

Nicole Lanzer

Diverse Educator AND Voice of Hope

For one longtime leader in the classroom, the decision to pursue a career in elementary education was certain as soon as she stepped on the UW-Eau Claire campus.

Sophomore Rachel Douglas not only dreams of inspiring young minds—the future teacher also plans on being a passionate promoter of diversity in the classroom. Douglas became one of 20 nationwide recipients of the prestigious Ronald McDonald House Charity Scholarship in 2014 as an incoming freshman. The judges certainly noticed Rachel's impressive application detailing her high school GPA, community service, and leadership, but it was her powerful essay describing the importance of diversity that really made her submission rise above the rest. Last summer, Douglas even had the opportunity to put her own words into practice, using her bilingual abilities to teach English to Spanish-speaking students in Guatemala.

Whether through words of diverse empowerment or songs of connection, Rachael's influence and impact have moved beyond the education department to nearly every corner of the university. Gifted musically from the time she was a little girl, Douglas now shares her singing talents as a voice in the Symphonic Choir and a musical leader in the on-campus Christian organization InterVarsity. Rachel is also a Resident Assistant and member of the University Honors Program, but despite her lengthy list of commitments, she remains dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and acceptance. And just as the multilingual student has shown through singing and her teaching experiences abroad, people can find common ground by sharing both language and song...and that's pretty powerful!