



## An inside look at the lives of UK Scholars

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Applying for a national scholarship can seem like a daunting task. It requires countless hours of drafting, writing and revising; of deep reflection about your past accomplishments and experience; of profound contemplation about your future aspirations. But being selected as a national scholar will take you on a journey unlike any other.

Just ask Drew Birrenkott, Andrew Bulovsky and Josh Shutter.

All three men are 2014 graduates of UW-Madison and they all belong to an elite group of national scholars who have been recognized for the exceptional academic achievement and outstanding personal characteristics.



**Andrew Bulovsky, Josh Shutter and Drew Birrenkott at the 2014 Chancellor's Undergraduate Awards Ceremony**

Birrenkott is a 2014 Rhodes Scholar currently in the first year of his D.Phil (the Oxford equivalent to a PhD) in Engineering Science at the University of Oxford. Bulovsky is a 2014 Marshall Scholar and is working towards a Master of Science in Comparative Politics from the London School of Economics and Political Science. And Shutter is a 2014 Churchill Scholar studying for a Master of Philosophy in Chemistry at the University of Cambridge.

### **Academic experiences abroad**

Birrenkott, Bulovsky and Shutter headed to the United Kingdom in the fall of 2014. As scholars, they have enjoyed countless benefits.

Shutter says that the most rewarding opportunities as a Churchill Scholar have undoubtedly come via his studies at Cambridge.

“Perhaps the greatest academic benefit in Cambridge is the freedom and liberty to chart your own path of study and inquiry for the MPhil degree,” Shutter said. He is completing a research master’s, working independently on his project under the supervision of Cambridge faculty, with little or no classroom work.



## Undergraduate Academic Awards

The opportunity to meet world-renowned scholars is also something from which Shutter says he has benefitted. Similarly, Birrenkott says that the Rhodes Scholarship has provided him with an important broadening experience. He is constantly surrounded by

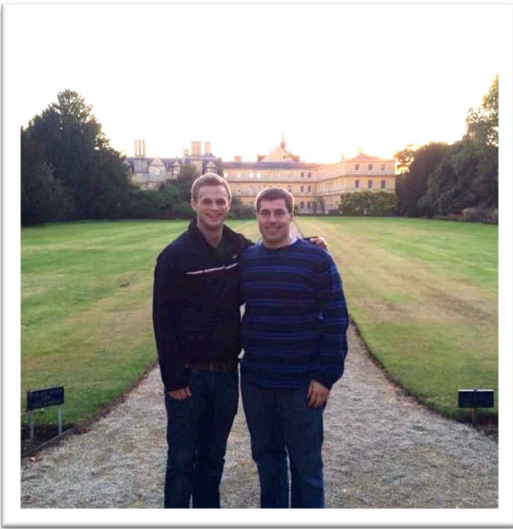
Rhodes Scholars from 16 different nations doing work in a variety of fields unfamiliar to him.

“I have had amazing conversations on topics I know only very little about,” Birrenkott said. “I feel that this experience will allow me to engage more broadly with my colleagues and co-workers in a way that I might otherwise not have been able to.”

Bulovsky praises his academic experience as well. Through the Marshall Commission’s Speaker’s Program, he gave a guest lecture to first-year undergraduate students at the University of Ulster on the design of the US political system and the logic behind the separation of powers. In addition, through a special internship scheme available at the London School of Economics, Bulovsky works for a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons, and had the opportunity to contribute to her recent successful reelection campaign.

### Outside of the classroom

The Rhodes, Marshall and Churchill Scholarships all encourage scholars to build experiences in realms other than academics as well. Shutter says he appreciates the Churchill program’s encouragement of scholars to grow not only academically, but also culturally. For Shutter, this means traveling—around the English and French countryside, and to London, Rome and Paris. Birrenkott agrees that being able to travel regularly and so easily has been an amazing opportunity for him.



**Bulovsky and Birrenkott in the gardens at Trinity College, University of Oxford.**

“To me a year ago, [traveling to London for the day] would have seemed very exotic,” Birrenkott said. “But being in Europe, it’s really easy to go and see places that you’ve only ever heard about in history books.”

Bulovsky has also had the opportunity to expand his cultural horizons, in an especially memorable way. In November 2014, he ran the Istanbul marathon. Bulovsky successfully completed the only race that covers two continents, starting in Asia and crossing the finish line in Europe.

Furthermore, all three scholars have been presented with many opportunities unique to their individual scholarship programs. As a Churchill Scholar, Shutter was able to attend the wreath-laying ceremony in Parliament in



honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Churchill's state funeral.

For Birrenkott, the Rhodes Scholarship has provided a unique sense of community. The scholarship is primarily run through Rhodes House, a building on the Oxford campus that all the scholars are invited to use as their own space.

"The staff at Rhodes House takes great pride in bringing all of the scholars from all constituencies and years together for many talks, social functions and activities," Birrenkott said. "This means that we all grow very close and get to know one another very well."

## Why apply?

Birrenkott, Bulovsky and Shutter's priceless experiences seem to make it clear why they all agree that other students should apply for these prestigious UK scholarships.

Bulovsky says the scholarships provide life-changing opportunities to identify your passions, as well as to pursue your dreams while lessening the financial burden of graduate school. And the perks don't end there, according to Bulovsky.

"These two years of study in the UK will not only expose me to some of the most incredible graduate programs in the world and to some brilliant alumni who can provide career advice, but the time I now have to think about my future and goals is priceless," Bulovsky said.



**Shutter sitting at Winston Churchill's War Room desk.**

Shutter says that applicants shouldn't be discouraged by the seemingly impossible task. According to Shutter, many of his fellow Churchill Scholars share in his sentiment that he never expected to actually receive the scholarship.

"Perhaps the biggest roadblock in applying is the one that we mentally put up ourselves," Shutter said.

## Benefits of the application process

Birrenkott, Bulovsky and Shutter all praise the application process for being a learning experience in and of itself. Shutter emphasizes the importance of a strong personal statement. Bulovsky agrees; stating that through this essay applicants are able to delve into their interests and do some important self-discovery.



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“The application process encourages you to truly identify what you’re interested in and enables you to weave a narrative through your experiences about what has driven you up to this point in your life,” Bulovsky said. “This will help you find your passions.”

Bulovsky adds that working on his application sharpened his writing skills more than any traditional course he had ever taken.

Birrenkott echoes Bulovsky’s sentiment. He warns all students applying to a national scholarship to be prepared for ‘a heavy dose of introspection.’

“At the time you’re working through it, the application process can be both stressful and frustrating,” Birrenkott said. “But in hindsight you realize that you learned more about what motivates you as a person than you would from most other things.”

Shutter says that in addition providing an opportunity to reflect on his experiences at UW-Madison, composing the Churchill application provided a solid foundation when the time came to complete applications for graduate school and graduate research fellowships.

Birrenkott, Bulovsky and Shutter recognize that applying for the UK scholarships is a huge undertaking. They stress the amount of support that is available at the university, from their professors, and staff at the UW-Madison Writing Center and the Undergraduate Academic Awards Office. By taking advantage of these resources, all three students were able to put together winning applications.

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Now, all three UK scholars are in the midst of incredible academic and cultural journeys that have been provided by their scholarships. They encourage all students to take the plunge and apply as well; one never knows who the next Rhodes, Churchill or Marshall Scholar will be. Birrenkott puts it most simply:

“The only way to guarantee you won’t get the scholarship is to not apply.”