

Runway to Educational Success

At Southwest Airlines, we believe educated communities are empowered communities. We're taking all the strides we can to ensure we're giving students every opportunity to achieve educational success through a variety of scholarship opportunities allowing them to focus on their schoolwork without the financial burden that often comes with earning a college degree.

Recently, as part of [Gary Kelly's induction into the Business Travel Hall of Fame](#), we were able to present a new scholarship designed to give a hand-up to college students throughout Texas who are pursuing a career in the tourism and hospitality industry. The first recipient of the Gary Kelly Texas Travel & Hospitality Scholarship is Alexis Willis and this scholarship will help her graduate on time from Texas A&M. We were inspired by Alexis and her story so we invited her to share what this scholarship means in her own words:

Being the first person in my family to graduate from college has been a dream of mine since the beginning of high school. While I was thrilled to be a first-generation college student from my family, I was overwhelmed by all the little things that come with earning a degree. For example, I didn't know how paying for college even worked or whether I would even be able to afford it from semester to semester.

Today, I am in my second to last semester at Texas A&M University and although I had my expenses figured out for my current semester, I still had to figure out how I could afford my last semester in the summer to graduate on time. When I got the email that I was a candidate for the Gary Kelly Texas Hospitality & Tourism scholarship I was over the moon excited and knew exactly how I would use it to make my dream become a reality. Being selected as the recipient is truly an honor and a memory I will cherish for the rest of my life. The scholarship has taken a weight off my shoulders and provided me with so many opportunities including opportunities to complete my internship and most importantly I get to graduate on time! But this scholarship means more to me than the opportunities and honor itself. Coming from the environment I grew up in, education was my only escape and frankly, I did not think that attending college was going to be a part of my future. I thought that I was destined to be stuck in the same environment I had known my whole life.

However, with this opportunity, I will be able to graduate and step into a career that has been a passion of mine; providing people with lifelong memories they can cherish forever. I cannot thank Southwest Airlines and its team enough for their generosity, continuous support, and kindness throughout the process of accepting the scholarship.



From Left to Right: Gary

Kelly, Alexis Willis, and Dave Harvey