



## Five students receive Carter Roger Williams scholarships

The goal of philanthropists Letitia and the late John Carter is to encourage students to think big about their futures

By Chris Barnett | May 27, 2022

**T**he Rhode Island Foundation is sending high school seniors from Barrington, Central Falls, Newport and Providence off to college with scholarships honoring Roger Williams, the state's founding father.

The four-year, renewable scholarships are through the Carter Roger Williams Initiative, which was launched by philanthropists Letitia and the late John Carter in 2017. This year's recipients are eligible for \$320,000 in aid over four years.

"All of these students discovered inspiration in Roger Williams and in turn has an inspiring story of their own to share. It is only due to the commitment of the Carter family that we can offer students and their parents this opportunity to think big about their future," said Neil D. Steinberg, president and CEO of the Foundation.

This year's scholarship recipients are Haneen Alsuwaidani and Ousainou Bah of Providence, Tania Guerrero of Central Falls, Lucas Matthews of Barrington and Ava Reise of Newport.

They were selected from nearly 80 applicants based on their academic achievement, financial need, appreciation for Roger Williams' values and record of community service.

**Alsuwaidani** attends the Met. She plans to attend the University of Rhode Island and study pharmacy.

Originally from Syria, Alsuwaidani has interned at Rhode Island Hospital since 2021, works at Ocean State Job Lot and has volunteered as a translator at the Refugee Dream Center in Providence.

In her application, Alsuwaidani shared how she relates to Roger Williams' values.

"I had to leave Syria because of war and because I did not have freedom of religion or education there. Both Roger Williams and I left our homes because we did not have the right to live our lives openly in the countries where we were born," she wrote. "I am lucky that Williams founded a space where it is safe for me to wear hijab and openly observe Islam. I am happy to share my traditions and culture, just like Williams did in his community."

**Bah**, who came to Providence from The Gambia in 2021, plans to study cell and molecular biology at the University of Rhode Island.

"My family and I endured extreme hardship and trauma in The Gambia. Because of that, I dream to one day be a medical doctor or a scientist in the field of medicine," said Bah.

In his application, Bah shared how he relates to Roger Williams' values.

"I came to Rhode Island in pursuit of freedom. Therefore, finding out the founder of this great state also pursued freedom resonated with me and I realized that it was home for me," he wrote.

**Guerrero** attends the Blackstone Academy Charter School. She plans to attend Roger Williams University and study architecture.

"I love architecture because of the combination of technology, science, math, design and photography. The interdisciplinary nature of this field is what holds my interest, as I am someone with a passion for both STEM and the arts," said Guerrero.

"As a future architect, my vision is to create beautiful living environments that are safe and affordable for residents. I also want to also inspire younger girls like me to consider studying architecture," she said.

Guerrero volunteers in the adult education program at Progreso Latino, participates on the Youth Advisory Council of Rhode Island and is the head coordinator and editor of Blackstone Academy's 2022 yearbook.

"I love photography and learning about it. Capturing beautiful moments with my family and friends motivates me. Because I enjoy photography so much, I never accept payment for any of the photos because I am still perfecting my craft. Photography makes me feel alive," she said.

In her application, Guerrero shared how she relates to Roger Williams' values.

"Roger Williams was a determined person. Determination is what has kept me going on wanting to pursue all my dreams and goals just like Roger Williams. I want to bring back change to my community in order to improve it for future generations," she wrote.

**Matthews** attends Barrington High School. He plans to attend Roger Williams University and study education and English.

At Barrington High, Matthews is a member of the National Honor Society and the Gay/Straight Alliance; is president of the school's book club, participates in theater and is an AP Scholar. In addition, he also volunteers with the Barrington Congregational Church, is a member of the Barrington Public Schools Culturally Responsive Learning Community Committee and works part-time at Shaw's Supermarket.

"The move my family made from Maryland to Rhode Island reminds me of one of the most inspiring principles Mr. Williams lived by, which is that sometimes you have to risk everything for a vision that only you can see," wrote Matthews, who came to Barrington in 2021.

"Similar to Mr. Williams, we moved here because we had a vision for a brighter future in a community that truly supported us, while risking damaged relationships and the comfort of staying where my family had lived for eight generations. In the spirit of Mr. Williams, we have made our beautiful vision become reality," he concluded.

**Reise** attends Rogers High School. She plans to attend Emmanuel College in Boston and pursue international studies.

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Her activities include indoor and outdoor track and field, cross country, gymnastics, yearbook, theater and the National Honor Society. In addition, she works at Belle's Café and The Reef in Newport.

In her application, Reise shared how she relates to Roger Williams' values.

"Everyone has the ability to voice their opinion, but he took it to the next step by taking action. Williams voiced his reasons for separation of church and state, something that contradicted the beliefs of many during his era," Reise wrote. "I not only aspire to Williams' confidence, but as well to his resilience. I see myself as a strong individual, however I am still learning how to stand up after I get knocked down the way Williams did."

*The Rhode Island Foundation is the largest and most comprehensive funder of nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island. Working with generous and visionary donors, the Foundation raised \$98 million and awarded \$76 million in grants in 2021. Through leadership, fundraising and grant-making activities, often in partnership with individuals and organizations, the Foundation is helping Rhode Island reach its true potential.*

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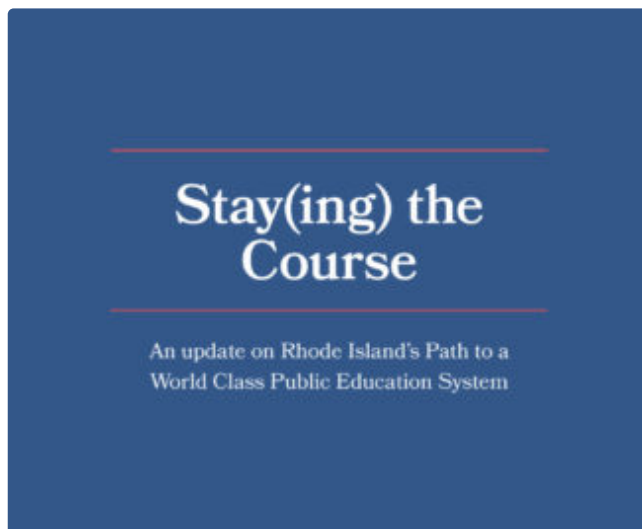


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