

UTA Jerome Nerman Family Foundation Education Fund

Biography of Taylor Duda

1) Academics

As an individual aspiring to become a physician, my academics have taken the forefront position in my life at this point. It's not uncommon to find me locked away in my room on a Friday afternoon, with the lamp set dim, absorbing what knowledge I can from the depths of a textbook. School has been expressed as important to me since I was a small child, and so my record is consistent throughout my academic career. My future academic plan is the status quo, with perhaps more effort on timing of my studying so I can say "yes" to spontaneous social time as well. Below are a few points of my academic career, along with some current goals I find invaluable to my success.

- High school was a time of discovering my academic inclination, and deciding the often feared problem of "what to do with my life". An interest in science sparked early, as well as English. I found myself on the honor roll all four years, but did not truly apply myself until my final grade 12 year. I graduated with Great Distinction Status (above 95% average), and 2nd in my class of ~300. For academic achievements, I was awarded the Scholastic Merit Award (\$400), Biology Award, and Law Award.
- During my grade 11 and grade 12 years, I undertook Advanced Placement courses in Psychology, English Literature and Composition, and Calculus. At the completion of each of these a college equivalency test was issued for the respective subject. With grades of 5/5, 4/5, and 5/5 respectively, I was awarded a total of 15 credits (one full semester) to the University of Saskatchewan. Because I had achieved credit score (4 or above) in all three of the AP courses, I was also fortunate enough to be the only one at my high school to receive the AP Scholar Status from the organizing body, College Board.
- University was a huge change in my life, moving away from home and experiencing listening to an expert on a topic for three hours a week. Initially, I stumbled in class selection and a couple of my classes were below 80%, as outlined in my transcript included with this application. However, I knew by this point that I wanted to achieve entrance into the College of Medicine at the UofS, and understood a better average was simply necessary. It was obvious, and so I buckled down to study more and study better. My efforts began paying off, and I achieved better grades including a recent 97% final grade in PLSC 314, a statistics course. For my academic average, I was offered a membership to the Golden Key Society, who offers membership to the top 15% of the Arts & Science College.
- Entering my third year, it is my wish to continue improving my grades. Besides my wish to achieve entrance to the College of Medicine, I am also currently pursuing Double Honours Bachelor of Science Degrees in Anatomy & Cellbiology and Microbiology & Immunology. These fields complement medicine well, and allow me insight into health sciences in general. One highlight for me was the previous semester's Human Gross Anatomy course, which allowed me to work with cadavers in the lab. This degree will require a total of five years school, but because of its subject matter allows important networking opportunities with medical professionals at the UofS.

2) Extracurriculars & Experiences

One of the greatest notations of a good life is balance, and through my activities outside of school I have tried to achieve that. I've had a lifelong relationship with sport, and couldn't give it up if I tried. But sport alone causes an imbalance, and so I've attempted a few other things as well ranging from politics to computer programming. For your consideration, I've listed below some of the experiences which have helped craft me into who I am today.

- At age six I first picked up a racquetball racquet, and it was almost as big as me. Despite my size disadvantage, I began hitting the ball and instantly fell in love with the sport. And so I continued, playing approximately five times a week for 1-3 hours until I moved to university. During this time, though I played for love of the sport, I achieved various trophy medals including qualifying for funding to attend the Canadian Junior Nationals seven consecutive years. In October of my 2008, during my first year university, I fractured my right ankle while backpeddling during a match. It was a three month recovery, and meant I had only three more months after that until nationals in April. I knew it was my last year at such a competitive level, since my academic time requirements were beginning to require priority over athletics, and tried my very best to train back to my previous standard. I was fortunate in rehabilitation, and made it to nationals, which was in Regina that year. My singles game (1v1) suffered and I was eliminated in the quarter finals, but my doubles game (2v2) made it all the way to the third place match. I was ecstatic. Unfortunately, my partner was having elbow problems. We had to decide whether he could play both that match and his singles game later, and mutually volunteered that we would forfeit the third place match. I do not regret that decision even an ounce, because later that day he played absolutely brilliantly and won 1st place including the right to represent Canada at the world championship.
- I believe I was 10 when my first computer arrived, and I was instantly fascinated with the machine. From 2004-2006 I attended the MSI Computer Camp to learn programming and a splash of graphic design during my summers. The knowledge later turned out to be a great asset for learning bioinformatics and designing a website for an employer.
- Politics have always interested me as well, which is why when a friend invited me to Saskatchewan Youth Parliament (SYP) in 2008 I gladly attended. This mock parliament was a heaven of debate and allowed us to use the actual Saskatchewan Parliament Buildings for our days. This interest led me to join the Arts & Science Students Union once I moved to Saskatoon for university, where I have since been elected as Whip (2008-2009), Lounge Director (2009-2010), and Technical Director (2010-present).
- My time with the ASSU allowed me to experience the background of university education when I was appointed to the Committee on Academic Programs and Standards for Science. This group of professors and myself reviewed and decided upon new courses, changes to courses, changes to majors, deletion of courses, and other similar matters. One substantial project we evaluated during this time was the complete revamping of the Physiology & Pharmacology department.
- More local to my major, I decided to join the Anatomy & Cell Biology Students' Society, and became the social director there. It was a welcome change to organize events for fun instead of working with such serious business of course changes.
- In 2009 also decided to volunteer for Experience US, a once a year visit to the UofS by hundreds of high school students. It is always interesting to see those in the same place as you were a few years ago, and provided me some perspective on the growth I've experienced the last few years.
- During my employment for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region in 2009, I was able to clear confidentiality standards to see patients. Working as a maid there, my interests in the patients were peaked. One day, out on a limb, I decided to ask a Dr. Alan Beggs whether I could shadow him occasionally during the summer. To my delight and surprise, he said it was absolutely fine. Quite frankly, though I had wanted medicine as a career before, this experience was life changing. As I watched the orthopedic surgeon work, a friend who was working as a medical Resident asked me if I wanted to see "something cool". Curious as ever, I followed him quietly through the sterile core of the Operating Room. I remember how cold the metal door was, but as I walked in the room was being prepared for surgery. Because I had cleaned the ORs before, I knew well this was the Cardiac room and my own heart jumped. My mind raced, and I was excited to see a heart surgery from the corner of the

room. The patient sedated, I watched closely as the bone saw began to rev. I remember thinking "this is unreal", as they opened the chest. Partially in a trance, I heard "Taylor, come over here.", and walked to my invited location above the patient's head. From feet away, I could see the individual beats of his heart. As the anesthesiologist, my acquaintance explained what was happening next. They injected potassium and I watched carefully as the heart slowed, slowed, and stopped. The next week, I was actually working on the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit and found that patient awake and responsive. It was miraculous to think I had watched his heart stop, and now he was walking and speaking to a nurse. He was discharged after a speedy recovery. I'll never forget it.

3) Volunteer Work volunteering - church or in your community

I recognize how fortunate I am to possess simple things. From the ability to walk, through to my mental capability to even attend university, I have an obligation to give back. Through volunteer work, I have attempted to expand my horizons and keep my world view consistently reevaluating. Volunteer work has been an important part of my life in the past, and will continue to be. Below are outlined a few of my past services and their composition.

- At the UofS, there is a student run clinic called SWITCH (Student Initiative Towards Community Health). It seemed like a perfect opportunity to meet medical students and real patients alike. The full body approach taken here suited me, and I was able to work in a food store, day care, and waiting area. The things we take for granted were aptly demonstrated by this poorer neighborhood when I worked in the waiting room. For example, I recall a chronic pain victim who grew marijuana in his basement not because of addiction, but because he simply could not afford his prescription pain killers and his doctor sanctioned that as ok in the stead. As a student I've never been without a medical plan, and shuddered to think that there are so many who need such simple things.
- Racquetball is an individual sport, but a tight knit community. When I was asked to begin coaching children in 2004, I didn't hesitate to say "absolutely". The atmosphere of the establishment helped me decide I would enjoy spending 4 hours each Saturday coaching ages 6-12. The one thing I did not know then was that it was considered "work". I simply enjoyed it, and continued to do so until 2009 whenever I had opportunity. Seminars were hosted in Saskatchewan, and I received my level 1 coaching certification, which meant I could help out a couple of my kids when we went to nationals if they needed it. It's almost as much of a high to coach someone through a great game as it is to play yourself.
- Since 2008, I've attended the Parliament Community Church most Sundays, and the community there has been influential on my life. One such example is handing out free gifts of flowers or chocolates to the local community. The essence of the deed is in that there is no string attached. It is best if we did not say where we were from, or why we were giving these out. A simple gift can make someone's day. A flap of a butterfly's wings might be the breeze which starts a hurricane. One flower might be the initiator to a better community.
- Each March the College of Medicine hosts hundreds of potential applicants for interviews. We must undergo ten separate station interviews, of only ten minutes in length on various topics. Ranging from an acting scenario to discover how one breaks bad news to the most in depth personality questions, intense preparation is recommended. So, at the beginning of the year, I led a group of ~12 students each week in interview preparation. We went through personal exercises, and practiced for at least three hours a week. Through the actual success rate of medical applicants is abysmal, our success rate was over 70%. Though I ended up in the 30% this year, my resolve has not been weakened and I plan to run for president of the Pre-Med Club at the UofS to further utilize my abilities.

4) Employment work – work experience, including company, position, duties and the time frame in which you held the position

Money makes the world go round. But as long as we need it, I see no reason we can't search for a more complete life fulfillment while earning it. My philosophy regarding employment has been to expand my boundaries and mind, while earning money. The job in and of itself has been a reward, and now that I've had a taste of life beyond the standard teenage employment opportunities, I predict all my future jobs will similarly cater to an academic and medical interest. I've outlined below some of my past employment and accomplishments, as well as hopes for the future.

- Wascana Lake is located in the middle of Regina, and serves as a beautiful site for Parliament. The Wascana Canoe Kayak Rentals business hired me as Project Manager in 2009. My duties were simple – run the establishment and make as much profit as possible. This largely included marketing, and so I began construction of a few marketing endeavors. Construction of a pamphlet, poster, and website were prime accomplishments for me and made possible by my previous computer training. While it rained, we could not open and so I constructed interior wood storage units for paddles and equipment. By the end of the employment term, I had gotten to know the excellent individuals of the canoeing and kayaking communities. An opportunity had arisen at the Regina General Hospital and I simply had to take it.
- The later part of my 2009 summer was spent working as an Environmental Service Worker at the Regina General Hospital. Working as a maid for the Health Region was a humbling experience, but also one of the most rewarding of my life because of the shadowing opportunities. Besides the surgical shadowing previously described, I also was able to glimpse the worlds of General Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery, Emergency, and Intensive Care. This job, despite the toilet cleanings, has absolutely solidified my career choices.
- For 2010, I needed to try something new. So during Christmas of 2009, I began speaking with professors at the University of Regina. This led to contact with Dr. John Stavrinides. After interviews, Dr. Stavrinides decided to take me on as an undergraduate researcher for the summer. He has taught me an astonishing amount in only four months, and proved an inspiring supervisor. This work led to discovering how real science is done, and meeting the people who do it. I desire now to continue research work during my summers throughout my education with Dr. Stavrinides and potentially other researchers in Saskatoon.

Thank you very much for your consideration for the Jerome Nerman Family Foundation Education Fund Scholarship. If there is absolutely anything I can add or clarify, I ask you not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,
Taylor Duda