

# Challenged to Meet the Challenges

## Truman Scholar looks to tackle substance misuse

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Grace Roy '22 started mapping her future when she was in middle school, a future that aims to see people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol get the help, and respect, they deserve.

She began volunteering with the Dover, New Hampshire-based drug prevention program Youth 2 Youth in 2011. Ten years later, she is one of 62 students nationwide, out of 845 candidates, to be selected as a [Truman Scholar](#). The \$30,000 graduate fellowship, established to honor former President Harry S. Truman, is awarded to undergraduates seeking a career in public service. Roy's involvement with substance misuse issues has helped her build a proven track record for such work.



“I have been involved in substance use prevention efforts in New Hampshire since 2011 and have had the opportunity to travel across the country through my work,” says Roy, a health management and policy major. “Seeing the impacts of the opioid crisis in New Hampshire and gaining perspective on the issues associated with substance use in other states really opened my eyes to the importance of addressing substance use and the opioid crisis in a way that helps people gain access to resources that they may be lacking.”

Roy is UNH's sixth Truman Scholar.

**“The entire process of applying and interviewing for the Truman Scholarship has challenged me to reflect on my experiences and translate the things that I care about into a plan for the future.”**

A [Hamel Scholar](#), Roy is involved with the program's Substance Misuse Awareness Task Force. She also serves as an Alcohol, Nicotine, & Other Drugs (ANOD) peer educator with UNH Health and Wellness. During the summer of 2020, she received a [Governor John G. Winant Fellowship](#) to work as an intern with Dover Youth 2 Youth and assisted with conducting youth advocacy program development trainings for community substance use prevention coalitions in multiple states. The Winant fellowship was established at UNH in 1982 in memory of the late New Hampshire governor to encourage the professional development of undergraduates with a strong commitment to public service.

Roy has been conducting public health research in the lab of associate professor Semra Aytur since February of 2020. Her focus has been on increasing access to acceptance and commitment therapy, a form of cognitive behavioral therapy used in the treatment of chronic pain, substance use disorders and many other chronic diseases.

“Through my academic and volunteer experiences, I have become very interested in and passionate about harm reduction and other approaches to substance use disorder and drug use that prioritize health, safety and dignity for people who use drugs,” the Dover resident says. “I hope that my future work will help to reduce the stigma surrounding substance use and establish evidence-based solutions that help people impacted by addiction.”

After completing her undergraduate degree, Roy plans to pursue a master's in public health, concentrating in health policy and community health intervention.

“The entire process of applying and interviewing for the Truman Scholarship has challenged me to reflect on my experiences and translate the things that I care about into a plan for the future,” Roy says. “Throughout my time at UNH, I have had numerous moments of doubt about my future and uncertainty about how I am going to be in a position to help my community and make an impact. It means so much to me to be selected as a Truman Scholar and be part of a network of people across different disciplines who are helping to change things for the better. It gives me hope that I will be able to have the same impact.”

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