

2015 Undergraduate Excellence First Generation Award

Christina Tori Lollar
Southern Methodist University



In her personal statement, Christina Lollar described some of the hardships and obstacles that clouded her youth. Then she wrote, “I am proud of these things because it is in spite of it all that I am applying to this scholarship and pursuing my PhD in Chemistry. Regardless of the struggles I endured growing up, there are plenty of people who have endured much worse.” She went on to describe her eventual plans to become a university professor who will reach out to disadvantaged and minority youth and help them “gain laboratory experience and perhaps a passion for chemistry they would have never known of otherwise.” Considering her many outreach activities—community service chair for SMU’s Rotaract; volunteer to help foreign students learn English, and participant in Dallas’ Graffiti Abatement and Prevention program about which she writes: “Clearing up graffiti in rough neighborhoods lets the inhabitants of that neighborhood know that the city of Dallas has not given up on them.”—Christina definitely walks the talk.

Christina’s academic and research accomplishments are outstanding for any undergraduate student. Since her sophomore year, she has worked in the research group of Dr. Alexander Lippert, who wrote, “Christina has been performing high quality research in my lab, has already published 2 papers (one as 1st author), and has presented her work at local and national meetings....Christina is the best undergraduate synthetic chemist in my lab...She loves to think about mechanisms and enjoys working through challenging arrow-pushing up on the board during group meetings.”

Christina obtained funding for her research from an Engaged Learning Grant. As described by Professor Werner Horsthemke, “Engaged Learning is SMU’s institutional framework for students to learn beyond the classroom, anywhere in the world, through research, community service, internships, and creative work.” According to Professor

Patty Wisain-Neilson, "Christina is ready to jump into graduate research at the level of perhaps a second year student. She has the intelligence, energy, enthusiasm, and laboratory skills to make rapid and significant contributions to chemistry." Iotans can be proud to recognize the accomplishments and aspirations of this truly outstanding young woman.