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Scholarship awards social, global aspirations

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(U-WIRE) NEW YORK -- When Ripa Ajmera decided she wanted to make a difference, she chose to make a film. She is currently writing a script for a movie about a young woman whom she met last winter while visiting Mahatma Gandhi's ashram in India.

Ajmera, a New York University senior majoring in marketing and minoring in producing, aspires to one day start a production company to make films that both "entertain and empower" viewers.

She took her social entrepreneurial aspirations and applied for the 2006 **Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation** Undergraduate Scholarship in Social Entrepreneurship -- "doing what [she] can to create solutions to problems in the world," said Zachary Lane, CAS senior and fellow 2006 scholar recipient.

"It's definitely a big time commitment ... it will change your life," Ajmera said of the scholarship, which current sophomores are now eligible to apply for. She applied because it allowed her to "empower change in the world through the business skills that I was learning in Stern."

Ajmera, also a former WSN writer, and Lane are two of the 19 undergraduate students who have thus far taken part in the Reynolds scholarship program.

This year, a maximum of ten scholars will be selected for the Reynolds scholarship following the January 22 deadline. Each scholar will receive up to \$40,000 in scholarships for their last two years at NYU and a paid summer internship, in addition to "a fairly intensive curricular and co-curricular component," said program director Gabriel Brodbar.

Lane said that the scholars, in addition to developing their personal projects of social entrepreneurship, also take a course together and have sessions with what the program calls "expert advisers."

"The course is great," Lane said. "The course is called Three Modalities for Change ... the idea is that we look at a person, an institution, and a movement."

In addition to the written application, students also have the opportunity to participate in a team competition where they present their ideas to a panel of judges in order to win one of 35 \$1,000 seed grants through the program's "Be a Changemaker Challenge," Brodbar said.

The deadline for the challenge is Dec. 2, 2007, although teams are allowed to make changes to their plans until February 2008. Judges look for innovation, social impact, and sustainability as the keystones of a winning social venture.

The "Be a Changemaker Challenge" winners are, additionally, entered into a competition for the grand prize, which entails "\$10,000 in capital, a \$500 Staples gift card, and additional in-kind technical services," Brodbar said.

The Reynolds program also offers a variety of resources to the entire NYU community. NYU students can attend the Reynolds speaker series or utilize the university's social entrepreneurship librarian, Brodbar said.

Taking on the world's problem may seem daunting, especially as a college student, but Lane, who is majoring in politics with a minor in art history, is one of many NYU students who said he is focused on becoming a social entrepreneur.

"What I see in everyone else in the program is a really genuine commitment to creating change in the world," Lane said. "I think that that's a quality that's hard to come by in a lot of people."

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