A Summer Teaching STEM

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— Claudia Gaither JE ’20

Surrounded by growing plants and curious middle-schoolers, Claudia Gaither JE ’20 experienced a different kind of summer internship. “I had done research in a laboratory after my first year,” said Claudia, an ecology and evolutionary biology major. “For my second summer, I was looking for something focused on the environment but outside of a lab.”

Claudia’s search led her to CitySprouts, a nonprofit organization in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that provides garden-based learning for middle-schoolers. As a summer intern, Claudia used the cultivation of fruits and vegetables to teach ecology, biology, and chemistry to fourteen students, aged ten to thirteen. “The best part was watching kids find joy in growing things,” Claudia said. “The hands-on approach really sparked their curiosity about the world, and I loved it.”

Claudia hails from Athens, Georgia, and was in the first cohort of students to receive a Domestic Summer Award (DSA). Marvin Chun, dean of Yale College, launched the DSA program in 2017 to ensure that Yale students who qualify for financial aid during the academic year can also participate in meaningful summertime learning and service opportunities.

The DSA program offers grants of $4,000 to financial aid recipients seeking an unpaid summer internship in a service, arts, or government program. “I was able to live in Boston and do this work thanks to the DSA,” Claudia said. “I had never thought about teaching before, but now I’m considering it as a potential career. My internship taught me so much about people and working with kids, and I am grateful that the DSA made my experience possible.”

A robust financial aid program brings exceptional students like Claudia to 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.