Dean’s Medals will adorn 20 of the nearly 3,000 ASU seniors graduating with degrees in natural sciences, humanities and social sciences this spring – an honor bestowed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for academic achievement.

The medal recognizes the top graduating student in each of the degree-granting schools and departments in the college.

Those to be honored are ASU seniors Brenna Fanning, Danielle Barrs, Jed Chou, Abraham Anup, Gabrielle Chen-Dickens, Zachary Kovach, Emily Thurston, Ashley Kinkel, Madison Fulton, Eric Van Buren, Scott Van Buren, Levi Wolf, Blake Thomson, Yijee Jeong, Cami Samuels, Brittany Ebbing, Holly Vins, Jane Ly, Christopher Webb, and Anna Rose Salazar.

“Some of the foremost leaders in the United States have pursued a broad undergraduate education in liberal arts and sciences,” said Robert E. Page, ASU vice provost and the dean in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, who created the medal. “I congratulate each of these students for their accomplishments and vision in creating a personalized approach to their studies that will empower them to change the world.”

The medalists come from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, with dreams fueled as ASU Obama Scholars, President’s Scholars, Flinn Scholars, Provost Scholars or Pell Grant recipients. Many created opportunities through Barrett, The Honor College, through work as researchers or teaching assistants, residential associates, or started or served on student organizations, such as the Buffalo Council, Changemaker Central, Quanta or ASU Hope. A multitalented group of teachers, mentors and strivers, the Dean’s Medal recognizes the spirit and commitment with which all have pursued their passion to achieve and make a difference.

Three medal winners, Chen-Dickens, Thurston and Thomson, will also receive the ASU Alumni Association Outstanding Graduate Award in humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, respectively.
Chen-Dickens receives her degree in English literature, with minors in history and religious studies, and a certificate in medieval/Renaissance studies. An ASU Obama Scholar, ASU President’s Scholarship recipient and Pell grant awardee, she has also received The Arizona Republic’s Scholastic Journalist Award, Excellence in First-Year Latin Award and The President’s Volunteer Service Award from the Office of the U.S. President. She will complete her Barrett, The Honors College thesis on the topic of the relationship between selfhood and possession, revelation and witchcraft in Early Modern English literature.

Thurston is a psychology major whose focus is in developmental psychopathology and physiology. She pursued undergraduate research with four different scientists: Foster Olive in the Department of Psychology, Kathryn Lemery-Chalfant in the Child Emotion Center, Director Keith Crnic in the Parent Child Relations Laboratory, and Leah Doane Sampey in the Adolescent Emotion and Stress Laboratory, where Thurston will complete her Barrett, The Honors College thesis. “Emily operates at the level of a graduate student and has excelled doing so,” said Doane Sampey. “She has been an outstanding student, budding research scholar and leader within the ASU community.”

Thomson, who will receive his degrees in global health and English literature this spring through Barrett, The Honors College, intends to pursue a medical degree with Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Thomson was admitted to the Mount Sinai Humanities and Medicine Program as an ASU sophomore, which allowed him to focus on developing his humanities-based skills and interests before moving to study medicine.

Thomson’s research activities at ASU have spanned environmental justice studies in Central Phoenix, examination of factors that impact infant mortality rates in high poverty areas in Washington, D.C., and analysis of child protection systems in emergencies overseas. He has interned with the World Health Organization and volunteered at a health clinic in Peru. His experiences there inspired him to found the Students for Health and Education in Peru, an ASU club that promotes awareness of health disparities in Peru. He also serves on the Board of Directors with Vive Peru, a non-profit that coordinates volunteer opportunities for college students to serve in the areas of clinical medicine, English, music, engineering, and social work in underserved areas of Peru.

“Blake is very deserving of these awards from ASU Alumni Association and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He is one of the most positive, sincere and humble students that I have ever worked with,” said Rebecca Lish, an undergraduate academic success specialist in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change. “I cannot wait to hear about the contributions he will continue to make to the world.”

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is ASU’s core academic unit, offering degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. It is ASU’s largest and most diverse college with more than 100,000 alumni worldwide.

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