Liyu Woldemichael will graduate this May with a major in Public Policy and a minor in African and African American Studies. Through her time at Duke, she has distinguished herself in the dimensions of selflessness, generosity of service, character and integrity.

Liyu was nominated by five individuals including her advisor, the Director of the Baldwin Scholars program, Dr. Colleen Scott. Other nominators include instructors and program advisors excited to celebrate her unwavering contributions. Alec Greenwald, staff advisor to the Duke chapter of the NAACP, wrote, “Liyu has emerged as the most dynamic, courageous, and imaginative student-leader I have ever had the privilege of working with.” She is resoundingly described as respected and well-liked, and acknowledged for providing remarkable contributions to her community within and beyond the university.

Liyu is from Montgomery, Alabama, a place of significance in America’s civil rights movement. She has been immersed in justice and equity causes and is a thoughtful, yet demanding activist. She grew up in the church, and her growing relationship with and respect for the land is tethered strongly with her sense of religion and spirituality. She has traveled with DukeEngage to support environmental justice in Hawai’i, she has provided communications support for the League of Conservation Voters, and has executed a public lands project addressing racially and culturally insensitive placenames through the Southern Environmental Law Center. Liyu’s scholastic efforts have critically reimagined the intersection of land use and justice, evidenced by her senior thesis, “Carcerality as a Climate Crisis: Alabama’s Incarcerated Population & the Prison-to-Pollution Pipeline,” for which she was awarded highest distinction.

At Duke, Liyu has been an energetic and selfless leader. A member of the highly competitive Baldwin Scholars program, she led the expansion of student campus involvement and inspired the very best from her peers. Liyu has provided significant leadership for the Duke Chapter of the NAACP, where she started as co-chair of the health care committee and coordinated bi-weekly STI testing for students. She is celebrated for her transformational leadership within the Duke chapter of the NAACP, where she is now completing her second term as President. Liyu also serves as a dedicated writing coach to her peers, supports Durham residents through the Community Empowerment Fund, and serves insightfully on Duke’s Racial Equity Advisory Council.

Liyu’s mixture of positive energy, thoughtfulness, and demanding expectations has contributed significantly to Duke, Durham, and the greater society. She has endeared herself to classmates and professors, advisors and fellow leaders. Duke University is proud to name Liyu Woldemichael as the student recipient of the 2022 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award. She truly is deserving of high commendation for her heartfelt and impactful service.