

OACRAO SCHOLARSHIP HISTORY

In November 1995, the OACRAO Executive Committee encouraged a few OACRAO members to explore the possibility of developing a scholarship program for up and coming college freshmen. The scholarship initiative was suggested for two reasons: 1.) to make OACRAO more visible in the community, and 2.) an interest on the part of OACRAO members to give something back to the community and contribute to tomorrow's leadership. As a result, the Executive Committee approved and funded an ad-hoc committee in 1995 to develop a scholarship proposal for the organization's membership to review.

The ad-hoc committee met several times during that year, talked with AACRAO scholarship committee members as well as members of scholarship committees in other state organizations, and even OACAC (Ohio Association of College Admissions Counselors). In setting the parameters for the scholarship program, the group was very interested in focusing on recognition of students who possessed leadership and service skills in their schools and communities. Thus, at the fall, 1996 conference, the membership approved the OACRAO Leadership and Service Scholarship Committee as a standing committee in the organization. Thanks to the commitment of the Executive Committee, funding for the committee operating costs and 2-\$500 scholarships were set aside for that first year.

The Scholarship Committee went to work immediately that first year reaching out to 950+ high schools seeking out applicants for the first two OACRAO Leadership and Service scholarships ever to be awarded. The committee received over 1100 applications that first year and all were considered, but two names made it to the top after much reading and discussion about all the candidates. At the fall 1997 OACRAO conference the first two scholarship award recipients were recognized and awarded their money. The winners were Mia Zaharna, from Willoughby South High School and Anuradha Munshi, from Firestone High School, in Akron. Both students used their scholarship award that year as they entered the freshman class at University of Akron.

Continued financial commitment from the OACRAO Executive Committee as well as fund-raising initiatives through the organization's membership has enabled the Scholarship Committee to expand the number of awards given since the first year. In 2001 the Scholarship Fund extended the number of scholarships funded to five. In 2001 Scholarship Fund also received its first corporate sponsor - Script-Safe Security Products, Inc., from Cincinnati, Ohio.

In sum, this program has garnered very strong support from the membership to the point that folks truly look forward to the committee's activities and recipient recognition at the annual fall conferences. The Scholarship Fund is also looking forward to gaining more and more corporate sponsors so it may ultimately increase the number of scholarship and the value of the scholarships. Each year the number of applications received and the quality of the applicants are astounding. In order to insure the integrity of the scholarship program the scholarship selection committee works very hard to review all applicants fairly in order to select outstanding young Ohioans for the awards.