

Joy, gratitude at Foundation Scholarship Breakfast

Before she was awarded a scholarship from the Lee College Foundation, Honors Program student and Nigerian immigrant Gift Sampson had to make the difficult choice between paying tuition or taking care of household bills. At her husband's insistence, the tuition always came first.

"After we paid the tuition, we didn't have enough money to see us to the end of the month," Sampson said through tears at the 13th annual Foundation Scholarship Breakfast, held Friday, April 10, in the Rundell Hall Conference Center on campus.

"But he told me: We are going to make it. ... And I worked so hard. I went to the Writing Center every day, to the point where I called and they knew my voice."

Each year, the foundation breakfast gives scholarship recipients and their donors the opportunity to connect. Students personally thank donors for the tuition or textbook assistance that helped fund their education, while donors see and hear firsthand how their generosity has made a difference.

"I just get amazed by what we have at Lee College and in this community," Lee College Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown said at the breakfast. "In the eyes of the donors, you can see the excitement they have for what they have been able to do: helping us get the students here, keep the students here, and graduate. And in the students, you can see the progress and the growth that they're making because you believed in them. There simply aren't enough 'thank-yous' we can give."

Sampson described how she and her husband's shared faith in her lifelong dream of receiving a college education kept them going despite myriad challenges — from conquering the English language barrier, to overcoming doubts about her own ability to excel academically after coming from a culture where women were valued only for their potential worth as brides and wives.

"When I received the \$1,000 scholarship, that was how it all started and that money meant the world to me," said Sampson, who received the Cindy McNeill Memorial from the foundation. "There is a text in the Bible that says that if you cast your bread upon many waters, that it will come back to you in so many ways. The bread that you cast touched me in another part of the world and now I am here today, because of you. I cannot be more grateful."

For John Allen, a Barbers Hill High School senior taking dual-credit college courses in process technology, receiving the Chevron Phillips Workforce Development Scholarship through the Lee College Foundation opened a world of new possibilities for his future.

"The money for tuition and books has been really helpful to me and my family, but the money is just the beginning," Allen said at the breakfast, noting how much he has gained from his relationship with Todd Jackson, the Chevron Phillips employee mentor with whom he was paired as a scholarship recipient.

"He took me on a tour of the plant and I was able to see how to apply what I'm learning in class to the real world. You all have motivated me for success."

The Lee College Foundation is a non-profit entity that raises private funds to help support scholarships and other worthwhile initiatives that directly affect student success,

and promote the student's ability to reach their educational goals. This year, the foundation endowment topped \$10 million for the first time in history.