

Two sophomores named 2012-13 Goldwater Scholars

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Two sophomores from Michigan State University were named 2012-13 Goldwater Scholars, bringing MSU's total number of Goldwater Scholars to 32.

Craig Pearson, of Bloomfield Hills, and Mairin Chesney, of Brighton, are among the 282 undergraduate sophomores and juniors from the United States who were awarded the scholarship. They are both members of the [Honors College](http://honorscollege.msu.edu/).

[Goldwater Scholars](http://www.act.org/goldwater/sch-2012.html) were selected on the basis of academic merit from a field of 1,123 mathematics, science and engineering students.

"This is very exciting news for the students and their research mentors," said Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, dean of the Honors College. "I am pleased that their early and distinguished commitment to scholarship is being celebrated and that their research is being recognized and indeed encouraged."

Pearson, a graduate of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy, is dual majoring in biochemistry and molecular biology, and English in the Lyman Briggs College and College of Arts and Letters, respectively. Pearson has conducted research with professors Melissa Baumann and Simon Petersen-Jones, developing a bioresorbable drug release vehicle for the controlled release of artificially derived vitamin A. The goal is to restore sight to those suffering from a rare, congenital eye disease.

Pearson's interest in biomedical science began when he volunteered at a school for children with physical and mental disabilities. Being a visual learner himself, Pearson was most challenged when communicating with children suffering visual impairments. It is because of his experiences working with these children that he plans to earn a medical degree and a doctorate in biochemistry.

"Just the process of putting together my application made me realize how wonderful my first two years at Michigan State have been, and being recognized as a Goldwater Scholar is really the icing on the cake," Pearson said.

Chesney, a graduate of Brighton High School, is majoring in computer science in the College of Engineering. Chesney combined her love of computer science and biology while working with professor Charles Ofria in the BEACON Center for the Study of Evolution in Action Center. She also has collaborated with a fellow undergraduate student to design a joint oral presentation and research poster that won first prize at the Michigan Celebration for Women in Computing Conference.

Chesney's passion for digital evolution grew from her fascination with how simple computer programs could exhibit many characteristics of life. It is because of the many fundamental evolutionary questions that remain unanswered that she plans to obtain a doctorate in computer science and pursue a research career in computational biology.

"Research has been one of the most unexpectedly wonderful parts of college, and I am happy to be able to continue," said Chesney, who also is a 2011-12 Von Ehr Scholar, which is a College of Engineering endowed scholarship benefitting undergraduates.

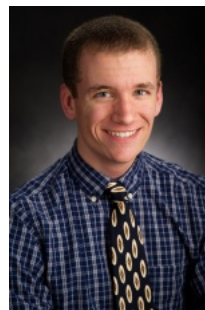
Started in 1986, the [Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program](http://www.act.org/goldwater/index.html) seeks scholars committed to a career in science, mathematics or engineering who display intellectual intensity and who have the potential for significant future contribution in their chosen field. The Goldwater Scholarship provides a grant toward the last year or two of undergraduate tuition and living expenses for students who are planning careers in research.

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Mairin Chesney, 2012-13 Goldwater Scholar. Photo by G.L. Kohuth



Craig Pearson, 2012-13 Goldwater Scholar. Photo by G.L. Kohuth

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