

Report to the Olseth Family Foundation

Submitted by St. Olaf College, August 2026

Thank You!

Since 2015, the Olseth Family Foundation has generously supported Oles as they broaden their perspectives and learn about other places and cultures through international off-campus studies. You have provided \$660,000 in grants that have helped Oles with middle-to-high financial need access and complete study abroad as part of their St. Olaf experience. Thank you for this generous and critical support!

The following report details the impact the Olseth Family Foundation has made possible for Oles and our off-campus study program during this most recent grant year.

Impact

During our 2025-26 school year, the Olseth Family Foundation enabled 31 Oles from middle-income families to study abroad and take less in loans to do so. St. Olaf awarded \$65,550 in Olseth funds; \$5,500 unspent in FY25 was awarded to FY26 students in addition to the \$60,000 foundation payment this past year. Recipients and their programs include:

Barcelona SAE: Semester II

- Lydia Rand '28

CIEE January in Monteverde

- Mia Ransavage '28

Classical Studies in Italy

- Sahra-Marie Roberts '26
- Aaron Rutherford '26

Comparative Images of Wellness (Germany and Switzerland)

- Alayna Vogel '27

Contextual Opera Study Abroad (Europe)

- Jenna Hartz '27

Encountering China: Shanghai

- Jennifer Tsang '26
- Mia Stipkovits '28
- Jonathan Reeves '26

Environmental Sustainability Japan

- Jaimie Phan '26

Fiction in Florence

- Cora Harpel '26
- Ella Hansen '26
- Kalea Velasco '27

Innovation in New Zealand

- Ivy Ray '26

Italian Art in Context

- Madeline Saunders '26
- Ross Erstad '27

Kierkegaard in Copenhagen

- Jacob Schmidt '26
- Cael Roberts '26
- Samuel Ruttger '27
- Emily Schmiersal '28

Number Theory – Budapest

- Changmin Seo '26
- Nicholas Magnusson '26

Storytelling, Healing and Family (Australia/New Zealand)

- Lauren Knutson '26
- Karina Aguayo '26
- Alexia Jisa '27
- Jade Mac '27

Theater in London

- Tarin Vessey '27
- Juliet Stouffer '27

What is Europe? Three Cities Study

- Paavo Rundman '26
- Sofie Urberg-Carlson '26
- Mathea Benson '27

Other study abroad funding has allowed us to make significant gains in scholarship funding for students on semester or year-long programs. Yet the Olseth Family Foundation is one of the largest funding sources that we can use to help middle-income Oles participate in January Term programs. Last year, middle-

income students on average borrowed \$3,034 less overall because of the support they received for study-abroad.

These experiences remain meaningful for students and are considered a high-impact practice that strengthens learning and students' persistence through graduation. An Olseth recipient last year shared:

- *I grew up in Aurora, Colorado, a diverse and rapidly growing community where I was surrounded by stories that shaped my passion for helping others. I am deeply grateful to the donors who make financial aid and scholarships possible. Your generosity has allowed me to pursue my education at St. Olaf and fully engage in opportunities that have shaped both my academic and personal growth.*

Trends Over Time

Participation in study abroad by Oles overall continues to strengthen. Following a rate of 69.2% of the Class of 2025, I'm happy to report that 71% of the Class of 2026 studied abroad while at St. Olaf. This increase in participation continues to be driven by generous aid that we can offer students as well as the variety of programs offered to students during their time on campus.

In Fall 2025, St. Olaf launched a pilot to enable every student with a family income below \$300,000 to participate in a semester- or year-long study abroad program at the same cost as studying on campus. Support for January Term programs was tiered by need; high-need students had 50% of costs above campus study covered, mid-need 35%, low-need 25%, and no-need students received \$500. As a result of the pilot, 30% more students participated in semester-long programs, and 70% more from middle-income families participated in study abroad overall.

And in February 2026, St. Olaf College received a transformative \$20 million commitment from Louis and Mary Kay Smith to endow the Smith Center for Global Engagement. Their gift underwrites our pilot, making these commitments permanent, and adding resources to expand programs and develop new ones to reinforce our leadership and access.

Their commitment also enables us to focus on closing the cost gap for January Term study abroad experiences, which remain the most expensive for students and the college.

Conclusion

With you, we made great strides for Oles from middle-income families seeking cross-cultural learning, immersion, and ultimately a transformative experience they will take with them for the rest of their lives. Studying abroad is something that Oles never forget, and helps shape them into thoughtful and engaged global citizens.

Thank you for these important grant awards from the Olseth Family Foundation! You ensure we can continue to make international study an accessible and affordable part of a St. Olaf education.

Should you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Submitted by:

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