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## UAB's 3 Goldwater Scholars

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## student feature

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) holds a proud reputation of promoting academic success and instilling a passion for scientific research in its students. In the 2008-2009 academic year, UAB upheld this tradition when three of its Honors Program students, Taoreed “Larry” Lawal, Pratik Talati and Cierra Spencer, were selected as Barry M. Goldwater Scholars. L-R: Taoreed “Larry” Lawal, Pratik Talati and Cierra Spencer.

Established in 1986, to honor Senator Barry M. Goldwater and his service to our country, the Goldwater Scholarship is awarded to outstanding undergraduate students who plan to pursue careers in mathematics, the natural sciences, or engineering. Of the 1,035 students nominated nationwide, 321 students were selected, seven from Alabama. The three are among eight UAB students who have received the award in the university’s history.

Taoreed “Larry” Lawal is a senior majoring in biology. Lawal’s accomplishments are many, and include receiving the NASA Alabama Space Grant Consortium Scholarship in 2007, first place winner in the 2007 UAB Summer Research Intern poster session, and receiving the Excellence in Organic Chemistry Award in 2007. Lawal attributes much of his success to working with Larry DeLucas, O.D., Ph.D., a top UAB researcher in the Center for Biophysical Sciences and Engineering and to his involvement in the University Honors Program. Following graduation, Lawal plans to travel abroad and attend medical school in Fall 2009.

Pratik Talati, a junior majoring in mathematics and chemistry, maintains a high level of academic excellence. Talati is a student in the Chemistry Scholar and Math Fast Track programs. This past summer, Talati represented UAB while traveling to the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Munich, Germany, through the DAAD-RISE program. Talati says this experience was his “most personally satisfying and significant accomplishment at UAB,” affording him the opportunity to work with top researchers while exploring Europe.

In his spare time, Talati enjoys working with Habitat for Humanity and reading to patients through Healing Words. After gradu-



# UAB's 3 Goldwater Scholars

Adam Scott

L-R: Taoreed “Larry” Lawal, Pratik Talati and Cierra Spencer

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ating in May 2010, Talati plans to pursue an MSTP program for a joint M.D./Ph.D.

Cierra Spencer is a senior chemistry major specializing in biochemistry. Spencer’s numerous academic accolades include the Excellence in Freshman Chemistry Award, the Excellence in Organic Chemistry Award, and a Chemistry Scholar fellowship from the UAB Department of Chemistry. Her most recent accomplishment was receiving the 2008 UNCF Merck Undergraduate Science Research Scholarship Award. As part of this award, Spencer spent last summer at the Merck Research Lab in Rahway, NJ, in the Process Research division. While there, she gained invaluable research experience and submitted a paper for publication in October to *Tetrahedron Letters*.

Spencer will be graduating in May 2009. She plans on attending graduate school to study pharmacology, with a focus on drug metabolism and resistance.

UAB is proud to have a record number of three Goldwater Scholars from Alabama in 2008. All three students emphasize gaining a diversity of training in research as an undergraduate, and promote getting involved and being proactive early in your academic career. For information on nominations for the Goldwater Scholarship, students should visit the UAB website of the fellowships and scholarships office: [www.uab.edu/fellowships](http://www.uab.edu/fellowships).