The 2022 McDermott Scholars

The 2022 class of Scholars is made up of 13 students from Texas and 4 from out of state.

Giana Abraham

**Giana Abraham** graduated from Allen High School in Allen, Texas. She was an active volunteer through UNIFIED, a special education robotics organization, and through the Allen Public Library. Her over 400 hours of service earned her the gold-level President's Volunteer Service Award. In school Giana served as student body president, as president of both the National and Math Honor Societies, and with the diversity and inclusion committee. She is a National Merit Commended Scholar and an AP Scholar with Distinction. Her research received an honorable mention at the Dallas Regional Science & Engineering Fair. Giana is a church youth group leader and is learning Malayalam. She is majoring in neuroscience.

Zaina Asad

**Zaina Asad** graduated from Flower Mound High School in Flower Mound, Texas. Active in the theater department throughout high school, Zaina worked her way up to the position of head of costuming and competed for design and construction at the 2019 International Thespian Convention. She interned with administrators at Mayhill Hospital and a local private medical practice, and also spent time volunteering at a soup kitchen and as a tutor for children in her school district. Zaina plays guitar and is learning to play the piano. She is fluent in Urdu. She is a National Merit Scholar and an AP Scholar with Distinction. She is majoring in business administration.

Mariana Cano

**Mariana Cano** graduated from Harmony Science Academy – Dallas High in Dallas, Texas. As senior council president she helped host sports tournaments and other school activities. As part of the Student Leadership Committee she practiced proposing a bill to the Texas Legislature. Mariana served as a news anchor and script editor for her school's YouTube channel. As National Honor Society vice president Mariana hosted blood drives and organized students around efforts to address social issues. She is also a passionate pianist. Mariana is
fluent in Spanish and is learning Korean. She is an AP Scholar and salutatorian of her graduating class. Mariana is majoring in global business.

Ayomide “Mide” Precious Dairo

Ayomide “Mide” Precious Dairo graduated from Cypress Springs High School in Cypress, Texas. As senior class president, Mide collaborated with her team of senior representatives to ensure that her class had a fun-filled and memorable senior year. Mide served as co-president of her high school’s Mental Health Alliance and participated in her school’s HOSA – Future Health Professionals chapter, placing first in the state-level medical terminology competition. She volunteered at a local elementary school tutoring fifth graders in math and at a non-profit organization benefiting low-income students. Mide was the valedictorian of her high school graduating class and she is fluent in Yoruba. Mide is majoring in psychology.

Tejas Devata

Tejas Devata graduated from Heritage High School in Frisco, Texas. He volunteered at his local temple and various other organizations to provide educational opportunities to children and is a three-time recipient of the Presidential Volunteer Service Award. In school, Tejas was the vice president of the National Honor Society, an officer of the debate club, and a member of Business Professionals of America through which he won numerous state- and national-level accolades. He also worked as a policy advocate regarding diet pill and supplement sales and has researched acculturation and eating disorders. He is a National Merit Finalist and an AP Scholar with Honor. Tejas is fluent in Telugu and is majoring in neuroscience.

Shivani Gupta

Shivani Gupta graduated from Flower Mound High School in Flower Mound, Texas. In school she was a member of the varsity speech and debate team and parliamentarian of the National Honor Society. She was a scenic design intern at the multilingual theater DFW Play, interned as a therapy technician at a local occupational therapy clinic, and is a FEMA-certified Community Emergency Response Team member. During the COVID-19 pandemic Shivani created a portable UV-C disinfection chamber for use in low-cost clinics and presented the design to representatives of the Texas Legislature and PhRMA. As a volunteer attorney at the Lewisville Teen Court she represented
juveniles who committed class C misdemeanors. She is a Gold Award Girl Scout, a National Merit Scholar, and an AP Scholar with Distinction. Shivani is fluent in Hindi and conversational in Spanish. She is majoring in neuroscience.

**Liam Elliot Nichols**

*Liam Elliot Nichols* graduated from McKinney High School in McKinney, Texas. In school he was an active member of the speech and debate team, led the school math club, started a chess club in his senior year, and also participated in the chemistry, philosophy and computer science clubs. Liam was a UIL competitor in current events as well as in number sense and calculator applications. He worked as a competitive soccer referee in high school. Liam is the second eldest of eleven children and was an algebra tutor at home as well as at school. He will assist Richardson-area students through the campus organization Comet Tutors. Liam graduated at the top of his class and is a National Merit Commended student. He is majoring in mathematics.

**Edwin Thomas Philip**

*Edwin Thomas Philip* graduated from Hebron High School in Carrollton, Texas. He has volunteered in his community with the Texas Ramp Project, Computers for the Blind, Baylor Scott & White Health, and local vaccination clinics. In school, Edwin was the president of the Science National Honor Society, and the president and founder of his school’s chapter of Intellichoice, an organization that provides free and accessible tutoring to economically disadvantaged students; he will work with the Intellichoice chapter at UTD. Edwin was also an instructor for Red Tiger Karate and captain of a national championship winning esports team. Philip is an AP Scholar with Distinction and a National Merit Commended Student entering UTD as an undeclared student.

**Aiswarya Saravanan**

*Aiswarya Saravanan* graduated from Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas. She was part of the National Honor Society and HOSA – Future Health Professionals, and was captain of the debate and mock trial teams. She volunteered at her local library and with children’s reading groups to promote literacy in her community. Additionally, Aiswarya was a dance teacher and also coached her former junior high MathCounts team to competition at the state level.
She holds multiple medical certifications and volunteered as a certified nursing assistant in Northwest Medical Center’s COVID-19 and labor and delivery units and as a public health ambassador for her community. She is fluent in Tamil and can read and write Latin. Aiswarya is a National Merit Finalist and an AP Scholar with Distinction. She is majoring in neuroscience.

**Sneha Sharma**

**Sneha Sharma** graduated from Timberline High School in Boise, Idaho. Sneha worked with children as a licensed childcare provider and through the St. Luke’s Children’s Hospital advisory board, the City of Boise’s WaterShed Action Team, and the Mayor’s Council on Children and Youth. Through the Boise Host Lions Club, Sneha started a drive that collected nearly 400 pairs of eyeglasses for charitable distribution. She led her school's HOSA – Future Health Professionals and environmental clubs, spoke at social and environmental justice rallies, helped her school district pass a clean energy commitment, advocated for wildlife conservation, and is on the board of a student-founded environmental education nonprofit. She also has been recognized in state competitions for piano and drawing. Sneha is a National Merit Commended Student and an AP Scholar with Distinction. She is fluent in Hindi. Sneha is majoring in neuroscience.

**Anjali Shenoy**

**Anjali Shenoy** graduated from Perry High School in Chandler, Arizona. An officer for Perry’s UNICEF chapter, she also helped special needs children through Sparrow Club. As a member of Leaders In Training, a youth professional development organization, she shadowed the Chandler city attorney and in the city’s human resources department. Throughout high school and onward, Anjali has advocated for mental health awareness and helped people through recovery. A painter since childhood, Anjali has had her works displayed in art shows; one won a Best Painting award from the Chandler Center for the Arts. She is fluent in six languages including Hindi and Konkani, and can read Latin. Anjali was a member of the National Honor Society and is an AP Scholar with Distinction. She is majoring in psychology.

**Sneha Shrinivas**

**Sneha Shrinivas** graduated from Centennial High School in Frisco, Texas. Sneha organized many Feed My Starving Children drives in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and helped plan Naada Daanam: Carnatic for a
Cure, which raised over $70,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. She co-founded a Girls in STEM chapter at her high school and hosted many STEM career workshops for underprivileged middle and high school girls. Her writing on the immigrant experience was nationally recognized by Indian American Impact, and she has been involved in national immigration policy reform through advocacy work in Washington, D.C. Sneha is a National Merit Scholar and is also fluent in Tamil. She will study computer science.

Leah Grace Sullivan

Leah Grace Sullivan graduated from Cypress Homeschool STEM Academy in Cypress, Texas. As a dual credit student at Lonestar College in Tomball she co-founded the Homeschool Dual Credit Club, served as president of the Gay-Straight Alliance and was chosen as the head delegate for the model United Nations team for three years. She was also active in the Lonestar Honors College where she served as the operations manager for the leadership team, a peer mentor, and a student recruiter. Leah worked for Katy ISD as a head lifeguard, swim instructor, and lifeguard instructor, and for Harris County as a student election clerk during three elections. Leah also volunteered extensively at local food pantries and as a junior counselor at Texas A&M University’s SEE Math Camp. She is majoring in data science.

Liana “Oli” Szabo

Liana “Oli” Szabo graduated from Plano West Senior High School in Plano, Texas. They coached middle and high school mock trial for four years and were the president and lead attorney on their mock trial team. Oli helped found vCare4Seniors, which connected nursing home residents with high school students during the pandemic. They were co-president of the school orchestra, served as a National Honor Society officer, and were the director of management for DFW Students for Biden. Oli studied in Germany on the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange Award, worked at Concordia Language Villages as a camp counselor, and received the American Association of Teachers of German Study Trip Award. They are a National Merit Scholar and an AP Scholar with Distinction. Oli is fluent in Hungarian and conversational in German. They are an undeclared student.

Nishka Talwar

Nishka Talwar graduated from Hendrickson High School in Pflugerville, Texas. She was active in UIL academics, The Locker,
Unified Champions, and HOSA – Future Health Professionals, and served as president of both National Honor Society and Girl Advocates, vice president of the Student Council, secretary of Unified Champions, and ambassador for her school’s Career Technology Education program. Nishka’s service focused on aiding underserved communities in India and Texas by offering free tutoring in English and mathematics, mentoring youth in her high school, and volunteering in her local food pantry, public library, and elder care facility. Nishka is fluent in Hindi and conversational in Spanish. She graduated third in her class and is an AP Scholar with Distinction and an AP Capstone Diploma recipient. Nishka is majoring in neuroscience.

Alekya Sai Tanikella

Alekya Sai Tanikella graduated from Capital Senior High School in Boise, Idaho. A founding member of the Red Cross club of Idaho, Montana, and Eastern Oregon, she hosted multiple blood drives in her school and community. She also was a member of the inaugural Mayor’s Youth Climate Council, created a native plant garden and hosted climate-related events as part of outreach to youth and families in the Boise area. Alekya created Bee Musicale, a group of students who played classical music for residents of senior centers. At Boise State University Alekya studied the effects of CRISPR/Cas9 on zebrafish and published her research in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences. She is fluent in Telugu and conversational in Spanish. Alekya is majoring in neuroscience.

Jennifer Zhang

Jennifer Zhang graduated from Lebanon Trail High School in Frisco, Texas. She volunteered through her church as a math and English tutor for refugee students and also volunteered with the Dallas Life Foundation and Grace Bridge Food Bank. She was the vice president of her school’s Operation Smile chapter, helping to raise awareness and money for child cleft lip surgeries. As an active member of the National Art Honor Society and Create 2 Donate, she was also involved in several art service projects for her school and local community. Jennifer is her school’s valedictorian, a National Merit Scholar and an AP Scholar with Distinction. She is also fluent in Chinese. Jennifer is majoring in computer science.