



XAVIER

UNIVERSITY *of* LOUISIANA

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Xavier 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 2017-18 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 freshman mass communications major from Peoria IL (Peoria High); Anam Ismail, a junior biology/premed major from New Orleans (Ursuline High); and Brianna Scott, a freshman public health sciences major from San Antonio TX (James Madison High).

Lola Haskins, an award-winning poet and the author of some fourteen books, served as judge of this year's competition. She had these comments on the three scholarship winners' entries:

Deja Dennis: "Ms. Dennis writes in the vernacular and it suits her subject, which is, essentially, hard life in our country. Her poems are like thunderstorms with occasional flashes of lightning, brilliance. When Ms. Dennis learns to harness eloquence like that, she will find herself read by thousands."

Anam Ismail: "Ms. Ismail writes so tenderly about her family that we nearly weep, and she does it without resorting to sentimentality. Unlike many young writers, she writes beyond her own life. Ms. Ismail has a book in her . . . something that with time and patience will just happen."

Brianna Scott: "I chose Ms. Scott for her masterful, convincing slave diary. She uses the right voice for the age of her character and the right diction for someone who's been taught to read but hasn't read, so can speak only what she's heard and what she feels inside. And she handles the plot well, for example, by being careful to stay in June's voice when she tells what happens."

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 Association of Writers and Writing Programs and provided the stipend for award judge.

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