

1/c Alex LeKander selected as 2009 Truman Scholar



By Dr. Alina M. Zapalska
Professor of Economics and
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For the second consecutive year the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation awarded a U.S. Coast Guard Academy Cadet the prestigious title of 2009 Truman Scholar. In March then 2/c Alex LeKander received the news from Rear Admiral Burhoe, USCGA Superintendent, that he had been awarded the prestigious prize granted to only 60 students out of 601 who applied.

The scholarship provides up to \$30,000 for graduate study, priority admission, supplemental financial aid, leadership training, graduate school counseling, and special internship opportunities within the federal government.

1/c LeKander, a government major, began working on the scholarship in the fall of 2008 under the guidance of Professors Zapalska and Ringel of the CGA Honors Program. The application consisted of about 13 short essays and four letters of recommendation. By the end of the application, he had received help from faculty and staff throughout the Academy.

1/c LeKander hopes to one day work in the field of Coast Guard Arctic policy and is very interested in pursuing a joint law and Masters in Public Policy degree. Institutions offering this degree include Georgetown, Berkeley, and Harvard. . In one of his application essays, 1/c LeKander wrote: "Arctic policy is a dynamic and changing realm, and while it is difficult to ascertain exactly where U.S. Arctic policy will be in five years, the



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Coast Guard will certainly be at the forefront. I would like to be working in this changing domain, specifically focusing on the implications of climate change in the Arctic relating to pollution, maritime shipping, and national security."

Truman scholars are elected by independent selection panels on the basis of leadership potential, intellectual ability, and likelihood of 'making a difference.' Each selection panel interviewed finalists from a 3 - 4 state region and generally selected one Scholar from each state and one at-large Scholar from the region. Each panel typically included a university president, a federal judge, a distinguished public servant, and a past Truman Scholarship winner.

In February 1/c LeKander, who applied from his home state of Montana, was notified he was a finalist and would be interviewed in Seattle, Washington with twelve other finalists from the Northwest region. Other finalists included a former marine and midshipman at the Naval Academy, as well as students from

Harvard, Lafayette, Seattle University, and Carnegie Mellon University. The interview was conducted by a panel consisting of prominent business and government figures from the northwest, as well as Frederick Slabach, the executive secretary of the Harry S. Truman Foundation.

In preparation, teachers from every academic department helped draft practice questions, hold mock interviews, and provide background on topics discussed in the application. 1/c LeKander expressed how beneficial everyone at the Academy was in helping him to be thoroughly prepared for the interview.

After arriving in Seattle, Captain Fred Herzberg, Class of 1955, met 1/c LeKander, gave him a tour of Seattle, and arranged a meeting with Captain Fred Sommer, the Commanding Officer of the Healy. Meeting Captain Sommer and discussing Coast Guard Arctic operations

was extremely beneficial as panelists on the interview board asked questions pertaining to Arctic policy discussed the day before on Healy.

Professor Ringel, former Director of the Honors Program, reported that 1/c LeKander sought her out when he was a freshman to learn how he could make the best use of his time at the Academy. He was amazed to hear that he could prepare for graduate school and scholarship competitions by engaging in independent research. 1/c LeKander is the longest-serving Honors Colloquium member, and he has been a faithful participant and tireless advocate for the Honors Program, attending every event and helping to convince other cadets to join.

Professor Zapalska stated, "2/c LeKander has made every effort to broaden his economics, political, and cultural horizons, and convincing other cadets to follow his example. His selection as a 2009 Truman Scholar is truly an historic event for the CGA." The first USCGA cadet to be awarded the Truman Scholarship was ENS DeCarol Davis, '08.

This summer 2/c LeKander will be attending Truman Scholar Leadership Week at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. While there he will meet the other 2009 Truman Schol-



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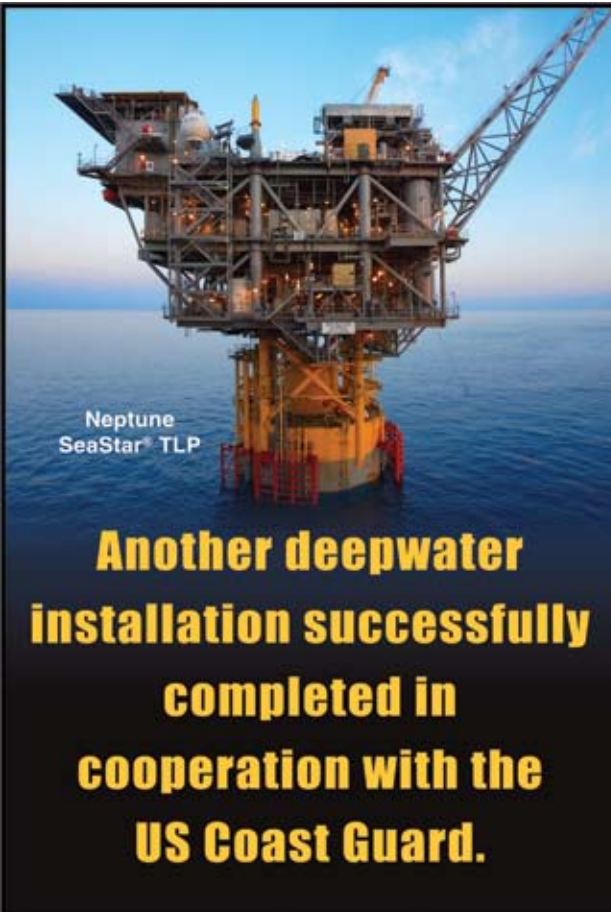
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ars, staff and public servants, work on community service and public policy projects, and learn about different graduate school programs. Additionally, 2/c LeKander will spend his summer underway on the Morro Bay and then attend an internship in Prague, Czech Republic at Charles University where he will be working and learning with other students from around the world.

1/c LeKander was born and raised in Kalispell, Montana. He came to the Coast Guard Academy because he admired the humanitarian missions of the service and wanted to pursue greater challenges and leadership development opportunities unique to the US Coast Guard. 1/c LeKander decided to do independent research last year in Education Policy Studies, which he pursued both in the New London Public Schools as a tutor and by analyzing Coast Guard Partnership in Education outreach programs across the country. He offered frank suggestions for improvement to the officers in charge, which he has applied to the local tutoring program.

2/c LeKander's favorite hobby is travelling. He also enjoys hiking, biking, fishing, hanging out in New York City, and going to concerts.

Dr. Alina M. Zapalska is a professor of economics in the Department of Management at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. She is also the Honors Program Director. Professor Zapalska's extensive and varied teaching experience spans 24 years in the U.S. and abroad. She has presented numerous academic papers at professional conferences, has published more than 200 articles in professional refereed journals, several book chapters, monographs, research projects, and papers and conference proceedings. She is currently working on an Economics textbook.



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