



GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
NEWS RELEASE

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GFOA Awards 2022 Scholarships

(Chicago, Illinois – April 5, 2022) Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) has announced the recipients of its 2022 scholarships. GFOA's mission is to promote excellence in state and local government financial management and the awarding of scholarships is one of the ways GFOA accomplishes its mission.

The recipient of the ***\$20,000 Goldberg-Miller Public Finance Scholarship*** is **Cynthia Bankston**.

- **Cynthia Bankston** currently serves as the controller of St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office (STPSO) in Louisiana. Prior to joining STPSO, she was an auditor with a regional accounting firm focusing primarily on audits of non-profits and local government entities. Cynthia enjoys giving back to her community through volunteering, serving on boards/committees, and being an active participant and advocate for the foster care system. She cherishes spending time with family, traveling, and watching her children grow and progress. Cynthia is pursuing a Master's in Public Administration degree with the University of Louisiana at Monroe in order to allow her to better lead and serve the public sector.

The recipients of the two awards for the ***Frank L. Greathouse Government Accounting Scholarship*** are **Sharon Suggs** and **Talia Smith**. Each will receive **\$10,000**.

- **Sharon Suggs** began her career with City of Myrtle Beach in October 2017 as a payroll technician and was promoted to financial analyst in May 2020. Previously, Sharon worked for a local CPA firm for more than seventeen years and graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Accounting degree from Horry Georgetown Technical College in December 2020. She is currently attending

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Grand Canyon University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Accounting degree with the intention of graduating in August 2023. Her goal after graduation is to continue serving the City of Myrtle Beach in the Financial Management and Reporting department while enhancing her knowledge of processes to assist in being promoted to a senior financial analyst.

- **Talia Smith** serves as strategic projects manager in the County Administrator's Office in Marin County, California. In her current role, in addition to her previous position with the City of San Rafael, she has directly managed and overseen budgets ranging from \$100k/year Assessment Districts to Health and Human Services' \$250m budget. Talia is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Policy from the UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy, where her focus is on improving the management of public dollars, primarily involving state and federal funds spent at the local level. With the degree, she aims to continue making government work better for the people it serves—by efficiently prioritizing limited resources.

The recipient of the **\$10,000 Minorities in Government Finance Scholarship** is **Victoria Lim**.

- **Victoria Lim** has served as senior accountant/auditor at the County of Orange, California, since May 2018. Victoria holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an Accounting emphasis from California State University, Fullerton; she is also a CPA. Victoria is currently pursuing an MBA from the University of California, Irvine. She plans to graduate in June 2024. Victoria's career goal is to hold an executive position within the County of Orange to utilize the knowledge and acumen she has gained to serve her colleagues and community.

The recipients of the four awards for the **Government Finance Professional Development Scholarship** are **Jon Beckmann, Audrey Danek, James Pounders, and April Weller**. Each will receive **\$10,000**.

- **Jon Beckmann** is superintendent of finance and administration at the Waukegan Park District in Illinois. Jon is working on a Master's of Data Analytics degree with a focus in Accounting and Process Improvement. He plans to use the degree to make an impact on future challenges in local government to leave a positive lasting impact in his hometown. His wife and two children are his biggest supporters to attaining this degree.

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- **Audrey Danek** works as financial analyst for the City of Allentown, Pennsylvania. She began working with the city as an intern after having completed her Master's degree. Audrey is currently pursuing her Doctorate of Public Administration with a concentration in Geography and Planning from West Chester University in Pennsylvania. She plans to use her degree to promote long-term and sustainable economic development and financial policies to address future challenges in the public sector.
- **James Pounders** has served as state debt analyst with the Louisiana Department of Treasury since 2019, providing complex financial analysis regarding state and local projects. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance degree from Harding University and is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Data Analytics at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. James desires to leverage his studies to provide meaningful analysis and interpretation of data sets to decision makers. Following completion of school, James intends to continue working for the benefit of a state or local government entity and the community where he lives. In his off time, James enjoys spending time outside with his family and friends and working as a volunteer with his church's youth group.
- **April Weller** is the billing supervisor for the City of St Louis Park, Minnesota. She is currently attending the University of Minnesota Mankato and pursuing a Master's degree in Accounting. April's goal after graduation is to keep advancing professionally and one day become finance director for a municipality.

The recipients of two awards for the ***Jeffrey L. Esser Career Development Scholarship*** are **Jessica Isley and Carrie Marckess**. Each will receive \$7,500.

- **Jessica Isley** recently accepted a new position as financial manager at Clifton Water District in Clifton, Colorado. Previously, Jessica worked as finance accountant with Mesa County Valley School District 51 in Grand Junction, Colorado. She is currently studying Accounting at Western Governors University based in Salt Lake City, Utah, and plans to graduate in June 2024. After graduation, Jessica's goal is to continue a career in governmental accounting and possibly obtain a Master's degree in Governmental Accounting.
- **Carrie Marckess** is an accountant for the City of Rolling Meadows, a suburb of Chicago. She is completing a Bachelor's in Accounting degree from the University of Minnesota. After finishing the degree requirements in spring 2022, Carrie plans to continue her education by seeking a minor in Management and gaining enough credits to sit for the CPA exam with the goal of becoming a finance director one day.

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For more information about GFOA's scholarships, please contact Gen Carter, senior consultant, at gcarter@gfoa.org.

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Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources, and practical research for more than 21,000+ members and the communities they serve.