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Xavier Graduate Awarded Ochsner Health Medical School Scholarship
Biology Student Receives Full Tuition Scholarship to LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine

NEW ORLEANS– The third annual Ochsner Health Medical School Scholarship for LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine was awarded to Xavier University of Louisiana graduate Colbren Thomas. The scholarship award covers the cost of tuition for Thomas to attend LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine.

"Now is the time to invest in the next generation of healthcare leaders. Ochsner Health is proud to team up with Xavier University and LSU Health Shreveport to pave the way for Colbren Thomas and other aspiring physicians to have the opportunity to study here at home in Louisiana. It is our hope that they will choose to stay and serve local communities after graduation, doing their part to contribute to making Louisiana a healthier state – both for the current generation and those to come," said Leonardo Seoane, MD, Chief Academic Officer, Ochsner Health and Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, LSU Health Shreveport.

Thomas holds a Bachelor of Science in biology from Xavier University. Outside of the classroom, he was engaged in campus leadership activities, volunteering, shadowing, and conducting scientific research. Notably, Thomas participated in the Harvard Multidisciplinary International Research Training (MIRT) Program – a national program designed to encourage students to pursue careers in biomedical and behavioral research. Additionally, Thomas worked with the University of Pittsburgh's SEA-PHAGES (Science Education Alliance-Phage Hunters Advancing Genomics and Evolutionary Science) program – a two-semester, discovery-based undergraduate research course which progresses through a variety of microbiology techniques.

Thomas hails from Mansfield, LA – a city of about 5000 people located about 40 miles from Shreveport. He shared, "I believe it is important for people of differing backgrounds and ethnicities to come together and share their experiences in an effort to better serve our communities. As a future doctor, I believe it's my responsibility to serve not only my community, but any community in need."

To qualify for consideration for this scholarship, students are required to be a Louisiana resident, a Xavier student, and have already been accepted into the LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine. To apply for the scholarship, Xavier students submitted an application detailing academic accomplishments, recommendations and an essay reflecting on how they have overcome adversity. A joint Xavier and Ochsner committee reviewed the applications and selected the final scholarship recipient. One scholarship recipient is selected annually for this scholarship program. The inaugural 2019 honoree was Sarah Bertrand of Marrero, LA and the 2020 honoree was Rachel Coleman of New Orleans, LA.

"LSU Health Shreveport is grateful to Ochsner for their continued awarding of a full tuition scholarship to a deserving minority student. This scholarship is an important tool in enhancing LSU Health Shreveport's' ability to recruit and retain top minority students. We are thrilled to have Colbren joining the Class of 2025," shared Dr. David Lewis, Interim Chancellor and Dean of the LSU Health Shreveport School of Medicine.

The annual Ochsner Health Medical School Scholarship for LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine is just one way Ochsner is investing in the education of the next generation of healthcare professionals in the region – a key component of Ochsner's 10-year vision to transform Louisiana into a healthier state by 2030.

With a focus on cultivating the next generation of healthcare professionals, Ochsner and Xavier have an established, long-standing relationship dating back to the 1980s when an affiliation agreement partnership was established to provide educational experiences to pharmacy students. Through this ongoing partnership, Ochsner has provided clinical training for an average of 80 Xavier pharmacy students each year.

Additionally, the two institutions have collaborated on a variety of projects, including:

- Expanding local healthcare education opportunities by launching a physician's assistant program which welcomed its first class in January 2020.
- Addressing health inequity in Louisiana, including preventative medicine and a push toward healthcare reform through the establishment of the Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity & Research.

- Planning for the development of two new graduate degree programs – genetic counseling and health informatics.
- Collaborating on several programs that allow students the opportunity to gain practicum and clinical experiences at Ochsner.

"We are honored to have a lifelong partnership with Ochsner Health. Our relationship benefits Xavier University faculty and students, and we hope the work we're doing serves to influence change for the betterment of the New Orleans community as a whole," said Dr. Anne McCall, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost at Xavier University of Louisiana. "We are proud that our students continue to excel as leaders in the community with the support of Ochsner."

For more information about Ochsner Academics, visit www.ochsner.org/locations/center-for-academic-excellence. For more information about Xavier, visit www.xula.edu. For more information about LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine visit https://lsuhs.edu/com.

Photo Caption: Recent Xavier University of Louisiana graduate Colbren Thomas was awarded the 2021 Ochsner Health Medical School Scholarship for LSU Health Shreveport – School of Medicine. Click here for high-res version of photo: https://ochsner.imagerelay.com/share/Colbren-Thomas-2021-Scholarship

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About Ochsner Health

Ochsner Health is a system that delivers health to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and the Gulf South with a mission to Serve, Heal, Lead, Educate and Innovate. Ochsner Health is a not-for-profit committed to giving back to the communities it serves through preventative screenings, health and wellness resources and partnerships with innovative organizations that share our vision. Ochsner Health healed more than 900,000 people from across the globe in 2020, providing the latest medical breakthroughs and therapies, including digital medicine for chronic conditions and telehealth specialty services. Ochsner Health is a national leader, named the top hospital in Louisiana and a top children's hospital by U.S. News & World Report. As Louisiana's leading healthcare educator, Ochsner Health and its partners educate thousands of healthcare professionals annually. Ochsner Health is innovating healthcare by investing in new technologies and research to make world-class care more accessible, affordable, convenient and effective. Ochsner's team of more than 32,000 employees and 4,500 providers are working to reinvent the future of health and wellness in the region. To learn more about Ochsner Health, please visit www.ochsner.org.

About LSU Health Shreveport

LSU Health Shreveport (LSUHS) is one of only 154 Health Sciences Centers in the nation. LSUHS is home to the School of Medicine, School of Graduate Studies and School of Allied Health Professions, and a robust research enterprise. Over 900 students are enrolled in the degree programs at any one time. Additionally, over 550 residents and fellows are trained each year. The primary mission of the LSU Health Sciences Center at Shreveport is to teach, heal, and discover, in order to advance the well-being of the region and beyond. At the heart of the LSU Health Shreveport is a strong faculty that includes a number of nationally and internationally acclaimed physicians and scientists. For more information, visit https://lsuhs.edu/som.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Being America's only historically Black and Catholic University is just the first of the distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than eight decades. Despite its relatively small size (3,300 students), Xavier is a nationally recognized leader in STEM and the health sciences, producing more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Its College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists.

Its liberal arts-based programs in such areas as art, business, education, psychology, and political science – as well as such recent additions as bioinformatics, data science, neuroscience, crime and social justice, and jazz studies – offer students an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. The winning Xavier formula? Provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls.

For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. To book interviews and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications, and the arts, contact Chelsea Cunningham at xula1925@xula.edu.