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LEEDS SCHOOL STUDENT NICOLE BAUM WINS \$25,000 GEOFFREY BEENE SCHOLARSHIP

A childhood case of insomnia resulted in the development of a jewelry company and now a \$25,000 Geoffrey Beene National Scholarship Award for Nicole Baum, a junior studying marketing and international business at the University of Colorado at Boulder's Leeds School of Business.



[View Video](#): *Nicole speaks on winning the scholarship, how she started in fashion and marketing, and all the great people and experiences along the way.*

Baum recently received one of four Geoffrey Beene National Scholarship Awards in a competition sponsored by the YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund for students who "have the potential to become future leaders in the apparel business."

"It was one of the best nights of my life," Baum said of the YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund Dinner in New York City where the top scholarships were announced. "I was really proud to be standing up on stage with the other three finalists who were fashion design majors from some of the best schools in the country." The other finalists attended the Rhode Island School of Design, Parsons The New School for Design and Philadelphia University.

The competition and awards dinner also provided Baum with professional networking and internship opportunities with some of the top firms in the fashion industry.

Baum said her interest in art and design began in childhood when insomnia often left her awake late at night creating jewelry and accessories to match the next day's outfit. She turned the craft into a custom design jewelry business called "Nico" when she developed a business plan and took out a loan as a high school senior in Rhode Island.

Photos of her silver and beaded jewelry, prints from a CU printmaking course and marketing postcards she created for a local jewelry designer served as her portfolio for her first YMA scholarship application in 2006, which resulted in a \$5,000 scholarship.

Last fall, Mary Banks, director of the Leeds School's Career Connections office, informed Baum that the YMA fund had new scholarships endowed by the Geoffrey Beene Foundation, and Baum applied.

For the competition, Baum and 24 other top students from across the country had to prepare a case study of the Gap which entailed extensive analysis of the company's finances, marketing strategies and merchandising spectrums, while taking into account the Gap's new target market and rising operation costs.

As part of Baum's research, Banks helped her contact two CU alumni: Evan Price, vice president of investor relations for the Gap Inc., and Chip Thompson, who works for Polo Ralph Lauren. They helped Baum better understand both the Gap and its competitors.

Baum then surveyed Gap customers in Colorado and London, where her boyfriend lives, and found that Gap customers were satisfied with pricing and styles but were less enamored of their shopping experience.

"The data helped me realize that what I really needed to capitalize on was the company's widespread brand recognition," Baum explained. "This also meant recreating the brand's 'fun bubble' which has long disintegrated since the days when you could spot your favorite celebrities in a Gap ad rocking out in their classic 1969 jeans."

She developed a 12-page business proposal for the Gap featuring a new branding campaign and logo. It earned Baum a trip to New York as one of eight finalists who would present their plans to a panel of industry leaders.

"Pitching my campaign was by far the best part of the project," Baum said. "I had been working on it for about three months, and I couldn't wait to get the judges involved, have them laughing and impress them with my branding campaign. I had so much fun doing this proposal because for the first time I was able to really apply the skills I learned in business courses."

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