

Lee College Foundation prepares to award fall 2017 scholarships, host annual gala

Foundation relies on individual & corporate donors to support hundreds of worthy students

BAYTOWN, TX — The fall 2017 semester begins next month, and the Lee College Foundation is preparing to award scholarships to hundreds of deserving students both new to campus and returning to continue their journey to a degree or certificate.

Many scholarship recipients would be unable to afford tuition, textbooks and other essentials without the generosity of private and corporate donors throughout the community who give to the foundation. Nearly two dozen of the new scholarships to be awarded for 2017 were sponsored by individuals — families, alumni, former employees and friends of the college among them — who believe in the importance of higher education and want to support students in reaching their dreams.

“Individuals and businesses in this community have made life-altering changes for so many of our students by providing them with financial support,” said Pam Warford, executive director of Foundation and Resource Development. “Many students just don’t have the means to pay for college, or they work and go to school simultaneously. For their community college, these advocates for education have enabled students who have the ability and the desire to achieve a degree and create a better life for themselves and for their families. I am so grateful to each of them for their continued support.”

All Lee College students are eligible to receive scholarships, regardless of their program of study or enrollment status. The Foundation Board of Directors awarded more than \$470,000 in the 2016-17 academic year to full-time and part-time students, high school students earning college credit in dual-enrollment classes, offenders in the Lee College Huntsville Center correctional education program, and students taking non-credit classes through the Center for Workforce and Community Development. In addition, the foundation maintains a Student Success Fund to help students facing extraordinary circumstances pay for college-related expenses.

Though a straight-A student throughout his career at Dayton High School, Thomas Sweeney arrived at the crossroads between high school and college unsure of which way to go. He knew he could succeed academically, but difficult family circumstances meant he was limited financially. Lee College was his choice for its affordability compared to other options, and he was ultimately awarded the foundation’s Rockwell Fund and Sam Bramlett Memorial scholarships.

“I was raised in a household where I didn’t really have a whole lot of opportunities,” said Sweeney, who shared his story in April at the annual Foundation Scholarship Breakfast, just one semester away from graduation. “My dad worked a job that he didn’t particularly care for and he wasn’t in the best of health, but he persevered because he saw the value of education. That’s why he pushed my sister and I really hard in school to be successful.”

After taking several Lee College Honors Program courses and becoming involved in student organizations on campus, Sweeney was selected to present original research at two academic conferences and said he gained a greater appreciation for thinking critically about the world around him. His “enriching and self-fulfilling experience” in college would likely have been unattainable without foundation support.

“I can honestly say these generous scholarships took quite the weight off my shoulders,” Sweeney said. “It was a very rewarding experience to have my hard work receive recognition so I could continue my educational career with the peace of mind of having my financial needs taken care of. The foundation donors and board have my sincerest and deepest appreciation and respect for their generosity in allowing students like myself, and many other diverse students, the ability to achieve our goals and ambitions.”

Planning is now underway for the 32nd annual Lee College Foundation Gala, which benefits student scholarships and other forms of support.