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Education Credit Union Funds Scholarships for 30 WT Students in Surprise Presentation

CANYON, Texas — Thirty West Texas A&M University students received an early Christmas gift when they were surprised with scholarships from Education Credit Union.

The students took part in WT's Money Management Bootcamp, a six-week series of seminars sponsored by the [Education Credit Union Buff \\$mart](#) program.

At a Nov. 15 graduation reception, the names of 14 eligible participants were drawn to receive \$250 scholarships from WT and ECU. At the conclusion of the reception, ECU President and CEO Marcus Smith announced that, for the first time, ECU would fund scholarships for the remaining 12 eligible students, plus four peer financial coaches.

ECU became a naming sponsor of WT's Buff \$mart Program in September 2020. The program helps students improve their understanding of financial literacy and empowers them to make informed choices to improve their financial well-being.

"ECU recognizes the hard work these students put in to better their knowledge of financial literacy and education," Smith said. "We wanted to celebrate their success."

In all, ECU and WT jointly provided \$7,500 in scholarship funds for the students.

The bootcamp offered six sessions on topics such as paying for college, building credit responsibly, overcoming financial obstacles and more.

To be eligible to be in the drawing for a scholarship, students received points for attendance, participation, completing assignments, and attending a one-on-one coaching session.

"Education Credit Union's generosity and constant support of WT students is inspirational," said program coordinator Meghan Williams.

The ECU Buff \$mart program offers one-on-one coaching sessions with trained peer financial coaches via webinar or in person; classroom and organizational presentations on money

management, budgeting, planning to pay for college and more; and outreach programs and money management workshops on credit cards, credit scores, identity theft, budgeting and more.

Scholarship recipients include Kaitlyn Amador, a freshman general business major from Plainview; Chidinma Aniekwena, a graduate computer information systems and business analytics from Nigeria; Najely Ascacio, a freshman sports and exercise science major from Amarillo; Diana Benitez Perera, a sophomore finance major from Spring; Erika Cedillos, a business graduate student from Kapaau, Hawaii; Katie Garcia, a sophomore management major from Clovis, New Mexico; Maryann Heffley, a senior criminal justice major from Wellington; Marshal Howard, a sophomore pre-engineering major from Follett; Kaden Husband, a sophomore animal science major from Childress; Victoria Juarez, a senior agriculture major from Castroville; Katie Labrum, a freshman animal science major from Bear River, Wyoming; Sydney Landers, a freshman agribusiness major from Guymon, Oklahoma; Matthew Machicek, a senior mechanical engineering major from Temple; Luis Martinez, a freshman general business major from Pampa; Victor A. Mata, a freshman agribusiness and economics major from Sherman; Simon Mbanefo, a graduate environmental sciences student from Lagos, Nigeria; Daniel Norris, a sophomore computer science major from Levelland; Kaela Ramage, a freshman sports and exercise science major from Roswell, New Mexico; Taylor Rockey, a freshman agribusiness and economics major from Monte Vista, Colorado; Libby Schelich, a freshman agribusiness and economics major from Eaton, Colorado; Lizett Silva, a sophomore Spanish major from Pampa; Savanna Sims, a freshman health sciences major from Wheeler; Shefin Singh, a sophomore wildlife biology major from Canyon; Grace Small, a graduate agriculture student from Welch, Oklahoma; Baylee Spraggins, a freshman pre-engineering major from Keller; and Jady VanWinkle, a freshman animal science major from Yantis.

Peer financial coach scholarship recipients include Preston Downard, a Frenchtown, Montana, native pursuing a second bachelor's degree in general business; Tucker Gattis, a senior agriculture major from Pottsboro; Niquole Knapp, a junior animal science major from Rocky Ford, Colorado; and John Kent, a junior agribusiness and economics major from Iraan.

Creating a commitment to being self-reliant, courageous, resourceful and part of something larger than one's self in its students is a key mission of the University's long-range plan, [***WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World.***](#)

That plan is fueled by the historic, \$125 million [***One West***](#) comprehensive fundraising campaign. To date, the five-year campaign — which publicly launched in September 2021 — has raised more than \$110 million.

About West Texas A&M University

WT is located in Canyon, Texas, on a 342-acre residential campus. Established in 1910, the University has been part of The Texas A&M University System since 1990. WT, a Hispanic Serving Institution since 2016, boasts an enrollment of about 10,000 and offers 59 undergraduate degree programs and more than 40 graduate degrees, including two doctoral degrees. The

University is also home to the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, the largest history museum in the state and the home of one of the Southwest's finest art collections. The Buffaloes are a member of the NCAA Division II Lone Star Conference and offers 14 men's and women's athletics programs.

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