



SIUE School of Pharmacy Grad Among Nationally-Selected Walmart Scholars

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – Having just completed a doctorate in pharmacy and serving as Class of 2020 student speaker for the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy (SOP) May commencement ceremony, Austin Dillon, PharmD, of Dixon,

has added another feather to his cap as a 2020 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Walmart Scholar.

The AACP Walmart Scholars Program provides a \$1,000 scholarship to 65 student-faculty pairs from AACP member institutions to support registration and other meeting expenses for students to attend the AACP Annual Meeting and Seminars. Dillon and his SOP faculty mentor Beth Cady, PharmD, BCPS, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice, will attend two days' worth of professional development sessions during the virtual meeting running from July 13-31.

According to Cady, the award is intended for learners who are interested in pursuing a career in pharmacy academia, but the scholarship is not limited to pharmacy students, making it highly-competitive.

"The amount of qualifications that any typical applicant possesses is outstanding," Cady said. "I would argue, both as a former Walmart Scholar and previous applicant evaluator, that it's harder for pharmacy students to receive the scholarship, simply because they have fewer years of experience than a pharmacy resident or fellow."

"That's what makes this award so special for Austin," she continued. "It highlights his exceptional skills at such a young age, and his strong desire, backed by a tangible plan to pursue a career in academia. This scholarship will introduce him to not only the pharmacy academy, but also provide the tools to become a more effective pharmacy educator."

Dillon noted his excitement to represent the SOP on a national level, and his appreciation for the SOP's unique pharmacy education specialization that allowed development of his interest in teaching in conjunction with his clinical training through the doctorate program.

"Mentors like Dr. Cady allowed me to develop as a professional and stressed the importance of also developing on a personal level," Dillon said. "Although this is a rigorous professional program, Dr. Cady and others helped me not lose sight of what was most important. There are countless individuals I would like to thank for helping me get to this point. The entire staff at the SIUE SOP had a part in my journey, and I can't wait to use this opportunity as a jumping-off point to make my alma mater proud."

In July, Dillon will begin a PGY1 Pharmacy Residency at Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) St. John's Hospital in Springfield. His mentor/mentee relationship with Cady will continue as she is employed at the same hospital.

“In my biased opinion, this is the perfect place for Austin to continue to develop his teaching skills while becoming an even better pharmacist,” Cady said. “I can’t wait to see where Dr. Dillon’s career takes him, because he is going to be a fantastic teacher. His students don’t know what they’re in for!”

Today’s pharmacists improve patients’ lives through the medication and education they provide. Dedicated to developing a community of caring pharmacists, the SIUE School of Pharmacy curriculum is a model that offers students a unique combination of classroom education, research, community service and patient care. The School of Pharmacy’s areas of excellence include a drug design and discovery core; pediatric practice; chronic pain research and practice; and diabetes research and practice. As the only downstate Illinois pharmacy doctorate program, the SIUE School of Pharmacy is providing highly trained pharmacists prepared for the rapidly changing healthcare environment.