Upward Bound Celebrates Two Scholars | Eastern

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Two Utah State University Eastern Upward Bound students are recipients of the 2015 Gates Millennium Scholarship.

They are Melanie James, accepted at Michigan State University, and Elijah Lee, who plans to attend Northern Arizona University. James is a graduate of Monument Valley High School and Lee graduated from Red Mesa High School, Arizona.

“What an accomplishment for these two students,” said Teresa Frazier, USU Eastern Upward Bound director. “We are so proud. The Upward Bound counselors, high school teachers and staff have done an excellent job mentoring and helping these students to apply. What a great job they have done to help them qualify for this prestigious scholarship.”

Upward Bound is a federally funded educational program that serves high school students from low-income families and students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor’s degree. It is one of several federal college-access programs on the USU Eastern Blanding campus that fall under the umbrella of TRIO, an education-assistance program established under President Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 War on Poverty, Frazier said.

Today, almost 1,000 programs across America serve more than 80,000 students from demographic groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. USU Eastern Blanding Campus currently houses Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services that collectively provide more than two-dozen major college access grants, scholarships and programs.

These programs and grants have helped thousands of students attend colleges around the country and at USU Eastern in Blanding. They have been key to the success of the Blanding campus in providing assistance to the underserved in the region, Frazier said.

Upward Bound projects provide tutoring, academic counseling, cultural enrichment, financial guidance and other services needed to promote success at the high school and college levels. It also includes taking the students around to various colleges in Utah and Arizona.

“We go with them (including Talent Search students) on the campus tours and walk them through the admission processes and help them check out housing,” Frazier said. “In Upward Bound, we try to have our students decide at a sophomore-junior level what college they want to attend and then work from there.”
Many of these students wind up going to USU. This past year USU Eastern Blanding hosted five of its own Gates Millennium scholars including Racheal Holiday, Kayenta, Ariz.; Janelle Israel, Tonena Begay and Richelle Sloan, all from Monument Valley, Utah; and Jerrick Tsosie, Rock Point, Ariz..

The fact that five of the 1,000 national Gates scholars chose the Blanding campus this past year was particularly noteworthy, said Nathan Jones, admissions and bachelor programs advisor for USU Eastern.

The Gates Scholars program began in 1999 with a $1.6 billion grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation established to provide outstanding low-income minority students a chance to complete an undergraduate college education.

Gates scholars are expected to succeed and most generally they do, beginning with high graduation rates? a six-year rate of more than 87 percent (28 percent higher than the national graduation rates for all students and comparable to the rates for students from high-income families), according to United Negro College Fund (UNCF).