A unique matching scholarship program in Texas A&M’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is giving students a financial boost by doubling gifts from a dedicated group of former students and friends of the college.

Created by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Development Council (COADC), the program provides a 1-to-1 match to council members for the cost of an endowed scholarship, which starts at $25,000. It’s the only matching scholarship program of its kind among the development councils that serve Texas A&M’s colleges.

Established in 1981, COADC is an organization of volunteers who are dedicated to enhancing the cooperation between Texas A&M University and practitioners. Members provide feedback to the vice chancellor and dean of the college on agricultural issues and also assist in attracting financial resources that will enhance the college’s programs. Each person on the 108-member council pays $1,000 in dues annually, money that was initially used at the dean’s discretion. But in 1991 council members voted to set aside 75 percent of their annual dues to create a matching scholarship program.

This change has led to a significant increase in the number of scholarships available to students in the college—approximately 60 benefit from them now. “We actually have a waiting list of development council members who wanted to create these scholarships,” said Kenneth McGee ’60, who has served on the council since 1987. “It’s good for our college because we can endow more scholarships this way.”

Student stipends vary based on the market value of the endowment, but they generally provide between $1,250 and $3,000 annually per recipient. As of Dec. 31, 2011, the total market value of the COADC scholarship endowment was almost $3.3 million.
A scholarship funded by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Development Council is defraying college costs for Alyssa Spruill '10, a junior from Stephenville, Texas, who is studying agricultural leadership.
Miles Vann '13 can breathe a little easier thanks to a scholarship from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Development Council.
The program has created an avenue for younger Aggies to give back, such as COADC treasurer Ed Erwin ’92, who wanted to help students from humble backgrounds and average grades, many of whom work more than one part-time job to get through college. With a match from the council, the owner of El Campo-based E.F. Erwin Inc. created the COADC–James R. "Cobby" Reed ’50 Scholarship in honor of his wife’s grandfather. “This is the best conduit I’ve found to help ag students who really need it,” he said. “The match is important because I couldn’t have done a $25,000 scholarship on my own.”

**Match Impact**

The council is defraying college costs for Stephenville native Alyssa Spruill ’15, who is the recipient of the COADC–Pat Mauritz Memorial Scholarship. Marcus “Pat” Mauritz ’59, who died in 1998, was named a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Alumnus in 1994.

Spruill comes from a ranching family and has shown livestock since third grade. The junior is putting her passion for agriculture into action while at Texas A&M through the agricultural leadership program. Outside the classroom, she has supported Farmers Fight, an A&M agriculture advocacy campaign, and she participates in the 4-H Proud of Texas Agriculture program. Spruill was elected to serve on the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Council and will also participate in Aggie Reps, a student organization that promotes and represents AsM’s Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. She is exploring career options in agriculture sales, lobbying and policy.

Another COADC scholarship named for Gilbert R. Watz, who served as a member of the council from 1994-2011, provides critical financial support to Miles Vann ’13, who also studies agricultural leadership. Vann was ranked fourth out of 14 in his graduating class at Wellman-Union High School, and thus was not in the top 10 percent guaranteed automatic admission to a Texas public university. In addition to strong academic performance, Vann’s extracurricular involvement in athletics, FFA and public speaking competitions earned him admittance. He’s leaning toward graduate school and perhaps teaching and doing research at a college or university.

Vann and Spruill have more than their choice of majors in common. Both were selected to serve terms as state FFA officers during their freshman year at Texas A&M. They agree that the opportunity to serve the 85,000-member organization is a great honor. “When we do presentations around the state, it’s not always just for ag students—sometimes we’re talking to the entire school,” Spruill said.

“Our message is one of personal growth and being optimistic as you go through life.”

The COADC scholarships have helped both students work toward their educational goals. For instance, Vann said his parents pay for his spring semester tuition through a Texas Tomorrow fund while Vann pays for the fall semester through raising and selling pigs. The COADC scholarship and two other scholarships he receives make a big difference.

Spruill echoes Vann’s sentiment. “Any scholarship means everything,” she said. “In high school, there are so many students who apply for big scholarships and many people blow off the $1,000 scholarships. But those are the ones that really add up. I received a $1,000 scholarship and it’s been awesome because it helps me pay for books. You just don’t realize how expensive they are until you’re here. Every cent that you get is needed and appreciated.”

—by dorian martin

“**This is the best conduit I’ve found to help ag students who really need it. The match is important because I couldn’t have done a $25,000 scholarship on my own.”**

Ed Erwin ’92
Treasurer
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Development Council

To learn how you can support students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, contact:

Monica Delisa
Assistant Vice President for Development
Texas A&M Foundation
(800) 392-3310 or (979) 847-9314
m-delisa@tamu.edu