



Samford University

Media Relations

CONTACTS: Sarah Waller

Email: swaller@samford.edu

Mobile: 205.726.4628

Philip Poole

ppoole@samford.edu

205.215.1460

\$250,000 Gift from Encompass Health Establishes New Minority Scholarship for Samford's School of Health Professions

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- Samford University's [School of Health Professions](#) recently received a \$250,000 gift from Encompass Health Corporation, formerly known as HealthSouth, to endow a scholarship for minority students who are inspired to follow their calling to serve others through health professions, positively influencing health care and society.

[Doctor of Physical Therapy](#) (D.P.T.) students Hans Rice, Eric Gonzalez Diaz and Joy Dees are the inaugural recipients of the Encompass Health Minority Scholarship, and the impact of this scholarship can already be seen in their lives.

Rice, a third year D.P.T. student, attended Samford as an undergraduate student, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in exercise science. When he began to look for physical therapy programs, Rice knew he wanted to return to Samford as a member of the program's inaugural cohort. "Samford revitalized my life, so I knew I wanted to go to a program that helped me become a better person," Rice said.

As he finishes his final semester of the program, Rice is excited for the opportunity to impact the lives of his future patients and the communities he will serve. "I know my calling is more than physical therapy," Rice said. "Physical therapy is the outlet for me to impact lives."

For Rice, the scholarship means more than the monetary value. "From the situation I come from, anything goes a long way. But in this instance, it's not the monetary value that is the most important. It's an honor to just be a recipient. What this scholarship stands for is the most important thing to me," he said.

Joy Dees, a first year D.P.T. student, said she chose Samford for graduate school because of its commitment to missions and service learning. "That is what attracted me to the program. I really have a heart for missions, and I love getting to do service learning projects as part of my curriculum," she said.

For Eric Gonzalez Diaz, a second year D.P.T. student, the scholarship comes as a financial relief for his family, as his wife works to not only support him but also their 3-year-old daughter.

When asked what he would want to say to Encompass Health, knowing their gift made this scholarship a reality, he said, "I would want to tell them thank you for their generous donation and their contributions to our community. While this scholarship seeks to make an impact amongst minority communities, I see its greatest purpose. This scholarship has directly impacted my family," Diaz said.

While Encompass Health made the transformative gift, the desire for this scholarship has been on the heart of [Alan Jung](#), dean of the School of Health Professions, for years.

“It brings me incredible joy to see this scholarship become a reality, and to witness how it is already impacting the lives of the students who have received it. My hope is this fund will continue to grow so we can expand the reach and the impact of the scholarship,” Jung said.

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ABOUT SAMFORD UNIVERSITY -- *Samford University is a premier nationally ranked Christian university. Founded in 1841, Samford is the 87th oldest institution of higher education in the United States. U.S. News & World Report ranks Samford 3rd among regional universities in the South, and Samford is recognized as the top-ranked university in the state of Alabama in national rankings published by Forbes Inc, The Economist and The Wall Street Journal. Samford enrolls 5,509 students from 45 states and 30 countries in its 10 academic units: arts, arts and sciences, business, divinity, education, health professions, law, nursing, pharmacy, and public health. Samford also fields 17 NCAA Division I teams that compete in the tradition-rich Southern Conference. www.samford.edu*