

Thursday, September 11, 2008

SBA expands Scholars program

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

The School of Business Administration launched the Scholars program in fall 2007 for freshmen, juniors, seniors and those who wanted to participate in research. In fall 2008, the SBA expanded the program to include sophomore scholars, and theme scholars in social and public policy. The program offers high achieving students the opportunity to take on different challenges in the SBA. Sophomore, junior and senior students must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher to be invited into the program. Incoming freshmen have different standards based on ACT scores and high school GPAs. Each class has different tasks to complete throughout the year, and they are awarded with accelerated major standing or scholarships.

The program consists of nearly 60 students. This number is expected to grow as more students are invited to participate. Students may apply for the program in any class year, whether previously a scholar or not.

The Freshman Scholars are on the fast track to attain major standing. As freshmen, they are permitted to register for sophomore-level business courses during their second term at OU. Students in the program can earn major standing at least one to two semesters before most incoming freshmen. With a 3.2 cumulative GPA, Freshman Scholars will become Dean's Scholars and receive a \$250 scholarship per semester for up to four semesters. Freshman Scholars will also have the opportunity to participate in Scholars-only events including high school outreach programs, and they may be invited to participate in the Sophomore Scholar program.

Sophomore Scholars mentor Freshman Scholars and provide 15 hours of peer tutoring each semester. Students receive a \$300 award after completing the program. Junior Scholars mentor Sophomore Scholars and assist Senior Scholars with their community outreach projects, as well as participate in leadership development seminars and two recruiting events. They receive a \$500 award at the end of the academic year for their work. Senior Scholars work on community outreach projects, focusing on a project to give back to the community. The Senior Scholars receive a \$500 award at the end of the year for their participation.

Research Scholars assist faculty with research and conduct their own research, under the supervision of faculty. Students are presented a \$500 scholarship to defer the cost of the required three-credit academic year-long course. They are also paid \$10 per hour for work done on faculty research projects.

The new Theme Scholars will participate in classes and research for two years related to social and public policy. Theme Scholars receive a \$500 award upon completion of the program. Seven Theme Scholars will meet roughly two hours each week for two academic years.

"The idea is that we will take a public policy issue and we will look at it from various perspectives, including economic, management and accounting, and get an understanding of the different disciplines and how they would look at it," said Ron Tracy, associate dean of the SBA, associate professor of economics and coordinator of the social and public policy scholar theme.

The Theme Scholars are also required to take another course together. The Theme Scholars will also be required to write a research paper and analyze a social topic. Chris Valmossi will head the Scholars program this year as a Senior Scholar. Last year, as the Rising Junior Scholar he played a part in the development of Scholar events and activities.

"Participating in the Scholars program is my first opportunity to take on a leadership role," said Valmossi, who has also participated with some student organizations, but not in a leadership role. "We accomplished a lot last year, but I still feel like there was more we could do. I feel a personal sense of responsibility toward the program and I'm really looking forward to getting things going this year."

Last year, the Scholars hosted programs such as SBA Night at an OU basketball game, an SBA bowling outing and various business-related speakers. "Not only do I feel the Scholars program has given me the opportunity to network with my peers and external business leaders, but I feel I have connected in a whole new way to the dean, the faculty and the SBA administration," Valmossi said.

Valmossi is also part of the Dean's Scholar Board, which is a group of one representative from each of the Scholars classes who meet monthly with the SBA Dean Mohan Tanniru, keep him informed of program events and share their thoughts on areas for improvement. While the Provost's Office funds the Research Scholars, funding opportunities are available for the other Scholars programs, with naming opportunities also available.

For information, visit the **Scholars Program** Web site.

SUMMARY

The School of Business Administration launched the Scholars program in fall 2007 for freshmen, juniors, seniors and those who wanted to participate in research. In fall 2008, the SBA expanded the program to include sophomore scholars, and theme scholars in social and public policy. The program offers high achieving students the opportunity to take on different challenges in the SBA. Each class has different tasks to complete throughout the year, and they are awarded with accelerated major standing or scholarships.

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