DAMON CARDENAS, Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering

Damon Cardenas is the recipient of the 2010-2011 Michael and Louise Beldon Doctoral Scholarship. Damon discovered a strong interest in the neurological basis for human paralysis while obtaining his electrical engineering degree from a local private university. "One of the most prominent issues on my mind is the occurrence of paralysis," he said. "I cannot imagine what it would be like to live life unable to move my arms or legs, or worse, nothing below my neck." According to Cardenas, pursuing his graduate work at UTSA is appealing because of the university's commitment to research excellence. "Through engineering, there is the potential to change the world with the development of new technology and physical techniques," he said. "The scholarship allows me the freedom to concentrate on my work and gives me a significant boost in my motivation and inspiration to become a successful researcher." "San Antonio has always been my home, and despite anticipating future travels through the course of my professional and educational careers, it will always be my home," he said. "I come from a family who claim UTSA as their alma mater, including my parents, and I would love to contribute to our family's Roadrunner legacy of achievements."

PAUL CARROLA, Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision

Paul Carrola is a recipient of the 2011-2012 Presidential Dissertation fellowship award. Paul, who plans to graduate with his doctoral degree in December 2012, also received his Master's degree in Counseling from The University of Texas at San Antonio. His decision to continue his studies at UTSA was due to the one-on-one attention he received from faculty, such as Dr. Gerald Juhnke, and from his Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Michael Karcher, who was instrumental in his success as a doctoral student. Paul's ultimate goal is to earn a position as a faculty member at a university and instruct counseling students. Paul was able to utilize his Presidential Dissertation Fellowship award funding for his dissertation research and presenting his research at conferences.

SINGAIAH CHINTALAPUDI, Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Engineering

Singaiah Chintalapudi is a recipient of the 2011-2012 Presidential Dissertation fellowship award. Singaiah, a Summer 2012 doctoral graduate, also received his Master's degree in Civil Engineering from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 2008. Singaiah decided to continue his doctoral studies at UTSA due to his advisor, Dr. Hatim Sharif, who provided direction, support, and research opportunities. Singaiah attributes his success at UTSA in large part to the financial assistance he received from the institution. According to Singaiah, "Without financial assistance for international students, a graduate degree can potentially be unattainable."
Jinxuan Hu is a recipient of the 2011-2012 Presidential Dissertation fellowship award. Jinxuan, a Summer 2012 doctoral graduate, plans to pursue a career in academia with the goal of becoming a tenure-track faculty member. He thanks his Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Heather Shipley, for being a valuable student-focused mentor who encouraged his professional development and enabled him to present his research to the American Chemical Society. In addition, Jinxuan attributes his success as a graduate student to The Graduate School’s workshops and student success events, and to the Graduate Student Association for providing an outlet for social networking and research preparation. Jinxuan used his Presidential Dissertation Fellowship award funding to present his research and data at conferences, where he received invaluable feedback.

Jessica Inocencio-Gray is the recipient of the 2011-2012 Michael and Louise Beldon Doctoral Scholarship. Jessica began her doctoral program in business administration with an emphasis in organizational management at The University of Texas at San Antonio in Fall 2012. Her research interests include diversity and cross-cultural issues in organizations, performance of first-generation college graduates in the workplace, and gender and racial diversity among the corporate elite. "I am eager to commit four to five years of my life to develop expertise [in organizational management subjects] and will work diligently to fulfill my goal to become a researcher and faculty member at an institution that values scholarship," she added. "I am very thankful to Mr. and Mrs. Beldon because they have assisted in removing financial barriers that are difficult to overcome and are making the academic and professional goals of a first-generation college student a reality."

John Jordon is the recipient of the 2012-2013 Michael and Louise Beldon Doctoral Scholarship. John made substantial contributions to the fight against cancer during his Master’s program in Mechanical Engineering at UTSA. He was invited to present his thesis research, "Simulation-Based Design and Optimization of Surgical Device for Lymphatic Tissue Removal in Humans," at the Cancer Therapy and Research Center at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Additionally, he worked with an oncological urologist, Robert Svateck, to design an efficient surgical device. "Surgeons have certain needs in the operation room that they cannot pursue because of the lack of resources and free time," said Jordan. "Dr. Svateck believes it [the device] will allow him to ultimately save more lives." "Based on what professionals have described, having a Ph.D. allows you to work on the cutting edge of research. That is what I strive for," said Jordan. "I understand the Beldon scholarship is a highly prestigious award, and I am honored to be selected. It is outstanding that dedication and rigorous work at UTSA is recognized and rewarded, and I am extremely thankful for this opportunity."
MARK ROBINSON, Ph.D. in Computer Science

Mark Robinson is a recipient of the 2011-2012 Presidential Dissertation fellowship award. Mark, who plans to graduate with his doctoral degree in December 2012, also received his Master’s degree in Computer Science from The University of Texas at San Antonio. His decision to continue his graduate studies at UTSA was due primarily to the reputation of the Computer Science program. Mark’s Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Jianwei Niu, was instrumental in his success. Dr. Niu provided support in the form of travel funds to assist Mark’s research. According to Mark, “UTSA kept me here from my Master’s program to my Doctoral program due to academic and faculty support in my department and additional support from The Graduate School staff.” The Presidential Dissertation Fellowship award funding allowed Mark to focus on his research instead of working full-time, which Mark firmly believes decreased his time to graduation.

ARPAN SATSANGI, Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering

Arpan Satsangi is a 2012-2013 recipient of the Translational Science Training (TST) Scholars Award. Satsangi is a Ph.D. student in the joint Biomedical Engineering program at the University of Texas at San Antonio and the UT Health Science Center. As a San Antonio native, Satsangi attended Health Careers High School and that is when he first met his current mentor Dr. Joo Ong, the Department Chair for the Department of Biomedical Engineering. While working with Dr. Ong, Satsangi won the National Siemens Westinghouse Competition in Science, Math, and Technology for his research. Because Satsangi was exposed to, and excelled in the field of research early in his academic career, it quickly became his passion. Satsangi notes that being a TST award recipient has placed him in an “environment to interact with people who my research directly affects”. He is currently focusing his research on breast cancer treatment and developing a two-step mechanism to verify nanoparticles are targeting the cancer cells and not healthy cells; this will allow breast cancer patients to better tolerate their chemotherapy treatment. Satsangi plans to finish his Ph.D. in 2013 and immediately begin medical school so he can earn his M.D. and start a career as a translational physician-scientist.