

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



# Washington's Cassie Strickland wins the 2015 Senior CLASS Award<sup>®</sup> for women's volleyball

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (December 17, 2015) – University of Washington libero Cassie Strickland has been selected as the 2015 Senior CLASS Award<sup>®</sup> winner in NCAA<sup>®</sup> Division I women's volleyball. The award, chosen by a nationwide vote of Division I volleyball coaches, national volleyball media and fans, is given annually to the most outstanding senior student-athlete in Division I volleyball. To be eligible for the award, a student-athlete must be classified as an NCAA Division I senior and have notable achievements in four areas of excellence: classroom, community, character and competition.

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*<sup>®</sup>, the Senior CLASS Award focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their platform in athletics to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities. A model student-athlete both on and off the volleyball court, Strickland is a three-time Academic All-Pac 12 honoree who earned 2014 Pac 12 Libero of the Year honors in just her first season in the position before going on to earn AVCA All-America honors as a senior.

"I'm extremely honored to receive this award," said Strickland, a four-year starter for the Huskies. "Being a student-athlete is one of the hardest balancing acts out there. Here at the University of Washington I learned how to balance my school, sport and social life with help from my coaches and teammates, and from the demands that my schedule placed on me. The networking I was exposed to here with academic advisors and alumni gave me incentive to strive to be the best I could be in all aspects of my life."

After starting at outside hitter for her first two seasons, Strickland switched to libero in 2014 as a junior and made an immediate impact, becoming one of the top liberos in the country. This season, along with her AVCA All-America honors, Strickland was named to the All-Pacific North Region and All-Pac 12 teams while also setting the school record for sets played (462) and helping her team to a share of the Pac 12 Title. As part of the winningest class in Husky volleyball history, Strickland also led her team to 117 victories in her career, including those earned in UW's trip to the 2013 Final Four and this year's Elite Eight.

"I can't even count how many people come up to me and tell me that Cassie is their hero," said Head Coach Keegan Cook. "Hundreds of young women look up to Cassie, and having a player like her for an inspiration can make a huge difference in an athlete's life. Cassie has a unique combination of passion, humility and focus in every phase of her life, and I'm excited to see where she goes from here. I expect her to continue to lead in her community, her family and her chosen profession."

Also a standout in the classroom, Strickland has maintained a 3.21 GPA entering her senior year. As an anthropology major, she demonstrated her commitment to her future career by participating in a study abroad trip to Tahiti to study the effects of colonization

on communities. While there, she also taught at volleyball and basketball clinics, and she one day hopes to use her experience in her father's homeland of Samoa by using athletics to empower the country's native children.

"One of the biggest lessons I'm going to take with me from my experience here is appreciating what life gives you," said Strickland, the first student-athlete from the University of Washington to win a Senior CLASS Award. "Sometimes as student-athletes we allow ourselves to expect to be treated to things instead of appreciating what we are being given. Because of the people I am surrounded by here, I am reminded to be thankful for everything I have, and, in turn, it makes me want to give back in any way that I can to my family, friends, and community."

Known by teammates and coaches as a fearless player with endless energy, Strickland models her strength of character by being a positive, encouraging teammate and caring for others on her campus and in her community. In addition to athletics and academics, Strickland makes community outreach a priority by participating in local Coins for Kids fundraisers and community clean-up projects.

"On behalf of everyone associated with the Senior CLASS Award, we congratulate Cassie on being selected as this year's winner for women's volleyball," said Erik Miner, executive director for the Senior CLASS Award. "She has modeled excellence and perseverance on and off the court, and her desire to make a positive impact on others makes her a wonderful model for others to follow."

For more information, visit [seniorCLASSaward.com](http://seniorCLASSaward.com).

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#### **First-Team All-Americans**

Morgan Bergren, Kentucky  
Jordan Burgess, Stanford  
Paige Neuenfeldt, North Carolina  
Amanda Orchard, Pittsburgh  
Cassie Strickland, Washington

#### **Second-Team All-Americans**

Kierra Holst, Oklahoma  
Molly McCage, Texas  
Taylor Morey, Wisconsin  
Shelby Sullivan, Texas A&M  
Nicole Walch, Florida State

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#### **ABOUT THE AWARD**

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: community, classroom, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for

college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards a senior season can bring. Premier Sports Management manages the award.

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