

Name: Grace Silge
Year in School: 10
School: West High School
State: Utah

I have always been driven by a desire to help people. I have also always been interested in STEM, in understanding how things work and how to create new and exciting technologies and discoveries. Now, my driving force in my education and career is to find a way to help people using STEM, and to create a more equitable and compassionate STEM community. I want to use my college education and this scholarship to combine my passion for STEM and my passion for helping people.

When I was asked what I wanted to do when I grew up in elementary school, the answers ranged from teacher to firefighter to environmental engineer. My goals changed, but throughout my life, my goal has always been to help people. I could envision myself as a teacher, shaping a more caring, open-minded, and insightful next generation, as a firefighter, saving lives within my community, or as an environmental engineer, creating a more safe and sustainable future for not just myself and my community, but the world.

As I progressed in elementary school and moved into middle and high school, I became more interested in STEM. At first, I thought that this would lead to less opportunities for helping people. I had always thought that doctors and engineers creating new, life-saving technologies were the only scientists who helped people, not chemists or computer programmers. But then I learned about the ways that STEM was being used, not to create a new element that disappears in milliseconds, but to find out how the Flint Water Crisis happened and how to stop it from happening again, to create health and suicide prevention apps, to spread information about current events in the world to wider audiences than ever before. I learned that I could follow my own interests and still help people. I started dreaming of becoming an app designer for health or social justice apps, of running numbers behind an influencer who hopes to spread love and kindness, of combatting prejudice in machine learning.

I want to go to a college that will provide me with a strong STEM base, but also give me options to explore humanities and social sciences. I want to not only use STEM to create a kind world, but create a kinder and more inclusive STEM community. STEM is notorious for being very imbalanced in race and gender. To change that, the world needs people who not only have strong STEM skills, but have strong communication, advocacy, and inter-personal skills, as well as a passion for equity and compassion. I want an education that will allow me to both be successful in a STEM career and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable STEM community. That education will set me up to follow my intellectual and career goals, and my passion for making the world a better place. This scholarship will let me take my turn behind the wheel, driving myself and the STEM community into a more equitable and compassionate future.