



Nicole Saunier - Fellow for 2011-2012



Name	Nicole Saunier
Born	January 28, 1989
Hometown	Ettingen, Canton of Basel Country
Major	B.A. in International Affairs (2011), University of St. Gallen
Languages	German, English, French, Russian
Interests	Horseback riding, snowboarding, hiking, music, politics

At the University of St. Gallen career fair the former Fellows Yvonne and Philip presented the Swiss-California Foundation and shared their memories with me. I realized that the Swiss-California Foundation does not just offer a job but an experience which allows the Fellow to develop valuable qualifications for his or her professional career. The possibility to realize one's own ideas regarding the management of the foundation provoked my interest. Furthermore, the Swiss-California Foundation operates at the nexus of business, economy and the public sector. This is exactly what I valued highly about my study program "International Affairs" at the University of St. Gallen. Correspondingly, I am aiming at a career in the field of public affairs or economic development and I want to take up a master's program at a European University that supports my career plans.

Having lived my entire life in Ettingen – a small village situated close to Basel – I was looking forward to settling in a new environment for my studies. I expected more of my stay in St. Gallen than purely studying. Hence, I joined the organizing team of an exchange project of the student body. This project consists of a one-week program in Switzerland and in the country of the partner university. Thereby a comprehensive insight into both cultures is provided to the participating students of both universities. During this voluntary assignment I gained fundamental working skills, experienced intensive team work and got in touch with business and political representatives. Moreover, I enjoyed the dialogue with international students and deepened my knowledge about foreign cultures.

My interest in international affairs developed when I was learning Russian at high school. Before I moved to St. Gallen I spent three months in Russia. The capability of speaking the local language provided a unique access to the country's population. Accordingly, I hope to further improve my English to experience a lively interaction with the people of Sonoma, as well as political and business leaders. Besides, I am looking forward to discovering California's lively cities and fascinating national parks as well as the beautiful landscape and wine culture of Sonoma County.

Thanks to your support I am the first Fellow to stay in California for 10 months. I am strongly appreciating your contribution to the Foundation and I will do my best to advance its development. In terms of the Swiss-California Foundation's ideal *bridging – exchanging – creating* I am looking forward to an inspiring and fruitful exchange with you.