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Scholar sees duty in Rhodes honor

An obligation to correct injustices comes with the scholarship, FSU's winner says.

By TAMARA EL-KHOURY, Times Staff Writer Published November 20, 2007

Joe O'Shea - Dunedin native, overachiever and Florida State University student body president - is making headlines again.

It's no surprise. You've seen the 21-year-old's name in print in the past and will probably see it many times in the future.

In a Monday morning press conference in Tallahassee, FSU officials announced O'Shea's latest accomplishment: Rhodes Scholar.

"Joe, we're so proud of you. We are so happy for you," said university president T.K. Wetherell, who introduced O'Shea.

He described O'Shea as "the type of guy you don't mind having a malt beverage with, or having your daughter date."

O'Shea, a senior, is only the third FSU student to earn the honor. In an applicant pool of 764, O'Shea is one of 32 students in the country who were awarded the scholarship this year and is the only one from Florida.

The prestigious scholarship pays for up to three years of undergraduate or postgraduate study at the University of Oxford in England.

An honors student majoring in philosophy and social science, O'Shea has a passion for health care policy and hopes to pursue a career in politics.

"It's such a responsibility to be a Rhodes Scholar," O'Shea said. "You have an obligation to spend the rest of your life correcting injustices in the world."

There are several rounds of interviews and the process is intense. The 15 regional finalists were interviewed in Birmingham, Ala., on Saturday.

O'Shea said the first question he was asked was to compare sources of poverty in New Orleans and Rwanda.

FSU prepared him well, O'Shea said. He

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[Rob Davis]

Joe O'Shea also won a Truman Scholarship. He will work on a project in Rwanda after graduating from FSU.

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Salvation Army, searching for toys that have been recalled.

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worked for six or seven months with the school's Office of National Fellowships, receiving counseling and performing mock interviews.



The first person he called when he won the scholarship was his mom, Debbie O'Shea, who lives in Dunedin.

She screamed and cried so loud, he said he had to pull the phone a foot away from his ear.

"It took a very long time to calm her down," O'Shea said. "She immediately proceeded to call everybody in her entire phone book in her cell phone."

He and his three siblings, also accomplished FSU students, were featured in a September Times article about how the tight-knit family coped with the death of their father, Jim O'Shea. He died in May after a battle with kidney disease.

Thanksgiving will be the family's first major holiday without him, and Debbie O'Shea said she is trying to uphold all the family traditions.

"This was probably going to be a difficult holiday for us so this will give us something to celebrate," she said.

Oldest brother Robert O'Shea, a law student at FSU, told his mom he was so proud, he wanted to get a megaphone and tell the whole world his brother is a Rhodes Scholar.

Joe O'Shea will leave for Oxford in October. He plans to earn a master of philosophy degree in comparative social policy.

Then he plans to use a second prestigious scholarship, the Truman Scholarship, which he won in March, to either study law or earn a doctorate.

As part of the national scholarship, O'Shea will get \$30,000 toward a graduate-level degree. He must also perform public service work for at least three years.

O'Shea has founded or helped found several charitable organizations, including a health clinic in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans.

He'll graduate from FSU this spring but don't expect him to take a break. He'll take his first trip overseas to Rwanda in May to construct a technical school. Then it's off to Washington, D.C., where he plans to work at the World Bank.

Times staff writer Steve Bousquet contributed to this report. Tamara El-Khoury can be reached attel-khoury@sptimes.com or 727 445-4181.

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by **Alicia**

11/20/07 10:49 AM

Hes got it all... Intelligence, Looks, and a Big Heart, ect. Congrats to him and his proud family!! He will definatly succeed in life and benefit from his knowledge. Way to go!!!.....Wondering if he is single???

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