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WESTERN ATHLETES ARE FAR - OUT

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Aliyah Dawkins was one of the 16 recipients of the FAR award// Photo courtesy of WWU Athletics

By [Maya Anderson](#)

This year Western athletics broke a record with a total of 16 athletes granted the Great Northwest Athletic Conference Faculty Athletics Representative's Scholar-Athlete Award.

The FAR Award represents the academic achievement of athletes who maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.85 or higher during the academic year, according to the Western athletics press release.

Any student-athlete participating in a Great Northwest Athletic Conference full-member school is eligible for the award. Western participates as one of the 11 members schools, which totaled 258 awarded athletes for the 2018-2019 year.

Since the program's start at Western in the 2011-2012 year, the record of 15 FAR Award athletes had yet to be beaten.

"We are extremely proud of the efforts of all of our student-athletes, but this group that are honored as FAR Award winners is extra special," Jeff Evans, the director of athletic communications, said. "With their commitment to their programs training daily and in competition, raising the bar to this level in their academics is as impressive as it gets."

Among Western's 16 award winners are five track & field and cross country athletes, five soccer players, three volleyball players and three rowers. Aundrea Koger (cross country, track & field) and Cameron Unks (soccer) are both receiving this award for the third time, with Maddie Bangasser (rowing) and Tess Biscup (volleyball) as second time recipients.

The press release notes that Western athletes have an average GPA of 3.16 for the 2018-19 school year, with 11 of 13 teams maintaining a GPA above a 3.00. The men's soccer team maintained the highest with a 3.37 GPA, while the volleyball team came in second with 3.36.

Other FAR Award winners include Chloe Biscup, Anneka Bostrom, Aliyah Dawkins, Gus Diehl, Claire Henninger, Anna Maracich, Haley Moss, Hannah Nienaber, Hattie North, Bryce Rosenwald, Paige Shimkus and Alessandro Tomasi.

"Maintaining this level of academic excellence is incredibly difficult, and when you add in the rigorous schedule with practices, games, weight training, it becomes even more impressive," Diane Flick-Williams, the head volleyball coach, said via email. "We are very proud of all of our student-athletes for their commitment to excellence on the court, in the classroom and in the community."

Aundrea Koger



"It was an honor to learn I was a three-time recipient of this award," Koger said. "School and athletics are both things where hard work really pays off."

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Fourth-year Aundrea Koger was one of the 16 recipients of the FAR award//

Photo courtesy of WWU Athletics

She maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.88 as a track & field and cross country athlete for the 2018-2019 year.

Koger will be starting her fourth-year in the fall and said she has been running cross country and track since seventh grade. Before coming to Western, she ran for Osage City High School in Kansas and the Brocaw Blazers club team. She was also a counselor for a Smarter Training for Faster Running cross country camp.

"I have a really good group that is behind me," Koger said. "In the last year, I've built a lot of strong relationships with my teammates, my professors and my coaches... I'm just excited about learning and working hard."

Koger is pursuing a double major in biology and German and plans to take time off after graduation to work at a university lab before pursuing a Ph.D. in animal behavior. During summer break, she is doing a research internship studying neural behavior in flies at a Harvard University lab in Kansas.



Fourth-year Cameron Unks was one of the 16 recipients of the FAR award// **Photo courtesy of WWU Athletics**

Cameron Unks

"If you do your best, good things come," Unks said. He is a three-time FAR Award winner holding a 3.87 GPA after the completion of this year and plays on the men's soccer team.

He began playing soccer when he was three years old and has been involved in swimming, basketball and track.

"I've been kicking stuff for a long time," Unks said.

In his free time, he enjoys going outdoors, reading, running and studying up on astrophysics and biology. Unks is also an avid guitar player and singer.

"I'm kind of an info junkie," he said. "I just like having a bunch of knowledge about things that I'm interested in."

Unks is going into his fourth-year pursuing a molecular and cell biology major with plans to attend medical school after graduation. He said he is currently spending the summer as an assistant coach to the 2004 Whatcom FC Rangers boy's soccer team.



Aliyah Dawkins was one of the 16 recipients of the FAR award// **Photo courtesy of WWU Athletics**

Aliyah Dawkins

"I've always put academics above athletics," Dawkins, a track & field athlete, said. "While I do love athletics, I'm not going to be an athlete forever."

Dawkins earned a 4.0 cumulative GPA this year as a freshman. Before her interest in track, Dawkins started as a dancer at three years old. She returned home to Minnesota for work this summer and was a math tutor as well as an instructor for young dancers. She taught a range of styles from hip-hop to ballet during a six-week course.

Dawkins plans to pursue a bachelor's in behavioral neuroscience and work her way up to a master's. She said she might also try a minor in statistics and potentially go for a doctorate after graduation.



Third-year Anneka Bostrom was one of the 16 recipients of the FAR award// **Photo courtesy of WWU Athletics**

Anneka Bostrom

"Whatever I'm doing, I try to put my absolute best into it," Bostrom said. "Otherwise I know I won't be satisfied with the results."

Bostrom maintained a 3.87 GPA and is a member of the women's rowing team.

"I work just as hard as all the other girls on my team," she said. "Some of them work harder than me, honestly. I wish I could give every one of them an award."

She first had an interest in rowing due to the influence of her parents, who encouraged her to get involved with

the sport at a young age. It was not until her freshman year of high school that she began to participate.

Now, Bostrom said that without rowing, she doesn't quite feel like herself.

"Rowing has taught me so much in my life," she said. "It's one of the most important things to me. It challenges me in every single way."

She plans to continue rowing beyond her years at Western and is pursuing a double major in environmental policy and history. She eventually hopes to attend law school and work as an associate with a company or the

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