

## Getting SMART

### Six UNH students make up largest one-year cohort of DoD scholarship recipients

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Six University of New Hampshire students have been awarded Science, Math and Research for Transformation (SMART) scholarships from the Department of Defense, the largest number of recipients ever from UNH in a single cycle.

Rebekah Adams '24, Katherine Austin '23, Josh Beaulieu '24, Olivia Morel '25, Joy O'Brien '23G and Cameron Wagner '23G make up the cohort of honorees from UNH this spring.

SMART scholarships are awarded to undergraduate or graduate students in STEM-related fields and include full tuition and related

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fees, a \$25,000 to \$38,000 annual stipend, summer research internships and employment placement within the Department of Defense after graduation.

“I’m pleased that we have recipients from COLSA, COLA and CEPS who come from a variety of majors and represent both our undergraduate community and the graduate school,” says Jeanne Sokolowski, director of the Office of National Fellowships at UNH. “As always, UNH students’ success in the SMART competition is a testament to our stellar STEM education, strong mentoring by STEM faculty and research support through the Hamel Center for Undergraduate Research.”



REBEKAH ADAMS

**Rebekah Adams**, who is pursuing dual degrees in mathematics and history, will complete her placement at the Air Force Sustainment Center at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Greene County, Ohio, near her childhood home in Dayton.

She drew inspiration to apply for the SMART scholarship from her family’s background in military service – it was her dad’s work at the Wright Patterson base, where Adams was a frequent visitor as a child, that prompted her to join the United States Naval Sea Cadets in 2018.

“This scholarship is a huge blessing for me,” Adams says. “While receiving funding for my education and a guaranteed job after graduation are awesome enough on their own, I’m also fulfilling my desire to be involved with the Air Force and getting back home to Ohio. Not only that, but I’ll be working at the base where I spent my childhood. What could be better?”

Adams, a member of the Society of Women Engineers and a participant in the history club at UNH, says she may pursue a

master's degree while at Wright Patterson or may choose to continue indefinitely with civilian service.

**Katherine Austin**, a bioengineering major from South Berwick, Maine, earned a placement at the Army Public Health Center at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. She was drawn to the facility because of the focus on public health, and environmental monitoring in particular, as her current research includes work with electrochemical biosensors.



KATHERINE AUSTIN

“I pursued this site because they focus on public health, which will allow me to best be able to help the most people,” Austin says. “This gave me the opportunity to take my passion and apply it to a problem that can make others’ lives better.” Austin is also interested in science communication and interdisciplinary science and was pleased to see that the center is working to develop both. She said she has already had “some great conversations with current employees” about those topics.

Austin is involved in the Mask and Dagger Society, the International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineers (ISPE), Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) and is co-president of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. She intends to pursue graduate school after completing her undergraduate work at UNH.

**Josh Beaulieu**, a native of Bow, New Hampshire, pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering will be stationed at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, a placement he sought because he is considering joining



**JOSH BEAULIEU**

either the Navy or Air Force as a mechanical engineer. Aside from being close to home for him, “the mission statement at the

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard also really interested me,” he says.

Beaulieu, a member of the UNH cycling team and the ski and board club, said he was motivated to apply for the SMART scholarship because of the experience it will provide and the financial burden it will help lift, both of which he hopes will help set him up for a strong start to his professional life.

“My end goal in terms of my career is to eventually open my own engineering firm,” Beaulieu, who is considering a Master’s or doctorate after earning his undergraduate degree, says. “I would also like to eventually work for NASA or Space-X, as they help society advance through to the next age.”

**Olivia Morel**, a native of Greene, Maine, majoring in homeland security with a concentration in cybersecurity, was motivated to apply for the SMART scholarship by the prospect of graduating college debt-free with employment already lined up. She will fulfill her placement at the U.S. Army National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) in Charlottesville, Virginia.



**OLIVIA MOREL**

“The NGIC’s values are described as trust, teamwork, transparency, passion and a commitment to putting people first. I feel strongly that these values align with who I am as both a professional and as a person, which is very important to me,” Morel says.

Morel, who described the scholarship as “life-changing,” says she is passionate about pursuing a career in public service, with a focus on the fields of cybersecurity and intelligence, in particular. At UNH, she has been involved in the Idea & Innovation Society and has been a recipient of the Changemaker Fellowship. She has also served as vice president of Upper Quad Hall Council and as a mentor for Shadow-a-Wildcat.



JOY O'BRIEN

**Joy O'Brien** is from Blairstown, New Jersey, and is a microbiology master's student researching permafrost microbial ecology. She got a glimpse of life as a government researcher during consecutive summer internships at the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) in Hanover, New Hampshire, which prompted her to explore a SMART

scholarship opportunity and ultimately led her to a placement in the same facility.

“I am incredibly honored to receive the SMART scholarship, and I feel empowered that I will be able to conduct important research that benefits the safety of our country and the environment,” says O'Brien. “I feel this award will benefit me by not only providing me with employment upon graduating with my Ph.D. but also a valuable experience working for the government and studying what I love most – soil microbes.”

O'Brien, a co-coordinator with UNH's Women in Science group and participant in soil ecology outreach activities through the US GLOBE office on campus, will be pursuing a Ph.D. in ecology at Indiana University beginning this fall.

**Cameron Wagner** is a civil and environmental engineering major from Medford, New Jersey, who was also inspired by the Cold Regions laboratory in his pursuit of a SMART scholarship placement after investigating the facility's mission. He will complete his placement there, as well.



CAMERON WAGNER

Wagner, a participant in the New Hampshire Outing Club at UNH, is currently researching wind slab avalanche modeling on Mount Washington.

"This facility engages in work that interests me and aligns with my research interests," Wagner, who is writing two academic papers on track to be published around the time of his spring 2023 graduation with a Master of Science, says. "I learned about the SMART scholarship and it seemed like a great way to build connections at the place I would like to work and secure a position after graduation. My goal is coming to fruition and I am excited to see where it takes me."

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