

Dear AAUW,

My name is Elise Miedwig, and I am honored to be the recipient of the Leila Sulkes Memorial Scholarship for the Spring 2022 academic year. I began my university journey at Drexel in Philadelphia, where I studied Russian. While I loved learning a foreign language and the new horizons it opened up for me, I did not see it as a career I wished to pursue. What really interested me – and what I discovered too late into my expensive degree – was the natural world, and plants specifically. I spent the next few years exploring this passion through my work with the Monmouth County Park System, through working in a greenhouse, and through working as a seasonal employee for the National Park Service at Sandy Hook. And while I enjoyed all of this immensely, I missed learning in a university setting.

I decided to return to school and was drawn to the freedom that a community college such as Brookdale affords students to “shop around” their interests, so to say, without breaking the bank. (My return to school is being funded entirely by myself – I am working while taking a full course-load – and I am simultaneously paying off student loans from my first go-round, so I am eternally grateful for the financial help this scholarship provides!) Not only can I study environmental science and delve deeper into my fascination with the natural world, but I can explore and enjoy my other passions as well: Like the scholarship’s namesake, I love books and reading, and have been able to participate in a number of literature classes. I can even brush up on my Russian language skills through Brookdale’s Russian program. I hope to take the knowledge (and credits) earned at Brookdale and put it towards a degree in ecology to further a career with the National Park Service, or some other organization with a focus on caring for and preserving the natural world.

I appreciate all the work the American Association of University Women is doing to assist women in their university journey, and the direct help provided to me through the Leila Sulkes Memorial Scholarship. The picture painted of Leila through articles found online portrays her as a beautiful and inspirational woman, and I hope the help provided to me through this scholarship allows me to live up to her name.

Thank you again!

With sincerest gratitude,

Elise Miedwig

P.S. I will send along a picture of myself for your wall of scholarship recipients (as soon as I find a good one!)