

Gateway Program

C R E I G H T O N U N I V E R S I T Y

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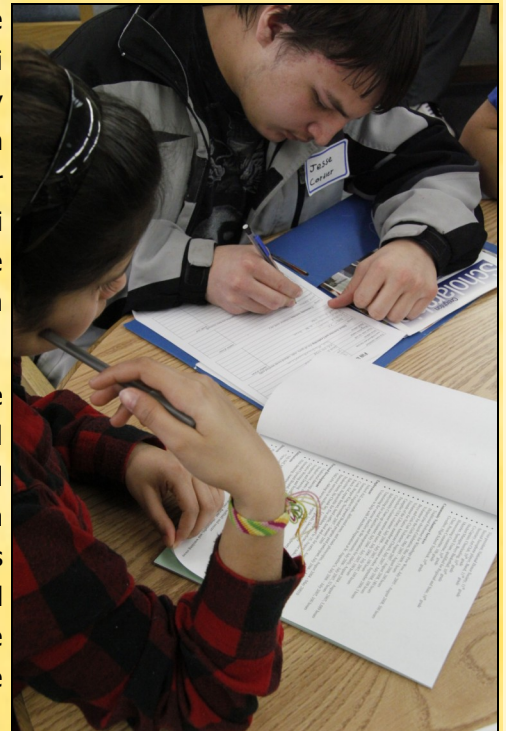
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THE GATEWAY INITIATIVE

An initial contact between Norbert Hill, former President of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC)/Gates Millennium Scholarship program and Tami Buffalohead-McGill was all it took to create something that would eventually become an important life changing opportunity to many that would also positively impact many more people. This initial seed has grown into a giant Sequoia with offshoots of college awareness and preparation, Gates Millennium Scholarship and other scholarship mentoring, and student and faculty Immersion trips. In 2000, AIGC contacted Tami to present at the Gates Millennium Scholars Leadership conference. At that time she was also asked to serve as a reader and eventually an ambassador for the AIGG Gates Millennium Scholarship by conducting workshops for high school students.

Tami was to focus her attention on the states of Nebraska and South Dakota, which at the time produced a very low ratio of scholarship recipients relative to the number of students who qualified; especially from the Native American population. To do this, Tami used the Oshkosh Wisconsin University workshop model: a college admission application workshop and then a two hour presentation on the Gates scholarship. As Tami became more aware of what worked for the students, she eventually developed her own model for effectively working with the students.

In the beginning, Tami, along with Monique Donahue from the Admissions Office and Ricardo Ariza from the Office of Multicultural Affairs, conducted Gates workshops for Omaha area students. Tami also conducted Gates workshops on reservations in Nebraska and South Dakota. Over time, Tami became the primary coordinator because of her knowledge about the scholarship and her experience working with the students.



Namrata Sapkota working with a student from the Rosebud reservation on resume development.

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During a trip to the Pine Ridge reservation, Tami and Reverend Raymond Bucko S.J. realized the students at the reservation needed more assistance and encouragement to work on the application process and responded with a mentoring program using college faculty and staff in addition to the Gates workshops. This idea came to fruition when they both started conducting faculty immersion trips during fall break, beginning in 2004. The trip consisted of recruiting a group of volunteer Creighton faculty and staff to attend a four day trip to the Pine Ridge reservation to assist the scholarship applicants at the Red Cloud Indian School and, initially, at Pine Ridge high school. After the faculty immersion occurred, the participants continued as mentors to the applicants and maintained communication with them via email, providing assistance with the Gates scholarship and college application process, and encouraging the students to complete their applications.

The faculty immersions proved very effective as the number of students applying for the Gates and completing the application increased and more Native students were awarded the scholarship. Beyond the benefits to the students, Creighton University and the mentorship participants also gained much from this interaction. As the faculty visited Pine Ridge, they became more aware of the needs of Native American communities and thus grew more sensitive to their cultural realities to better assist these students at Creighton. By becoming mentors during these trips, they built bonds with their protégés who often were convinced that Creighton would be a good fit for them as the place to receive their education. Every year Creighton University's incoming freshmen class included many of the students in this mentoring program; some who received the Gates and some who do not.

This initiative reached a point at which many Creighton students became involved as well. At first Tami



Maria Victoria Sanchez

only took a single student, **Maria Sanchez Chagolla** (Gates Scholar, B.S.B.A. 2010), then later a few more students accompanied her to the reservation. Thanks to a partnership with the Cardoner program, it was possible to have trips in which larger groups of students participated. The Cardoner program funded student visits to reservations to mentor student applicants much like the faculty and staff immersions. Immersion trips took place on reservations in South Dakota, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nebraska. Native and non-Native Gates recipients and non recipients who understood the importance of this initiative were willing to help those who were going through what some of them had once gone through themselves. The majority of these students are in the Student Support Services (SSS), program, and thanks to them, the immersion trips and mentoring programs were possible and successful. They also assisted at greater Omaha area workshops and served as mentors to a wide variety of students from many ethnic backgrounds.

Student involvement in this initiative was very important to the effort as a whole. By volunteering their time to assist at the Gates workshops for the Omaha area applicants, by participating in the student immersion trips on the reservations, and by becoming ongoing mentors to those students applying for the Gates, they provided an even more significant impact, increasing the positive outcomes of this initiative. Over several years the Gates initiative grew through campus wide partnerships to become an important way for the Creighton community to provide service in the Omaha area and on several

FRONT STORY CONTINUED

reservations to students who need the help and encouragement, and to promote the education of our students, staff, and faculty. All of this was possible through a myriad of informal and formal partnerships among Student Support Services, Native American Studies, Cardoner, Enrollment Management, Admissions, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health. Many individuals university wide contributed to the success of this initiative, including students, faculty, staff, and alumni from the Journalism department, English department, the Writing Center, and numerous volunteers across campus. This effort has grown, and now each year approximately 1,180 middle school and high school students benefit from Creighton's outreach initiatives and over 200 Creighton volunteers help with this effort. Over the years, the Gates initiative has grown and achieved invaluable outcomes. The numbers of students earning the Gates Scholarship in Nebraska, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Arizona are significant. The impact to Creighton is evident by the 30 Gates Scholars enrolled at Creighton during the 2010–2011 academic year and a total of 169 students earning the Gates Scholarship since 2001. The total number of successful Gates recipients we worked with demonstrates that we are making a difference.

In Spring 2010, Creighton formalized this initiative by hiring **Jessica Swisher**. The initiative grew so big Tami was no longer able to successfully serve as SSS Director and the 20% of her time allocated for the initiative was no longer enough. With the support of the V.P for academic affairs, **Professor Patrick Borchers**, Creighton institutionalized the initiative by formally establishing the Gateway program to continue to serve the greater Omaha community and targeted reservations communities.

Students who are eligible to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship are minorities with limited financial resources. The students we work with are economically disadvantaged multicultural first generation college students who must overcome difficulties while achieving academic success and maintaining strong ties to their culture and communities. Often these students seldom consider furthering their education beyond high school. Many of the students we worked with are students who come from communities where there is not enough support and who are dealing with serious problems. Without opportunities such as the Gates scholarship or moral support from our program, many of these students would not have known that their attending college was possible. By encouraging them to complete the scholarship, we are helping them become more competitive for the Gates scholarship and helping them realize the importance of strong academic achievement, serving their community, being leaders, and rising to the

Year	Total GMS	GMS Enrolled Creighton	% Enrolled Creighton
2001-2002	2	2	100%
2002-2003	8	7	88%
2003-2004	13	7	54%
2004-2005	24	9	38%
2005-2006	26	10	38%
2006-2007	24	10	42%
2007-2008	24	11	46%
2008-2009	14	8	57%
2009-2010	17	8	47%
2010-2011	17	8	47%
TOTAL	169	80	47%

Table 1: Total number of students who received the Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS) and the percentage who enrolled in Creighton as a result of the Gateway initiative since 2001.

FRONT STORY CONTINUED

challenges that will bring them success.

The impact of the Gateway program extends beyond the individual high school participants. The workshops, support, and mentoring positively affects them by helping them with the college admissions process, study skills, career exploration, and the scholarship process. The communities from where these students hail and our society as a whole benefits from the ripple effect each student has. As an educational institution, our students, faculty, staff, and administrators become more aware and sensitive to the cultures, communities, and personal experiences of the students we assist. We are able to build relationships with prospective Creighton students and once they join our community, they are more comfortable and successful because we understand how to assist them. Whether these students come to Creighton or not, the simple fact that they continue their education assures that we played an important role in the students' life and their communities. These students will one day return to their communities to give back. The students we help are the future professionals and leaders of our communities who will contribute to the advancement of society. Furthermore, through the immersion experiences, we transform Creighton.

The Gateway program is a great experience for these students, regardless of whether they earn the scholarship. The work that is done by the students and the support people involved in this initiative is valuable. Inside this newsletter you will read about what some of the Gates Scholars, mentors, and volunteers have to say about the program, and the real value of this initiative to encourage you to help us continue this effort.



The sixth grade class at Winnebago Community School waiting to hear the Creighton students talk about college.

CAROL ZUEGNER

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM

Carol Zuegner is an associate professor of journalism at Creighton University. She heads the news sequence in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Carol has also worked as a reporter and editor for a number of years as well as earning a master's and doctorate in journalism. Her job consists of teaching writing and editing, she works with students on the student newspaper and does research and writing on journalism issues. Her department includes news, public relations, photojournalism, advertising and graphic design, which includes design for print, the web and video.



"I believe in education and the opportunities education can bring. Helping students reach for those opportunities is very important to me"

Dr. Carol Zuegner describes her involvement and experiences as a Gates Scholarship mentor: "I began working as a Gates Scholarship Mentor when we came up with Pizza and Proofreading, where students from our department and students who work on Creighton's newspaper the Creightonian take what they've learned in class to help the high school students edit their application essays. We gather on an evening, eat pizza, brownies, and apples, then college students pair up with high school students to work for a couple of hours. It has been so successful, not only in high school students getting help with their essays, but also for the college students, who tell me how great the experience is for them. I do it because it's a terrific way to use my talent and skills and the talent and skills of my students to help others. I like the one-on-one experience the mentoring offers. The high school students I have met are so interesting. I'm often in awe of how hard they work, how much they do and how much they sometimes struggle.

We have done the Pizza and Proofreading for six years. I also participated in the Lakota Immersion program, where I worked with a high school student from Red Cloud. I know my students learn so much by mentoring. I have had students tell me that the Pizza and Proofreading is one of their favorite academic experiences at Creighton. The college students gain confidence in their skills and talents. I think it helps the high school students when they get to meet and work with college students. I believe in education and the opportunities education can bring. Helping students reach for those opportunities is very important to me."

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS

"The process may seem overwhelming at first, but it's worth it. The questions help students figure out their own strengths. The best essays are specific with examples that illustrate the point you're trying to make. I'm sure their teachers have told them: Show, don't tell. So don't tell me you're responsible; show me how you've learned responsibility by caring for your younger sisters and brothers. I'd also advise students to read their essays aloud to themselves. If it sounds good to the ear, you're probably on the right track. My last piece of advice: Take advantage of the workshops and mentoring offered. Even if you don't get the Gates scholarship, you've put the wheels in motion to apply for others. And at the end, when you've answered those essay questions, you should feel good about yourself and your accomplishments!"

NHU LE GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLAR AND MENTOR



Nhu Le is a Gates Scholar of 2009 and a former student of Omaha Central High School. Le is enrolled in the College of Arts and Science at Creighton University and a chemistry major interested.

As a high school student, Le was involved with National Honor Society, Math Club, Chemistry Club, and Chemistry Competition. Le continues her involvement at Creighton by serving as a chemistry teaching assistant, Peer 2 Peer mentor, and Gateway mentor. She is also an active member of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity, Pre-dental Club, and the Minority Association of Pre-health. She participated in the Gateway Immersions to New Mexico/Arizona, South Dakota, and served as Co-Coordinator for the Winnebago Immersion. Le also serves as a translator for her family and helping her grandmother during her doctor visits and managing her diabetes.

Le started the application process late, about a month before the deadline. Le says she remembers Tami Buffalohead-McGill calling her in December at 11:00 p.m. and telling her about the Gates scholarship and letting her know she could assist her with the process. Le says you can imagine how overwhelmed she felt at the time. However, having such great guidance and assistance from Tami and other Gates mentors, she decided to give it her best shot.

Le did not waste any time working on the application process. It was an intense month for her, especially with school work, college applications, and other scholarships deadlines. Luckily for her, Le had her entire winter break to complete the application. She recalls that it was not a very pleasant break since she sat in front of the computer most of the time working on her application. Since Le had been in the United States for only three years, her English was not strong. She struggled to find the right words and the right sentences, but she had a strategy. She looked up the words, and then learned how to use them properly. She started with gathering all ideas to answer the questions and wrote them down in her notes. She even asked her mom and dad for ideas. Then she set a goal to finish an essay every two days. Every morning she sat down on her table and kept writing until the end of the day. During her winter break, she was able to work on her essays and have them edited by her mentors Tami and **Dr. Nina Ha**, English Professor at Creighton University. After the break, she finished the application and submitted it a couple of hours before the deadline.

"To me and my family, it was like a miracle. It showed me a bright future..."

Le recalls she was glad her mom was the one who opened the Gates Millennium Scholarship package because she did not have the courage to open it. She says that when she discovered she earned the



Nhu working with a student from Gallup, NM.

NHU LE CONTINUED

scholarship "it felt like a heavy rock was lifted from my shoulders. Within that one month of hard work, I earned myself a free five year education at Creighton. To me and my family, it was like a miracle. It showed me a bright future and removed the financial burden for my family."

Le today is a mentor. She says "If Tami had not called me up, told me I should apply, and guided me through the process, I would not have what I have today. Tami did her best to help me, therefore I feel the responsibility to help other students who strive for success and a better education."

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS

"Pay attention to the application status of your nominator and recommender and stress the importance of the scholarship so they can also complete it in a timely manner. Also, if there is some information that is relevant to your application, ask your nominator and/or recommender to add it to their application to get the reader's attention. Look over the essay questions and generate ideas. I recommend that you try to remember everything from childhood to high school such as key events that shaped who you became and most importantly tie it to your culture. Real personal stories will move the reader."

NINA HA ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Dr. Nina Ha is an English professor at Creighton University; however, her duties to the university are endless. If Dr. Ha is not in class teaching, you can find her advising Markoe leaders, programming events such as "The Day of Remembrance," participating in the World Literature Program committee, talking to advisees from the English department, directing student projects, attending conferences, serving as faculty advisor for the Asian Student Association, or working on diversity workshops for both students and faculty. Outside of Creighton, she participates in professional associations, peer reviews articles and essays for journal publishing, creates panels for conferences, and mentors graduate students from other universities.



Dr. Ha first volunteered as a mentor because she remembers there was a call for helpers. Tami Buffalohead-McGill had asked students and faculty in the English department to participate. Since Dr. Ha is an English professor, she believed that it would be right to volunteer and help these high school students with their essays toward obtaining a scholarship. Although the event was only one day, she looked over each essay carefully and focused on grammar and content. With high school students, she also noticed a trend with their essays. Most of them had very general ideas written. However, the best essays share their unique experiences to explain why they deserve the scholarship. "You have to ask yourself, how do you stand out when there are similar students in your position?" she says.

Dr. Ha found the experience rewarding. She said, "The knowledge that I can contribute in some way to students seeking help makes me feel great. Since I'm an English professor, I might as well use my profession in some way. It's also a good feeling to know that Nhu Le received it and was able to attend a good school. Even if the students I worked with didn't receive the scholarship, I'm still glad to help out when I can. It's important to give back, you know? Even if it's not a lot, it's still something."

RAYMOND BUCKO, S.J. CHAIR FOR DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY



The success of the Gateway Program at Creighton University depends on the balance between the perseverance and synergism of the Gates applicants and their mentors. Gateway mentors do not simply assist and encourage applicants to complete the Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS) application, but they build a working relationship with their protégé. **Reverend Raymond Bucko, S.J.** has exemplified this relationship with Gates applicants and much more.

Fr. Bucko is currently chairs the Creighton University Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and directs it's Native American Studies program. Fr. Bucko is also active in the American Catholic Bishop's community, works as a mentor within students obtaining their PhDs, and participates in the Lakota immersion mentorship program at Creighton University.

As a mentor in the immersion program, Fr. Bucko, along with other administration, faculty, and staff work with Lakota high school students on the Pine Ridge reservation who are preparing for college. The main focus is the mentor/protégé relationship that needs to be developed in order to manage the lengthy GMS application. Fr. Bucko has been mentoring Gates applicant for the past eight years, since the immersion program's inception.

"I learned a lot from this experience such as the struggles of students and their triumphs."

Fr. Bucko volunteered as a mentor because of his Jesuit connection with the Pine Ridge reservation. Before Fr. Bucko obtained his PhD, the Pine Ridge community educated him and encouraged him to get his doctorate. He felt a passionate obligation to give back to the Pine Ridge community and kept his promise through the mentorship program and immersion. When asked about what the impacts made and gained from this experience, Fr. Bucko replied, "I learned a lot from this experience, such as the struggles of students and their triumphs." Fr. Bucko noted that applicants did endure setbacks in the process but were able to persevere and complete the application.

As the Lakota immersion leader he says, "I was also able to introduce other faculty and staff to people on the reservation these trips, and I kept people laughing." The humorous Jesuit even added that he learned a great deal about gas station bathrooms and saving receipts for reimbursement. For Fr. Bucko, a good sense of humor is important in developing relationships, especially the ones he has developed working on the Lakota immersions.

As a Gates mentor Fr. Bucko edited his protégés' essays,



Father Bucko with his Red Cloud protégé.

RAYMOND BUCKO, S.J. CONTINUED

encouraged them to finish, made sure they were up-to-date on the application process, and generally got to know his protégés and their families. His long-term time commitments with the applicants are made possible through email contact even though the immersion trips only last about four days.

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS

Fr. Bucko's for GMS applicants is to "believe in themselves." He says, "Applicants shouldn't be shy in the essays and should be able to talk about themselves freely. They shouldn't get discouraged nor should they count themselves out."

JOY DOLL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Joy Doll, OTD, OTR/L, is an Assistant Professor in Occupational Therapy and Director for the Post Professional OTD Program. Outside of Creighton, Doll is involved with the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association and Community Garden as well as the Nebraska Occupational Therapy Association.

Doll decided to be a mentor because of the strong encouragement and support she received from her mother to go to college. Doll says, "Without my mom, I would not be here. I want to do this for others. I know the process is challenging, so I am happy to help."

From her experience as a mentor Doll says, "Mentoring students is so important to ensure they can attain success. I am always happy when they go on and can succeed." Through mentoring, Doll feels she makes an impact on her protégé, the community, and Creighton University. She is glad that she can be a part of the process. Doll feels that she is just a small part of many factors during the process. Doll says, "Really, the mentees do all the hard work and have the motivation. You are really just a coach."

As a mentor, Doll helped the students edit their essays and encouraged them to pursue their dreams. In her experience working with students, Doll says each person was different and had different needs, some required less of her time than others. Doll found that most students struggled with completing the application because "students do not always know what all they can achieve, and what a gift the Gates Scholarship can be."

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Advice Doll leaves for the students is "Go for it! Believe in yourself and know you are called to something greater!"



MARISSA BEGAY GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLAR



When **Marissa Begay** received the letter in the mail, she was in for a surprise. Within this envelope was her future. Marissa Begay is a senior at Creighton University from Blue Gap, Arizona. Begay is an alumni of Chinle High School and is Navajo.

While in high school she was involved in Student Council, secretary of DECA, Vice President of her Senior Class, President of National Honor Society, manager and tutor for Chinle Wrestling team, and played Volleyball and Softball. At Creighton she helped found and serve as President for RAISE (Recognizing American Indian Success in Education) a Native American mentoring program, served as a Peer2Peer mentor, is a member and Secretary for the Native American Association, Gamma Delta Pi President (Native American sorority), was a RSP101 Decurion, mentored a female Native American student from Boys

and Girls Town, and participates in intramural volleyball and basketball.

Begay is majoring in biology with a minor in medical anthropology. Once she completes her undergraduate degree, she plans to continue her education by attending Optometry School. Her career goal is to work for Indian Health Services at Chinle. Once Begay achieves her goals, her next intention is to help her community on the Navajo reservation. Her main desire is to help families in need and members of her community who have health problems. She also wants to be a role model and mentor to the youth of her community.

The Gates Millennium Scholarship pays her tuition to attend Creighton University, provides money for her books, health insurance, and a laptop. As a Gates Millennium Scholar, she was able to go to Los Angeles, California, for the annual Gates Leadership Conference. Begay meet other recipients and learned new leadership skills.

Marissa's greatest obstacle to attending college was money. Marissa says, "Finding scholarships was really hard until I got the Gates Millennium scholarship." Marissa found out about different scholarships because Tami Buffalohead-McGill and Creighton students came to her high school on the Navajo reservation and told her about the scholarships she should apply for. Marissa says the information was really helpful for getting her into college. Marissa's mentor, **Joy Doll**, helped encourage her and edited her essays through email.

The application itself was a great commitment for Begay. She was an active student in high school. Her daily routine during her senior year in high school was school, extra-curricular activities/sports, home at 6:30 p.m., to do chores, homework, and work on scholarship applications. Marissa was determined to succeed. The most difficult problem was figuring out what to write on the essays to grab the reader's attention. Her main motivation was her mother who kept her on track and focused. The scholarship

"...for them to see one of their fellow classmates going to college and helping with their application made them realize their own dreams."

MARISSA BEGAY CONTINUED

removed the burden of having to rely on her family for tuition.

Marissa's experience is unique in that as a junior and senior in high school, she was one of the students the Creighton Pharmacy and undergraduate students worked with during the Gateway Immersions. As a high school student, Marissa wondered, "Why are the Creighton people at my high school?" According to Marissa, "At I first thought 'Oh, they're just trying to get some hours in for community service, but they're not even from our community'. But after she participated in the immersion trip, she realized it was because "they cared and wanted us to be aware of this great scholarship." Marissa says "Now, as a Creightonian, it just makes sense! We like to help others." She said her first experience as a Gateway Immersion trip volunteer was awesome. To see her younger friends at her high school was great. She said as they greeted her, it just felt good to be able to reach out to them. She said "I think for them to see one of their fellow classmates going to college and helping with their application made them realize their own dreams. I loved every minute of it."



Marissa at the Winnebago Immersion.

In the fall of 2008, Begay went on a service trip and has done service every fall and spring break. Since that time, she has coordinated the last two immersions to AZ/NM, attended South Dakota and Winnebago immersions, and attended a CCSJ spring break trip to Stroud, OK. Her goal as a mentor was to see other students realize their dreams by helping them build a résumé, edit essays, and encourage them. She was inspired to be a mentor to help others. She has personally mentored five students from Chinle. She helped her protégés with their application by editing and offering ideas that they could add to her essays. Begay kept in touch throughout the entire application process by emails and encouragement. Her contribution helped the young women by advising them to put personality into their essays. Begay felt was as if she was an older sister leading her little sister in the right direction. Begay learned a lot about the students and developed her abilities to help students as a mentor. Mentoring helped her gain confidence. She also felt personal fulfillment since three of the students she mentored earned the Gates scholarship.

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS

"Do not take the scholarship for granted. It is the best thing that can happen to you. My dreams came true with the help of Gates Millennium Scholarship. I encourage you to do your best and stay committed. Trust me, it pays off to not have to worry about loans or work study. Good luck!"

"I encourage you to not hold back; just motivate yourself to get it done with your best effort. The difficult part of the application for me is describing the awards and services. I would recommend that you describe with your personality because that is what the reader wants to read. They want to hear your voice, so let them hear it. Always be straight forward and add character to your essays. Again, it is a bonus if you add your personality into it. Do it at your pace; one essay at a time. Think of the application as your job. You literally get paid to go to school. It is up to you if you do treat it like a job and put as much time and effort your schedule will."

LOC HOANG GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLAR CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY



Loc Hoang is a senior majoring in exercise science at Creighton University. He plans to attend physical therapy school and to help his community.

In high school his involvement included soccer, wrestling, Creighton University Classic Upward Bound, National Honor Society, ESL club, UNO Summer Scholars, and treasurer for LEO club. The most influential organizations in which Loc was involved were UNO Summer Scholars and Creighton University Upward Bound. Both organizations had an impact on his career in high school by giving him the experiences of a college student.

As an active student on Creighton campus, Loc is involved with the Peer 2 Peer mentoring program, the fundraising committee of the Vietnamese Friendly Association, president of the Vietnamese Christian

Life community, Asian Student Association, Minority Association of Pre-Health Students, and Vietnamese Student Association. He also served as a Resident Advisor for Creighton's Classic Upward Bound program, Coordinator for the CCSJ service trip to Montgomery, AL, and intern at Community Rehab Physical Therapy.

As a Gates scholar and big brother, he shared the experiences he has accumulated to support his younger brother, Tai, by mentoring him on the Gates application. He gave him advice and tried his best to help his

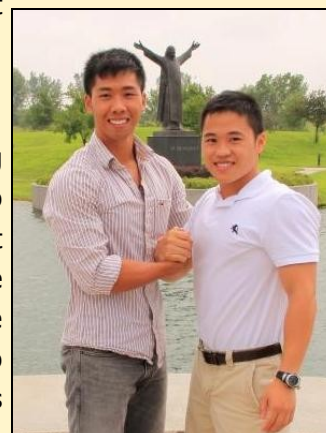
*"We came to
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brother to realize how important it was to keep up his GPA, be more involve in school organizations, and in the community.

"It was an awesome feeling that I couldn't really describe, but I was so happy for him because he worked so hard, and he deserved it. It had a big impact on my family financially because now my parents don't have to worry how to pay for our education anymore. I think we are the first family in Nebraska that both of us are Gates Scholars. It's an honor, and I think we made our parents proud. We came to the USA in 2003, and now looking back, I see that I have gone far, though there were a lot of things that I could have done better. Sometimes I regret letting go all the opportunities that came to me."

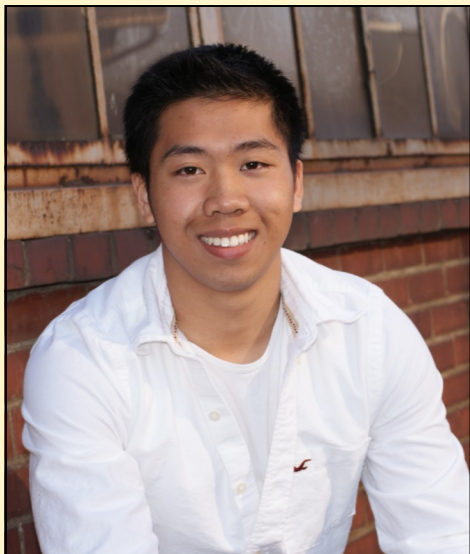
ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

"The Gates application is long, and I would encourage students to start thinking and preparing for it early. Don't wait until the last month before the deadline to do it. Keep up the GPA, build up your résumé, and really spend a good amount of time working on your essay. The essays are really important because through them you will present yourself as a person. Have at least two people revise your essay, don't let them change your story or the point you want to make, but let them give you some good advice on how to make the essays better."



Tai and Loc Hoang

TAI HOANG GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLAR AND MENTOR



Tai Hoang is a junior studying to become a Pharmacist. The Gates Millennium Scholarship helped his dreams unfold. Tai is majoring in Exercise Science and plans to apply to Pharmacy School after completing three years of undergraduate. He wants to become a pharmacist and travel around the world to help people with limited access to medicine.

Tai was a student at Papillion/La Vista High School where he was involved with the LEO (service club), National Honor Society, College Bound, and more. His leadership at Creighton University includes the Asian Student Association, the Creighton University Latino Student Association, Pre-Pharmacy Club, Peer 2 Peer mentoring, Gateway program mentor, Gateway Immersion trips, and Center for Service and Justice (CCSJ) service trip to Stroud, OK. Tai was also a Coordinator for the fall immersion trip to Eagle Butte, South Dakota.

Tai reveals he is proud to be awarded this honor, especially after coming to Omaha from Vietnam about seven years ago and entering 7th grade without speaking English. His parents did not want to leave their home country, but they wanted a better future for their children. Tai's older brother, Loc, being a Gates Scholar, was a great resource and a positive role model. Loc, provided Tai with tips for the essays and gave him information on what to expect and what not to do. Tai also received help from Tami, **Dr. Nina Ha, Bidong Tot**, and other Gates Scholars. Tai says "Without their help, I don't think I would be able to win the Gates Scholarship. The help and the generosity of my Gates mentors made me feel thankful, and most importantly, they greatly impacted my education in terms of being able to attend a university and receive a higher education. There are countless students out there who are in need of the help like I did, that is why I volunteer as a Gates mentor. As a mentor I know I made a difference in a student's life one way or another."

Tai says of being a mentor, "I learned about the students' educational life, their culture, traditions, and as well as their interests. Through my Gates Immersion trips helping younger students, I was able to see their growth in terms of their confidence in school, social interactions, and their expression of personality." Tai believes after a full week of interaction with the students, they were more comfortable expressing themselves. He said this made it easy for him to approach and help them while learning about their progress in school. He says, "Interacting with other students not only helped me feel confident about myself, but it also made me realize that I have a lot to give, and to better understand my weaknesses and strengths." He feels the students benefits not only with the application and college process but he says, "I think I helped increase their confidence level in school and as a whole person."

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS

"Start early, work on essay during the summer, make a goal and be determined, know exactly what you want, get involved in organizations, and built a relationship with your recommender and nominator. The process is long; try to stay on top of deadlines. Be true to yourself, stay focused, and be determined till the end."

CHESTER ASHONG

GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLAR AND MENTOR

Chester Ashong is from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Currently he is a third year Pharmacy student. At Creighton, Chester is involved with the Pharmacy and Health Professions Student Government (PHPSG) as Vice President of Pharmacy, is a member of Rho Chi Society, was a PHPSG CSU Pharmacy Representative, and was a Welcome Week Ambassador. He was also awarded the PHPSG Student Leadership Award and the Best Poster for the St. Albert's Day/University Research Day.

Ashong is a recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, the class of 2007. He benefited from the scholarship by having the majority of his college education at Creighton University paid for. While the Gates Scholarship does not pay for pharmacy school under the graduate school category, they will pay up to five years for undergraduate students who are accepted to early-entry graduate programs. After pharmacy school, Chester would like to complete a post graduate one-year pharmacy residency.



*"Bill Gates
has inspired me
to follow in his
footsteps"*

Ashong was committed to completing the application, knowing the consequences would be well rewarding in the long run. The challenging components within the application were the essay questions, but undoubtedly, he gave it his all. His main motivation was not having the burden of paying for college on his parents or himself. When he first heard he was a scholarship recipient he was ecstatic and thankful to God for what the scholarship represented. The scholarship has allowed Chester to succeed in school without having to worry about how to afford his college education. Ashong states, "The scholarship is worth every penny, and I am glad Bill Gates has inspired me to follow in his footsteps and give back both now and after school."

Ashong says he volunteered as a mentor because he wanted to have the opportunity to help another student just as he was helped when he first started as a freshman. He says, "College can be an overwhelming experience, and I wanted to be able to make that experience as stress-free as possible for another student." He says of being a mentor, "This experience was great for me because I was able to learn about Native American culture from my student and grow as a leader at the same time. I feel like I was able to make an impact because my protégé appreciated the help I provided him with preparing for tests and how to succeed while in college. Although my protégé transferred to another school to pursue a different career, he is now greatly impacting his culture."

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

His advice to students is to always stay on track and set deadlines to complete each section of the scholarship. He personally found it easier to do a section every day, so he would not have to feel bogged down. He highly suggests not waiting till the last minute to submit the application. The sooner you turn it in, the better you will feel. Always remember to have someone read it over for you to correct your mistakes.

2011-2012
CREIGHTON
GATES SCHOLARS

Chester N. Ashong
Baptiste Beauvais
Marissa Begay
Bryan Bennett
Emmanuel A. Chavez
Ramon Chavez
Amy Lan Anh Dao
Tai Q. Do
Ari-el Earth
Awatif B. Elias

Dylan H. Fills Pipe
Xavier Glover
Roger Gonzales
Loc N. Hoang
Tai A. Hoang
Monica E. Ibarra
Yashswee Kc
Nhu P. Le
Saw Lot
Khanh T. Mai

Laura Magana
Dilasha Neupane
Christina Nguyen
Jason Q. Nguyen
Edward Parish
Lucia Rodriguez
Kerri K. Trujillo
Steele H. Valenzuela
Adam Watters
Matthew B. Wilson

