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BCU Awards Scholarships to Undergraduate Students, Welcomes Former Recipient into Internship Program



CHICAGO – August 24, 2023 – BCU’s Purpose to Empower People to Discover Financial Freedom has fueled their scholarship program for a decade. Much like years passed, the Credit Union is pleased to present some of the nation’s most extraordinary young adults with scholarship funding to help empower their future. This includes ten honorary awards – nine Leader of Tomorrow Awards and one Samuel G. O’Kelly Memorial Award for outstanding commitment to community service.

Scholarship applicants were asked to write an essay in the form of a letter to their congressperson to explain whether they believe consumer education should be required for high school graduation. With less than 20 states including financial or consumer education in the kindergarten through twelfth grade, BCU was interested in hearing from recent high school students entering their most financially formative years. This year’s recipients exceeded BCU’s ethnic diversity goal, with 52% identifying as non-white. Recipients also represent 15 states and Puerto Rico, with students attending Boston College, Duke University, Stanford University, University of Puerto Rico, and more.

Leader of Tomorrow Award honorees include Gerardo Hernandez, recipient of the Vernon R. Loucks Jr. Award; Zinn Amos, recipient of the Ray and Irene Oddi Award; Gabriella Estrada, recipient of the John Pelletiere Award; Anna Erpenbeck, recipient of the Michele Hooper Award; Abigail Welle, recipient of the Tom Hodson Award; Kathryn Beranek, recipient of the Charles Thurman Award; Enrique Ayala-Morales, recipient of the Jose Cajigas Award, Koa Kaliebe recipient of the A. Rex Johnson Award; and Jenna Jiang, recipient of the Margot Kaplan Award. Greta Franke was honored with the Samuel G. O’Kelly Memorial Award.

In addition, many other students received scholarships and are pursuing a variety of majors including Accounting, Biology, Elementary Education, Finance, Legal Studies, Marketing, Psychology, and more.

“It never ceases to amaze me how intelligent and deserving our scholarship winners are. Each year, their achievements become more impressive, and their goals become more ambitious. BCU is so proud to be a part of their financial and academic journeys!” said Mike Valentine, BCU President & CEO.

[View the list of BCU’s 2023 Scholarship Award recipients.](#)

Empowering new opportunities

While BCU’s scholarship program enables the next generation to reach their educational goals, it can also empower them to build connections and discover new opportunities.

Nathanael Wang was the recipient of BCU’s A. Rex Johnson Leader of Tomorrow scholarship award in 2021. Wang, a then-incoming freshman at Rice University in Houston, Texas, applied for a BCU scholarship to help with anticipated college expenses.



Having developed a connection with BCU through the scholarship program and his long-term membership, Wang applied for the Credit Union’s summer 2023 internship program. Throughout his summer, Wang interned in the Audit department,

updating audit procedures, conducting risk assessment meetings with management, among many other tasks to prepare for his junior year as an economics major. “A lot of the skills are transferable because there’s a lot of emphasis on attention to detail and general knowledge of procedures and guidelines,” Wang said. Justyna Lindahl, BCU Audit Supervisor, said, “Nathanael worked hard to accomplish the tasks he was assigned, and, with his help, BCU was able to make significant progress on our 2023 goals.”

Since 2014, BCU has awarded over \$350,000 in scholarships. The program was established to assist members of the Credit Union who plan to continue their education. The awards are offered annually to students to support undergraduate academic studies at an accredited institution of the student’s choice. Selection criteria includes academics, participation in community activities, and demonstration of the Credit Union’s Shared Values, with eligible applicants required to write a short essay. If someone you know is in need of a scholarship or student loan, [refer](#) them to the Credit Union! You’ll each earn a \$25 deposit and be on your way to achieving financial freedom – that’s what best financial friends are for!

About BCU: BCU is a not-for-profit, member-owned Credit Union that is fiercely dedicated to Empowering People to Discover Financial Freedom. At just under \$6B in assets, BCU is driven by its commitment to providing a fast, easy, secure banking experience and extraordinary service for close to 350,000 members. The BCU [field of membership](#) includes employees and families of large employers that are focused on the financial well-being of their workforce; those who live or work in northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin, and the island of Puerto Rico; and subscribers of BCU’s wholly-owned Credit Union Service Organization (CUSO), Life. Money. You.® within communities and Fortune 100 workplaces throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. All BCU members enjoy lifetime access to financial services and well-being programming that inspire confidence through the brand promise “Here Today For Your Tomorrow.”

To learn more about how we can help you realize your financial dreams, visit [BCU.org](http://bcu.org).

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