

Case statement excerpt, Humanist Community at Harvard

Savannah discovered the Hub prior to coming to Harvard, and by her first week on campus she knew she had found the support she needed. “I was so excited to see that, not only were there people who shared my belief system, but they were actively organized as a community. They were focusing on who we are and how we have an impact on the world, and how we make this a meaningful thing — it’s not just that we’re **not** something, but what **do** we believe?”

Savannah put her humanist values into action at the Humanist Hub and beyond. In 2015, she led the Hub’s annual interfaith meal-packing event, managing hundreds of volunteers in packaging and distributing 20,000 meals for food-insecure families. Savannah also proposed an orientation program for incoming Harvard freshmen from under-resourced high schools, to help their social adjustment and academic development at college. The program was initially rejected. Savannah fought for two years to get it off the ground. “Inclusion, access and equity were all humanist principles that drove me to do this,” she says. Savannah’s work inspired a program that Harvard will launch in 2018.

Savannah is particularly grateful for the Hub’s professional leadership. “Many of the organizations at Harvard are run by students, and it’s good to have adults who can give you guidance and wisdom,” she says. “At home, I had mostly seen adults who were very religious. It was like, ‘this is what you need to believe, and you should go to this college because they teach you Bible classes.’ Having a supportive mentor who’s a bit older, but who is open-minded about letting people figure things out for themselves, is really helpful.”