

University of Colorado Denver student leaders awarded scholarships

In 2015, three students were awarded the Peggy Lore Leadership Scholarship: Joann Doan, Lah Say Wah and Johnnie Nguyen. They were recognized as leaders who are actively involved in the AAPI community and in activism related to social justice issues.

Students were selected based on an essay where they shared an obstacle they overcame. "The purpose of asking this question is to dispel the perception that many AAPI students do not have challenges. We need to debunk the model minority myth and the Peggy Lore Leadership scholarship recipients illustrate the variety of financial, emotional and academic challenges that our AAPI students face," says Soyon Bueno Program Director of Asian American Student Services.

"Due to the model minority myth, there are not as many scholarships for AAPI students or they may not be included in scholarships for underrepresented populations. This was the impetus for the Peggy Lore Leadership scholarship, to award students who are AAPI and active in the AAPI community. We also wanted to honor Peggy Lore, the former Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Success who served as the director for Asian American Student Services for over 20 years while serving as a director for multiple other offices."



AGE 20 ETHNICITY Vietnamese HOMETOWN Seattle, WA
MAJOR Communications, senior graduating fall 2016

Throughout my time at the University of Colorado Denver, I have been an active member of the Vietnamese Student Association, Asian Student Alliance, Korean Student Alliance, Minority Association of Pre-Health Students, and Council of Asian Students Leaders. My first year at the university was during Fall of 2014, I was lucky enough to be the public relations officer for the Minority Association of Pre-Health Students. In the fall of 2015, I became the president of Minority Association of Pre-Health Students.

It has been an honor to receive this scholarship, especially being one of the first students to receive it which makes it even more memorable for me. I have been working to help pay for my education, and I was able to use the scholarship towards my education for the fall 2015 semester. After graduating, I plan to obtain a masters degree. I want to eventually work abroad for a while and travel the world at some point in my life!



AGE 24 ETHNICITY Karen
HOMETOWN Mae La Refugee Camp, Thailand
MAJOR Graduated with a bachelor's degree in public health

Despite all the difficulties faced in a refugee camp—poverty, hunger, and violence, moving to America was one of the biggest obstacles my family and I had to face. We came to America not knowing the language, the culture, or society. I did not speak any English, however I managed to learn the 26 letters of the alphabet, but as soon as I was proud of my small accomplishment I was bullied for how I spoke. My life experiences have shaped me into the person I am today. It has motivated me to help others by sharing my story with those who are going through similar struggles. I encourage them to be positive and to reach for their dreams because hard work does pay off. I may not have the money to share with my community, but I do have valuable time that I can use to help others.

This scholarship opened a door for me to be able to build relationships with other Asian ethnicities. I completed an unpaid internship with Community Campus Partnership at the University of Colorado Anschutz last summer. I am currently in Thailand interning for an agency that supports victims of sex trafficking. When I come back, I hope to continue in a masters program.



AGE 20 ETHNICITY Vietnamese HOMETOWN Denver, CO
MAJOR Political science, sophomore

Receiving this scholarship meant that there were people in this world who believed in me. Growing up as an Asian American, there were so many moments of doubt and insecurities that deprived me from being confident in my own worth and success. But knowing that there were individuals in my community willing to invest into students such as myself through this scholarship, truly empowered me to work harder and climb the highest mountains. I used this scholarship money to help support me in my 2015 Summer internship in US Secretary Tom Vilsack's office partnered with the White House Initiative on Asian American Pacific Islanders.

I want to advocate for those who are restricted to expression because I see the importance for engaging opinions in a society. I have this ambition to take on leadership roles and represent a large group of individuals. I build my lifestyle to be a trustworthy, dependable, and purposeful individual. My future plans would be to get my law degree and continue being a voice for the voiceless on a bigger scale. I dream to one day hold a position of leadership where I can optimize my story and experience to make the greatest impact for the communities around me.

The CU Denver Asian American Student Services (AASS) office, CU Denver Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Alumni Association, university affiliates are organizing the Peggy Lore Leadership Scholarship Fund. A \$25,000 endowment being established under Peggy Lore's name. The endowment will allow CU Denver to award scholarships to outstanding student leaders actively involved in the AAPI community, such as these six. Please learn more and donate at www.cufund.org/peggy-lore-scholarship-fund.



2016 recipients were awarded on May 5, 2016 at the Asian American Student Services and Council of Asian American Leaders end of the year ceremony. Lien Luong and Alex Pongphachanxay received the AAPI alumni scholarship and Kieu Phan received the Peggy Lore Leadership Scholarship.



AGE 22 ETHNICITY Vietnamese HOMETOWN Austin, TX
MAJOR Pre-nursing Psychology, senior graduating fall 2016

Growing up, I watched my mom struggle through so many obstacles; obstacles like learning English, finding a job and providing for her four kids without any help. My mom never once complained about our situation. In fact all she ever said was that we should be grateful for everything that we have. She showed me the meaning of hard work. Watching her work her entire life taught me that no matter what happens as long as you work hard then you can overcome any problems in your life. Today, I know the meaning of a strong work ethic and I try my hardest to put 110% in everything that I do, because I've learned that a great work ethic speaks louder than any word on a resume.

Being a recipient of this scholarship, has shown me the importance of being apart of a community. Getting this scholarship has encourage me to be even more involved in the CU Denver AAPI community. I want to be able to give the gift that I was given, which was recognition and comfort to a student who needs it in the future. This scholarship is important to me because it showed me what it is like to be a part of a community that cares. Thank you to everyone who was a part of this amazing award - I really appreciate it.



AGE 21 ETHNICITY Lao HOMETOWN Aurora, CO
MAJOR International Studies, senior graduating fall 2017

The obstacles in my life have pushed me into becoming the leader I am today. Beginning next fall, I will serve as the president of the student body at CU-Denver. One of my greatest accomplishments has been building up CU Denver's Asian Student Alliance (ASA). Together, we hosted the very first statewide mixer for all ASA's in the state of Colorado. I played a part in establishing ASA as a well-known Asian American organization at the University of Colorado at Denver and the state of Colorado. I learned that sometimes taking a chance is way better than not taking one at all. I learned that I can be a leader. I learned that anyone can do what ever they want as long as they work for it. My obstacles have helped me understand the true virtue of hard work. They taught me a lot of things but the most important one is that it taught me as an Asian American leader - I can make in impact.

This scholarship is important to me because it shows that the work I have done for my university and community is being acknowledged. It also really helps alleviate some financial burdens. A student living check to check, I am very grateful. I am very humbled receiving this award.



AGE 21 ETHNICITY Vietnamese HOMETOWN Denver, CO
MAJOR Biology/Pre-Dental, senior graduating spring 2017

In 1987, my parents immigrated to the United States from Hue, Vietnam in hopes of escaping the communism to pursue a better life. Picking up low-wage jobs such as shucking oysters, butchering pork, or working in a factory is what they did to make ends meet. Working long, strenuous hours eliminated the option of attending school for themselves. A lifelong goal of mine is to be kind and help everyone and anyone because we do not know the battles they are fighting.

Besides the monetary value of the scholarship alleviating the stress of school expenses, the other half of the award valued for who I am matters more. I always believed what I am doing in life is nothing special. Going to school, going to work, taking care of the family, tutoring, being involved in student orgs, and etc. is my ordinary life. When others encouraged me to apply for the Peggy Lore Scholarship, I was hesitant. I know there are far greater leaders than me that deserve the scholarship, but I decided to take a chance on it. I am very grateful that my efforts are acknowledged, and this "extraordinary life" of giving back continues.