

Philadelphia University Fashion Design Student Awarded \$25,000 YMA Geoffrey Beene Scholarship



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For the second consecutive year, a PhilaU fashion design student receives the prestigious award

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 8 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Jessica Steele, a senior fashion design major at Philadelphia University, was awarded a prestigious \$25,000 Geoffrey Beene National Scholarship Jan. 7 at the YMA Geoffrey Beene Fashion Scholarship Dinner in New York.

"This is huge, it's really exciting," said Steele, who was one of four student winners announced at the dinner. "I think everyone appreciates the work that goes into winning this award -- the balance between school and working on the scholarship case study. It's great to see that hard work pay off."

This is the second year in a row that a fashion design student from Philadelphia University has won the selective industry award. This year's other winners are from Parsons The New School for Design, Cornell University and Iowa State University.

"We are extremely proud of Jessica for her commitment and dedication to her chosen field," said Clara Henry, director of Philadelphia University's Fashion Design Program. "She demonstrated an extraordinary degree of focused energy and grace under very stressful and competitive circumstances, while at the same time managing a full roster of classes. She never wavered from the professionalism that she is -- she truly exemplifies the Philadelphia University spirit."

In addition to the \$25,000 award, Steele and two other Philadelphia University fashion design students, Rebecca Krane and Kate Schnitzer, won YMA scholarships of \$5,000 each.

"We congratulate all three winners -- Jessica, Rebecca and Kate -- for their professionalism and commitment," Henry said. "I expect great things from each of them as they make their mark in the fashion industry."

This is the second year the YMA awarded \$25,000 scholarships to the top students in the country. The scholarships were funded in part through a bequest from the estate of famed designer Geoffrey Beene. The annual scholarship fund dinner is a top industry event attended by designers and fashion industry officials. This year, honorees included designer Zac Posen, and the event was hosted by Tim Gunn, a host of Bravo's Project Runway and chief creative officer for Liz Claiborne Inc.

Steele, 21, expects the prestigious award to open some doors for her when she enters the fashion industry after her May graduation. Her plans include moving

to New York, where she hopes to work for a small fashion house, perhaps a firm like Nanette Lapore, where she had an internship last year. Steele studied in London last spring and, as a sophomore, had her children's designs modeled in Philadelphia University's 2007 Fashion Show. Eventually, she would like to start her own fashion line.

Scholarship applicants had to complete a detailed case study to design a sustainable apparel brand that could sell at a mass market level - in other words, at a sustainable price point. "This feeds into the larger trend of going green," noted Steele, who had a little over a month to turn the project in before Thanksgiving.

Steele designed a menswear line with a young, urban cache to sell at Macy's. Her brand, called Steele Plains, featured natural clothing for a "globally conscious, modern young man who wants to wear trendy designs and who is also environmentally responsible," she said. To make the line sustainable, she proposed using organic and natural fibers, sourcing some work locally to cut down the carbon footprint of shipping the products, but also planned to source some manufacturing internationally to keep costs down. She used fabric samples from Martex Fiber Corp., a Philadelphia firm that recycles factory-floor scraps for use in new textiles.

On Dec. 21, Steele found out she was one of eight finalists and went to New York on Jan. 5 to present her case study before a panel of judges. Two days later, at the awards dinner, Steele waited nervously on stage as two other names were called before hers. "It was really exciting," she said, "and a little overwhelming."

Casey Saccomanno '08 received a \$25,000 YMA Geoffrey Beene Fashion Scholarship in its inaugural year in Jan. 2008, as well as a \$5,000 YMA scholarship. Philadelphia University fashion design students Janelle Frank and Sandra Huffaker also won \$5,000 scholarships last year.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,350 full- and part-time students enrolled in more than 50 undergraduate and graduate programs. As part of its core mission, the University focuses on professionally oriented programs that prepare students for successful careers, with a strong foundation in the liberal arts and an orientation toward interdisciplinary cooperation. Philadelphia University includes Schools of Architecture, Business Administration, Design and Media, Engineering and Textiles, Liberal Arts, and Science and Health.

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