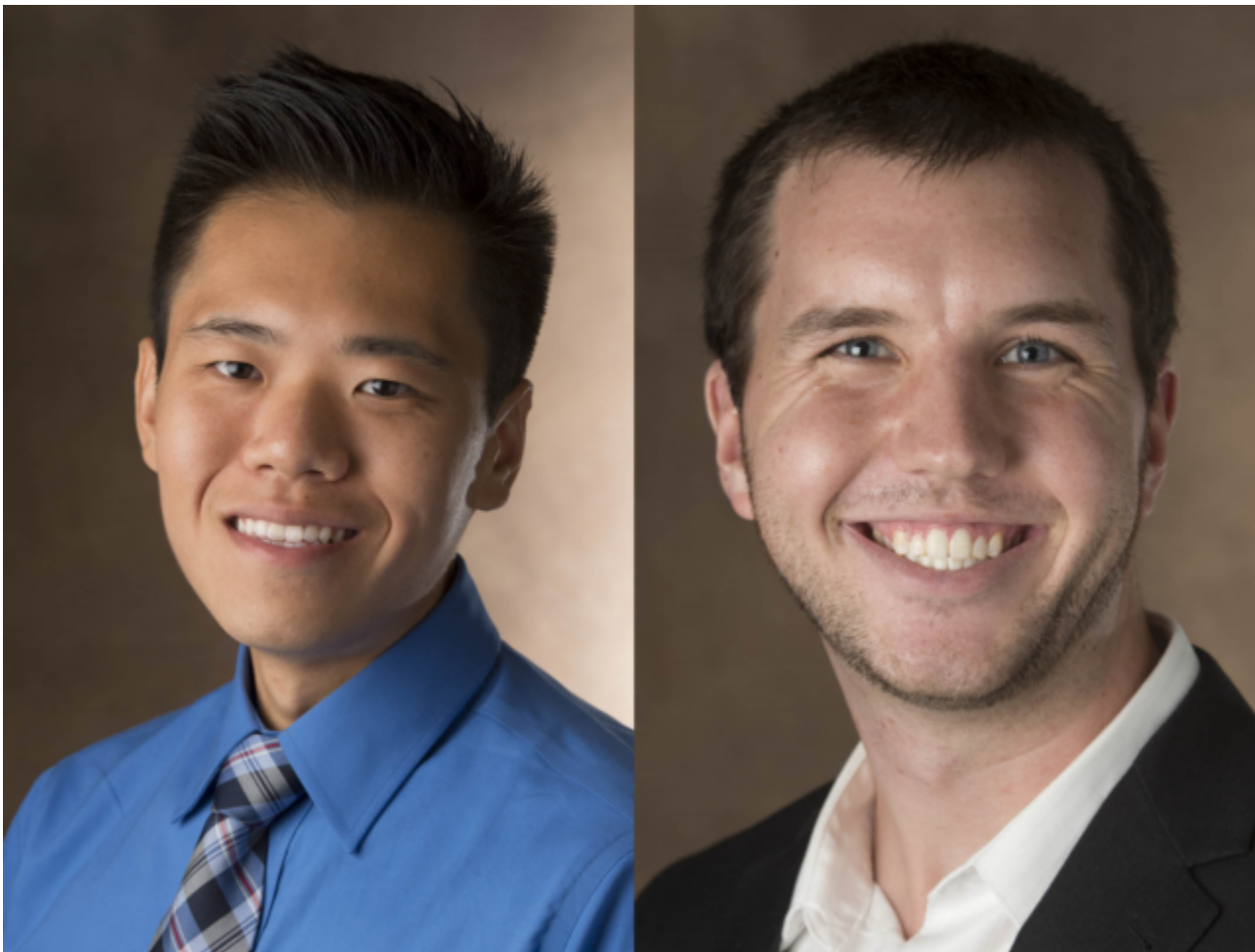


SIU Dental Medicine students receive ISDS scholarships

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Illinois State Dental Society (ISDS) Foundation has selected two Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) students Spencer Blackham and Sonny Song for \$3,000 scholarship awards.

Fourth year dental student Blackham is from Palatine, and he received the David C. Shapiro Memorial Scholarship for senior dental students. Mount Vernon native Song, a third year dental student, is the recipient of the Paul W. Clopper Scholarship Grant for junior dental students.

The Shapiro scholarship is available to two dental students who will be seniors in the fall 2016 semester. It is based on academic and clinical excellence, as well as financial need, student activities and community involvement. The scholarship memorializes Dr. Shapiro's civic leadership and dedication to the dental profession.



Throughout his four years at the SDM, Blackham has been involved in the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) and currently serves as president. He created an Employment Opportunity Fair for third and fourth year students in order to assist them in transitioning to private practice.

During 2015-16, he worked with the SDM administration to expand the research day and vendor fair to showcase student achievements in research. He is developing a second student newsletter focused on research within the SDM to accompany the ASDA Amalgamator, which comes out in the spring.

Within the community level, Blackham volunteers with a local Boy Scouts of America troop. He teaches the youth at his local church twice weekly and encourages their development. Being able to work with adolescents during his time at the SDM solidified his decision to pursue a career in orthodontics.

“The award helped fund the expenses incurred with my orthodontic applications, and thus allowed me to pursue my goals and aspirations,” Blackham said. “Reflecting on and sharing my thoughts regarding the current state of live-patient licensure exams as part of the application process was a great opportunity. I am incredibly grateful for those who have made this scholarship possible.”

The Clopper scholarship is available to three dental students who will be juniors in the fall 2016 semester. It is based on academic and clinical excellence as well as financial need, student activities and community involvement. The scholarship memorializes the civic leadership and dedication to the dental profession of Dr. Clopper, the founder of the ISDS Foundation.



“I am incredibly grateful, humbled and honored to receive the Clopper Scholarship,” Song said. “Aside from the financial benefits it provides, receiving this scholarship has inspired me to further pursue my passions in a field that I thoroughly enjoy and most importantly, to continue actively giving back to those in my community.”

During his time at the SDM, Song cites his most rewarding experiences as being with the community dentistry department, namely Give Kids A Smile Day, and outreach programs at local schools. These initiatives not only provided free dental care and education to underserved children in the southern Illinois region, but also the unique opportunity to connect with the community as a whole and make a lasting impression. Song has served on SDM’s student council as a liaison between students and faculty to conceive, plan and bring projects to fruition for the betterment of the dental school community and clinic, as well as the profession as a whole.

In 2016, the ISDS Foundation expects to award \$18,000 in scholarships to qualified dental students, who are succeeding academically and have committed themselves to community involvement. The funds are focused on the programs of Illinois’ three dental schools: SIU SDM, University of Illinois College of Dentistry in Chicago and Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine – Illinois in Downers Grove.

It is through generous donor support that the ISDS Foundation is able to continue to provide financial assistance for exemplary dental students who will become tomorrow’s leaders of organized dentistry.

ISDS Foundation’s mission is to improve the oral health of children, families and individuals throughout the state by supporting initiatives that expand access to care, and increase dental health education and awareness. Additionally, the Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the dental profession through special programs and services benefiting Illinois dental students and dentists. No state or federal funding is received.

[The SIU School of Dental Medicine](#) students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at its patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.