

# Four College transfer students awarded

## 1 from Miramar earns prestigious Cooke scholarship

BY GARY WARTH

SAN DIEGO

Four local community college students, including three from MiraCosta College, are among only 55 in the country to receive the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke scholarship this year.

The scholarship for undergraduate transfer students covers the final two or three years necessary to earn bachelor's degrees and can be as high as \$40,000 annually.

At MiraCosta in Oceanside, the scholarships were awarded to Farshud Sorourifar, Vanessa "Van" Reynolds and Omer Azizi, a native Afghan whose family fled to Pakistan before emigrating to America.

At Miramar College in San Diego, the scholarship was awarded to Ishak Mahamoud, whose parents immigrated from Somalia.

About 3,000 students applied for the scholarship, the largest private scholarship for two-year and community college transfer students in the country.

Azizi, who came to the United States with his parents in 2014 when he was 21, has earned several other scholarships and was selected for the All California Academic Team.

He also has received the President's Volunteer Service Award for contributing more than 500 hours of volunteer work in the 2016-17 school year. His community service includes picking up refugees as they arrive at the airport and helping them find housing, jobs and with various chores.

Azizi plans to attend the University of Southern California to pursue degrees in business administration and sociology. His ambition is to head the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and run the International Rescue Committee.

“But whatever I do, my focus will always be on education,” he said. “My mission in life is to empower children to escape war and poverty through education. Education is the key. Technology is the answer,” Azizi said.

Sorourifar returned to school in 2013 after deciding he no longer wanted to work in the automotive field, and then began taking pre-engineering courses, with goal of working in alternative energy.

“After doing more research, I found out the biggest breakthroughs in that field are coming from chemical engineering departments from all the top universities,” he said. “So, I’ve focused on chemical engineering. It’s been great.”

Sorourifar, who hopes to attend University of California Berkeley, serves as the Phi Theta Kappa president, tutors at the Math Learning Center and is an Honors Scholar Program navigator.

Reynolds is on the President’s Permanent Honor Roll and has a 4.0 grade-point average. She is active with such organizations as the North County LGBTQ Resource Center, California Coastal Commission and Habitat for Humanity International.

In August 2016, Reynolds was selected to participate in a college fellowship focusing on ways to increase access for LGBTQIA+ students in the STEM majors (science, technology, engineering and math).

Reynolds plans to pursue a bachelor’s degree in international business followed by a master of business administration and law degree from Stanford University. She hopes to work in corporate law between the United States and France as well as other French-speaking countries.

MiraCosta College has had two other recipients of the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship in the award’s 16-year history. In 2012, one went to Jamie Cook, who transferred to UC Riverside; the other, in 2014, was awarded to Travis Williamson, who went on to Columbia University.

At Miramar College, Mahamoud said receiving the scholarship was a huge surprise, and very appreciated.

“It helps a lot because I have five other siblings in my family that are all trying to go to college and my parents can’t pay for all of them, so this helps tremendously,” he said.

Mahamoud plans to graduate and hopes to study electrical engineering next fall at either UC Berkeley or UCLA.

While at Miramar, Mahamoud was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa (Beta Iota Lambda Chapter) Honor Society and was responsible for the construction of the chapter's website.

This is the fifth consecutive year that Miramar has had at least one student win an undergraduate transfer scholarship from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

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