

The Appalachian Scholars Program

The Appalachian Scholars Program is a merit- and need-based scholarship program, designed to provide academically talented but economically disadvantaged students with the financial resources and the support system they need to succeed in college. Ohio University President Roderick McDavis founded the Appalachian Scholars Program in 2005 to benefit young people who are enthusiastic, show leadership potential, have financial need, and live in one of Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties.

The first graduate of the program was Erin Shipbaugh, a member of the inaugural class of Appalachian Scholars who graduated in the summer of 2009.

Erin, a business marketing major from East Rochester, Ohio, completed her degree in only three years.

"Erin is so focused and driven that she is always using time to meet her goals," said Mark Skillings, program director of

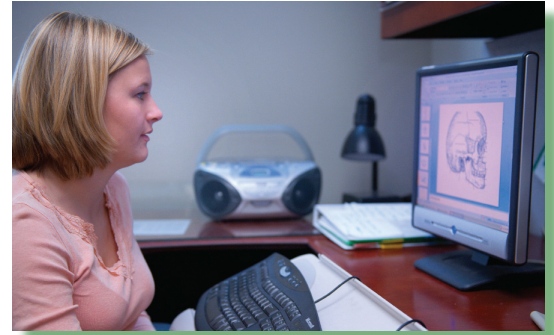


Appalachian Scholar Erin Shipbaugh with OU President Roderick McDavis

the Appalachian Scholars Program, which admitted its first class in 2006. Erin took post-secondary classes as a high school senior and took more than the required amount of credits every quarter. "However she is not leaving anything behind," Skillings said. "She's had fun at college and she'll have international experience. She's been able to pack what most students do in five years into three years."

"I have been given so many opportunities with this scholarship," Shipbaugh said. "I have been able to do community service activities and also meet great kids from Appalachia. I live in the northern area of Appalachia so it is has been wonderful to meet other people from this area that are in the same boat I am. We are good kids and we are all smart, this scholarship has given us a way to prove it to everyone." The Appalachian Scholars program is one step toward closing an opportunity gap among Appalachian youth and, in the long run, improving the way of life in Appalachian Ohio. Shipbaugh says, "I love knowing that once I start my career, I will be able to give back to the program and provide the same opportunity I had to another kid just like me."

Another Appalachian Scholar, Elizabeth Wolfe, knows firsthand how the generosity of Ohio University's alumni directly affects students—even if she doesn't know exactly who is responsible for helping her pay for college. Wolfe's scholarship has been funded through an



Appalachian Scholar Elizabeth Wolfe

anonymous \$2 million gift from an alumnus. A first-generation college student and sophomore from Scioto County, Wolfe said gifts like these change students' lives.

"A lot of [the Appalachian Scholars] are in the same boat as me. If it weren't for the scholarship, we wouldn't be here," Wolfe said. "It's funny to think how life would've been. ... We would have just settled." Finances had forced Wolfe to make plans to attend another school—one that didn't offer her desired major: hearing, speech and language sciences. Receiving the scholarship made attending Ohio University possible. "I could not believe I was chosen," she said. "Coming to Ohio University was one of the easiest decisions I've made." The program has also made Wolfe see her home region in a new light. "The scholarship helped me to better understand where I came from and made me proud to be an Appalachian."

The son of the anonymous donor says his late father was inspired to help students from Scioto County after returning to the region for high school reunions. He saw how his community struggled and wanted to make a difference. "He never lost track of where he came from," the son says. "OU provided him with his first intellectual and academic challenge, and it changed his life. With all of his achievements, he credited his time at OU as the major factor."

The Appalachian Scholars Program gives talented, deserving students like Erin Shipbaugh and Elizabeth Wolfe a chance they might not have otherwise had to go to college. If you would like to help support the program and make a difference in a student's life, please contact Sam Venable, Assistant Director of Annual Giving, at (740) 593-2206 or venable@ohio.edu.