

## Goliard Scholarship Cover Sheet

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Kristen Hallberg  
Wiess class of 2010

The Goliard Scholarship for International Travel

## **AIR JAWS: A Master Class in How to Be Fierce, Yet Graceful**

*Also known as the "My Mother Would Kill Me if She Knew I Was Doing this" project*

### Proposal:

When I was little, my mother would always tell people I was born with gills instead of lungs. I have always loved the water and had a fascination with marine life, and while most children grew up watching Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers, I grew up glued to the Discovery Channel and Animal Planet. I would make up games like "The Dolphin Show Game" and "Shark Attack," both of which I would be happy to explain to the Goliard Board later... or even demonstrate them. They're pretty fun. For my 8<sup>th</sup> birthday, I got the best birthday present ever: a membership to the Shedd Aquarium. I was certain I was going to be a dolphin trainer when I grew up. Later that year, I fell in love with Shark Week. I found my one true love lost at sea: The Great White. Forget being a dolphin trainer, I wanted to be a shark biologist like Rocky Strong (yes, that is the name of the shark biologist on the discovery channel). For some reason, the sharks never scared me, but they amazed me with their stunning, graceful strength and power. To me, they will always be the most majestic and beautiful creatures in the ocean. Shark Week also aired for the first time the year I was born. Coincidence? I think not.

Well, all of this was fine and great until I realized one major issue: I lived in Chicago. The most interesting marine life I was ever going to see was the E. Coli infestation that prevented me from swimming in lake Michigan in the summer time. I was confined to a life of watching the ocean world through my television, and slowly my interest dissolved into the on screen waters. The voice of Jacques Cousteau telling me to follow my dreams out to sea was drown out by that of my parents telling me that I will need a real job someday and I had the potential to do so much more with my life than study sharks. The underlying interest has never died though, and that is why I study environmental engineering and environmental policy here at Rice. Yet over the years I have drifted further and further back towards the proverbial shore, and the desk job at a major oil company.

Then this Christmas, something amazing happened: my sister gave me the 8 disc collectors' edition of Shark Week on DVD. I won Christmas. 3 days later, I had finished watching all 8 DVDs, and it all came back to me: the passion, the fascination, the need to see these amazing creatures face to face.

My favorite episode of the collectors' edition is one entitled "Air Jaws." It is about the metapopulation of Great White sharks in the waters surrounding Seal Island off of the coast of South Africa. There are over 60,000 Cape Fur seals that call Seal Island home, and which the White Sharks call lunch. Because of the unique predator/prey interaction found in these waters, the White Sharks here actually

breach to ambush their prey. It is the only place in the world where White Sharks can be seen practicing this behavior, and to me, it is the most beautiful display of ferocity and grace in nature. The sight of an 18-foot long, 4,000 pound shark majestically hurling itself out of the water and securing its prey with one bite is breathtaking, even on television.

That is the lesson that I have to learn from these sharks: how to be fierce, yet graceful. I am nearing the end of my college career, and my future is uncertain. I am confident in my abilities and my knowledge of what I study, but I have a tendency to let the opinions of others sway me too much. I need to be like these sharks: choose my goal, and pursue it 100%, while showing true grace and majesty in the process. I need to learn to find my prey, what is going to make me truly happy, and lock in on it. Yet at the same time, what I need to learn the most is how to balance the rest of my life with this goal, to emerge from the abyss with goal in hand, and the rest of myself intact as well. I need to learn to not make a mess of things; I need to follow through on my decisions with conviction, while balancing this conviction with the other thing that is so important in my life: family and friends. My hope is that one day, onlookers of this great sport of survival of the fittest will marvel at the grace in which I have handled myself, rather than scoffing at my inability to maneuver elegantly through the waters of life.

My plan for use of the funds would be to travel to South Africa to live my dream of meeting these Sharks for the first time. I have researched several groups of naturalists and scientists that study the Great Whites of Seal Island, which I could join for as long as funding permits. What I would love to do with the funding more than anything is to cage dive with the Great Whites. I know, I know... I'm insane, and my mother is going to have a heart attack.... and if chosen, I promise you won't be held liable for any damages to my limbs. But this is something I have wanted to do for as long as I can remember, and if there were only one thing that I could choose to do before I die, it would be this. If selected by the Goliard board to embark on this incredible journey, I will most likely (read: undoubtedly) pee my pants (or wetsuit) while cage diving, and I promise I will let you all know if I do so you can have a good laugh. It's really quite hard for me to even put all of this into words, because I don't know exactly why this is so important to me... I just know that I have to do it. It's something I think about all the time, because I know it would be that pivotal experience in my life that I would look back on forever and think, "If I can travel to South Africa by myself, and get in a cage surrounded by the ocean's greatest predator.... Hell, I can do anything." The month of May through the month of September is the high season for Great White sharks in this area, so the summer would be the perfect opportunity to meet them. I have even contacted researchers at South African universities and have tracked down the name of the naturalist who hosted the "Air Jaws" episode for Shark Week. I have e-mailed him about joining him on his vessel for an expedition to see the breaching sharks, and I am awaiting his response.

If chosen as the next Goliard Scholar, I would love to produce some sort of documentary about my journey, and I promise I will bring back all of my body parts to show for my efforts as well!

Thank you for considering my application. I am happy to submit a budget, itinerary, or any other supplementary materials you can think of. As a former Sid Rich co-advisor, I also know well the lovable craziness of the college, and in the true spirit of Sid, I'd also like to say that if chosen, I might even have to get a shark tattoo somewhere... because that would mean I am hard core... and sharks don't mess with hard core blondes. Fact. I look forward to hearing from the board, and in the meantime, I will continue to do what Kenneth from 30 Rock says and "live every week like it's Shark Week."

Below I am attaching a screen shot of my recommended videos from youtube, because I procrastinate by watching shark videos all the time. As you can see, even youtube recognizes my love of Sharks... and giant squids? I am also submitting a photo of a breaching Great White, which was taken by the naturalist who I have contacted about joining his vessel. Please, take a moment to marvel at its splendor.

The screenshot shows a YouTube 'Recommended for You' section with eight video thumbnails arranged in two rows of four. Each video card includes a thumbnail with a duration timer, a title, upload date, view count, channel name, and a star rating.

Video Title	Duration	Upload Date	Views	Channel	Rating
Giant Squid caught by Japanese s...	1:28	2 years ago	2,073,252	MedamaNoOyaji	★★★★★
Great White Shark Attack!!	4:42	1 year ago	2,174,386	roggezzinho	★★★★★
Animal Face-Off: Anaconda vs. Ja...	2:40	8 months ago	1,026,801	AnimalPlanetTV	★★★★★
hawaii surfing	4:20	2 years ago	1,266,115	vandangos	★★★★★
Man eaten alive, caught on tape	0:07	1 year ago	1,043,095	TedCrusty	★★★★★
THE GREAT WHITE SHARK SONG	3:35	3 years ago	388,796	abc4explore	★★★★★
WTF! - Orca Vs Sperm Whales	2:31	3 months ago	31,859	AnimalPlanetTV	★★★★★
Zombie Vs Shark	1:20	3 years ago	2,032,595	VideoSlave	★★★★★



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