

SIU SDM students recognized for meritorious achievement

June 8 2017 10:47 AM





EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine has honored two students for their significant contributions to research and emerging leadership in the profession and community.

Fourth-year student Joshua Welborn, of Harrisburg, earned The Odontographic Society of Chicago Dr. Irwin B. Robinson Student-Researcher Award for 2017. Kevin Wolf, of Springfield, a third-year student, achieved the Oral Health Foundation Pierre Fauchard Academy Scholarship for 2017.

“It is important that we publicly acknowledge students who set themselves apart by going beyond what is required in their program,” said Bruce Rotter, DMD, dean of the SIU SDM. “Dentistry is a dynamic profession which is evidence-based. Josh’s immersion into his research and Kevin’s strong commitment to impactful outreach activities have not only distinguished them among their colleagues, but also positioned them for the future practice of dentistry.”

The Odontographic Society of Chicago Research and Education Foundation presents its annual award to one student-researcher from each Illinois College of School of Dentistry in recognition of their research efforts during their dental education.

Under the mentorship of Anita Joy, BDS, PhD, associate professor and director of the SIU SDM Office of Research, Welborn has evaluated the role of a specific cellular signaling pathway that plays an important role during the progression of cancers, especially oral and salivary gland cancers.

“I was incredibly surprised and honored to receive this award,” Welborn said. “Research is important in allowing us to best treat our patients. Our specific area of research could one day help diagnose a potentially deadly disease much earlier than currently possible.”

“Joshua Welborn has been one of the most hard-working and self-motivated students I have had the privilege to work with,” Joy said. “Pursuing research adds another level of experiential learning to the dental curriculum that is so often underestimated. It provides opportunities to think through a question or problem, troubleshoot ideas, identify mistakes, and eventually come up with answers, solutions or improved methodologies.

“It’s even more rewarding that these efforts by our students, under the able mentorship of our faculty members, are ultimately geared toward improving patient care, well-being and overall health.”

Wolf's \$1,000 scholarship recognizes his great potential for developing into an outstanding leader in the profession because of his participation in the university, dental school or community. Wolf earned a bachelor's in biological sciences from the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences in 2014.

"The SIU School of Dental Medicine is extremely focused on community outreach, and I have participated in events such as Give Kids a Smile Day, the Special Olympics and outreach programs at various schools in the Alton area to promote oral health and wellness," Wolf said. "The School has provided me with an experience of a lifetime, and from these experiences I have learned that dentistry is a team effort. Everyone in the dental field works together to provide the best care possible to our patients, both through treatment and education."

"Everyone in my class is hard-working and dedicated to their education," he added. "To be selected from that group to receive this scholarship was a humbling experience. I am grateful for the opportunity to practice dentistry for the rest of my life."

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.