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**Kellcee Baker, Ashley Gaschk are 2009 Truman Scholars**

*Summary: Kellcee Baker and Ashley Gaschk have been named 2009 Truman Scholars, two of the 60 selected across the entire United States. Baker is the only Truman recipient selected from Minnesota and Gaschk is the only North Dakotan named.*

(March 27, 2009)-University of Minnesota, Morris students Kellcee Baker and Ashley Gaschk have been named 2009 Truman Scholars, two of the 60 selected across the entire United States, announced Morris campus Chancellor Jacqueline Johnson.

“I speak for the entire campus when I extend my sincere congratulations to Kellcee and Ashley as our 2009 Truman Scholars,” said Johnson. “We are so proud of these two students. Their success with the Truman illustrates what we at Morris already know—our students are among the best in the country and they are prepared to be tomorrow’s leaders.”

Baker, daughter of Scott and Tracy Baker, Audubon, Minn., is the only Truman recipient selected from Minnesota and Gaschk, daughter of Mitchell and Della Gaschk, Bismarck, N.D., is the only North Dakotan named. Both juniors at Morris, they are the only University of Minnesota students selected from among 601 candidates nominated by 289 colleges and universities.

The Truman Scholarship Foundation was established by Congress in 1975 as the federal memorial to the 33rd President. The Foundation awards highly competitive, national scholarships for college students to attend graduate school in preparation for careers in government or elsewhere in public service.

“I owe a lot to my family, my support group, friends and the faculty and staff who supported me throughout the application process,” said Baker, who majors in psychology and liberal arts for the human services and minors in business and Native American studies. “Specifically, I thank Paula O’Loughlin (director of the Academic Center for Enrichment [ACE] and political science faculty, both at Morris), Thomas McRoberts (director of continuing education and regional programs), Leslie Meek (psychology faculty) and Julie Pelletier (anthropology faculty).”

In addition to the assistance in preparation for interviews, challenging her and “building [her] confidence,” Baker shared that “the most important thing is that they all believed in me and did not let me ever doubt myself.”

With the help of the scholarship, Baker plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison to earn a doctorate in clinical psychology with an emphasis on human development and family studies. She will then work with Native American and low-income youth “to develop positive health behaviors including positive self esteems and strong identities.

“Aside from the obvious benefits, the scholarship validates my goals for the future and provides me with the support to make those goals become a reality,” said Baker.

A first-generation college student majoring in English and American studies, with a political science minor, Gaschk said she was “shocked and thrilled” when notified that she is a Truman Scholar. “Now that the reality is beginning to sink in, I am honored to receive the award...the interview panelists were interested in my interests, leadership abilities, the way I think, and my sense of humor, in addition to my grades. It’s a great relief knowing that now I’ll have the Foundation’s financial support for graduate school, as well as having great internship and networking opportunities opened to me.

“I am really grateful to the Truman Foundation for affirming what I have been doing and what I want to do as a career.” Although, said Gaschk, North Dakota is one of the states with the lowest union density, her post-graduation plans are “to take a few years to work as an organizer for a public sector labor union. With that work experience under my belt, I want to earn a master’s degree in public policy from a program with a strong focus on collective bargaining and labor. Ultimately, I want to do legislative advocacy for a national public sector industrial labor union.”

Gaschk also credits O’Loughlin and McRoberts as well as Sharon Van Eps, associate administrator for ACE at Morris. “Becca Gercken (English faculty), Dave Swenson (director of Student Activities) and Jamison Tessneer were all there to help me.” (Tessneer is the organizing director for the campus’ Minnesota Public Interest Research Group [MPIRG]).

The scholarship application process includes a multi-page application, written essays, a policy proposal, online research and rigorous interviews. Each interview panel typically included a university president, a federal judge, a distinguished public servant and a past Truman Scholarship winner.

The 2009 selections bring Morris to a total of four Truman Scholars.

Watch an interview with Ashley and Kellcee on [YouTube](#).

Photo: Kellcee Baker, Chancellor Johnson, Ashley Gaschk

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.