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Senior Alletta Brenner is one of 40 American students awarded the Marshall Scholarship. She plans to study international politics and African studies.

KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Marshall: First year a UO student has won the award

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in international politics and African studies.

The Marshall Scholarship was established after World War II by the British government to honor Gen. George Marshall, the author of the Marshall Plan, which was used to rebuild Europe.

Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Marilyn Linton suggested Brenner apply for the Rhodes and Marshall scholarships after Brenner won a first-place prize at the Undergraduate Library Research Award for a paper she wrote.

"She kind of twisted my arm a little bit, got me to come see her and come talk to other people, and they convinced me that it would be a great opportunity," Brenner said.

After she was selected as a finalist, the regional selection committee flew her to San Francisco for an interview, and by the time the plane landed in Eugene, she had received a voicemail on her cell phone, alerting her that she had been selected.

"I was jumping around on the plane, and the people next to me were all excited," she said. "They didn't really know me, but I was obviously really happy."

Brenner plans to study the role of two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in changing perceptions of slavery in Niger.

"For many parts of the country, (slavery) is a very old, traditional practice," Brenner said. "I'm sort of looking at this question of what happens when you have international human rights standards ... and yet you have traditions within particular places in the world that are otherwise."

She said labor rights and the interaction between human rights and the environment are extremely important to her, and she hopes to eventually work as an international lawyer.

Her interest in NGOs was piqued

when she interned at the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide last summer.

"They work on a lot of environmental but also human rights cases, and so that was a really great experience," she said. "I'm really interested in the role (NGOs) play not only in politics ... but also the way they influence people's lives on the ground in the work that they do."

The Forest Grove native said she became interested in workers' rights and social justice when she helped with her church's efforts to bring food, clothing and supplies to migrant workers who lived in the area.

During high school, she co-founded Students Organized Against Prejudice and was one of the valedictorians of her class.

While at the University, Brenner has been very involved with the Robert D. Clark Honors College. She's worked extensively as the program coordinator for the internship and mentorship programs, and last year was the president of the Clark Honors College Student Association.

"Alletta is an exceptionally gifted and hard working student ... She has brought great honor to the academic program of the university," University President Dave Frohnmayer said in a news release.

Pauline Austin, a spokeswoman for the University, agreed with Frohnmayer.

"The University is so proud to have our first Marshall Scholar," she said.

She added that the University was particularly pleased to have two students who were finalists in both the Rhodes and Marshall scholarship programs. Brenner was a finalist for the Rhodes scholarship, and psychology senior Drew Shipley was a finalist for both awards.

Contact the higher education reporter at kbrown@dailyemerald.com

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