



# TMS Foundation: growth through giving



Nicholas De Leon

## Scholarship Inspires Nicholas De Leon to “Reach for the Stars”

Lynne Robinson

Nicholas De Leon’s future is as boundless as the universe that he intends to help open to further investigation. “My overarching goal is to hasten the time when humans are efficiently exploring space by developing the materials necessary to achieve this,” said De Leon, a Ph.D. student at the University of Alabama (UA), Tuscaloosa, who will be defending his dissertation this fall. “This has led me to work with the welding of rockets, flexible heat shield development, and thermal-mechanical characterization of rocket engine materials.”

An important boost in De Leon’s career trajectory was winning the prestigious J. Keith Brimacombe Presidential Scholarship, funded by the TMS Foundation, when he was a junior at UA in 2008. While the money was very welcome, De Leon said that the award had a much more significant impact on him than helping him pay his tuition bill. “Being recognized for your achievements is extremely validating,” he commented. “An award like this tells you, ‘Yes, you can do this, you can do it well, and you deserve to be here.’ I have heard that many students and professionals alike suffer from ‘impostor syndrome’, and think that they don’t deserve to be where they are, for a perceived lack of competence. I think this type of recognition shatters those kinds of thoughts.”

“For me, winning the Brimacombe Presidential Scholarship helped remove any self-created roadblocks for my career ambitions,” De Leon continued. “It gave credence to what I heard growing up—‘You can do whatever you set your mind to’—and inspired me to keep my sights high and continue reaching for the stars. And, the benefits of this experience definitely didn’t end there. I am sure that

having the scholarship on my résumé has had a snowballing effect and contributed to my winning subsequent internships and awards.”

At the time he was considering applying for the scholarship, De Leon was a student of Garry Warren’s, now a UA Professor Emeritus and member of the TMS Foundation Board of Trustees. De Leon had heard about the scholarship and other TMS student award opportunities when he was a sophomore presenting a poster at the 2007 TMS Annual Meeting and Exhibition. After placing in the student poster contest that year, “I felt that I actually had a chance to compete with students from all over the world for the top prize.” He noted that Warren encouraged him to try, “even though it was an intimidating prospect.”

Warren believes that supporting bright and motivated students such as De Leon in the pursuit of a TMS Foundation scholarship not only benefits those individuals, but the field as a whole. “As a professor, the TMS Foundation scholarship program provides a valuable opportunity to promote TMS to students and help them recognize the importance of being active in a professional society,” he said. “When your students win scholarships, it then gives you a means of introducing and promoting them to your colleagues, which helps the profession continue to advance and grow.”

“I can’t think of a single instance in which winning a scholarship did not contribute to the career development of one of my students,” Warren continued. “All of them came out of that experience more excited about their chosen profession and positive that they had made the right decision. Not only did it provide them with affirmation that they could succeed, but it also gave them confidence to continue pursuing their ambitions.”

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**—Nicholas De Leon, 2008 J. Keith Brimacombe Presidential Scholarship Recipient**

Seeing the impact of the TMS Foundation scholarship program firsthand was a leading factor in Warren's decision to become a Foundation Trustee and a major contributor. Warren has been active in TMS for a number of years—including his service as the 2011 TMS President—and believes this frame of reference enhances his ability to make a difference in the TMS Foundation's future. "Growing the TMS Foundation is a cause that I really believe in," he said. "It has already had an enormous impact on the lives of so many students and young professionals in the field, but I also know that it is possible to do more."

De Leon, from his perspective, agrees that the importance of the TMS Foundation's work transcends the monetary value of its projects. "I believe that awards like the Brimacombe Presidential Scholarship are effective in motivating and inspiring future leaders in the industry. These opportunities attract the best and brightest and we should be working to create more," he said. "Helping our shared passion have the most successful future possible is very worthwhile."



Nicholas De Leon (right) and Garry Warren at the 2008 TMS-AIME Awards Banquet, where De Leon officially received his scholarship.

## Honor a Special Mentor with a TMS Foundation Tribute

Think of the colleague who provided insight to your research, encouraged you through a challenging semester, or helped set your feet on a career path. Now ask yourself: What better way to recognize the impact of that individual on your future than to invest in the future of the next generation in his or her name? The TMS Foundation makes that possible with its Tribute Gift opportunity.

Simply indicate on the TMS Foundation contribution form that you would like to make your donation a Tribute Gift, and provide the name of the person you would like to honor. Your honoree will receive a tribute card, as well as be recognized in the annual TMS Foundation awards book. Your donation will then go to work in supporting the scholarships and awards, student best paper and poster contests,

travel grants, and young professional development programs that are at the heart of the TMS Foundation's mission to advance the future of the minerals, metals, and materials professions.

To make your Tribute Gift, visit the TMS Foundation website at [www.TMSFoundation.org](http://www.TMSFoundation.org) or contact Mary Samsa, TMS Foundation & Public Affairs Manager, at (724) 814-3130 or [msamsa@tms.org](mailto:msamsa@tms.org).



The TMS Student Poster Contest supported by the Foundation offers emerging professionals a valuable opportunity to develop presentation skills and connect with senior colleagues.

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