



NEWS RELEASE

Hanger Foundation Announces 2021 Diversity Scholarship Recipients

8/23/2021

AUSTIN, Texas--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- As part of its ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion in orthotics and prosthetics (O&P) and its pledge to help recruit underrepresented students of color into the profession, [The Hanger Foundation](#) today announced the 2021 recipients of the inaugural Hanger Foundation Diversity Scholarships.

Six graduate students from three universities were each awarded a two-year scholarship to help supplement the cost of their Masters of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO) programs. In addition to receiving the scholarship, all recipients will be offered a two-year mentorship, with the option of pursuing a residency at Hanger Clinic. Congratulations to the following recipients:

- Taushima "Shima" Nixon (Alabama State University)
- Kayla Tillman (Alabama State University)
- Felicia Farrar (Northwestern University)
- Althea Fordyce (Northwestern University)
- Juan Argueta (University of Hartford)
- Isabella "Noelle" Medina (University of Hartford)

"I am proud to accept the Hanger Foundation Diversity Scholarship," said Northwestern University student and scholarship recipient, Althea Fordyce. "This scholarship affirms that I am accepted into a space where, historically, few African American women venture."

Each scholar was selected by their respective university for displaying remarkable academic achievement, community service, and a passion for diversity within the O&P profession.

"As the only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) with a P&O program, Alabama State University (ASU) plays a crucial role in addressing the lack of diversity among certified practitioners in the field," said Scott Bretl, Department Chair for Prosthetics & Orthotics, College of Health Sciences at ASU. "We are excited to award the scholarships to two Black/African American women as they continue their educational pathway towards clinical practice. Certified practitioners in the field of P&O are currently only about 28% female, with a small percentage being Black/African American. The stark differences between demographics of practitioners and patients are most obvious in the South, so it is fitting that ASU's program seeks a shift that would positively impact health disparities and inclusive patient care. Both of our scholarship recipients (Taushima "Shima" Nixon and Kayla Tillman) demonstrated in their application a unique perspective and acute awareness of this representation gap and what it means for them and a significant portion of our patient population. We are happy to have them begin our program this fall and engage in relevant conversations throughout our curriculum."

In September 2020, Hanger, Inc. **committed** to take tangible actions to help address nationwide systemic racism, interrupt bias, and ultimately create a more inclusive profession. One of the five areas of focus was attracting more diverse candidates to O&P graduate programs. The Hanger Foundation Diversity Scholarship program was **established** in January 2021 through a founding donation from Hanger, Inc.

"It is an honor to align with the Hanger Foundation on the important work of increasing access to the MSPO degree, with the ultimate goal of ensuring O&P clinicians better represent the patient populations they serve," said Hanger President and Chief Executive Officer, Vinit Asar. "We are proud of these six outstanding individuals, who are the future of our profession, and look forward to having their unique perspective and talents within the O&P industry as we help build a more inclusive profession to better serve all."

The mission of the Hanger Foundation is to advance our communities by supporting organizations that help people with physical challenges live life as fully as possible. To learn more about the scholarship program, our Empowerment Grants, and how you can get involved, visit: <http://www.hangerfoundation.org>.

About the Hanger Foundation

The Hanger Foundation was founded in 2009 by Hanger, Inc., a leading provider of orthotic and prosthetic patient care services and solutions. Hanger's heritage of charitable giving began over 160 years ago. For many years, Hanger clinicians and employees consistently and generously donated millions of dollars in care and financial contributions to a variety of causes, including hardship cases in their own communities. In 2009, Hanger formalized and increased its philanthropic work by establishing a non-profit organization, the Hanger Foundation. For more information, visit: <http://www.hangerfoundation.org>.

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Source: Hanger Foundation & Hanger, Inc.