

2017 OKLAHOMA NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOWS

Ten Oklahoma College Students Are Honored As Newman Civic Fellows by Campus Compact

Ten Oklahoma students were named 2017 Newman Civic Fellows by Campus Compact as part of a group of 273 students from 36 states, Washington, D.C., and Mexico. They were nominated by their college or university president as inspiring college student leaders who have demonstrated an investment in finding solutions for challenges facing communities throughout the country. The Newman Civic Fellows Award is named for Dr. Frank Newman, one of the founders of Campus Compact, who dedicated his life to creating opportunities for student civic learning and engagement.

With the Newman Civic Fellows Awards, college and university presidents acknowledge students with the ability and motivation to create lasting change in our communities. Through service, research, and advocacy, these Newman Civic Fellows are making the most of their college experiences to better understand themselves, the root causes of social issues, and effective mechanisms for creating lasting change. Each Newman Civic Fellow will receive a \$500 monetary scholarship award from Oklahoma Campus Compact and be invited to be recognized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education at their monthly meeting. The Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellows program is supported by the KPMG Foundation and the Newman's Own Foundation. For more information about the Newman Civic Fellows, visit www.compact.org.



Campus Compact
Oklahoma

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Ms. Katherine Davis, Northern Oklahoma College

Katherine Davis is a sophomore Biology/ Zoology major at Northern Oklahoma College (NOC) who shares her passion for science with students of all ages. She is president of the science club and develops age-appropriate science experiments for local elementary school students, leading science club members in presentations which bring science to life.

NOC considers Katie an asset inside and outside of the classroom. She tutors in the science lab, volunteers as a faculty assistant advancing scientific research,

and prepares the media for microbiology labs and assists during lab procedures. Outside of the classroom, Katie is president of the President's Leadership Council and leads many community service activities.

Katie uses her passion for science and volunteerism to support educational and humanitarian efforts in her community.



Mr. Jack Nickelson, Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Jack Nickelson, a senior student at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, knows the value of hard work and dedication. He has excelled in his coursework while helping with his family's farming and ranching operation, coaching youth soccer, and serving as recreation assistant for his church.

Jack believes that serving the public and funding public education are necessities for a functioning society. He feels that everyone is gifted with certain abilities and characteristics to serve others, and

that it is only through jumping into societal service that people can begin to discover their individual gifts.

Jack is working toward his goal of obtaining his Ph.D in political science, and plans to teach at the collegiate level and guide his students through the rewards of civic engagement and service.



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Mr. Cody Milner, Oklahoma Christian University



Cody Milner, a third year honors student at Oklahoma Christian University, is an elected student leader and scholar who is politically and socially engaged in his community. He feels that the greatest service any individual can do is to lighten the burdens of another person.

Growing up in a poor rural town, he was blessed with parents who taught him the importance of hard work and wise financial steps to preserve his future.

Believing that economics is the key to every societal change and the impetus for lifting a socioeconomic class out of poverty and homelessness and into a comfortable life, Cody is currently focusing on economic solutions for inner-city poverty and criminal justice reform to put non-violent offenders back into the workforce, and persistently involving himself in local and national politics and government.

Ms. Shelbi Gambrell, Oklahoma State University

At Oklahoma State University (OSU) Shelbi Gambrell's life goal is to bring importance to the profession of education and to its benefits on an individual's life. Feeling that gratitude is a word that often gets overlooked by money, gifts, and services, and in view of the disheartening circumstances that teachers are experiencing in their working conditions and profession due to the discouraging state budget situation, she wants to ensure that teachers are aware of the impact their work has on the next generation.

Shelbi's project, Letters of Gratitude, involves a system of personal emails from former students and colleagues to teachers who made an impact on their life. Beginning with Educational Technology students at OSU, the email

encourages their teachers to forward the message of gratitude on to a teacher who made an impact on them.

When teachers are often thought of as replaceable, this project's goal is to bestow honor and help each teacher to realize the magnitude of their work. Shelbi was appointed to serve on the Professional Education Council as a representative of Oklahoma State University (OSU) by the dean of her college, a demonstration of the high esteem in which she is held by faculty and administrators.



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Ms. Jessica Villar, Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City



Jessica Villar is an Hispanic, first-generation college student who is also first in her family to attend college. Jessica understands the importance of identifying sources of help associated with the path to degree completion, and is an advocate for those who mirror her path.

At Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City Jessica represents the student voice in campus-wide discussions regarding the continuous improvement of support programs and services. In high school, she completed over 700 hours of service as a tutor at a local elementary school as an AmeriCorps volunteer, and participated in OSU-OKC's Upward Bound program.

At OSU-OKC she has: volunteered as a campus recruiter helping prospective students and their families understand the path to degree completion; staffed freshman orientation activities, helping students acclimate to the campus

environment; mentored students and provided encouragement and resources to those with varying levels of family support; and, presented her educational experiences, in a public forum, to the Chancellor of Oklahoma's system of higher education and to a panel of educational leaders from across the country. Jessica is pursuing a nursing degree at OSU-OKC while working at a local hospital.

Her life goal is to open a health clinic that serves minority and undocumented members of the community. Jessica has a passion for service and gives, tirelessly, despite the academic pressures that accompany her path of study. She represents the essence of the Newman Civic Fellowship program and is devoting her life's work to a social justice mission that will, no doubt, change the world.

Mr. Rhyder Joliff, Rogers State University

Rhyder Joliff, a second-year student at Rogers State University, is an active, engaged student leader committed to meeting community members' essential needs, including but not limited to, clothing and nutrition. He has initiated donation drives to help meet such needs, producing impressive results with expedience.

Rhyder chartered and is president of a community service fraternity on campus, which is currently partnered with Read Across America, local animal rescue

organizations, homeless shelters, senior centers, veterans centers, and Habitat for Humanity.

For the duration of his high school career he was involved in several community partnerships to help sustain and promote the wellbeing of Muskogee, Oklahoma residents. He now strives to assist in any fashion to make Claremore the best it can possibly be. Mr. Joliff is a conscientious individual with the rare ability to take responsibility for an initiative while also empowering and involving others.



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Ms. Ashton Shepler, Rose State College

At Rose State College Ashton Shepler is a student who leads by quiet example and uses her intelligence, ambition and passion to support and advocate for issues that are close to her heart and tied closely to the communities in which she is involved.

As a passionate animal welfare advocate and future veterinarian, she identified an issue within the agriculture and veterinary community to raise public awareness for race horse retirement. Having been raised in the racing industry, Ashton saw the fate that unwanted racehorses can face, and has worked tirelessly since the age of 13 with the Oklahoma Thoroughbred Retirement program to rehabilitate and rehome retired race horses.

In addition to her work with a formal organization, Ashton volunteers on a rehabilitation farm where retired race horses are kept during recovery from injury. She is the president of the Pre-Veterinary Medicine and Animal Welfare club on campus and organizes volunteer opportunities with local rescues and shelters.

Ashton's passion for animal welfare has guided her actions in all areas of her life and continues to be a driving force of her education and pursuit of ways to further contribute to this issue. She is a leader that puts her passion to work in every sense.



Mr. David Smoot, Southwestern Oklahoma State University



A computer science major at Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), Devin Smoot is involved in the Blue Thunder Alley project to develop the SWOSU High Performance Computing cluster for undergraduate research. He was selected to represent the SWOSU team in meeting with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center researchers to establish research collaborations, which resulted in research awards.

Devin served his country as a member of the United States Marine Corps, and has been active developing the computer network at his church. Because of his Native American heritage and through tribal security work for an Oklahoma Native American tribe, Devin gained insight into the serious need for education

applicable to current job markets, and developed a goal to begin a non-profit organization to teach various programming and computer skills to minorities in Oklahoma. He notes that while there are plenty of free and open source resources available, a teaching environment with a leader who is easily accessible is needed.

Devin believes that an at-home study course could reach people for whom vocational school training or higher education are not always an option. With a solid support system, Devin will train people to be programmers, web developers, and computer repair specialists, equipping them with the skills to obtain certifications and become employable in a freelance environment or corporate America.

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Ms. Rebecka Snyder, Tulsa Community College



Rebecka Snyder is a student leader at Tulsa Community College who understands that large-scale change can happen when those who are passionate about civic engagement find ways to collaborate with others in the community.

As a sex trafficking survivor she now works to prevent other women and children from facing the horrors she endured for ten years. Rebecka's work with The Demand Project has allowed her to speak with law enforcement and lawmakers about the need to better prosecute sex-trafficking crimes while also more effectively identifying and protecting the victims involved.

As part of her efforts with this organization, new law has been proposed and enacted. Rebecka works to fight

against sex-trafficking on an individual level as well by mentoring sex-trafficking survivors and at-risk girls.

Rebecka understands that sex trafficking has impacted millions of people's lives, and continues to do so, both on a national scale, and right here in our own backyards. Her hope is that by sharing her story, she will continue to help other victims like herself find the freedom that can only come from community awareness and action.

Her bravery and determination are remarkable, but her decision to give back to others as she pursues her educational success is truly astounding.

Mr. Jaylon Thomas, University of Central Oklahoma



Jaylon Thomas, a junior at the University of Central Oklahoma, is an active leader in addressing issues of increasing the retention of black males on campus.

In the Black Male Initiative, Jaylon began to find his niche in the program by serving as a tutor to the black men in the program. Through the tutoring, he became more conscious of the psychological issues that black men deal with in higher education settings. As a result, he works to teach black males about their identity in society, and advocates for black male success in higher education.

He currently serves as the Black Male Initiative Intern where he and his fellow counterparts in the program are exploring the possibility of creating a living learning community that would give black males

both a safe space and support system that they can use to navigate their undergraduate experience.

Jaylon is also involved in community efforts to resist the unjust police brutality by formulating research questions that will help relieve the hostility between law enforcement and the black community abroad.

For the last two years he has worked closely with grass root efforts to advocate for the success of black males in higher education, including efforts to rally faculty and staff to support programs that would provide a platform for those students to persist at the university.