

age like  
*fine wine*



Goliard Scholarship Proposal 2014

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This past year has been a “yes” year. With graduation looming in the distance, I see the opportunities to push myself and grow slowly shrinking. The best years of my so-far-relatively-short life are coming to an end, but I refuse to leave without making the most of my undergraduate experience. For the past few years, I’ve watched myself evolve from a hesitant, grade-focused freshman to a more self-assured me with a broader perspective. I’d like to think I’m a better version of myself now, but there’s always room for improvement. A fine wine made to savor and enjoy takes time, dedication, and cultivation; similarly, I believe Rice students are nurtured with the same care, and when we graduate, we have the opportunity to show the rest of the world the quality of a Rice education. As Ernest Hemingway said, “A person with increasing knowledge and sensory education may derive infinite enjoyment from wine,” and while my experiences and education within the hedges and in the Houston area have been more than fulfilling, I’d like to challenge myself to go beyond the hedges and the U.S. to the beautiful country of France, land of wine, to immerse myself in a place where wine is a lifestyle.

My love for wine wasn’t instant; a younger me would wrinkle my face in distaste after a sip at family celebrations because of my underdeveloped palate. Wine finally became a word in my vocabulary this past summer when a friend casually brought a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon to the apartment to share. I’d shunned wine for most of my college career since I didn’t think I would ever like it (let alone love it), but I decided to take a chance this time, following my “yes” motto. I’m glad to say it has been the most effective “yes” I’ve said so far. The more I look into wine, the more I learn about the science, history, classifications, and characterizations of wine. Unfortunately, as a college student on a budget, I can only afford so much of this luxury, so I haven’t been able to attend as many wine tastings or enjoy Houston’s local wine bars as much as I’d like. Nevertheless, when I do get the chance to chat with a sommelier about wine recommendations, I try to absorb as much information as possible about the wine such as where it originated from, how the grapes were cultivated, and how the wine was aged. The process of producing wine is an art, and I’m continuously fascinated with all of possibilities and variations of wine. I can only hope with time and experience, I’ll be able speak the language of wine fluently and accurately articulate my thoughts on tannin, aroma, and flavor after a taste.

So far, I’ve only dealt with wine as a final product, but I would love to start from the beginning and learn the craft of wine production. The concept of a vineyard, the tactics to grow quality grapes, the fermentation process, and the various ways of flavoring wine through aging are still foreign concepts to me. That’s why I’d like to travel to France, the largest wine producer in the world (and where wine is cheaper than water), to backpack around the famed regions and learn about the culture and production of wine. Additionally, since I began taking French in middle school and continued all through high school, I could only live vicariously through my teachers’ memories of visiting France; this opportunity would allow me to live out my teenage dreams of exploring France while engaging myself in the wine culture and lifestyle. If I have the honor of being a Goliard Scholar, I’d begin my 3 week exploration of France in Paris and move on to the regions of Champagne, Alsace, Burgundy, Bordeaux, and Loire. France classifies its wine by Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC), region of origin, rather than by grape, so it will definitely take adapting and research on my part to learn how to properly order a glass of wine; but I accept the challenge and hope that by the end of the journey, I’ll be able to take a look at a wine list, recognize the AOC’s I visited, and pick a wine that fits my preferences.

## **Paris**

In Paris, my main goal is to engage myself in French culture and see how wine plays into the daily Parisian life. I’d love to walk around the city, have a picnic by the Seine (avec wine, of course), visit a couple cafes and restaurants to people watch, and

interact with any willing Frenchman about what it's like to live a lifestyle in which wine is a both a casual yet luxurious beverage. Depending on recommendations from locals to further indulge my wine enthusiasm, I may dedicate an extra day in Paris to scope out local sites. As for wine tours, Paris doesn't actually have vineyards, so I would visit the Musée du Vin (the Paris Wine Museum) for a historical tour of France's wine. Not only would I be able to explore old, vaulted wine cellars and the historic collections of France's wine producers, I'd also be able take part in a complimentary wine tasting!

### **Champagne**

My second stop will be neighboring Champagne, region of famed sparkling wine. Champagne is definitely a tourist hotspot since the cellars of internationally known champagne brands are located there. I would take a tour at the Moët & Chandon headquarters and have my very first sip of the world's most renowned brand of champagne. Name brands aside, I would also visit a village in Champagne and take a tour of a local champagne cave such as Champagne Blondel or Champagne Forget-Chauvet. This tour would provide a different perspective on the wine-making process since it would be less industrial like Moët & Chandon's headquarters and have more of a rural flair.

### **Alsace**

Thirdly, I would visit Alsace, which is located near the German border of France. I would dedicate the majority of my time to the town of Colmar, visiting the Robert Karcher vineyards. The region of Alsace differs from the rest of France as it labels its wines by grape rather than by AOC, and it's known for its white wines made from Riesling, Pinot Gris, Muscat, and Gewurztraminer grapes. While at Alsace, I hope to learn more about the history and cultivation of white wines and appreciate the differing aromas and flavors.

### **Burgundy**

My fourth stop will be to the land of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Burgundy has four different tiers of quality in terms of wine, but the appellations are by land, meaning that different tiers of wine can come from the same appellation. Since Burgundy is a larger region with abundant vineyards, I'd like to dedicate two days for tours and two days to take in the local culture. I'm particularly interested in a wine and cheese pairing tour as well as a walking tour that takes visitors through vineyards and teaches them about the importance of terroir, a characteristic that includes factors such as soil, climate, and land elevation.

### **Bordeaux**

As my second to last destination, I plan to experience Bordeaux by first visiting the Musée du Vin and immersing myself in the city. I'm particularly excited about Bordeaux since it offers many red blends that include Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Interestingly enough, Bordeaux classifies its wines based on producer instead of specific plots of land like Burgundy does. I plan to participate in two wine tours that will take me to different wine châteaux while teaching me about the cultivation of the grapes and soil and spend the rest of my time visiting local sites to observe how wine plays into the lifestyle there.

### **Loire**

My last stop will be the region located right next to the Atlantic Ocean. The region of Loire is known for its wonderful seafood and perfectly paired white wine, Muscadet. I would visit Château de Clisson, a historic château from the Middle Ages, take a scenic tour of the beautiful castle, and participate in a Muscadet tasting at the tourist office afterwards. I also plan on taking a wine tasting class that teaches people how to read and understand French wine labels, how to distinguish the flavors of different cépages

(grape varieties), and what methods are used to create red, white, rosé, and sparkling wines.

The possibility of combining my growing passion for wine and experiencing France is absolutely heavenly. This opportunity is the perfect way to push my limits in terms of travelling independently, adapting to a different culture, and bettering my rusty French while loving every step of the journey. If selected, I promise to make a silent toast to the Goliard Board with every tasting of wine! I would return a more-seasoned oenophile, but my wine education wouldn't end there. Wine production is just the beginning, and the realm of wine is boundless. I would love to expand my knowledge on the role of wine in gastronomy and how to pair wine with food, which I'm sure will open even more doors to areas of interest, but for now, I'm happy to start with the basics.

Thank you, Goliard Board, for your consideration!

### Projected Budget

<b>Airfare (to Paris; roundtrip)</b>	\$1,600
<b>Ground Transportation</b>	
<i>Train</i>	
Paris --> Champagne	\$25
Champagne --> Alsace	\$45
Alsace --> Burgundy	\$45
Burgundy --> Bordeaux	\$85
Bordeaux --> Loire	\$55
Loire --> Paris	\$45
<i>Other (bus, bike rental)</i>	\$150
<b>Lodging</b>	\$35/night for 20 nights
<b>Food</b>	\$20/day for 21 days
<b>Wine Tours, Tastings, &amp; Attractions</b>	\$650
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,820</b>



First wine tasting  
courtesy of Yelp!



Goofing off while  
enjoying a glass of  
Cabernet Sauvignon



Hosting a wine and pizza  
pairing dinner for friends