

Southwestern

NEWSROOM

Success Stories

May 5, 2009



Jennifer Gibbs is one of the first Upward Bound participants to graduate from Southwestern. She plans to get a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Arizona.

Two seniors are the first Georgetown Upward Bound participants to graduate from Southwestern

Senior Jennifer Gibbs excitedly recalls memories of her high school adventures with Upward Bound, a federally funded program that aids first-generation college-bound high school students. Now, four years after successfully completing the program, Gibbs is preparing to graduate from Southwestern with a degree in biochemistry and is planning to attend graduate school at the University of Arizona.

The Upward Bound program started in the 1960s as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty." Southwestern received funds to run an Upward Bound program beginning in 1999. Upward Bound staff members, instructors and college student mentors equip high school students with the resources to achieve higher levels of education. Once Upward Bound alumni are in college, the program continues to track their progress. Results show that most alumni perform very well.

"Upward Bound is a great program that helped me a lot in high school, especially with the SAT," Gibbs said. "It's particularly helpful for students who need someone to nudge them along, or for families who are unsure how to get their children to college. My parents both have associate degrees and hoped that I would do better than them in life, which is why they enrolled me in Upward Bound. Because of their encouragement and the resources in Upward Bound, I've been able to not only to do well in college but now I'm ready to go further in education."

Gibbs and Darlene Thompson, a senior political science major, will be the first Upward Bound alumni from Georgetown to graduate from Southwestern. Both are 2005 graduates of Georgetown High school.

Thompson plans to attend graduate school to study public policy. While at Southwestern, she received the prestigious Hatton B. Sumners Scholarship, studied abroad in France and interned in Washington, D.C., with the Council for Opportunity in Education, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance and defend the ideal of equal educational opportunity in postsecondary education by supporting programs such as Upward Bound. She currently is participating in UT's Intellectual Entrepreneurship program, which encourages first-generation college students to pursue graduate school. She meets weekly with a graduate student at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and has sat in on some classes at the school.

"The LBJ School is one of the graduate schools I would like to apply to," Thompson said.

Thompson said when she first started the Upward Bound program, she didn't take it seriously. "I thought college was out of the question for me since I came from a single-parent family," she said. However, the program eventually helped her realize that there were resources and scholarships available to her. An Upward Bound Scholarship from Southwestern, which covered all her tuition, made her decide to enroll there.

"I'm so happy I came to Southwestern," she said. "I feel like I can do anything now."

While they were at Southwestern, both Gibbs and Thompson served as tutors for the Upward Bound program. Thompson also served for three years as an RA during Residential Week of the six-week summer academic enrichment program that Upward Bound hosts at Southwestern each summer.

Gibbs also has been involved on campus with the wind ensemble and Students Ending Sexual Assault. She also attended a summer program in Australia where she learned about research

management and field studies. Last summer, she attended a program at the University of North Texas sponsored by the National Science Foundation, and was published in a scholarly journal as an assistant to Chemistry Professor William Acree. She also participated in Southwestern's Paideia® program.

"So many high school students have tremendous potential, regardless of what kind of background they come from. These two women's achievements are great examples of how far students can go when they work hard and have guidance, information and a network of people who believe in them." said Upward Bound Director Lorna Hermosura.

Thompson said that as a result of her experience, several of her younger cousins are interested in college now. "One of them will be starting at Georgetown High School in the fall and she definitely plans to get involved with Upward Bound," she said.