**Serena Baldwin**

*FSU legacy finds joy in promoting a fair and sustainable food system*

**Major**: Political Science and Sociology

**Graduation**: Fall 2017

By: Ali Buis, University Communications Intern

Florida State University senior Serena Baldwin always dreamed of being a Seminole.

The native of Orlando, Fla., was raised by an FSU alumnus, and once she attended her first football game, she knew her heart belonged to the garnet and gold.

“I was delighted by the iconic architecture and landscape of FSU’s campus, and my mind was made up,” Baldwin said.

For Baldwin, it was the right decision. She has excelled academically, while discovering a career path she is passionate about. A , she

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shined in the classroom, earning a ship in the But her experiences outside the classroom have helped her shape her future.

Baldwin was selected as a 2017 Social Science Scholar during her junior year, which presented her with an opportunity to do an internship with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont during the summer. This internship led her to an interest in the Real Food Challenge; a student-led food movement that leverages the power of youth and universities to create a healthy, fair and sustainable food system.

“This [Real Food Challenge] movement presented a perfect representation of how the goals of diverse food movements recognized the need to craft a common language, establish clear goals, and mobilize their efforts toward the real food system challenge,” Baldwin said.

The Real Food Challenge inspired Baldwin’s honor thesis, the Social Movement Manual. The primary goal of the movement is to shift existing university food budgets towards community-based, fair, ecologically sound and humane food sources — or “real food” — by 2020.

FSU has recently transitioned to a new dining provider, Sodexo, an institutional food service provider that signed a transparency agreement with the Real Food Challenge in 2013. This agreement set up a process for students to collaborate with Sodexo managers to collect and analyze purchasing data using the Real Food Calculator and accomplish the goals outlined in the campus commitment.

“I can only hope my experiences will have lasting effects on the Florida State community,” Baldwin said. “If I have genuinely improved the health and well-being of even one student, then I have been successful.”

An FSU IDEA grant allowed Baldwin to conduct research utilizing the framework of the social movement theory to better understand coalition building within the food movement. She presented her findings at the Undergraduate Research Showcase this fall.

Baldwin is grateful to Annette Schwabe, a faculty member in the department of sociology, for providing encouragement to challenge her academic abilities and pursue an honors thesis.

“It has been my pleasure to watch Serena skillfully integrate her classroom experience, thesis work, IDEA grant and Social Science Scholarship to create a complex and meaningful intervention program for enhancing the quality of our food systems,” Schwabe said. “Her intense level of engagement and leadership at FSU emanates from her uncommonly high degree of curiosity, strong work ethic and innovative thinking.”

Alongside her academic pursuits, Baldwin served as the marketing chair for TEDxFSU 2016 and PR chair for the College of Social Science and Public Policy. She is also heavily involved with the FSU Center for Health Advocacy and Wellness being a certified peer health educator and a member of FSU Healthy Noles.

Her interest in health and wellness led her to a part-time position as an administrative assistant at the center. This introduced her to The Body Project, where she facilitates and leads small peer groups focusing on body image.

“One of the most rewarding roles I’ve held at FSU is being a facilitator for The Body Project, a body-acceptance program that helps students resist pressures to conform to an ideal of thinness or muscularity,” Baldwin said. “It’s amazing to help students realize that body pressures affect us all in some way and then see their body image and confidence improve throughout the sessions.”

After graduation, Baldwin plans to pursue a graduate degree in food systems focusing on food and agricultural law and policy.

“Most people change their career five to seven times within their working life, so I’m not afraid to admit that I don’t have my future set in stone,” said Baldwin. “I plan on getting my master’s degree in food and agricultural policy, getting some work experience and potentially going back to school for a law degree.”

Baldwin has FSU to thank for introducing her to influential mentors, as well as two majors she is passionate about.

“FSU has certainly impacted my future ambitions, helped me become a better student and allowed me to hone in on what I want to do with my life,” Baldwin said. “Recognizing and remedying the failures of our current food system is crucial for achieving environmental and public health objectives, therefore I plan to dedicate my life and career to food system advocacy.”

**Related Links:**

[**FSU College of Social Science and Public Policy**](http://polisci.fsu.edu/)

[**Real Food Challenge**](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/programs)

[**FSU IDEA Grant**](http://cre.fsu.edu/students/idea-grants)

[**FSU Phi Eta Sigma**](http://www.fsuphietasigma.org/)

[**FSU Omicron Delta Kappa**](http://odk.org/circle/fsu/)

**Pull Quote:**

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