The Archaeological Institute of America’s Waldbaum Scholarship has been extremely valuable. The money that this scholarship provided has helped me travel to and from Transylvania, Romania, where I was able to participate in a bioarchaeological field school. The funds awarded to me through this scholarship were used in a number of ways, ranging from the field school tuition to the airfare, it even helped me while I was in Romania to buy lunches and other supplies I needed for the field.

This field school focuses on the excavation of a number of lost churches used in the Medieval Period, dating back as far as the 14th century and as late as the 17th century. Although I would have loved to be a part of this Medieval funerary excavation I was lucky to be accepted into a group of six individuals excavating an ossuary just outside of the main cemetery. This program is unique in a number of ways, including the fact that it includes commingled remains, as well as a one of a kind field and laboratory experience. We would spend up to three days in the field, slowly and carefully exposing, leveling and eventually removing hundreds of human bone fragments. We would then spend the remaining two days of the week in the laboratory, where we would analyze everything we had collected. This process involved first, cleaning the bones. The next step was to set them out to dry and later identify and group them. We then sided the bones and finally used them to create an MNI or minimum number of individuals.

This field school has been an amazing experience, one that I will never forget! This trip has also allowed me to explore archeology first hand and gains new skills, such as excavating commingled remains. This experience has also allowed me to network and learn from a number of incredible professionals who have all given me amazing advice on future career goals as well as insight into the world of academia. Additionally, I was able to work with and meet many amazing students who I continue to remain friends with and have kept in touch with. This field school has even given me new insight into myself. I have been able to work with remains before, however I have never had the experience of digging them up! I have always thought of myself as a lab person, but I now realize that I love the field, and can see myself doing more archaeology in the future!

Going forward, the six people that form the ossuary group, including myself, hope to publish our research from the project on calculating MNI using dentition, a method that has not been done before.

