

Meet The 2018 Winner Of The Most Prestigious Accolade A UT Southwestern Student Can Receive

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Philip Tolley's journey to medicine began with a broken collarbone. After injuring it while playing football in high school, Tolley's interest in becoming a doctor piqued as he experienced the long recovery process.

"That forced me to see the medical side of it," Tolley says, "and made me realize that I wanted to be a part of that."

Phil Tolley will head off to Seattle to start a six-year integrated plastic surgery residency.

Last month, Dr. Tolley accepted the Ho Din Award, the most prestigious accolade a UT Southwestern Medical Center student can receive. Recipients represent the "ideal physician," who demonstrates academic excellence and compassion within their communities.

Tolley will receive the award—given out by the Southwestern Medical Foundation and in its 75th year—along with a \$10,000 scholarship at Friday's UT Southwestern commencement ceremony.

"On the one hand he is compassionate, passionate, and has an excellent understanding of humans and social situations," says Dr. Shai Rozen, a UTSW professor of plastic surgery and faculty mentor. "On the other, he is the ultimate hard worker, dedicated to completing the task at hand, innovative, and persistent."

Tolley's tether to sports continued during his undergraduate years at Oregon State University, where he majored in exercise and sports science and worked as an athletic trainer.

Then, as a first-year student at UT Southwestern, Tolley delved into research on facial reanimation surgery in relationship to facial paralysis. There, Tolley says, he found a sense of fulfillment as he saw patients improve and slowly gain back their smiles.

“Many times, your patients are coming to you after a life-altering experience,” Tolley said. “In plastic surgery you are the one who gets to meet these patients at the low point of their journey, and using your knowledge and skills—oftentimes over many operations and years—ferry them along to regain some or all of what they have lost.”

Recently, Tolley also served as president of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society campus chapter and helped create two new service committees directed toward aiding fellow classmates with preparation for board exams. He continued to stay on top of his class, maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

“Philip has led a distinguished academic pursuit at UT Southwestern Medical School,” Kathleen Gibson, president and CEO of Southwestern Medical Foundation, says in a statement. “Combined with his passion for education, his leadership, and his service-oriented heart—he holds the all the qualities symbolized by the Ho Din.”

During his time at UT Southwestern, Tolley also developed another passion—teaching. He realized a natural love for it during his days spent as an anatomy teaching assistant.

“I ... would love to be able to someday teach residents,” said Tolley. “I want to give back to the medical community that has given me so much and will no doubt continue to do so throughout my training.”

Tolley plans to move to Seattle with his family for a six-year integrated plastic surgery residency at University of Washington-affiliated hospitals.

“Phil is one of those students that speaks less and does more,” Rozen said. “He purveys a quiet strength and aptitude that I would expect in a future leader.”