

Assumption College has awarded Grace Clark ’19 a $3,500 Community Engagement Grant to travel to Uganda this summer, where she will explore her anticipated vocation of providing medical care to individuals in impoverished countries. Clark will travel to Uganda for the month of July as a participant in the Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children’s (FIMRC) Summer Health Fellowship.

Clark, a biology major who has traveled to Haiti a number of times to volunteer at the Be Like Brit orphanage – most recently in December 2016 -- is discerning a vocation in medicine, with a focus on serving disadvantaged populations in the third world.

The grant was awarded through the College’s High-Impact Summer Grant Program through S OPHIA
(SOPHomore Initiative at Assumption)--one of many Assumption programs created to reflect the College’s mission to form graduates known for critical intelligence, thoughtful citizenship, and compassionate service.

Serving in the Bududa community, located in the eastern part of Uganda, Clark will work in health clinics, conduct community outreach and home health visits and develop and deliver health education lessons as she explores the field of humanitarian medicine.

“This vocation requires me to go outside of the United States to those living the simplest of lives that lack western medicine, like Uganda,” Clark shared in her grant application. “I will be teaching the community about health issues to prevent them from getting sick, as well as working in clinics to see how doctors must alter the way they practice medicine to best benefit the community.”

According to FIMRC, the summer program is a four-week immersion and service program designed for undergraduate students pursuing health professions and recent graduates interested in medical school, nursing school, or physician assistant studies. Fellows are paired together for program activities and are able to network and share their own experiences and goals.

“The health care system in Uganda is completely different from that in the United States,” shared Clark. “Shadowing and helping in clinics here in the States will not effectively prepare me for my vocation. In Uganda, I will witness first-hand how clinics are run in developing countries. I will learn about the struggles of limited medicine and how that is handled, which is knowledge that will be of extreme importance when I am living out my vocation as a medic in a developing country.”

The SOPHIA grant program supports student pursuits in three categories: community engagement, faith, and life of the mind. Recipients can discover a deeper connection between their spiritual and religious commitments and their personal and professional lives, in terms of vocation. SOPHIA fosters a culture of vocational exploration at Assumption and helps students discern and choose lives of meaning. During the academic year, students enrolled in SOPHIA are encouraged to apply for the summer grants, which are funded by the Council of Independent Colleges and the Lily Foundation.

“Working in medicine in an impoverished country is how I want to spend my life,” said Clark. “It is something I can see bringing me to my ultimate happiness. This project in Uganda will give me full insight on my vocation.”

“Grace will have the opportunity to participate in both the clinical and health education programs taking place in Uganda, which includes rotating through each clinical station at our Level III Health Center, leading health education sessions with our Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Program, and assisting our Community Health Educators with outreach efforts,” wrote Meghan Knight, director of volunteer programs for FIMRC.

When not pursuing her vocation as a medical professional treating those in disadvantaged areas, Clark is a resident assistant on campus, Central Mass volleyball juniors coach and active in the College’s Campus Ministry, where she serves as a peer minister.