

Bright Futures

Hamel Scholars' success continues far beyond the mortar-board toss of graduation

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Alana Gudinas '20 was named a Goldwater Scholar. Jaclyn Weier '10 earned her doctorate in cancer biology and molecular therapeutics from Dartmouth. Eden Suoth '18 was a finalist for a Rhodes Scholars award. Cory McKenzie '15 was named a Carnegie Junior fellow, and Katherine Rocci '17 has been published in the international Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics scientific journal and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in ecology.

While those are impressive achievements for these individual students, even more impressive is that amid the cohort of Hamel Scholars at UNH, they are the norm and not the exception.

For the past 13 years, the Hamel Scholars Program has offered generous scholarships and an engaging undergraduate experience to the Granite State's best and brightest students. At the same time, it's served as a springboard for those scholars to earn national grants and fellowships, pursue advanced degrees and find professional success long after graduation.

That Hamel Scholars are achieving success far beyond the UNH campus ties back to founding donor Dana Hamel's philosophy about his philanthropy — that the ROI on investing in students is not just what they'll achieve at UNH, but what they'll go on to accomplish in life.

"The advantage of investing in scholarships is that it's good for the life of the students. You invest in four years, but the rewards come back over the next 60, 70, 80 years" of their lifetimes, Hamel says.

Part of that lifetime of success is the program's task force model, whereby students organize themselves into teams based on their research interests and, as Catherine Peebles, director of the University Honors Program, which houses the Hamel Program, says, "the change they want to see in the world." Task force areas of focus include environmental issues, mental health stigma, addiction, medical access, financial well-being and more.

Peebles says being academically talented is a key factor in a student's admission to the program, but so is genuine passion and demonstrated action and leadership.

"What we recognize in these Hamel Scholars is that they want to make something that should be different, different," she explains. "They want to make change together with others, and they're coming in to UNH with that leadership component, which comes from an impetus to change the world."

Alumni connections allow current Hamel Scholars to envision the possibilities for their own future, and each year, the Hamel Scholars celebration brings back a former program member to share their post-UNH path. This past fall, Jaclyn Weier spoke to current scholars about how the program allowed her to discover her passion for cancer research.

"We're always bringing alumni back into conversation with Hamel Scholars, so that the current students can see that the things they're doing now as undergraduates are taking them into their future," says Peebles.

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