
News Release

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Four Inland Empire students to receive 2021 SCAG Scholarships

Brenna Bell and Ryan Byrne of Murrieta, Gabriel Cao of Chino Hills and Andrew Ballard of Oak Hills were announced Thursday as Inland Empire winners of 2021 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) scholarships.

Bell, Byrne, Cao and Ballard were among 11 students from across Southern California who will receive \$4,000 each in financial support.

The SCAG scholarship program, now in its 11th year, is intended to provide financial support to a select group of high school and community college students who have expressed interest in urban planning and public policy as part of their long-term career goals. The scholarship winners were announced at SCAG's Regional Council meeting.

"We're honored to have the opportunity to help these students in the next stage of their academic journeys. They are remarkable young adults and future leaders for our region," said Clint Lorimore, SCAG President, an Eastvale City Councilmember and member of the SCAG Scholarship Committee.

As part of the application process, students were required to submit a completed application form; a minimum 500-word essay, two letters of recommendation and a current academic transcript.

Bell graduates Thursday from Murrieta Valley High School and will attend Claremont McKenna College, majoring in environment, economics and politics.

She wrote that her intended field of study "will allow me to study how to fight for what I think should be prioritized – the environment – and will aid me in figuring out how to create and implement regulations that will be cost-efficient for the economy ... Seeing the environment not being taken care of concerns me, and I plan on using my career to do what I can against that."

Byrne graduates Friday from Murrieta Valley High School and will attend Loyola Marymount University or American University, majoring in political science.

"For several years now, I have been active in my community using my voice to speak out for those in need; to use my passion for public policy and government to help those who are struggling," he wrote. "I hope that working for a government entity or private group can give me further insight into how government and policy making can be a force for good."

Cao graduated from Ruben S. Ayala High School in Chino Hills and plans to major in political science.

He wrote that he plans to pursue a career in legislation, at the Congressional or state level, “to protect the civil liberties of the people. Working closely with the laws that govern the people, I aspire to be a force that pushes us closer to solving these issues, however small my contributions may be. In my future of public policy, I hope only to serve as an instrument of the people and advocate for their best interests.”

Ballard graduated from Oak Hills High School and will attend California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, majoring in mechanical engineering. His scholarship was funded through a partnership with the California Transportation Foundation.

“Leadership is one element I feel that is important to exhibit in order for a volunteer, government official or other stakeholder to allocate resources to shape the positive advancement of a community,” Ballard wrote. “My goal is to work in public service for the U.S. Department of Energy, preserving environmental resources and developing clean power to advance the nation.”

In addition to Lorimore, this year’s SCAG Scholarship Committee was comprised of 15 Regional Council members and three representatives from education and business. On the committee from the Inland Empire were: Curt Hagman, Chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors; SCAG First Vice President Jan Harnik, representing the Riverside County Transportation Commission; Kathleen Kelly, representing the Coachella Valley Council of Governments; Steve Manos, representing the Western Riverside Council of Governments; and Ray Marquez and Larry McCallon, representing the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG’s regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.