

## *About the Awardees*

**LAUREN BREYNAERT** (Urban & Environmental Policy Major). The support of her Oxy Professors, fellow UEP seniors, and campus activists, has transformed the way Lauren understands systems of oppression and allyship in the fight for social justice. Lauren continues to take every opportunity she has to resist social injustices and stand in solidarity with social justice organizations on campus and in Los Angeles. Lauren has found her passion for environmental justice and social justice advocacy, organizing, and policy work through working with the Moving Forward Network at UEPI, the Los Angeles Community Action Network, and Got Green. Following these experiences, she now hopes to pursue a career in community-based organizing and advocacy. Lauren is forever thankful for the lessons and experiences she has gained at Oxy that have prepared her to continue to fight for a more just and equitable world.

**DYLAN BRUCE** (Biology and Theater Majors) has chosen to spend his time at Oxy stubbornly trying to start food fights. That is, fighting for sustainable food systems. Dylan has led the Food, Energy, and Sustainability Team (FEAST) at Oxy for 3 years, and been Campus Dining's Intern for Sustainability Research and Implementation for 3 1/2 years, drafting a food policy, successfully campaigning to have President Veitch sign the Real Food Challenge's Campus Commitment, and steadfastly working towards institutionalization of sustainable landscaping and food education. Blessed to be working amongst an amazing array of student leaders tackling many of the pressing issues of our generation, he has been continually inspired by his peers, as well as mentors and professors. Walking in the footsteps of his parents, he chose food as a focus; the last four years have been spent (attempting) to engage the broader student body to foster an appreciation of the complex food system we take for granted, and to cultivate a general culture of social, economic, and environmental equity and sustainability.

**SOMER GREENE** (Community Development and Media Communications Major, Sociology Minor) has dedicated her time at Oxy to connecting students with Los Angeles through volunteer efforts on and off campus. She is fully dedicated to this field, so much so that she created my own major to pursue nonprofit leadership after graduate school next year. In her first year as a Values and Vocations Fellow, she fell in love with place-based approaches to social justice and volunteerism. It inspired her to become a Campus and Community Organizer and an Education in Action Facilitator for

the next three years. As a facilitator, she works with supportive faculty to develop community-based learning curricula for classes. Working as an Organizer allows her to coordinate service projects alongside passionate students, such as Staff Appreciation Lunch and Social Action Week. In addition to these roles, she also works at Community Partners on their Fiscal Sponsorship team, leads weekly yoga sessions for community organizers, and facilitates Oxy's Grief Group. Somer is forever grateful to her Oxy family for these opportunities to better understand her role in scholarship and the community!

**SOFIA POLO** (Urban & Environmental Policy Major) is from Portland, Oregon. Her passion and main academic focus is on public health and the social determinants of chronic disease, particularly as they pertain to urban immigrant communities. She has worked on projects to improve the health, self-efficacy, and quality of life of diabetic populations both at the clinic at MEND in Pacoima, and while studying abroad. This year, she has been part of a team which created the club "Comparte" which partners with a community organization to provide jornaleros at the Cypress Park community job center with ESL workshops. While in college, Sofia has most enjoyed getting to know Los Angeles, and witnessing the work that is being done by ordinary people to make it a better, healthier, and more just place. Her main sources of inspiration at Oxy have been her amazing mentors Heng Lam Foong and Valerie Lizarraga, and her peers who have transformed the college through their leadership and organizing. Her departing wish for Oxy is that students and cleaning/facilities/kitchen/kitchen-cleaning staff can come together as a community and form a coalition to advocate for one another and fight to make the campus more interconnected and equitable.

## Senior Leadership in the AGC Occupation:

ABHILASHA BHOLA (Diplomacy & World Affairs Major)

DALIN CELAMY (Sociology Major)

MIKE CRIBBS (Community Development and Media Communications Major)

OBIAGELI OKPALANMA (Biology Major)

LINDSAY OPOKU-ACHEAMPONG (Biology Major)

MARIELLE PENA (Economics Major)

NINA MONET REYNOSO (Psychology Major)

ANTONIQUE ROBERSON-DANCY (Urban & Environmental Policy Major)

KAREN ROMERO ESTRADA (Urban & Environmental Policy Major)

DANA RUST (Diplomacy & World Affairs Major)

DIAMOND WEBB (Sociology Major)

BENJAMIN WEISS (Sociology Major)

Crossing departmental and disciplinary borders, these twelve seniors came together in solidarity with each other, and students nationally, to elevate anti-blackness at Occidental College. Pushing the College to match its rhetorical language on diversity with the lived reality of students, these seniors inspired and provided the base leadership for the Occupation of AGC involving more than a third of Oxy's student population, in addition to staff and faculty allies in November 2015. They modeled the way for critical and grounded teaching and learning for social change.

During the Occupation, these seniors lifted up personal stories of racism and sexual assault to advance a campus-wide understanding of the individual, institutional, and societal factors necessary to create a safe learning space for all and the cultural and institutional changes needed to ensure that Oxy systemically and institutionally address the needs and aspirations of its black students, faculty, and staff. Their leadership has ignited a continuing movement fighting for social justice. Despite tremendous challenges, these seniors remain true and steadfast to making their school and their community a more just and fair place.