

Fred Russell-Grantland Rice Scholarship in Sports Journalism, 2024–2025



Grace Hall

College of Arts and Science, Class of 2026
Interdisciplinary: Public Policy Study
Belfast, ME

"I can't thank you enough for your generosity and continued support of me and all the Vanderbilt students this scholarship has helped before me. Donors like you are the reason that I am able to be at Vanderbilt, and I am thankful every day for your generosity."

Tell us about your background (where you're from, interests, family). Why did you choose Vanderbilt, and what influenced your decision?

I am from a small town called Belfast, Maine and currently live just outside of it in a town called Swanville. Both my parents and my grandparents on both sides are also either from Belfast or the surrounding area. I am the youngest of three children, all girls, and my sisters are both educators. I always knew even when I was young that I wanted to leave the state of Maine for college, so when I was applying, I cast a wide net. Vanderbilt was one of those schools. To be honest I was shocked when I got into Vanderbilt, but as soon as I did I knew I needed to visit. The rest from there is history. I had a few schools I thought I was more interested in than Vanderbilt, but as soon as I stepped foot on campus I knew I wanted to spend my next four years on West End.

Where do you live at Vanderbilt and how does it enhance your student experience?

I live in the Village at Vanderbilt Townhomes here at Vanderbilt. I think living in the townhomes enhances my student experience by giving me an ideal situation where I feel independent and like a real adult. Living in the townhomes also allows me to live with my two closest friends at Vanderbilt.

How does Vanderbilt's motto, "Dare to Grow," resonate with your educational journey?

Vanderbilt's motto, "Dare to Grow," resonates with my educational journey immensely and summarizes what I aim to do every day while I am here. One of the biggest reasons why I came to Vanderbilt is because I knew that I would be surrounded by people who would encourage me and challenge me to grow and better myself every day, both personally and academically. I also promised myself that I would take advantage of every opportunity presented to me and use it as an opportunity to grow in every facet of my life. I feel as if I have adequately done that in my time here, but I am never satisfied. I think that this "Dare to Grow" motto is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

What is your major (and minor, if applicable), and what led you to that choice?

My major at Vanderbilt is public policy studies, and I also have a minor in legal studies. It was a bit of a winding road to get me to my major and minor choice because when I first applied and was accepted to Vanderbilt, I was in the School of Engineering and thought I wanted to be a biomedical engineer. After a semester of taking classes, I knew I didn't love the engineering curriculum but also found interest in the policy space through a writing seminar I took as a first-year student. This made me switch to public policy. Through this curriculum and my work with the student paper, The Hustler, I added the legal studies minor and now intend to combine my passion for law and sports with sports and entertainment law.

Tell us about an experience that stands out to you as one of your favorite examples of what Vanderbilt means to you.

Perhaps one of my favorite examples of what Vanderbilt means to me is the various communities I have been able to find at Vanderbilt. Not only has sports journalism given me some of my favorite moments in college, whether it be covering a game or writing articles, but it has also given me some of my best friends and a community I know want to see each other succeed. I know I will talk to these people long after I have left Vanderbilt and moved on to my professional career. This struck me when, after the big football win over the University of Alabama, we all found each other on the field, celebrated with each other and even got a photo together to commemorate that moment.

What career path do you want to pursue, and how has your Vanderbilt education prepared you for your future?

I want to pursue a career in sports operations or sports law. I feel Vanderbilt has prepared me exceptionally well for a career in this field. First and foremost, the education I am getting inside the classroom is among the best in the world, and I am truly honored to have learned from my professors at Vanderbilt. The public policy and legal studies curriculum has improved my writing, analysis and public speaking skills. The liberal arts curriculum that Vanderbilt requires has allowed me to pursue some of my interests and deepen my interests and passions. The clubs I am involved in have allowed me to stay connected to the sport I grew up playing (field hockey) and allowed me to explore my interests and continually develop professionally.

What has this scholarship support empowered you to do that you otherwise wouldn't have been able to do?

This scholarship has empowered me to do something I otherwise would not be able to do. I grew up in a working-class household, and, simply put, a Vanderbilt education would not be an option for me if I did not receive the aid that I do. This scholarship has allowed me to go to one of the best universities in the nation, all the while allowing me to have a college experience that I truly think is one of a kind.