

SIU School of Dental Medicine students honored as Dean's Scholars

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ALTON - The Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) has honored four distinguished students with its annual Dean's Scholarship.

Recipients include Tanner Brown, of Bethalto, Brandon Cesario, of Naperville, Jordan Ha, of Bloomington, and Kelsie Vandergriff, of Granite City. Each has been awarded \$5,000 for the 2018-19 academic year.

The Dean's Scholarship was created with the goal of rewarding academic merit, assisting with financial need and increasing student diversity at the SIU SDM.

"I am certain these outstanding students will make significant contributions to the field of dentistry and the communities they serve upon completion of their doctor of dental medicine degrees," said SIU SDM Dean Bruce Rotter, DMD.

"Our alumni, faculty and friends have contributed to secure funding for this scholarship," he added. "We appreciate their continued belief in our high-quality dental students who strive to make a tremendous impact in dentistry."

The Dean's Scholars noted their humble appreciation of the award. Each says it has further motivated them as they work toward degree completion.

"It is an honor to be recognized among my outstanding colleagues," said Vandergriff. "I appreciate the time and effort that the School of Dental Medicine puts into recognizing and supporting its students, as well as the generous contributors who make these scholarships possible."

Upon graduation, Vandergriff plans to work as an associate in general dentistry and some day open her own practice.

"The funding provided by this scholarship allows me to participate more fully in continuing my education, which will provide knowledge in new technology and advances in dental medicine," she said.

In addition to continuing his education, Ha is interested and involved in dental mission efforts.

"This scholarship has already helped with my professional growth and served to benefit hundreds of people in need," he explained. "After my schooling, I am open to any opportunity to use my education in a meaningful manner to satisfy my pursuit of happiness."

The scholarship monies have inspired Cesario to continue to go the extra mile in everything he does.

“After completing my degree, I would initially like to participate in dental outreach events such as Mission of Mercy or the clinic onsite at Willow Creek Church,” Cesario said. “While at the SIU School of Dental Medicine, I have learned the immense need for dental care in communities no matter their size or income level. There always seems to be someone in greater need.”

Brown intends to pay it forward by supporting others through scholarships, as donors have done for him.

“This reminds me how impactful giving a scholarship can be,” he said. “Some day, when I am in the position to give back, I will.

He plans to provide dental care close to home upon completing his degree.

“My family has been through a lot, and we have had a great deal of help from people in and around my hometown,” he explained. “There are countless families that have supported ours, and I would like to be in a position to help others in return.”

The Dean’s Scholarship Award is largely supported through the SIU SDM’s annual Dean’s Scholarship Gala. The 2018 gala will be held on Saturday, Oct. 13 at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch.

[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.