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SPOTLIGHT

FEATURED

Mesa native earns \$75K scholarship to medical school

Tribune News Staff 13 hrs ago

Mesa native Jacob Sorenson has been awarded a \$75,000 scholarship for attend the University of Arizona College of Medicine, where he plans to begin his studies to become a surgeon.

Sorenson, who last month picked up an undergraduate degree in applied biological sciences at Arizona State University, is one of 82 students who will share \$7 million in Cooke Graduate Scholarships.

“Even students who excel to and through college often face financial roadblocks on the path to graduate studies,” said Seppy Basili, executive director of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. “These scholars are poised to make an impact in fields from art to medicine in ways that will transform our lives and society. Cooke Scholars share a remarkable focus on solving pressing issues, and we can’t wait to see what this year’s recipients will accomplish.”

The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation is dedicated to advancing the education of exceptionally promising students who have financial need. Since 2000, the Foundation has awarded \$190 million in scholarships to nearly 2,500 students from eighth grade through graduate school, along with counseling and other support services. The Foundation has also provided over \$100 million in grants to organizations that serve such students.

Sorenson started at ASU Polytechnic campus in 2016 as a transfer student from Mesa Community College – and for that he was one of 75 outstanding community college students from 21 states to receive the \$40,000 Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship that year.

He entered the university with an impressive resume, including research on the correlation between the use of prenatal supplements and the occurrence of autism. He continued his research at ASU and is expecting it to be published soon.

While a community college student, he worked with schools in the Mesa Unified School District to create math activities for elementary-age special-needs students and started the Autism Lego Club of the East Valley, a group of families with autistic children that meets monthly. Children in the group play with Legos, an activity that helps build coordination and fine motor skills.

He also went on a two-year mission to Mozambique, where he observed the work of health care providers in a strapped medical system where medication and supplies are in short supply. For six weeks during the summer of 2016, he went to Botswana to work with the Baylor College of Medicine Pediatric AIDS Initiative, learning how medication helps people with the virus survive.

“My time at ASU and Barrett has been incredible,” he said.

He said he knew he wanted to have a career in medicine during his Mozambique mission.

“I saw the impact medical professionals could make in the world and the sad outcomes that occurred without trained physicians. My desire to become a doctor was confirmed after I shadowed doctors over the past few years and worked in an HIV clinic in Botswana last summer,” he said.

In an interview with an ASU publication, he said his university experience left him with “many pieces of advice that stuck with me.”

“One thing in particular that seems to rise above the rest is the fact that giving a bit of extra effort can have great effects,” he said. “I realized this as I progressed through my undergrad. When I worked just a little harder, was a little kinder, reached out to professors a little more, it made a world of a difference and has allowed me to excel far beyond the average student.

Although his first Cooke Fellowship scholarship would have enabled him to go to virtually any university in the country, he said he chose ASU “due to a close connection with my research professor, Dr. James Adams.”

“With him, I was able to submit a very large thesis on the optimal prenatal supplement for the prevention of autism and other birth disorders. This research could greatly impact how we care for mothers during pregnancy and allow them to receive the correct vitamins and minerals with the correct dosage,” he said.

“I continually think of how lucky I am to be able to have so many opportunities to work hard and make a difference,” he said.