

Feeling the fear and doing it anyway

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Grace Harsche, a graduate and Newcomb Scholar from New Jersey, will be a Fulbright Scholar in Amsterdam in the fall | Photo credit: Sally Asher

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Grace Harsche, a graduate and Newcomb Scholar from New Jersey, is feeling “so nervous and really excited” about her next chapter. Come August, she will be a Fulbright Scholar studying at Vrije University in Amsterdam. It will not be her first

time living in the Dutch capital—she studied there abroad her junior year—but this time she will be staying for an entire year to pursue a master’s degree in political science and intern with [Dutch & Detained](#), a nonprofit organization that provides free legal assistance to Dutch detainees in other countries.

Harsche, who majored in international relations and social policy and practice with a minor in gender and sexuality studies, plans to fully immerse herself in Dutch culture. This includes getting more comfortable with “Dutch honesty” and mastering the language. “My Dutch language skills are currently very basic and it’s never great to be that English-speaking person who can’t speak the native language of a country they’re visiting, so I’m anxious about how quickly I’m going to pick up Dutch,” Harsche acknowledged.

Starting over in a foreign place where she doesn’t know anyone and being away from her friends and family for so long is daunting, but she keeps reminding herself that her new life in the Netherlands will likely get easier after the initial culture shock period. “I saw a quote once that said ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’ and I’ve lived by that ever since. Every incredible life experience I’ve had thus far has completely terrified me at the beginning,” Harsche shared.

Her life motto also gave her the determination to apply to the [Fulbright Program](#). After learning more about the program from a staff member at [Tulane’s Office of Fellowship Advising](#) who visited her Newcomb Scholars class during her junior year, she knew she had to apply—despite some self-doubt. “The whole time I was applying I felt like getting the Fulbright was such a shot in the dark and that I was so underqualified, but I also couldn’t imagine passing up such an amazing opportunity,” remembered Harsche. “Coming from a very middle-class family, money was a consideration too. Not having loans to pay back for a master’s degree will open so many doors for me.”

Harsche is convinced that her participation in [Newcomb Institute’s Newcomb Scholars Program](#) also helped her secure one of the coveted Fulbright scholarships. “I tell everyone I know that Newcomb Scholars has made me the person I am today. The program gave me a really strong network that led to

amazing opportunities, and it made me a researcher,” Harsche explained. “Prior to becoming a Newcomb Scholar, I had never really considered conducting research, and definitely not pursuing a senior thesis, a year-long research project. I do think that the research experience that Newcomb Scholars gave me made my Fulbright application stand out.”

[Dr. Aidan Smith](#), Director of the Newcomb Scholars Program, notes that Harsche and her peers have excelled in spite of the challenges they faced. “The 2024 cohort of Newcomb Scholars has been through a lot. Their college experience was marked by the anxiety and disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida,” said Smith. “To see Grace and others in the program succeed and pursue these prestigious opportunities is a testament to their resilience and passion. There is nothing that can stop these Scholars from using their talents to make an impact in this world.”

In many ways, going abroad after graduation feels like a natural next step for Harsche, who hopes to work in international peacebuilding and conflict work with a focus on women one day and dreams about a job at the UN. But for now, she will be spending the summer working in Nantucket and counting down the days until she can experience the Dutch lifestyle again.

“I can’t wait to have dependable public transit, boat on the canals, enjoy work-from-home Fridays (which the Dutch were doing long before Covid), and spend weekends in other countries,” Harsche said. “Springtime in the Netherlands is the best because of the tulip fields and ‘Koningsdag,’ which is a huge festival to celebrate the king.”