

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In past newsletters we've focused on the fantastic work done by our state partnerships and our advisory council, as well as on research and trends in education. But we've only touched briefly on the State Scholars Initiative's reason for being: the students it works with and serves. This month we profile 16 Scholars living in small towns and big cities, from Utah to New Hampshire, Wyoming to Arkansas.

These bright young men and women have big dreams – and they're not afraid of the hard work it takes to achieve them. All acknowledge that SSI has played a major role in getting them closer to their goals. We're proud to devote this month's newsletter to these remarkable Scholars.



Terese Rainwater



Adrienne Hatchett

Adrienne Hatchett, Arkansas.

Adrienne Hatchett, 19, has family ties to SSI: her dad is an SSI business presenter – in fact, he came to her junior high to talk about the program. It was a turning point for Adrienne. "Back in 8th grade, I wasn't really thinking about college. But SSI made me realize that now's the time to start getting ready. I've been keeping up my grades ever since." And she made it a point to take challenging classes: in her senior year at Pine Bluff High in Pine Bluff, AR, she was enrolled

in AP biology, AP English lit, and AP calculus. "Biology was the hardest. We had to cover the whole book in a year – and it was a *big* book." Now a freshman biology major at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Adrienne has at least three reasons to appreciate the extra push SSI gave her: she won a full-ride scholarship from the university, got college credit for several classes, and is more than ready to do well. "College is kind of easy, compared to senior year."

Julio Badillo, Connecticut. Julio Badillo, 14, is just a freshman at Cross Connecticut Scholars Academy in New Haven, CT, but he's already looking ahead to college – and SSI is helping him get ready for it. Julio dreams of becoming a doctor, maybe a surgeon. "I'll have to take tough courses to make that happen. But that will just improve the value of my education." Right now, his hardest course is physical chemistry, which

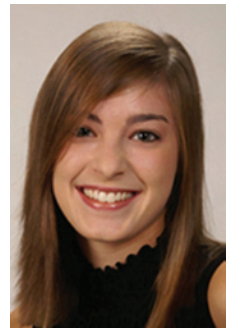


Julio Badillo

takes several hours of work every week, along with a lot of care and close attention to detail. It's not easy, but it's a step toward his goal. "It's definitely worth it to aim high and make your dream come true."

Auburn Wigginton, Kentucky.

Auburn Wigginton, 17, first heard SSI being talked up by some of her classmates at Campbellsville High School in Campbellsville, a small town in central Kentucky. "Some kids in my physics class told me about it – and it sounded like it'd be a great thing for me. I want to do something in the medical field, so I knew I'd need the math and science." The program pushes her to work hard, but there's more to it than that. "We get to do lots of different things. We've gone to the University of Kentucky and viewed planets and galaxies through a high-powered telescope, and we'll be touring some businesses – like the Amazon distributor and the county hospital." Auburn, a senior, is hoping to attend the University of Kentucky in Lexington next year – and she's ready for it. "I think the hard classes I've taken will help in lots of ways – and I'll get some college credit, too."



Auburn Wigginton

Felicia Baltazar, Massachusetts. Felicia Baltazar's dream is to study molecular biology and to someday make a positive contribution to humanity, while pursuing orthodontistry as well. A junior at Chicopee High School in Chicopee, Felicia, 16, is already on the road to realizing that very ambitious goal—and SSI is helping to spur her on. "It's giving me even more initiative to take the hardest courses possible. I try to go above



Felicia Baltazar

and beyond, not just to pass through. I want to know that my four years in high school were worthwhile, not just wasted time, and that they will prepare me for my future years in college." In addition to AP courses in history and English, she's also taking third-year Spanish and plans to take a fourth: "Learning another language helps me to understand different cultures, and that will open up new opportunities." Chicopee Scholars work hard, but they play, too: they've had socials and outings to places like the University of Massachusetts, as well as award ceremonies. "It helps remind us that we're participating in something that's great for us."

Kathryn Maxwell, Mississippi.

Going to a small high school in a small town didn't keep Kathryn Maxwell, 18, from dreaming big. And thanks to State Scholars, she had lots of opportunities to challenge herself. Now a freshman at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Kathryn attended Saltillo High in Saltillo, a town set in northern Mississippi with some 4,000 residents – and only about 150 seniors in last year's graduating class. Kathryn, who's majoring in chemical engineering, says that taking a rigorous curriculum in high school, including AP classes, readied her for college work in a very challenging field. "I feel well-prepared. I'm taking more advanced math and science and continuing to study Spanish, too." Pushing herself to excel as a Scholar literally paid off, as well: Kathryn won the Cornelius Vanderbilt Scholarship, Vanderbilt ENGAGE Scholar, Top Mississippi STAR Student Scholarship, National Merit Scholarship, Robert C. Byrd Honor Scholarship, Champions for Children Scholarship, and Lowe's Regional Winner Scholarship.



Kathryn Maxwell



Alison Lajoie

Alison Lajoie, New Hampshire. Late last year, Alison Lajoie, 18, a senior at Campbell High School in Litchfield, NH, found out that she got into her first-choice school, St. Michael's College in Burlington, VT. It's one more step toward her long-time dream: she plans to become a doctor. And taking a rigorous curriculum in high school has laid the ground for that. But for Alison, being a Scholar isn't just about doing well academically – it's about learning. "I'd get bored if I didn't challenge myself – I learn more, and learn in different ways. It's more gratifying to get an A on a tough assignment." She says she's always been like that, but she notices that SSI is having a real impact on some of the younger students she knows – including kids on her soccer team. "It's really making them take school more seriously."

Brianna Nichols, New Hampshire.

Brianna Nichols, 18, is a senior at Winnisquam High in Tilton, NH – but you'd have a hard time guessing that from her transcript. She's taking almost a full year's worth of college-level classes – from stats, psychology, and sociology to software applications and writing. "I could've graduated early, but I wanted to be sure I was ready. And I get college credit, too." That will help save tuition dollars. As importantly, she says, "it's getting me used to the quality of work they expect at the college level." Brianna, who's thinking about studying history and education in college – and maybe someday being a high school teacher – heard about SSI as a junior. She'd already taken a lot of the core courses, but admits there are some – like physics – that she might have skipped. She's glad she didn't. "Physics is a rigorous, year-long course. There's lots of hands-on work, lots of note-taking. It's taught me how to really listen – and that'll be a huge help once I get to college."



Brianna Nichols

Jesse Shull, New Hampshire.

Jesse Shull, 16, likes to think outside the box. He started a program at Newport Middle High School in Newport, NH, to convert gas-powered vehicles to electric power – and just finished the first one. "It took us hundreds of hours to do it – you have to get up early if you're going to find the time." But that's not his only commitment. He's also a competitive wrestler, fifth in the state in his weight class. And he's a Scholar. "I'm thinking about a career in engineering, or maybe renewable resources, so I'm taking the hardest math and science – they're my strengths. English isn't my best subject, but I like the challenge – and I see the point. It definitely improves my writing." Though neither of his parents went to college, all three of his siblings are attending top-notch schools – and Jesse's excited about what the future holds for him. "I like pushing myself and doing lots of things – you can fit it all in if you really focus."



Jesse Shull



Montré Washington

Montré Washington, Oklahoma.

Montré Washington, 18, is twice a Scholar. Last year he graduated as an Oklahoma Scholar from Ardmore High School, set in the small town of Ardmore in southern Oklahoma, having fulfilled the requirements of the SSI Core Course of Study. And now, as a college freshman at the University of Oklahoma, he's a Gates Millennium Scholar, his college education funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. SSI

definitely helped him get up to college speed, he says. "I knew that taking challenging courses would help me in the long run – and they were more interesting. Some of my science classes in high school were harder than my college classes. And my English 2 class was really tough – it definitely made me a better writer." That last skill will help him achieve his long-term dream: "I've always wanted to be a lawyer. Getting into law school is my next big goal."

Maija Gouldin, South Dakota.

Maija Gouldin, 19, has two older brothers and a sister, so when she was still a student at Sturgis Brown High School in Sturgis, SD, she already had an idea of what she needed to do to get ready for college. "They told me to take as many hard classes as possible and to avoid slacker courses – they said I'd end up paying for those." That attitude made SSI a perfect fit for her. "The workload in high school was intense, but I learned a lot, and it made me a more flexible thinker." Maija, who won a scholarship from Black Hills State in Spearfish, SD, where she's a freshman, plans to major in nursing. And just like her older brothers and sister, she's a role model – for her younger sister. "Taking tough courses definitely made the transition to college easier. I feel like I'm ahead, like I can compete."



Maija Gouldin



Amanda Womble

taking tough classes a habit. "AP biology was the hardest, and AP English 4 was challenging, too. You had to study every single night and couldn't miss a moment of class or you'd be left behind." She plans to go into nursing and become a nurse anesthetist – and she feels ready to tackle the college classes she'll need to achieve that dream. "I have friends who graduated from high school last year, and they told me if you can pass Mrs. Earl's AP class, you'll do fine in college."

Anthony Ardivino, Utah.

For Anthony Ardivino, 18, State Scholars was a natural choice: he started taking harder classes in middle school. "I always wanted to be challenged – I hate being in a class where I'm not. You get so much more from the material when you push yourself to the limit." As a Scholar at Park City High in Park City, UT, he racked up enough AP credits to give him sophomore standing at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, where he's in his first year. He's thinking of majoring in international studies, with a mass communication focus. All the science he took in high school may not help directly with that, but it has a payoff. "Those classes made me think hard, and demanded creativity. Especially physics – it's all about problem-solving." They had another benefit, too. "Because I came in as a sophomore, I can be a little freer and explore new things. This year, I'm taking my first art class and music appreciation. I'm expanding myself and becoming a more well-rounded person."



Anthony Ardivino



Brittany Ryan

Brittany Ryan, South Dakota.

Brittany Ryan, 18, likes to set ambitious goals. A freshman at Southeast Tech in Sioux Falls, SD, she's studying to be an ultrasound technologist and is interested in specializing in cardiology. And she's ready to take on that challenge, thanks to the solid preparation she got through State Scholars. Brittany first heard about SSI during her junior year at Sturgis Brown High School, where she was active in the School-to-Work Program, doing

internships in a hospital radiology department. "SSI's a good program, no matter what you end up doing. The array of classes is quite broad. And being a Scholar pushed me to take some classes I might not have taken otherwise, like higher math and science. It also made me determined to do well in all my classes." Pushing herself in high school led to a pair of college scholarships, along with the ability to excel. "My Scholars background is really helping me now. Some of my classmates are struggling, but thanks to SSI, I'm well prepared."

Amanda Womble, Tennessee. Amanda Womble, 17, first heard about State Scholars in 8th grade. "Some reps from SSI came to my school and told us about the program. I had my heart set on it – they said we'd get a medal! I took the brochure home, and that's how we made up my freshman schedule." Now a senior at Gibbs High School in Corryton, TN, Amanda's made



Hannah Cassada

Hannah Cassada, Virginia.

Hannah Cassada, 17, took her first dance class when she was only three years old – and since then she's trained in everything from ballet and lyrical to tap and jazz. But even though there's no straight-line connection between her passion and, say, physics or statistics, she's still happy she took on the SSI Core Course of Study. "It prepared me to work hard and study in college – and to learn at a college pace. And a lot of the classes I took – like precalculus, statistics, and biology

– will actually give me college credit." A senior at Tunstall High in Dry Fork, VA, she also found that challenging classes can be lots of fun. Physics was one tough class she might've skipped, but she ended up being part of a "physics road show," teaching grade-school kids about the physics of rollercoasters and the way sound travels. Hannah plans to double-major in dance and early childhood education. "If I get an education degree, it'd be great to come back and teach in this area. The



industries we used to have here – textiles, tobacco, and furniture – have all left, so kids really need a good education. Scholars is helping with that.”

Marc Bacon, Wyoming. To become a Scholar, Marc Bacon, 19, had to go the extra mile. His school, Pine Bluffs High in Pine Bluffs, WY, was so small – just 32 people in his graduating class – that it didn’t offer physics, so he had to take it as a college course. But that wasn’t his toughest class. “Second-year chemistry was definitely the hardest – I took it just for the challenge. It was a lot of work, but I loved the lab. It ended up being my favorite class.” Now a freshman at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Marc’s an anthropology major. “I have an uncle who’s an archaeologist, and I’ve gone on digs with him in southern New Mexico in the summer. I plan to go on to graduate school.” Taking the SSI Core Course of Study will help him meet that goal. “It got me used to doing college-level work, so now it’s easier for me.” That hard work had another payoff, too: Marc won Wyoming’s Hathaway Honors Scholarship, the highest that the state offers.



Marc Bacon



Walter Wilson

Walter Wilson, Wyoming. Walter Wilson, 18, likes a challenge – that’s one reason SSI’s rigorous Core Course of Study appealed to him. He’s now in his first year at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, an international agriculture business major, but he already has sophomore standing, thanks to a slew of AP and college-level classes he took when he was a student at Burns High School in the tiny town of Burns, WY, near Cheyenne. “I would’ve had a higher GPA if I’d taken easier classes, but ultimately I’m glad I took hard ones – it helped me really understand the concepts. The other students were great, and I loved the teachers and the small classes.” Walter, who was also very active in the Future Farmers of America and the American Cancer Society, found that a rigorous curriculum was excellent preparation for college work. “I come from a small town and grew up on a farm – living in a dorm with lots of other people was a much bigger shock than the academics. Taking harder classes prepares your mental state – I know I’m not going to get A’s on everything just by showing up for class.”

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STATE SCHOLARS: PARTICIPATING STATES AND CONTACTS

- ★ **ARIZONA**
www.azacademicscholars.org
- ★ **ARKANSAS**
www.arkansasscholars.org
- ★ **CONNECTICUT**
www.ctscholars.org/intro.htm
- ★ **INDIANA**
www.indianacore40scholars.org
- ★ **KENTUCKY**
www.kyscholars.com
- ★ **LOUISIANA**
www.louisianascholars.org
- ★ **MARYLAND**
www.mbrt.org/scholars
- ★ **MASSACHUSETTS**
www.mastatescholars.org
- ★ **MICHIGAN**
www.michiganscholars.org
- ★ **MISSISSIPPI**
www.mississippischolars.org
- ★ **MISSOURI**
www.showmescholars.com
- ★ **NEBRASKA**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **NEW HAMPSHIRE**
www.nhscholars.org
- ★ **NEW JERSEY**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **NEW MEXICO**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **OKLAHOMA**
www.obecinfo.com/scholars.php
- ★ **RHODE ISLAND**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **SOUTH DAKOTA**
www.doe.sd.gov/statescholars/index.asp
- ★ **TENNESSEE**
www.tennesseescholars.org
- ★ **UTAH**
www.utahscholars.org/
- ★ **VIRGINIA**
www.vacareereducationfoundation.org
- ★ **WASHINGTON**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **WEST VIRGINIA**
www.educationalalliance.org/StateScholars/StateScholars.asp
- ★ **WYOMING**
www.wyomingscholars.com

Nineteen states currently participate in SSI. These states have received federal funds and have operated SSI projects in their states, or they have completed their SSI projects and remain within the SSI network. Five additional states previously were funded and operated and concluded SSI projects: Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Washington.