

NEWS RELEASE

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LECOM School of Dental Medicine Student Wins PAC-12 Leadership Award

In lacrosse, it's known as "controlling the draw": Possess the ball and patiently dictate the game. Natalie Modly Schmidt, knows how to bide her time and wait for her opportunities.

A four-year starter on the lacrosse team at the University of Oregon, Schmidt -- now a first-year student at the LECOM School of Dental Medicine in Bradenton, FL -- recently was honored with the Pacific 12 Conference Leadership Award.

"I was a student athlete at the University of Oregon and they place a strong emphasis on leadership, both on and off the field," she said. "I have always enjoyed leadership opportunities and have had a strong desire to lead those around me."

The award was established to recognize student-athletes who have served on institutional Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAAC) and who have demonstrated leadership. To qualify, the nominees must have completed their final season of athletics eligibility, be enrolled in graduate school, have been a letter-winner in a varsity sport and have served a minimum of one year on the campus SAAC. Leadership activities, community service, grade-point average and athletic achievement also are factors in the selection.

Not only did she serve as team captain during her junior and senior seasons, but she also earned a spot on the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association Academic Honor Roll in 2017 and 2018 and was named a Mountain Pacific Sports Federation All-Academic Scholar-Athlete in 2016 (prior to Pac-12 play). In 2018, Schmidt earned Pac-12 All-Academic first-team honors as well as the University of Oregon Jaqua Award given to the graduating senior student-athlete with the highest Grade Point Average. She graduated in March with a 3.90 GPA in general sciences and also received a Pac-12 Postgraduate Scholarship in July 2018.

Recruited from high school in Annapolis, MD, where she grew up, Schmidt added, "We did a lot of community service in terms of spreading the game to local high schools, which was really cool to be part of because in Maryland, it's kind of the norm -- everyone played. So to go

someplace where people didn't play (lacrosse) as much, and kind of be the face of the game, was really cool.”

But her community service didn't stop at high schools and lacrosse demonstrations. Schmidt also served as the co-director and executive board member of Oregon's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and volunteered for such organizations as Special Olympics, the HOSEA Homeless Shelter, National Girls in Sports Day, Read Across America Day, and monthly events for cancer patients. She also traveled to Nicaragua in 2016 as a dental assistant to provide medical care and dental-hygiene educational courses to underserved communities.

Given the diversity of her interests and activities, it's little wonder that she was drawn to dentistry and to LECOM.

“In high school, I was really interested in something medically related and knew I wanted to pursue a health profession in some dimension,” Schmidt said, “and I liked working with my hands and was drawn to the artistic dimension that dentistry allows. And I really wanted to be in a profession with strong patient interaction. I was also really encouraged by my pediatric dentist ... she was a really strong leader in our community and that also drew me to the profession as a way to continue leadership,” she said.

“Whenever I'm asked I always joke that 'I loved Oregon, but I was ready for some sunshine.' It rains quite a bit there,” Schmidt said, laughing. “Actually, I was really drawn to the strong clinical emphasis, particularly in the fourth year where we're able to go (to an area where people need dental care) and serve, and get the hands-on experience. That's what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life, not necessarily sitting in a classroom, so to be able to start that right away was a really great opportunity.”

“And I definitely enjoy the group work and the team interactions (of Problem Based Learning) because that's what I've kind of grown up doing my whole life. People bring different strengths to the group, like a team, and I've really enjoyed that and it's definitely enhanced my learning.”

And there has been another opportunity Schmidt seized that has further enhanced her life: She married Sam Schmidt, also from Annapolis, in June 2018.

“I've known him from kindergarten to high school,” she said, “and we did the long-distance thing while I was in Oregon.”

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