

Contact: Patrice Bell-Mercadel (504) 520-5452
or Diana Mateo-Hernandez (504) 520-5120

Xavier University Students Awarded Truman Capote Creative Writing Scholarships

New Orleans LA – Three Xavier University of Louisiana students have been awarded \$13,333 scholarships to study creative writing during the 2018-19 academic year through a grant funded by the Truman Capote Foundation Trust.

The monetary awards, divided over two semesters, are designed to encourage talented writers to develop their writing skills at Xavier, the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to offer a creative writing minor. The scholarship winners were selected via a competitive process.

The scholarship winners are: Deja Dennis, a sophomore mass communication major from Peoria IL (Peoria High School); Kiara Houston, a freshman neuroscience major from Chicago IL (Chicago-Arts High); and Tresaundra Roberson, a freshman psychology/premed major from New Orleans (Lusher High). Dennis is a repeat winner, having earned a scholarship in last year's competition.

Randolph Thomas, an award-winning professor at LSU, poet, and short fiction writer, served as judge of this year's competition. He had these comments on the three scholarship winners' entries:

Dennis: "Ms. Dennis submitted five poems, all very different in style and subject matter, and for each one her sense of language, line, sounds, all worked very well. For each poem, she seemed very much in control of the form. She used inventive word choices throughout that really brought her poems to life."

Houston: "Ms. Houston submitted four short stories and each is outstanding. She is able to capture complicated characters and relationships, and clearly depicts the realistic action of her stories in a truly masterful way. Although very short, each seemed complete and often disturbing. She takes the reader to a very dangerous place, and often the story ends there."

Roberson: "Ms. Roberson submitted five poems, and I found their quality to be consistent and overall strong. She had tremendous control over the sounds of her poems through occasional repetition and variation, and through the line-breaks that force the reader to make surprising realizations. Also I found her word choice to be very powerful."

The scholarship program is funded by the Truman Capote Foundation Trust, which since 2000 has provided more than \$300,000 in scholarship funding to Xavier. The University's English Department and the Division of Fine Arts and Humanities supports the creative writing program's membership in the

XULA students *Leave Ready* to serve, lead, and care for their communities. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYZC8>.

Once again, Xavier University of Louisiana received national accolades as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of “Best Colleges” by the U.S. News Media Group. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under “Great Schools, Great Prices.”

To book interviews about our recent accomplishments and or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact Patrice Bell Mercadel, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at 504-520-5452 or via email at pbellmer@xula.edu.

#