



2004 Presidential Scholarship winner
Alvin Jeffery from Jonesboro, Ark.

Coming & Going >

Meet Alvin Jeffery, a warm and likeable young man. Jeffery is the 2004 recipient of the Union University's Presidential Scholarship.

Jeffery, a senior at Jonesboro High School, Jonesboro, Ark., is unpretentious about his academic achievements. Any complimentary reference to his talents or abilities only solicits an appreciable grin, a slight shrug and he quickly turns the matter away from him. Respected by peers and teachers alike, Jeffery's easygoing nature makes him very approachable. He's as unassuming about critiquing fellow classmates' English papers as he is in serving as a lab assistant to the junior chemistry class.

Jeffery admits that he loves to learn. His room is filled with books on languages, math, science, medical books and encyclopedias. To underscore his desire for learning, Jeffery refers to a C. S. Lewis quote, "Learning is one of the ways to God."

"Learning is my hobby," said Jeffery, "but it can be dangerous; I can get a big head."

Jeffery said his mom keeps his ego in check. "She has repeatedly told me never think you are the best or the smartest, because there is always someone better," he said.

It is obvious that Jeffery has the support of his family. His parents and younger brother are very proud of his accomplishments and his future plans to major in nursing.

Impressions from mission trips to Ecuador and Guatemala and a summer church camp influenced Jeffery to answer his call to ministry. He said, "I had such a heart for unreached people groups and I

remember praying, 'Okay God, I'll give up the idea of studying medicine.'"

Then the realization hit that he could put the two together. Why not become a nurse practitioner? It fit his criteria: it didn't require as much time or money—allowing him to get to the mission field sooner, he could do many of the things physicians do including prescribing medicine and be in closer contact with ministering to people's actual needs.

Jeffery began searching for universities, especially Christian schools. After visiting several and having a growing excitement about many, Jeffery visited Union. This time there was more than an excitement, he came away with a sense of peace. This was the place he wanted to study.

He was impressed beyond what he expected. He found the ambassadors very helpful and the teachers were so thoughtful. He sensed that teachers value students at Union.

"They would visit with me in their offices and ignore ringing phones. That gave me the message that I was a priority," said Jeffery.

As he began working with his enrollment counselor, Ronnie Smith, it became apparent that he qualified for Union's Scholars of Excellence program and could potentially receive some financial benefit.

Jeffery remembered the interview day as quite nerve-racking. He distinctly remembered one of the final questions: "Assuming you'll come to Union, describe what you hope to be after four years here."

In giving his answer, Jeffery said, "I hope

to be more conformed—from what I receive at Union, I hope to be more conformed to the likeness of Christ."

After that he went home and waited. Then the call came from Dr. David Dockery, university president, congratulating him on being chosen as recipient of the 2004 Presidential Scholarship. Jeffery said he and his family were just elated.

His mother, Melony, says they are so grateful for the opportunity to attend Union University. She said, "Now Alvin can go to the school he wants to go to instead of the school he has to go to. With the scholarship he can get to the mission field sooner."

Union University is pleased to have Jeffery and students like him join the academic community. President Dockery said, "Alvin Jeffery is a picture of a well rounded young man. He is brilliant, he has a heart for others, he demonstrates wide-ranging interests, and he is very serious about his Christian faith. Alvin and so many of the other scholarship recipients in this year's freshman class will make a mark on this campus in the next four years, and by God's grace, they will have an impact on the culture, the church, and the world in years to come. We are so very thankful for Alvin Jeffery and the hundreds of students like him who are choosing Union University."

Jeffery realizes that he has been given much. But he is not one to keep it for himself; Alvin Jeffery is all about giving back.

Union will graduate five outstanding presidential scholar recipients this year: Bethany Davis, Katie Gould, Amanda

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Union University Presidential Scholars of the Class of 2004. L to R: Matthew Newman, Amanda Scott, Katie Gould, Allen Smith, Bethany Davis.

Scholars of Excellence Program

Each year Union University interviews top academic achievers from across the U.S. as candidates for scholarships during the Scholars of Excellence weekend. On Friday evening candidates are Dr. Dockery's dinner guests, attend a Bulldog basketball game, and cap the night at Bubba's Bagels - a favorite coffeehouse for Union students.

Saturday's agenda includes a round of

personal one-on-one interviews, interviews in small group settings moderated by professors as they discuss current events and academic articles and final afternoon interviews conclude the weekend.

Scholarship qualifications require a minimum 31 ACT or 1360 SATR or be a National Merit Semi-finalist and rank in the top 15 percent of their graduating class or have a 3.5 of 4.0 GPA. Five scholarship levels are

granted: the Presidential Scholars, Provost Scholars, Dean's Scholars, University Scholars, and Collegiate Scholars. Award offerings range from full tuition and room and board, full tuition only, three-quarters tuition, half tuition to \$200 per credit hour, respectively.

To learn more about the scholars of excellence program and other financial aid opportunities visit our website at <http://www.uu.edu/financialaid/2004-2005>.

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Scott, Matthew Newman, and Allen Smith. Although all have had different Union experiences and different majors, they express the same sentiment about having been recipient of the presidential scholarship—gratitude. It meant they could come to Union and attend the Christian school of their choice.

“Outside of my salvation and what my parents have done for me, it is the greatest gift I’ve ever received,” Bethany Davis said, “Union has been my best experience and I feel very undeserving.”

Like their peers in the 2004 graduating class, these scholars recount fun times, tough classroom challenges, and life shaping influences.

Allen Smith began his own peculiar tradition with his annual Halloween costume. Each year he chose to spoof some Union quirk or event. His favorite was a superhero-styled costume depicting Union’s Mascot.com, which was an online student directory that had gone defunct just a month prior. He used leftover Mascot.com marketing items—a tee-shirt, their tablecloth for a cape and a frisbee for a hat. He recounts it was so zany that a professor suspected fraternity hazing. He also dressed as the Union Tornado of 2002.

“It was the first year I stayed up for the Hurt Costume Contest, and I won!” said Smith.

The students appreciated Union’s quality education and integration of faith in shaping their thinking. All attest to the strong influence that faculty has had on their lives and the preparation given so that they can confidently move on in life.

Davis, a learning foundations major, said, “Teachers were always willing to lend a helping hand. Most were interested in all parts of my life, not simply my performance

in their classes. Specifically, the education department prepared me better than I could have imagined to be as a classroom teacher.”

Davis will be putting those skills to work as she begins two years of service as a journeyman with the International Mission Board in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where she will be teaching in an elementary school.

Others like Smith, who is going into computer programming, and Katie Gould, who has a copy editor job for Jackson’s local paper, *The Jackson Sun*, felt that hands-on experiences and projects proved valuable in preparing them for the work place.

Smith said, “Union truly exceeded my expectations by the extent to which professors went to provide me opportunities for learning and enrichment outside the classroom. The projects they gave me are certainly the most valuable things I will take away from my Union education.”

Amanda Scott, a music major planning to study musicology at graduate school, first considered Union when her church’s youth group attended a Centrifuge summer camp here. It fit her search criteria of a Christian school with strong academics, and it wasn’t too far from her hometown of Arab, Ala. After arriving Scott was pleased to find that Union lives up to its core values of being excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused and future-directed.

“Union is definitely a Christian school,” Scott said, “It goes beyond merely calling itself a Christian school to trying to create a Christ-based community on campus, during class and in other facets of college life.

“Overall, the faculty has probably been the strongest influence on my life while at Union; I have been challenged academically and have seen wonderful examples of what it meant to be a follower of Christ.”

Matthew Newman was also looking for

a college close enough to home for frequent visits, but far enough from home to feel away. The Christian aspect of Union drew him in, and he found the Christian atmosphere that he expected really was here. Additionally, the future-directed nature of Union’s academics and liberal arts focus has given Newman, a public relations / advertising major, the confidence to now plan a different course.

“I’m not planning on working in my major, but I still think I have learned many things that will help me in life. I plan to attend seminary, probably Southern, this fall,” Newman said.

Union calls itself people-focused, and students find that to be a very influencing factor on their lives. It challenges them to be more serving and giving. Davis recalls the growth and maturity she experienced by having upperclassmen invest in her life.

She said, “As I grew older, I was, hopefully, able to do the same for other students.”

Smith and Gould tell of how important friendships were to them. Smith says one of the more meaningful things he did was to befriend several freshmen in his senior year.

“I took a close and genuine interest in their lives. I know that would have meant the world to me when I first arrived. My goal was to make their lives better, but that in turn had more of a positive impact on me than I ever imagined possible,” said Smith.

Gould said, “The friendships I made here influenced my life more than anything else.”

The 2004 Union graduates say they are ready to establish themselves as active alumni who are grateful for what they’ve been given.

“I’m ready to give back,” Bethany Davis said, “I want to tell my own story of Union and I feel a responsibility to tell others to come to Union. I feel proud to say I graduated from Union University.”