

Pathways to Medicine Scholarship

Supporting the enrolment and success of under-represented medical students in Alberta

By Pauline Zulueta

Graduating high school and preparing to enter the world of post-secondary education can often be a stressful time. For students coming from low-income families, furthering their education may seem out of reach — especially for those who dream of becoming a doctor.

In 2016, the Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) at the University of Calgary

introduced the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship, which is designed for high school students from under-represented populations (e.g. Indigenous, rural or low socio-economic backgrounds) who wish to pursue a career in medicine. The goal of this scholarship is to foster diversity within the medical profession.

Every year, up to five students are provided tuition support towards a

UCalgary undergraduate program of their choice, a relocation allowance (if needed), a paid summer research internship, and mentorship opportunities.

Once their undergraduate degree is complete, and certain criteria are met, Pathways to Medicine scholars are guaranteed admission into the CSM's Undergraduate Medical Education program. In total, each scholarship recipient

receives up to \$30,000 of funding towards their journey of becoming a doctor.

Based on research published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, medical students in Canada were found to be unrepresentative of the general Canadian population, with medical students more likely to be children of highly educated parents within high-earning households in urban areas.

With the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship program, students from under-represented populations are given access to the post-secondary education and resources necessary to achieve their academic and scholarly goals — transforming Alberta's next generation of doctors to more accurately reflect the diverse patient population.

For more information, visit cumming.ucalgary.ca/pathways or email pathways@ucalgary.ca.



Pathways to Medicine Scholar Amber Cox

Born in Ontario, Amber Cox, a Pathways to Medicine scholar, has moved all over the country — from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan then British Columbia. However, she says her adolescent years spent in Cardston, Alta., has made the most impact on her outlook and future.

"I saw so much addiction growing up," says 18-year-old Amber. "It's sad because addictions take over the people you love as well. I want to be in a position where I can give back and help."

Although she has many interests — such as photography, literature, rugby and playing the guitar — Amber says she has always dreamt of pursuing a career in medicine. She wants to study psychology and neuroscience in order to better understand addictions.

Due to limited means, she was unsure how she'd be able to complete the necessary education. After her high school counsellor approached her about the CSM's Pathways to Medicine Scholarship program, Amber immediately jumped at the chance to apply.

"Medicine was always something I thought about, but the financial side was really holding me back," she says. "This scholarship has really opened up that door for me."

Amber is currently in her first year of studies at the University of Calgary. She's enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts — English Literature program and is a member of the Arts and Science Honours Academy (ASHA), a program that gives students with high academic standing an opportunity to supplement their undergraduate degree with language studies, experiential learning and a study abroad experience.

"I'm the first one in my family to be going to university," says Amber. "This is kind of a turning point for our family as a whole, and for our future generations. This scholarship means breaking the chain in my family and that's really the most important thing for me."

After graduating medical school, Amber hopes to be known as a physician that focuses on a one-on-one personalized approach to medicine and encourages her patients to make more conscious decisions about their life and health.

"I'd love to be a doctor who inspires people to be more active and less reliant on technology and drugs," she says. "I also want to be in a position where I'm stable enough to give back generously to those who've given to me."



Pathways to Medicine Scholar Mathieu Chin

After playing competitive hockey throughout his childhood, Mathieu Chin saw firsthand the many injuries athletes will sustain in the name of sports. Now 19 years old, Mathieu is a learner in the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship program and is currently helping to research the effects of body checking policies in youth ice hockey players.

"I've always had a strong passion for sports," says Mathieu, who played ice hockey for 13 years. "What really propelled me to pursue medicine was my involvement with sports and seeing all the injuries."

During his senior year at John D. Diefenbaker High School, Mathieu stumbled upon the CSM's website and discovered the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship.

With a track record of academic excellence and community leadership, as well as a need for financial assistance, Mathieu applied for the scholarship and was accepted in June 2016.

"I grew up in a family where no one was in the medical field," he says. "My mom is a cook and my dad works in a warehouse. I came from high school not knowing many people who wanted to go into medicine, and now here at the University of Calgary, there's a lot of support."

Now in his second year of the Bachelor of Science - Kinesiology program, Mathieu says he plans to continue his research and hopes to get involved with the Scholars Academy, a group of the university's most ambitious students who are considered outstanding academics and leaders in their community.

This past August, Mathieu was recognized for the Best Podium Presentation in the Healthy Outcomes category during the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute's Summer Student Research Day. He presented his research on the effects of body checking policy in youth ice hockey players.

Currently majoring in biomechanics, Mathieu has high hopes of pursuing a specialty in orthopedic surgery or neurology and credits the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship for helping him take his first steps towards that goal.

"Now I have an idea of what my future will look like," he says. "If I didn't have this scholarship, I'd be wondering every day about my career and what I'd be doing. This scholarship has given me a safety net and an opportunity to explore my areas of interest, knowing I'm encouraged and supported."