

Wellesley Students' Aid Society Annual Celebration  
May 24, 2025

Speaker: Lauren Triolo DS'25

*Lauren Triolo is a recent alumna of Wellesley College, thousands of miles away from her home town of San Bernardino, California. She was the first in her family to attend college, beginning her journey at Columbia University in New York and ending it with a bang at Wellesley. As a Davis Scholar, Lauren studied Sociology, and spent countless discussions bringing her own lived experiences into conversation with theoretical texts in Pendleton East. Lauren hopes to find a career that is both impactful, and can sustain her Emotional Support Cat's expensive tastes.*

I want to thank you all for being here not only today, but every day of my Wellesley College career. My journey to and through Wellesley was long and arduous, but you made it possible.

I grew up in the deserts of Southern California, 90 miles east of Los Angeles and about 11 income brackets south of the town of Wellesley. From kindergarten onwards, I had a singular goal: Get into a good college, get a high-paying job, and lift my family out of generations of cyclical poverty. No pressure. In high school, I'd be on campus from 7am to 9pm, juggling an abhorrent amount of AP classes with numerous nerdy extracurriculars, desperate to pad my resume. On the weekends, instead of spending time with friends, I'd be working those same hours at my family's pizzeria, using the oven to flash-bake hundreds of cookies I was selling on the side to pay for SAT and ACT exams.

Needless to say, when I got my acceptance letter to a prestigious college in New York City, I was pretty much incoherent sobbing about it to my mother. I thought that was it.

Of course, as evidenced by me standing here as a recently minted Wellesley College alumna, we know that certainly wasn't it. When I decided to return to higher education, I knew I would be taking a risk — many risks, not least of which was a financial one. And while Wellesley offered a comprehensive aid package (one that I later learned was contributed to by WSAS), I knew one basic fact of life: Things happen, that's all they ever do.

And, they did happen. Only a couple of months after moving my entire life to Wellesley, I realized how sorely unprepared I was for a New England winter. It took some death defying footwork on the icy crosswalk on Washington Street to convince me to ask for help — and WSAS was there, waiting with a Winter Clothing Grant, as if they had known all along that I would slide myself into their office. When I showed up at the CVS on Linden and realized I didn't have enough in my bank account to cover my prescriptions, there was that email from WSAS in my inbox, reminding me of the Davis Scholar Lifeline Grant. "Lifeline" is definitely an apt title.

And WSAS continued to be there every time a new financial obstacle presented itself.

Language course require a \$100+ dollar license to submit homework? There's a grant for that. Emotional Support Cat needs more food/litter? There's an Amazon gift card waiting for you. Even when I shattered my four front teeth narrowly avoiding a classic Wellesley Driver, WSAS was ready to cover the \$8,400 dental bill with a \$5,000 grant and a short-term loan for the rest. And, when I lost my job and couldn't continue making payments on the loan, they were ready to forgive the remainder and afford me a peace of mind I hadn't felt in decades.

My story, while unique, is not atypical. Plenty of Wellesley students rely on and appreciate the financial support available through the Student's Aid Society. When I mentioned to friends that I would be speaking here today, each and every one of them told me a story where WSAS swooped in to the rescue, and to thank you all personally on their behalf. To express gratitude beyond what mere words can convey; to remind everyone here that your contributions mean something.

Without your support, I wouldn't be here today, smiling a fully in-tact smile. I cannot wait to give back to this organization that has given me so much. So, on behalf of myself, my colleagues, and everyone who has ever attended Wellesley College: Thank you so much for your support, we wouldn't be who we are without you.