

[https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/new-100-000-wku-scholarship-to-further-rural-health-equity/article\\_3bfe9043-50d0-54c4-90b5-ebe1358af19d.html](https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/new-100-000-wku-scholarship-to-further-rural-health-equity/article_3bfe9043-50d0-54c4-90b5-ebe1358af19d.html)

## New \$100,000 WKU scholarship to further rural health equity

By SARAH MICHELS [smichels@bgdailynews.com](mailto:smichels@bgdailynews.com)

Oct 12, 2022



Western Kentucky University's Anthem Medicaid Rural Medicine Scholar Saysanavong talk with WKU President Timothy Caboni before Anthem B presented a check for \$100,000 in endowed scholarships to WKU and th **For additional photos, go to [bgdailynews.com](http://bgdailynews.com).**, Oct. 11, 2022. The scholar expand the number of frontline workers in the western region of Kentuc state's rural communities. ([Grace Ramey/gramey@bgdailynews.com](mailto:Grace Ramey/gramey@bgdailynews.com))

Grace Ramey/gramev@bgdailynews.com

Health insurance company Anthem Medicaid is looking to address the hospital workforce shortage in rural Kentucky, and Western Kentucky University is its latest stop.

Anthem announced Tuesday an endowed \$100,000 scholarship for WKU students majoring in the health sciences at the WKU Health Sciences Complex on the Medical Center's Campus.

The Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship fund is intended to remove financial barriers for students pursuing a career in the medical field while incentivizing them to serve as frontline workers in their rural communities, said Leon Lamoreaux, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield's Medicaid president in Kentucky.

The only scholarship requirement is that the recipients must stay and work in the community for three years to be able to give back, Lamoreaux said.

"In our strategic planning, we've been through several different layers of achieving health equity and one of the things that we have recognized is that until we address the access challenges in rural communities, we will never achieve the equity that we aspire to achieve," he said.

The inaugural recipients are Abbey Mills, a senior biology major, and Sarah Ela Saysanavong, a 2014 WKU graduate who is now pursuing her second degree in nursing.

Mills, a Bowling Green native, said she can't wait to serve the people of the Bowling Green community in the same way they've always helped her.

"I want to stay here and be a familiar face for patients," Mills said. "I know if I go to anybody for help, they will help you and so that's what I want to do in the future – be someone that they can come to see with their concerns and know that they're gonna get the help they need."



It's possible to make money AND do the right thing.

**SEVENNEY**  
MORTGAGE NOTE  
INVESTMENTS

AIM FOR  
AND PAID  
LEA

Saysanavong originally pursued forensics and criminology at WKU, but realized it wasn't for her once she got into the field. As a non-traditional student, she said her second degree wouldn't have been possible without WKU's scholarship support.

She added that knowing her hard work is recognized is the "icing on the cake" that allows her to keep pushing forward.

In 2022, Anthem Medicaid has made over a half-million dollar investment through ARMS. In the past, other university recipients have included Eastern Kentucky University, Hazard Community and Technical College and the University of Cincinnati.

The hospital workforce shortage has reached critical levels, according to the Kentucky Hospital Association's 2022 Workforce Survey. In 2021, over 17% of statewide hospital workforce positions were vacant.

Urban areas had a higher vacancy rate – 18.3% – than rural areas – 13.8% – but both are "unsustainable," the report stated. There were 469 non-physician vacancies among the ten hospitals in the Barren River area at the end of 2021.

WKU President Timothy Caboni said this scholarship is just the latest of the 192 endowed scholarships added to the university's roster since the WKU Opportunity Fund was created in 2018.

“Expanding access and opportunity has been an institutional priority at WKU since the university’s founding in 1906,” Caboni said. “Scholarship support, much like this one from Anthem Medicaid, plays a critical role in helping us achieve our goal of making the WKU experience more accessible to more individuals, while simultaneously caring for the communities that we serve.”

---

– Follow regional reporter Sarah Michels on Twitter @sarah\_michels13 or visit bgdailynews.com.

---

**Sarah Michels**

---

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)