim witness specialist in a law enforcement center or prosecutor’s office. There, she can help victims navigate the criminal justice system, which can be overwhelming for a person with a history of trauma.

“The main job of the victim specialist is to help them through the trial and make sure they are not being retraumatized,” said Furr-Johnson, a School of Social work student who is minoring in criminology and criminal justice.

Furr-Johnson learned about the Voyager Scholarship from [Diane Gruber](#), her professor at Barrett, The Honors College on ASU’s West Valley campus.

“When I heard about this scholarship, I felt like the mission of the foundation was aligned with my interests,” she said. “And the idea of being connected to 99 other students from different universities that are all interested in public service was very exciting.”

Gruber and [Shay Masterson](#), program manager for the [Lorraine W. Frank Office of National Scholarships Advisement](#), helped her with the application process, which included eight essays and a video statement.

“They were a big help — believing in me, because sometimes I struggle with that,” she said. “It was great to have people in my corner supporting me.”

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

**Text image(s)**



Photo of Sierra Jones by Charlie Leight/ASU News



Photo of Sage Furr-Johnson by Charlie Leight/ASU News