

UT boasts three Goldwater Scholars

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Three UT students recently received the Goldwater Scholarship, a prestigious honor for students pursuing careers in mathematics, engineering and natural sciences.

“This is the best UT has ever done. These are terrific young people. They can do what they do because they are terrific and because they have our absolute best faculty wanting to help them only for the reward of watching them succeed,” said Christopher Craig, director of the college scholars program.

It is not typical for all four of the university’s national applicants to do as well as they have this year, Craig said.

Brad O’Dell, junior in college scholars focusing on structural chemistry, is one of the scholarship recipients.

O’Dell currently works in a carbohydrate chemistry lab, researching synthetic physical and organic chemistry. He is from Newport, Tenn., and after graduating from UT, he plans to attend graduate school in chemistry.

Jamie Troupe, junior in college scholars majoring in animal behavior and learning, also won.

“I was really excited and shocked and I couldn’t wait to tell the people who had really helped me to get it. So I jumped up out of class and took off and made a beeline for the director of my major’s office,” Troupe said.

Troupe has completed two research projects already, both in spider behavior, which is also the topic of her current research project. She is from Tullahoma, Tenn., and plans to get a doctorate in conservation biology and become a professor.

The third scholarship winner is Casey Williams, sophomore in college scholars majoring in medicinal and synthetic organic chemistry.

“Sophomores rarely get it because they typically like to pick juniors,” Williams said. “It’s less money to commit to one person, but I feel honored to get it as a sophomore. The money’s not really the reason you apply for it. Whenever you’re going to graduate school, it’s a really nice thing to be able to say that you’re a Goldwater Scholar because it shows that you had a really promising undergraduate career and (have) shown some potential to do the type of work that graduate schools like to see.”

Williams is currently doing research in the chemistry department involving diseases, more specifically, discovering drugs with specific applications. He is from Kingsport, Tenn., and would like to attend graduate school and do postdoctoral work before becoming a professor and full-time researcher.

“I really like teaching people, especially the more advanced material and I like doing the research a lot. Also, I’m interested in writing science for the public. I like communicating a lot of scientific ideas to a more general audience because it can be kind of thick and not make a lot of sense but it can be easily broken down,” Williams said.

A fourth UT student received an honorable mention for the scholarship. Elizabeth Jacobs is a junior in college scholars majoring in solid state chemistry and condensed-matter physics.

The Goldwater Scholarship provides a maximum of \$7,500 per year, based on need, for educational purposes, according to the Goldwater Scholarship Web site.

Applicants must apply at the university level, where up to four applications can be sent to the national board for review. In 2008, more than 1,000 sophomores and juniors were nominated and 321 were chosen, according to the scholarship's Web site.

Formed in 1986 in honor of Sen. Barry M. Goldwater, the Goldwater Scholarship has awarded more than 5,500 students \$54 million.

According to the scholarship Web site, other schools with three recipients and one honorable mention include Harvard University, MIT, Princeton and Duke.