I am pursuing a volunteering opportunity in Sendai, Japan with an organization called Archi-Aid. During my time there, I will most likely be participating in local workshops to prevent these catastrophes from happening again and helping to rebuild and design anti-disaster housing. This organization consults the affected communities first, then has architects and students come up with preventative and restorative measures to improve the survivors’ quality of life. The objectives of this program are “to build a multi-faceted platform to support regional reconstruction and development through an international network, to revive architectural education and development of a practical reconstruction service, and to accumulate and illuminate disaster knowledge”. I am passionate about helping Tohoku survivors and if anything I have learned in architecture school can make any amount positive change in their lives, I feel the need to help.

The skills that I have developed in studio will finally be put to real world use and can contribute to needy people in Tohoku. I also hope to utilize my ability to speak Japanese and English to help the organization. I believe that this program will allow me to see the more socially responsible side of architecture, in comparison to more conceptual processes that I have experienced in studio. While I love studio, I think forgets some very important factors of architecture, namely coordination and cooperation with diverse professionals to ultimately create a building. While form and aesthetics can be pivotal in architecture, I think that the classroom never teaches people how to lead or coordinate change. Typically in architecture, the client wants to create a building that is beautiful or comfortable, but when the client is homeless and needs architecture to survive, what are the priorities of design? These are some of the questions that I cannot have answered in the setting of the classroom. The Archi-Aid program creates actual change by spreading knowledge and new housing to regional communities and teaching
architects and students disaster-preventive design. I think that this program will make me focus on what matters most in architecture: the people who occupy it and optimization of design solutions that improve quality of life. My hope is that through this experience, I will become a more sustainably and socially minded architect.

From a very young age, I knew that I wanted to become an architect. But during these last two years, my dream has focused more on working in Japan as an architect. I believe that Japanese architecture is among the finest in the world and I want to dedicate my life learning their design methods. This scholarship will allow me to increase my exposure to Japan and pursue my dream of practicing architecture in Japan.

The disaster in Tohoku was particularly close to my heart. Most of my extended family were directly affected by the disaster and one of my friends’ homes was washed away. Japan is almost like my second home and ever since I was a child, I have often visited my grandparent’s house. When I was previously interning in Japan, we entered a competition for a school and housing multi-use building for the survivors of Tohoku. The focus was not so much on aesthetic design, but on measures to prepare for another disaster. Some of the precautions were building a safe house on the summit of a nearby mountain and creating floodgates that could deal with future tsunamis. It was an interesting change to see a socially responsible design processes and I think it would be a major benefit for my education to be actively participating in it. If I receive this scholarship, I think I will be able to contribute positively to the Tohoku area and take back the lessons I learned from Archi-Aid to America.
Travel Itinerary

March 1st: Applied to Archi-Aid as volunteer worker.

March 21st: Volunteer Position Selection announced

July 10th: Arrive at Narita International Airport, take train to Sendai.

July 10th –August 10th: Volunteer in program

August 11th: Fly back to LAX