

Dennis Kennedy Gives \$20,000 To Fund College Scholarships



DiversityFirst™ Scholarships Fulfill Young People's Visions

Beth Douglass Silcox

Like so many college-bound kids, Lauren Anderson's parents told her without scholarships her first choice school was out of reach. Graduating from University of Miami's elite marine science department was key to this young woman's future, so she got busy.

After all, where better to study the biology and chemistry of marine mammals than just steps from the Florida beach? She also figured a University of Miami undergraduate degree would place her as a solid contender for graduate school.

Anderson's scholarship search landed her among a group of ten 2008 graduating high school seniors, honored by the National Diversity Council as their first-ever recipients of DiversityFirst™ Scholarships.

Dennis Kennedy, founder and CEO of the National Diversity Council, personally funded ten, \$2,000

scholarships in 2008. "Education is so important, I am very thankful I have the opportunity to give back," he says about the awards based on grade point average and a diversity-focused essay. "I would love to be able to give away \$100,000 a year in scholarship money."

For now, Kennedy's happy to help fulfill the vision these ten young people have for their lives, including Lauren Anderson, aspiring marine mammal researcher. "The Diversity scholarship, along with others, enabled me to attend University of Miami...my first choice school," Anderson says.

Winning a DiversityFirst™ Scholarship awakened in Veronica Lizaola a curiosity to explore the world. "I feel I gained so much more insight on diversity by gathering my thoughts on it and submitting it as part of my scholarship application, conversing with others about it, and hearing Jeb Bush, our keynote speaker, talk about the importance of diversity," she says.

Bush, the former Florida governor, addressed scholarship winners and their families during an awards

Updates

banquet. There, Lizaola mingled with fellow scholarship recipients, meeting people with varied academic interests. She says, "That brief experience prepared me for the 30,000+ diverse student body at my academic institution. From that overall experience, I valued diversity even more and made it a strong priority academically and personally."

Humble, Texas is a long way from Washington, DC and DiversityFirst™ scholar Makeda Easter says, "This scholarship was one of the reasons why I was able to go to a school like Georgetown. It's very far away and a private institution, so it is expensive."

But it is at Georgetown University, studying science, technology and international affairs with a concentration in global health, where Easter's vision for her future begins. Easter's major is basically the intersection of issues in science within the global realm. "Generally, I hope to have a job where I will make a positive impact on the world," she says. That could mean medical school or volunteering for the Peace Corps.

"It's my heart's desire to help our youth grow," Kennedy says of his dedication to education and making the Diversity1st Scholarships an integral part of the National Diversity Council's mission today and in the future.

Complete list of DiversityFirst™ Scholarship Recipients:

Lauren Anderson, University of Miami
Boshavar Callis, Texas A&M
Makeda Easter, Georgetown University
Brooke Kelley, University of Southern California
Veronica Lizaola, University of Houston
Arissa Nath, Texas State University
Stephanie O'Grady, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Sonya Panjwani, Boston University
James Salazar, University of Texas
Jonathan Tirk, Tarleton State University

Lauren Anderson graduates in May 2012 with a B.S. in psychology and minors in biology and human and social development. "With this degree, I want to work with children with developmental disabilities, such as autism, and help improve the individual as well as the family's quality of life. There are also places currently researching Dolphin Assisted Therapy (DAT) for those disabilities. This research is very exciting to me, and perfectly blends my interests," she says.



Makeda Easter is extremely excited about spending a semester abroad in Buenos Aires, where she hopes to become fluent in Spanish, take courses in global and public health, and volunteer with an organization that deals with HIV/AIDS. Easter says, "Going to Georgetown has opened many doors for me, and I feel that if I would have gone to another school, I wouldn't have ended up on the same path I'm on now."

