Finding the Common Ground

Samantha Wood SY ’20

“The easiest decision I ever made was coming to Yale. It’s brought me wonderful friends and prepared me for what’s next.”

“As a religious studies major,” says Samantha Wood SY ’20, “I look for the common ground that unites people across cultures, societies, and values.”

Samantha pursues the common bonds between people both inside and outside the classroom, including on Yale’s varsity fencing team, where she wields the foil and saber. “We practice about ten hours a week,” she said. “The whole team comes together every weekday afternoon, and we participate in weight training and lessons together, too.”

Samantha also serves as a First-Generation Low-Income (FGLI) Ambassador for the Yale College Dean’s office. In this role, she helps to build a sense of community for FGLI students at Yale. She plans events, holds office hours, and organizes student outings both for fun and for necessities—such as shopping for winter clothing with those who have never experienced a New England winter. “It’s about letting these students know that Yale is behind them one hundred percent,” Samantha says, “and that they’re not alone.”

Creating such community comes naturally to Samantha. She is a fixture at Global Grounds, a weekly coffeehouse run by the Chaplain’s Office every Friday and Saturday night. There, students enjoy games, snacks, and fellowship in a welcoming, and alcohol-free environment. “It’s a great option for socializing beyond the party scene,” she said. “People really enjoy it and are glad to have a fun and relaxed place to hang out.

“When I first visited campus,” she said, “I noticed that everyone looked happy, even though it was finals week and they were working hard. I wanted to be among people like that. The easiest decision I ever made was coming to Yale. It’s brought me wonderful friends and prepared me for what’s next.”

Donors make it possible for exceptional students like Samantha to attend Yale, regardless of their financial circumstances. To learn more about ways to support these students, please visit giving.yale.edu or call 800.395.7646.