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Three UWF chemistry students receive National American Chemical Society scholarships, named ACS Scholars for 2016-17

Pensacola, Fla. – Aug. 22, 2016 – Three students from the University of West Florida Department of Chemistry were recently selected to join the National American Chemical Society Scholars Program. A total of 12 UWF students have been named ACS Scholars since 2013, receiving more than \$100,000 in renewable scholarship funds.

“The success of UWF students in the ACS Scholars program is a direct result of the students’ hard work and our departmental mentoring and advising efforts,” said Dr. Karen Molek, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. “It is absolutely a group effort by all of our students and faculty.”

De’Zhanae McCall-Butler, Constance Smylie and Aaron Mena were awarded scholarships of up to \$3,000 each and invited to join the prestigious ACS Scholars program, which encourages students to maintain high academic standards and work with a mentor to ensure success in the field of chemical sciences following graduation.

McCall-Butler, a sophomore biochemistry major, received a \$3,000 scholarship for the 2016-17 academic year. A member of the UWF Chemistry Club, UWF Chemistry Scholars Program and Phi Eta Sigma National Honors Society, she said the award will not only allow her to focus on her studies and research without having to worry about finances for the upcoming school year, but will also provide valuable educational and professional development opportunities.

“Being in the ACS Scholars program alone is beneficial to my academic career because I will have many opportunities I wouldn’t have otherwise, like being mentored by professionals in the chemistry field,” she said. “Being an ACS Scholar also motivates me to work and study harder to meet the standards set by predecessors.”

Smylie, a sophomore biochemistry major, was awarded \$2,000. She said she is looking forward to the experiences she will gain through the ACS Scholars program that will prepare her for her future career as an MD/PhD physician scientist with research interests in pharmacology and molecular sciences.

“The ACS Scholars program will enable me to expand my network and gain diverse experiences through my participation on projects with individuals in different specialties,” she said. “It will also allow me to become more knowledgeable in my field, further impacting my future.”

Mena, a senior chemistry major, received a \$1,000 scholarship for his last year as an undergraduate. For the current research assistant, UWF Chemistry Scholar and tutor, and president of the UWF Chemistry Club, becoming an ACS Scholar is one more achievement to add to an undergraduate education characterized by success.

“I was most interested in becoming an ACS Scholar for the program’s emphasis on promoting diversity in sciences,” he said. “It’s something I’ve really focused on during my time at UWF. As a Latino, I want opportunities to be open to all ethnicities. I also want there to be diversity across the fields. This year, I’ve opened the Chemistry Club up to students in any science, technology, engineering or math field, because I believe we all have something to learn from each other.”

The ACS Scholars program was established in 1994 to attract African-American, Hispanic and American-Indian students considered underrepresented in the chemical sciences by the National Science Foundation to pursue careers in the field. The program also aims to help build awareness of the value and rewards associated with careers in chemistry and assist students in acquiring skills and credentials needed for success.

For additional information about the ACS Scholars program, visit www.acs.org. To learn more about the UWF Department of Chemistry, visit www.uwf.edu/chemistry.

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See attached photo of Constance Smylie, left, De'Zhanae McCall-Butler, middle, and Aaron Mena, right, in the UWF chemistry lab.